Guarded from the Grave

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[0:00] Psalm 141, a Psalm of David. Psalm 141, a Psalm of David.

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And a former megachurch pastor of Covenant Life Church announced on Instagram that he's fallen away from the faith, basically. And that by every measure he has for defining a Christian, that he's not one based.
And I think the next month in August, Marty Sampson, who was kind of like a, you know, childhood, you know, hero of mine in a sense of because I love to listen to Hillsong United.
[2:09] He was one of the leaders of the music, basically announced on his Instagram page that, like, he's like, well, I'm genuinely, I guess, not, you know, believing my faith anymore or what, something along those lines.

Genuinely losing his faith, he said. So, I mean, these things show us that the allure of unbelief is real, right? It happens to people.
And we need to be kept from that if we're going to enjoy that eternity with God. And that's what Psalm 141 is really about. It's teaching us that we should pray to God to keep us from the deadly company of evildoers.
And there are two main things that help us to do that in this matter. So, the first half of the Psalm, verses 1 to 5, is about praying to God to keep our mouths.
That's the first point, prayer. And then second is, verses 6 to 10, remembering the deadly fate of the wicked. So, remembrance. So, it's those two things that keep us till the end, according to this Psalm.
[3:15] So, he begins by praying to God in verses 1 to 2. And he expresses a sense of urgency about this request. He says, O Lord, I call upon you. Hasten to me. Give ear to my voice when I call to you.

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you. And the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. So, just as God accepts a pleasing incense or a sacrifice from his people, he's asking God to hear his prayers because David sees this as urgent and important.
There's no time to waste. So, he says, Hasten to me, O God. And I think sometimes Christians can be complacent and take perseverance for granted.
But it's not something we can take for granted. There's a sense of urgency, importance to it. We need to ask God for help. And then we get to the main body of David's prayer in verses 3 to 4.
Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity.
[4:18] And let me not eat of their delicacies. So, David's well aware of, I mean, obviously, 1 Corinthians wasn't written then, but he's well aware of the idea in 1 Corinthians 15, 33, that bad company ruins good morals.

What's quoting from there, so that saying may already have been circulating probably somewhere from Proverbs. And so, he asks God to not let his heart basically drift toward evil, incline, lean toward evil, because he has himself felt the pull of the delicacies of this world, this sinful world.
And so, he prays that God would keep him from busying himself with the wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity. And the primary way that God's keeping of us takes place is in the arena of speech.
He says in verse 3, Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips. Guarding our speech is crucial. You guys are all aware of the famous passage in James 3, 2 to 5,

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which says, And so, the basic idea behind that is, if you can control your tongue, then you can control your whole self.
Because that's how unruly and difficult the tongue is to control. And a slip of the tongue have cost people jobs, relationships, even their lives.
[6:00] And when we start speaking of evil, and that's the concern that David has here, when we start speaking of evil, when we start delighting in evil, when that starts to be the subject of our conversations, when we start our conversations, our conversations tend to start to be dominated by the things of this world, it's a matter of time before we start doing evil.

And so, David asks God to guard his mouth, keep watch over his lips, like a guard, like a soldier, a sentry at the door of his lips.
And David knows that at times he'll fail, he will need correction. And so, he says in verse 5, So, David understands that the rebuke of a righteous man, he compares to being struck.
Obviously, being struck hurts, but it's a kindness because if he's struck and therefore repents from this, the eternal peril that he avoids is preferable to that temporal pain.
And so, he calls it a kindness. And he says it will be like oil for his head. This is actually a very vivid image because back in the ancient world, oil wasn't as common.
[7:21] And usually, it was really only people who were anointed, like kings or prophets, kind of understood what it felt like to have oil run over their heads. And it would have been a very refreshing feeling because they don't have modern hygiene.

So, you got like lice and different kinds of bugs in your head. And because oil, because of its viscosity, would actually kill all the lice if you pour it over your head. And so, just that kind of refreshing feeling.
I mean, I kind of imagine like when I have like, I don't know, I haven't washed my hair in a few days and there's like dandruff or whatever. And then that refreshing, you know, wash of like head and shoulders.
I don't know, like have you guys felt that? I don't know. Yeah. It's, you know. And so, that kind of refreshing kindness is kind of what David envisions is like being struck, you know, figuratively speaking, being rebuked by a righteous man.
That it actually, because it will spare him much deeper trouble in the end. And then, but even though he is, so David is receptive to the rebuke of the righteous man, but he steadfastly opposes the wicked.
[8:29] And he concludes verse 5 by saying, yet my prayer is continually against their evil deeds. Not time and time, but continually, steadfastly against their evil deeds. So, that's the first thing we need to do.

We pray to God to keep us, keep our mouths. But in addition to that, verses 6 to 10 tell us to remember the deadly fate of the wicked so that we're kept from joining them out of a healthy fear of the Lord.
And that's what verses 6 to 10 are about. So, verses 6 to 7 of the English Standard Version that I just read is actually, I think, a mistranslation.
It doesn't make sense. If you look at the second half of verse 6, it suggests that the evildoers will repent and hear David's words and then acknowledge that they are pleasant.
But that doesn't make sense in light of the context because the first half of verse 6 and verse 7 speak of their final judgment from which there's no return. So, I think the New International Version actually gets this exactly right.
[9:31] So, the NIV translates verses 6 and 7 this way. Their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken. They will say, quote, So, that's it.

So, this is speaking of God's ultimate vindication of David that when God finally throws down the wicked in judgment, they will then recognize that David was right after all.
And then they will mourn their destruction saying, quote, And so, this poetic justice is highlighted by the repetition of the word mouth because earlier, right, it's precisely because the evildoers did not set a guard over their mouths like David did that they lie now at the mouth of the grave.
But David, by God's grace, has not joined the company of evildoers. So, he continues in verses 8 to 10. But my eyes are toward you, O God, my Lord. In you I seek refuge. Leave me not defenseless. Keep me from the trap that they have laid for me and from the snares of evildoers. Let the wicked fall into their own nets while I pass by safely. So, he understands that the things that the evildoers

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lure them with, the delicacies of the sinful world that David spoke of earlier, is just a trap in the end. [10:58] It's a snare that leads to our death. And it's remembering that that keeps us from joining them because he could look attractive on the surface.

But what, in the end, will happen is that the evildoers will be trapped by their own snares. And then they themselves will perish while David passes by safely. Wonderful image of God securing our safe passage to our fatherland, to our Savior's kingdom, to our heaven.
And the good news for us, ultimately, that this psalm points to is, of course, the coming of Jesus because we have all sinned. We have all sinned in our speech.
We have all sinned, not kept the guard over my mouth as we should have. We have, at times, joined the company of evildoers. And we deserve to be like these evildoers scattered at the mouth of the grave.
That's exactly where we deserve to be. But instead, Jesus took our place on the cross. He died. And he was laid in the tomb at the mouth of the grave for three days.
[12:08] And God raised him from the grave so that we can now be spared that death that we had, we deserved, but instead can be guaranteed safe passage to pass by safely to our eternal abode with God.

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