

January 23, 2009

Psalm 141 (NASB)

**O LORD, I call upon You; hasten to me!
Give ear to my voice when I call to You!
May my prayer be counted as incense before You;
The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.
Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips.
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.**

**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.
Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock,
And they hear my words, for they are pleasant.
As when one plows and breaks open the earth,
Our bones have been scattered at the mouth of Sheol.
For my eyes are toward You, O GOD, the Lord;
In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.
Keep me from the jaws of the trap which they have set for me,
And from the snares of those who do iniquity.
Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
While I pass by safely.**

Submission has become an ugly word in some religious circles, for this isn't the kind of word that makes us think of equality and self-assurance. Submission sounds lowly and second tier. It sounds like a word that, if a person, would have slouching shoulders and a dejected expression. But submission is a word that aptly summarizes the first half of this psalm. Submission. Maybe we'd prefer its cousin: humility. Either way, both terms modify this psalmist's self-awareness as he approaches God in this prayer. He's willing to let God take over. His hands, his lips, his heart—all these are offered up to God, because this psalmist knows his frailty and the temptation of pride. He sounds like he's spoken too soon, acted too rashly, schemed too intensely in the past, but now he recognizes that sin's delicacies sour the stomach.

So he asks instead for correction from the righteous. He'd rather have righteous rebuke than devilish delicacies. He admits that this isn't an easy choice, and he asks God to keep him on the straight and narrow. Even though he's already been broken, he knows that the road ahead is no less treacherous than those he's already travelled. Oh, it can be hard.

When the days and nights run together in darkness, O Lord, give us light. When sin smells sweet and rebukes sound discordant, recapture our hearts, kind Father. When we feel defenseless and we tire of our heavy burden, call us again to your meek and lowly Son. Let us remember His love. Let us remember His power. Let us remember His cross. Let us ever humble ourselves and submit our lives to your guidance, merciful Savior. We're ready to lean on you.