Psalm 36

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Preacher: Ray Sims

[0:00] Psalm 36. For the director of music, of David, the servant of the Lord. I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked.

! There is no fear of God before their eyes. In their own eyes they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin. The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful.
They fail to act wisely or do good. Even on their beds they plot evil. They commit themselves to a sinful course and do not reject what is wrong.
Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens. Your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the highest mountains. Your justice like the great deep.
You, Lord, preserve both people and animals. How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast in the abundance of your house.
[1:05] You give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life. In your light we see light. Continue your love to those who know you.

Your righteousness to the upright in heart. May the foot of the proud not come against me. Nor the hand of the wicked drive me away. See how the evil doers lie fallen, thrown down, not able to rise. Amen. Amen. Okay, keep your Bibles open and we'll head through this psalm together. But please join me in a prayer. Father, bless us tonight through your word, not because we deserve it, not because we have any credit, but because of your great love for us.
Thank you that you hold us in the palm of your hand. You do us good. And we pray that, Lord, we will experience that this evening.
Speak to us through your word. Help me to be clear. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Hang on a minute.
[2:24] Have I got to click this thing? Hey. Right, okay. I think we're okay. So what's not on the slide there, but it's in your Bibles, is the superscription that's above the psalm.

And it says it's for the director of music. So it's telling us it's a song. Good start. And it's of David. So it's a song of David. And these, you know, aren't unusual.
In the psalms, that's not uncommon that you will have that. But what is unusual is that David then calls himself the servant of the Lord. That only occurs in two psalm headings, that phrase.
Psalm 18 and this one, Psalm 36. So we see straight away that it's a message which is immediately relevant to us if we call ourselves servants of God, servants of the Lord.
So what does David, the Lord's servant, sing about? In a sentence, and what I've tried to do is condense this into a short sentence that might summarize the psalm for us, to give us a heads up as we head into it.
[3:32] It's that the path of the wicked ends in death, and the love of the Lord sustains his people. And you'll see that, hopefully, as we skip through.

It breaks down into three sections, as Steve rightly said. The path of the wicked, verses 1 to 4. The steadfast love of the Lord, verses 5 to 9.
And at the end, there's a prayer of the Lord's servant, which in some ways adds as a summary, a recap, and a closing conclusion prayer to the sovereign.
So first of all, let's have a look at the path of the wicked. And I'll read to you these verses from verses 1 to 4. I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked. There is no fear of God before their eyes. In their own eyes, they flatter themselves too much to detect or hate their sin.
[4:41] The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful. They fail to act wisely or to do good. Even on their beds, they plot evil. They commit themselves to a sinful course and do not reject what is wrong.

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You might have noticed that there's a progression in these verses. Verses 1 and 2 show a general heart attitude that the wicked person has. And verses 3 and 4 give some detail in the way it works out in how they live, what their lifestyle is.
And let's very briefly walk through these verses. Verse 1 expresses the wicked person's state of rebellion against God. Now it doesn't come out so clearly in the New International Version.
But literally, this verse 1 says, The wicked man has an oracle of rebellion in his heart. So it's not that David the psalmist has this idea of the wicked.
It's that this wicked person has an oracle. Something he thinks is profound. Something he wants to say. Oracles elsewhere in the Bible, you may know, are usually good because they're referring to God's word usually.
[5:59] But the wicked person has his own oracle. Words of rebellion deep in his heart. And then, therefore, that's why they do not fear God.

Not only do they not revere God, as we usually use that word, fear God, but they have no dread of God. They have no dread of his judgment. They're carefree.
Verse 2. They're so convinced of their own path that they can't see their sin. They've blinded themselves by flattery, the psalm says.
They can't even see their wrongdoing because they think so much of themselves and how great their lifestyle is. Verse 3. They speak sinfully.
They act sinfully. Verse 4. They even lie awake at night planning their evil path. And they're fully committed to it. Who are these people?
[7:00] Who is David talking about? Well, it seems that they're a kind of category of sinners, which is bottom of the pile, the lowest of low.

It seems that really they are very unusual. But this psalm doesn't have particular individuals in mind. We're not actually given a heads up to who these people are.
It's a general description of a general sinner. And it seems to be a generic picture of everyone that is committed to an evil path.
It's the story of a person who lives life with their sin unchecked. The sadder news for us tonight is that the Apostle Paul quotes this verse, verse 1, there is no fear of God before their eyes, when he's writing to the Romans in chapter 3, verse 18.
And the context of the Romans passage applies this verse to all people, not just the worst of the worst. It's summed up in Romans 3, verse 11.
[8:13] There is no one righteous, not even one. So the truth is, although we can look at this list and think, well, that is a really bad person, the scriptures are telling us that we all have a propensity to do wrong.

And although we may not recognise ourselves in this psalm, if truth were known, that's exactly how we would live if we were living without Jesus.
Any being better than that is only because God has had mercy on us and has shown us some light. Even as Christians, we need to make sure that we don't flatter ourselves so that we're blind to our sin.
That sin that we still need to do battle with. I don't know if you've ever watched the game of bowls. It's usually an old person's sport, an English old person's sport.
And let me describe it to you. You've got a little white ball at the end of the pitch, and then you have a big black ball that you roll down towards it. And you've got to try and hit the white ball.
[9:24] Then it gets more complicated because then you get other balls that are in the way, and you've got to knock them out of the way. And the idea is to get as close as you can to this white ball. But the problem is, the ball has a weight in it.

That is why it's difficult. You can't bowl this ball in a straight line. And that weight inside it is called a bias. And that is a pretty good illustration of what we are like as a sinful person.
We have a bias to go off course and to do wrong. And unless we realize that this evening, we are in serious trouble, and we will find some of the problems, some of the progression of evil, that this wicked person in the first four verses is talked about.
Steve, quite rightly, I'm glad he did. Thanks for the heads up, Steve. There's a great contrast in verses one to four, the wicked man, to the section we're going to have a look at now, which is the steadfast love of the Lord.

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So we've seen the path of the wicked. David now describes to us the steadfast love of the Lord. Let me read to you verses five to nine. Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens.
[10:43] Your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the highest mountains. Your justice, like the great deep.

You, Lord, preserve both people and animals. How precious is your unfailing love, O God. People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house. You give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life. In your light we see light.
So as verses one to four moved from the general heart of the wicked to the specific outworkings of the heart, so verses five and six show us God's great heart of love in broad brushstrokes.
And the detail of the outworking of that love comes in verses seven to nine. Let's look at that together. So verses five and six, they show us the huge extent of the Lord's love.
[11:50] It's language that is of a gigantic, ginormous scale. Love and faithfulness as high as the heavens themselves. Righteousness as unmovable as the highest mountains.

Unfathomable judgments as deep as the deepest sea. David here uses God's covenant name, Yahweh, to show this love, faithfulness, righteousness and justice.
And he's showing that it's particularly for God's people, but not just for God's people. He extends this love, justice, righteousness to all creation, even to the animals.
There in verse six, for people and animals, such is God's love for his creation. When my children were small, we used to play a little game.
We didn't have a name for this game, but I've given it a name because it's pretty descriptive of it. How big is your love? When we would ask them, is your love as big as an elephant?
[12:59] All right. We'd say to Stephen, Elliot, how big is your love? Is your love as big as an elephant? We would go like this, big as an elephant. And they would usually reply, no as small as a rabbit.

All right. Or if they're feeling particularly cheeky, no as small as a mouse. And this used to go on day by day and it was hilarious. God's love is bigger than the mountains, bigger than the skies, bigger than the deepest sea.
We can't, we can't fathom it. We can't, even these pictures are too small. God is infinite. And so his love, his justice, his righteousness, righteousness is infinite.
It's bigger than the mountains, bigger than the sky, bigger than the heavens, bigger than the sea. But as we, just as we can't imagine how small it, how large it is, the psalmist brings it down to things we can imagine at a stretch.
How blessed mankind is to be under God's care and how our hearts should respond in wonder and adoration for his great love for us.
[14:17] So after the zoom out to see the massive scale of Yahweh's love, David then zooms in to the detail of how that love shows itself. verse 7, God's love is described as priceless or precious.

So the, the, the, the, the idea here, the picture in our mind is of a gem. It may be small, but it is priceless. It is precious.
And we can see in verses 7 to 9 how that detailed, detailed care of the Lord is expressed. people take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
So there's protection for God's people. They feast on the abundance of your house. There's plenty of food for the hungry. You give them drink from your river of delights, rivers of water for the thirsty. And there's light for those in darkness. So these blessings are not for creation generally. We're told here that they are for those who take refuge in God, refuge in God's shadow.
[15:31] Those who are willing to feast on God's abundance and drink from his river. For David and God's people at this time, they probably were thinking of the Exodus.

Why do I think that? I might be wrong, but I think they might have been picturing the Exodus. This is when God led them out of Egypt and through the desert. And they were protected, if you remember, by the pillar of cloud by day, protecting them from the Egyptians that were on the trail behind them. And then the pillar of fire by night that gave them direction and gave them light. The Lord fed them abundantly, we read, don't we, in Exodus, and supernaturally with manna, bread from heaven, and with quail.
They drank from water springing from a rock, rivers of water out from the desert. But when we think of these verses, how do we see these verses?

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Well, we see here the eternal provision we have in the Lord Jesus. He is our refuge. We are safe in him when we live in the shadow of his cross.
[16:53] We are safe in him because of that cross. Safe from the penalty of our sin, safe from sins hold on us, and even safe from the wrath of God whose wrath Jesus bore himself.

Jesus is the bread of life and the living water welling up in us to eternal life. Now, Nathan wonderfully took us through the second half of John 14 and he told us about the spirit who dwells in us.
That spring of water welling up to eternal life. And he's the light and he's the life and light. John 1 4 says, in him was life and that life was the light of all mankind.
The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. So in Jesus we see the provision of God for us.
How our hearts should respond tonight in thankfulness for God who loves us so much. I came across a quote from Warren Weersby who's written a Bible commentary and he sums up this section beautifully.
[18:13] He says this, what a privilege it is to be God's children. We are resting safely under his wing, feasting joyfully at his table, drinking abundantly from his river and walking confidently in his light.

Praise God. So, David the servant of the Lord, he's shown us the path of the wicked and he's shown us the steadfast love of the Lord and now he brings his request to God in prayer.
And what he's doing here is he's looking back on the verses that he's first written and he's feeding those into his prayer. Let me read to you 10 to 12.
Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart. May the foot of the proud not come against me, nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.
See how the evildoers lie fallen, thrown down, not able to rise. Hang on a minute.
[19:24] Right, okay. Sorry. I thought I'd missed a bit. So, David's prayer again spits into three sections and he takes the second section that we've looked at tonight and he prays for the Lord will continue his steadfast love to him.

So, those who know you, he's saying, those who have experienced your love and faithfulness, they need to experience this continually.
So, please, Lord, continue your love to us. Now, he's shown us that he already knows the Lord's awesomeness.
It's so awesome I couldn't get it out. The Lord's awesomeness he's also experienced the detail of God's blessings but his dependency is not on past blessings, how he's seen God work in the past, but now he's totally dependent on the loving, faithful, righteous God to provide for him now, day to day.
And so, he asks this. It's really an expression of dependence on God. God. So, we don't just marvel in the greatness of God.
[20:44] We don't just worship him for how he's cared for us. But we bring ourselves to God and we ask for his continued care. We tell him that we are dependent on him.

And we tell ourselves that we are dependent on him, that we need him. So, the middle section of his prayer, verse 11, he prays for protect from attack, from the evil.
Protect me from the attack of the wicked, those described in verses 1 to 4. May they not succeed in driving me away. He's frightened that the wicked may drive him away from the Lord or from his country, from his city, from his country.
This is a familiar theme. We've seen this in all the Psalms, I think, up until now, or most of them anyway, this point of we need protection from a wicked enemy. And David was sure of that.
He was sure that he needed protection from a human enemy. But at a deeper level and a more appropriate level to our situation tonight, is that this can be a prayer for protection from our enemies, from the world, from the flesh, our flesh, and from the devil.
[22:07] Those things that would try and drive us away from the Lord. Lord, save me from those things that would drive me away from you. Is that our prayer?

It's a great prayer to have. So David clearly sees these things as a present danger. He's not complacent, but he depends on God, the only one who continue to protect him and deliver him.
Lastly, he has a recognition here of the fate of the wicked. David here prophetically sees the fate of the wicked, which is going to happen in the future, but you notice the words he used are the present

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tense.
He sees it so clearly and he believes so strongly that God will bring the wicked to justice that he's talking as if it's happening already in the present tense.
See how the evildoers lie fallen, thrown down, not able to rise. So David rests in and he's confident in the righteous God who will bring justice on his enemies.
[23:18] The wicked will not prevail. So when we are treated unjustly, when we see other people treated unjustly, sometimes our reaction is to just try and get our own back, try and defend ourselves.

God's God's God's God's God's God's judgment. He doesn't need to do it himself. And so we should be confident whatever obstacles from people or things that we go through, if people are troubling us, leave it to God.
He will sort things out. So just a couple, two sentences to sum up. David has reflected on the wicked.
He's been overwhelmed by God's love for his people. And you see the contrast there between the two sections. And finally, he's turned to God in prayer, asking for his continued help.
So let me just lead us in a prayer and then it's back to Steve. Father, we were once like the wicked people described in verses 1 to 4.
[24:36] And we have to confess that sometimes we have a bias in us which goes off course from following you. Forgive us, Lord.

Help us to see our sin as it is and not flatter ourselves that we're better than we are. Father, we worship you for the magnitude of your love and we're thankful for the detail that you show us, Lord, in how you work that love out for us.
Help us, Lord, then to live for you, keep us from evil and help us to live our lives in your presence for your glory.
In Jesus' name, Amen. Thanks. Great. Thank you, Ray. That is the end of our evening service, so thank you for being with us.
We will see you next Sunday morning at 11 o'clock when Albury's going to be preaching for us, Lord willing. If you're in a community group, they meet on Tuesday or Wednesday evening, so get along to that.
[25:49] And if you're not in one and you'd like to be in one, let me know. We'll see you next Sunday. Thanks. Thank you.

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