

# The Privilege & Power of Prayer

## Psalm 141:1-10

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**Introduction:** This Psalm of David seems to have been written by him while fleeing from Saul. David acknowledges his need for God to hear & answer his prayer speedily (“*make haste*,” verse 1), & he longs to escape from his enemies (:10). I see 3 divisions in his prayer: verses 1-2, 3-7, & 8-10. David introduces his supplication, he indicates his petitions, & he invokes his benediction. It could also be noted as his prayer for accessibility (into God’s presence); his prayer for accountability (before God’s people); & his prayer for availability (to God’s promises). The question I have for us tonight is: ” Do we have an appreciation for the privilege & power of prayer?”

### I. David’s prayer for **accessibility** – into God’s presence (:1-2) [David’s supplication]

#### A. He asks for “**audience**” with the Lord > “*LORD, I cry unto Thee... give ear unto my voice*”

1. The verb tense suggests he has cried unto the Lord previously & does so again now.
2. “Prayer is intensely personal. There’s a mouth at one end, & an ear at the other” (Scroggie). Scroggie also likens prayer to 2 buckets in a well; one ascends, the other descends.

#### B. He asks for **assistance** from the Lord > “*make haste unto me*”

1. David boldly asks for God to hasten to his request.
2. Compare with Luke 15:20, the only time where God is represented as being in a hurry.

#### C. He asks for **acceptance** by the Lord > “*set forth before Thee as incense*”

1. Suggests preparation – incense carefully prepared according to regulation (His will?).
2. Suggests purification – incense kindled with holy fire (sins confessed & cleansed?).
3. Suggests presentation – incense devoutly presented to the Lord (our worship?).

Note: “*The lifting up of my hands*” – compare I Timothy 2:8, “*...lifting up holy hands.*”

Note also it is the time of “*the evening sacrifice*” – unable to worship at the Tabernacle.

Illustration: Incense entering the inner sanctuary – representing the presence of God.

### II. David’s prayer for **accountability** – before God & His people (:3-7) [David’s petitions]

[Note: The enemy from within is greater than the enemies from without.]

#### A. He asks to be guarded against sins of **speech** (:3).

1. Compare James 3:8. We hear “Watch your step” – more important, “Watch your mouth.”
2. “The *watch* does not stand with his back to the mouth, to challenge what would go in, but with his face, to challenge what would come out” (Scroggie). (see also Ephesians 4:29)

Illustration: We are to be door-keepers of His house (Ps. 84:10); the Lord condescends to be the “door-keeper” of our lips.

#### B. He asks to be guarded against sins of **thought** (:4a).

1. Consider Proverbs 4:23, “*Keep thy heart with all diligence...*”
2. Compare II Corinthians 10:5, “*...bringing into captivity every thought...*”

#### C. He asks to be guarded against sins of **deed** (:4b).

1. A warning of association (negative “peer-pressure?”).
2. A warning of participation (“*let me not eat of their dainties [wickedness]*”).

D. He asks to be guarded against sins of **pride** (:5).

1. “*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness*” >
  - a. “*The Righteous One*”? (the Lord) or “*The righteous ones*? (fellow believers). Compare Proverbs 27:5-6 & Galatians 4:16.
  - b. “*Smite*” – as with a hammer? A metaphor used of severe correction, sharp reproof.
2. “*It shall be an excellent oil*” >
  - a. “He therefore prays that he may welcome correction & reproof as the *ointment & perfume*’ which *rejoice the heart*’ (Proverbs 27:9)” (Kirkpatrick).
  - b. “Oil breaks no heads, & rebuke does no man any harm; rather, as oil refreshes & perfumes, so does reproof when fitly taken sweeten & renew the heart. My friend must love me well if he will tell me of my faults: there is an unction about him if he is honest enough to point out my errors” (Spurgeon). Compare Proverbs 9:8-9.

E. Summary of verses 6-7 > “When the leaders (*judges*) of the ungodly are judged & their *bones are scattered*, then the ungodly will listen to David” (Ryrie).

### III. David’s prayer for **availability** – to God’s **promises** (:8-10) [David’s benediction]

A. His place of **trust** (:8).

1. David’s eyes are upon the Lord, rather than his circumstances.
2. David’s refuge (“*trust*”) is in the Lord. “He has put himself under Jehovah’s protection, & appeals to Him on the ground of this relationship” (Kirkpatrick).

Summary: Compare Hebrews 12:2 & 13:5-6.

B. His protection in **temptation** (:9).

1. “*Keep*” – to be hedged about as with thorns. [Compare “*keep*” in verse 3, “to guard as by a watchman.”]
2. “Nobody could preserve David but the Omniscient & Omnipotent One; He also will preserve us” (Spurgeon).

C. His prospect for **triumph** (:10).

1. Prayer for “poetic justice” upon his enemies.
2. Prayer for “passing” (“*escape*”) through unharmed.

Summary: “The wicked are *ensnared*, but the *righteous escape*. This is necessarily & for ever true” (Scroggie). See Galatians 6:7-8.

**Conclusion:** What lessons can we learn from this privilege & power of prayer? For the believer, there is the **acknowledgement** of trials. We have no promise of being kept completely from temptation & trial. But we are promised His presence in the midst of trials. We know that the believer has **access** to prayer, at any & all times. The believer also can even “**ask**” for rebuke, a sign of willingness to be admonished & corrected. And the believer has the **assurance** of victory. Scroggie concludes, “How great the privilege & how wonderful the power of prayer! In this Psalm we see that prayer is articulate: *I cry*; it is urgent: *make haste*; it is bold: *give ear*; it is devout: *as incense*; it is expectant: *as the lifting up of my hands, & the eyes*; it is aware of danger: *set a watch; keep the door*; it is specific: *incline not my heart*, etc. We kneel; how weak! We rise; how full of power!” The Reformation Study Bible adds, “Prayer is vital & must never be neglected, particularly in difficult times. The storms of life should always drive us into the harbor of God’s presence. Notice what David asked God to give him: salvation from sin, accountability from godly friends, rescue from the traps of the world, & judgment upon the wicked. How often do you pray for such things?” That again reminds us to consider: “Do I have an appreciation for the privilege & power of prayer?”