

## **Forget My Sin...Remember Me!**

**Text:** Psalm 25

It's been really interesting to watch interviews and see reports on how ordinary people, along with our famous celebrities, express what 2008 will mean to them.

There seems to be a common thread through most of them.

That thread is 'hope';

Hope for themselves and hope for the world in general.

This comes on the back of increased fears about global warming, civil unrest in many countries, war and starvation seen daily on the news.

People are looking for hope, looking with optimism to the future.

Looking for the things that will sustain them and redeem society.

Looking to make decisions that will lead to the good life.

But sadly, most people are looking in the wrong places.

When David penned this Psalm...he was looking with hope to God.

It was God who would sustain him;

It was God who would lift him up.

There is a strong trust and confident hope in God through this Psalm...

Despite the enemies that lined the road of his life.

These were enemies both external and internal.

It is really nice if a Psalm broke up easily into sections which make great sermon points.

Like when the Psalmist moves through a neat sequence of thoughts to a wonderful conclusion.

This was the case with Psalm 13 that I preached on last year.

Here the Psalmist moves logically from terrible pain, to truthful prayer, to touching praise.

The problem with Psalm 25 is that we can't do that very well.

The verses here seem to alternate between prayers or petitions  
and expressions of confidence in God.

The reason for this is that the Psalm is structured as an acrostic.

Each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

The first verse is *aleph*, the second *beth* etc...

Through the 22 letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

There are nine Psalms structured this way...the most well known is Psalm 119, where each verse, or stanza, begins with the next letter of the alphabet.

Why are they done in this acrostic form?

Several possible reasons:

Artistic device, adding beauty to the Psalm.

May indicate the subject is being covered from A-Z, as we might say.

This form of poetry made it easier to memorize.

So how do we wrap up the Psalm in an easy to remember phrase?

Something we can easily identify with?

In the opening 3 verses the word 'shame' appears 3 times...

And it comes back in at verse 20.

So shame provides the context for this psalm.

To understand what David is talking about we have to realize that the Bible uses the words 'shame' and 'ashamed' differently than we do.

In fact, the Biblical use can't even be found in our dictionaries.

When we speak of being ashamed we usually mean being embarrassed or feeling foolish.

Now that is an emotion we can all identify with.

It is the typical teenage response to parents.

I know there are times when Emily is embarrassed by my actions.

This idea does come in the Bible, like when Jesus said, 'If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory.' (Lk 9:26)

Yet this is not the chief biblical idea connected with shame.

It has to do with the idea of having put your trust in someone, or something, that in the end proves unworthy of our trust.

You are then exposed to the ridicule of others.

So the thought expressed in the Psalm is that if you put your hope in God, you will never be exposed to ridicule, because God will never fail you.

For us, it means that our Christian hope will never be seen as an illusion.

Those who have staked their all on God will not be abandoned by him in the end

So why does David have this thought of being abandoned, 'shamed' by God.

For two very good reasons that David has to work through.

**First**, David is surrounded by enemies...

an external problem that causes doubt and fear.

**Second**, he is conscious of his own sin...an internal problem that nags him.

Now we can relate to these problems.

We have formidable external enemies.

For David it was the armies of Saul, his father-in-law, who were seeking him.

For us, our world and Satan are our enemies.

The world is opposed to every good thing.

The bible tells us that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

We also have that internal problem that nags us...

Our own sinful natures and the memory of the sins we have committed.

What if our enemies prove too strong?

What if they succeed in causing us to abandon our trust in God?

What if God, remembering our sins, should abandon us?

Have you ever felt like that?

But David knows this is not going to happen...

Because he has a mature trust in God.

From the start David says that he will NOT be put to shame...

But it is his enemies who will be shamed.

But notice how David also knows that if he is to remain firm to the end...

Then he must be taught of God, so he can walk God's way...

And so be found as a person of integrity and uprightness.

This requires responsible learning, obedience, faithfulness, trust and reverence on our part.

**Verse 4 & 5** show what is needed to know the truth...the truth found in the Bible.

Then we will know what it is like to walk in ways pleasing to God.

The Global Positioning System (GPS) is changing the way we work, travel, and play.

Did you know it was the No.1 present husbands bought wives this Christmas!

No more Melway arguments.

Using the signals from multiple satellites, the GPS receiver can work out your location anywhere in the world.

Using the information can help a driver locate a place in a strange city.

It helps a courier deliver his package to the right address.

It helps the fire control officer keep a check on the location of the fire trucks.

It helps a lost hiker find his way out from the bush.

In a very real sense, it is "guidance from above."

But it only helps the person who believes the information and instructions on the screen and then acts on it.

Suppose I listen to the instructions and say, 'This can't be right, I know a better way.'  
So I switch off the GPS and head off on my own.

When we were last in Sydney, for the fun of it, we used Anita's dad's GPS to go across the city to my sister's place.

We laughed at some of the suggestions and missed turns because we thought of a better way.

That was OK till we got confused on a new section of road and really did get lost.  
It was the GPS that brought us back on the right track.

In a similar way, God's guidance through the Bible benefits us only when we trust His Word and obey it.

It will keep us on track...  
Even if we don't like some of the directions it gives us.

"He guides the humble in what is right, and teaches them his way.  
All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant." (9-10)

But notice how David wrestles with the undeserving nature of the very things that he is asking for.

He sees himself as a sinner...but he wants to be lifted up by God.  
He knows his unworthiness...but he wants to walk in God's ways.

So in **verses 6-7** he pleads with God to remove his sin.

David is deeply conscious of the number and weight of his sins.  
He does not hide them from God or himself.

The 'sins of my youth' are sins easily committed.  
Youth can be a careless time...when passions are strong.  
But the end of youth does not mean the end of sinning.  
Am I right?

So the Psalmist adds, 'or my transgressions',  
meaning the deliberate, sinful acts of the mature person.

Those who are closest to us don't know the number and weight of our personal sins.  
We might even try to hide them from ourselves...  
Pushing them to edges of our conscience,  
justifying them in some way,

downplaying their significance at other times.

I've done that, maybe even doing it now.

We shouldn't do that.

We should face them honestly and confess them privately to God.

***Remember not my sins he asks...but remember me.***

Have no regard for the sins...wash them away, but please...remember me, the sinner!

With that sort of passion and trust we ask that God's love will disregard our sins and restore us, the sinner.

And we base our plea, not on God's goodness in general,

but on that greatest show of his goodness and love...Jesus Christ.

So we cry out...for Jesus sake, remember me!

This brings us to a discussion on God's justice and mercy...

Which comes out in **verse 8** of the Psalm.

Here the words 'good' and 'upright' are used.

It is a significant combination...

If God's justice requires we be condemned for our sin.

How can he, an upright God, show us mercy?

How can God save us from our sins?

The answer to this dilemma, of course, is Jesus Christ.

Here the goodness of God is shown.

In his death Jesus satisfied the justice of God...

Because on the cross he carried the punishment for our sins.

His death satisfied the justice of God completely...

Allowing him to forget about our sins and so reach out to us graciously.

But notice the continuing attitude of David.

V8 says God will instruct 'sinners'...

This implies that David knew himself to be a sinner...

And humbly came before God.

In V9 God guides the humble.

Not that sin is a qualification for God's guidance!

But sin is not an obstacle to guidance.

David confesses his sinfulness four times in this psalm.

He humbly admits his sin...and then humbly asks God to lead him.

We need those same steps in our lives.

Confess sin and need of a Saviour in Jesus Christ...

Then humble ask for leading...and the strength to follow that lead.

John Piper once wrote:

Suppose Jesus Christ walked through that door and came up to you and said, "Hello, my name is Jesus, I am the Son of God and I came into the world to save sinners and give them complete happiness and everlasting life. By my death and resurrection I have atoned for sin. And by my wisdom and knowledge I can show you how to make choices that will bring you the greatest life and joy. Will you trust me?"

And suppose you said, "Well, I do want to be happy. I like the idea of having all my sins forgiven. I certainly don't want to go to hell. But I have looked over some of your directions for the good life and I just don't agree with some of your ideas about how I can be happiest. So I accept your forgiveness now, and I really appreciate it. But I think I will go with my own ideas of how to live."

It is not enough to want Jesus as Saviour  
there is the added requirement of obedience.

The reason many of us do not learn much about God and his ways is because we are not ready to obey him.

David says this will not work...

Since God is loving and faithful to those who keep the covenant.  
God is faithful, not to those who are sinless...  
but those who are humbly committed to obedience.

### **Conclusion**

David has made the choice to walk the road of the righteous...

It is the right road to walk...but one lined with problems.  
There are troubles that line his road...  
Troubles from within and without.

He wonders how he is to continue on that road.

And so he prays to God to show him the road and keep him on it.  
He knows he doesn't deserve such guidance and strength, but as someone who has had sins forgiven, he is confident that God will show him the road again.

Life for us can be like that too!

We know the right road to walk.  
We know the things we should be doing;  
we know the things that God call us to do.  
We know the things God warns us against.  
We know the things that he calls sin...  
Those things of our thoughts words and actions.

But the road is hard at times...

lined with enemies...from within and without.

The external enemies tell us not to worry about our actions,  
as long as we don't hurt anyone.

They tell us to do what we like, to please ourselves.

The stuff of God is old fashioned, not of much use today.

The enemies within tell us things like...it's not really wrong.

It is only one small white lie, it is not going to hurt anyone.

It is OK to think that way, or say that thing, because they deserve it.

The road is hard.

But as people who know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour,

As those who know the forgiveness of sin through his death and resurrection.

We need to walk that sometimes difficult road of the righteous.

But we don't do it alone (unless we choose to try).

God will show us the way.

He will protect and guide us.

If he has forgiven us, he certainly won't abandon us.

We don't deserve anything from God but condemnation...

But, through Jesus Christ, he offers us a new and living way.

I am reminded of Pilgrim's Progress.

Christian was striving on the road...but faced danger after danger.

It was when he looked to God, and listened to the wise words from those he sent to help that he was released from snares and continue his journey to the heavenly city.

I don't know what the snares are that hold you, what the dangers are that you face...

Lust, lying, greed, idolatry, immorality, anger, bitterness etc.

Find wise ways to avoid them...and continue confidently on the journey with God.

I pray that each one of us might look to Jesus Christ and God's Word to receive the wisdom to be released from the snares that hold us and continue on the journey to the heavenly city.

If you want to make decisions that will lead to the good life...

Don't keep looking in the wrong places...

Look with hope to God and you will not be ashamed.

Put your hope in God, then you will never be exposed to ridicule, because God will never fail you.