

## PSALM 141

*An Evening Prayer for Sanctification and Protection.*

### INTRODUCTION.

- A. A Psalm of David. "Evening Prayer for Sanctification and Protection."
- B. There is nothing that I can find in this psalm that identifies the time or distress that he is feeling. In verses 2 and 5 he mentions his prayer, and this could mean that this psalm is a prayer, or refer to his prayers in general, or both. He seems to be asking God to help him in dealing with temptation and trials in general.
- C. Verses 5-7 are generally admitted by scholars as extremely difficult to translate and there are many variations in translation. Coffman simply says, "This writer claims no ability for solving the mysteries of passages which could very well have been obscured by textual damage during the centuries of transition; and we therefore offer no 'explanations or comments' on a passage which we freely confess is a mystery." (p. 503).
- D. Clyde M. Miller gives the following headings for the psalm:
  1. Plea for help (141:1,2).
  2. Prayer for strength (141:3,4).
  3. Righteous and wicked influences (141:5-7).
  4. Seeking refuge in the Lord (141:8-10).

### THE TEXT.

- 141:1** O LORD, I call upon You; hasten to me!  
Give ear to my voice when I call to You!
- 2** May my prayer be counted as incense before You;  
The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.
- 3** Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;  
Keep watch over the door of my lips.
- 4** Do not incline my heart to any evil thing,  
To practice deeds of wickedness  
With men who do iniquity;  
And do not let me eat of their delicacies.
- 5** Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me;  
It is oil upon the head;  
Do not let my head refuse it,  
For still my prayer is against their wicked deeds.
- 6** Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock,  
And they hear my words, for they are pleasant.
- 7** As when one plows and breaks open the earth,  
Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.
- 8** For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord;  
In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.
- 9** Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me,  
And from the snares of those who do iniquity.
- 10** Let the wicked fall into their own nets,  
While I pass by safely.

### COMMENTS.

- A. A Plea for Help.

**[v1]** "Lord, I cry out to You; make haste to me! Give ear..." Clyde Miller says that these short cryptic phrases indicate urgency as he pleads with God to rescue him from this current danger.

**[v2]** "Let my prayer be set before You as incense..." Revelation 5:8 identifies the "golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." The representation is of priests offering up sacrifices and incense on behalf of the people (Rev. 8:3,4; Ex. 30:10).
- B. Prayer for Strength.

**[v3]** “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” David identifies one of man’s greatest dangers: sinning with his lips. James 3:1-12 (esp. 2,6) identifies the tongue as great danger.

**[v4]** “Do not incline my heart to any evil thing...” Of course, it is Satan, not God who inclines our heart to evil, but he is praying that God will deliver him from the temptations and help him be faithful.

C. Righteous and Wicked Influences.

**[v5]** “Let the righteous strike me... let him rebuke me...” We should realize that those who are truly righteous always want what is best for us and that their rebuke or correction is for our benefit.

**[v6]** “Their judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff...” This seems to refer to the judges of the wicked, mentioned in the last part of the previous verse. When they are destroyed, they will have to admit that the words of the psalmist are right.

**[v7]** “Our bones” (KJV, NKJ, NAS, NIV and ASV) is rendered “their bones” by Moffat, Good News Bible and RSV. If it is “their bones” it would seem to refer to the wicked judges thrown over the cliffs for punishment. This seems to fit better in the psalm’s focus on David’s deliverance from personal peril.

D. Seeking Refuge in the Lord.

**[v8]** “But my eyes are upon You, O God... in You I take refuge...” David expresses complete confidence in God as his only hope and security.

**[v9]** “Keep me from the snares... the traps...” He realizes the danger and his own weakness to avoid it.

**[v10]** “Let the wicked fall into their own nets...” This is the ultimate justice. Rather than personal vengeance, we should let God punish the wicked--He can do a better job than we can.