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## *Psalms*

Now Hear This!

### **Psalm 5**

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**T**here have certainly been times over the years, just prior to the original writing of this message, when things were going less than ideally in my life. It was during this time I experienced the reality of a prayer life that seemed to control me more than I controlled it.

*I'm sure, considering the tests many of you have been put through, you too are familiar with the experience of crying out in pain to the Lord; prayers that are inarticulate groans, reflections of the pain being felt, more than some kind of profound theological exercise.*

*When our church finally closed, I had some serious discussions with God regarding my assessment of His fairness. I was in substantial pain. I felt I had given my all, and He owed me. Have you ever felt like that? But, I also realized that this was an emotional response and not consistent with what I knew to be true about God or life.*

*It is during these times we fall on our faces. All we express is pain and frustration. But that very expression can be a testimony to the depth of our faith. It is God to whom we are crying, because we know He loves us and can do something about our pain. While there may even be anger in our cry, nevertheless there is an awareness of the mercy of God as well. And it is that mercy that we long for. As Job's wife said to her husband,*

***“Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die.” Let us say with Job, “You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” Job 2:9-10***

*One of the greatest blessings we have as Christians is access to God and the confidence that we have His ear and His love. And it seems the author of Psalm 5 also has this same awareness, even though he lives in an Old Testament economy while we live in the New. In this lesson we will look at his prayer and see what we can draw from it that will benefit us.*

#### **PSALM 5**

*For the director; for the flutes. A psalm of David.*

- 2 Give ear to my words, O Yahweh,  
attend to my utterance.**
- 3 Give heed to the sound of my cry,  
my King and my God;  
For to you am I praying, O Yahweh.**
- 4 At dawn hear my voice,  
at dawn I will draw up my case,  
for you will I watch.**
- 5 A no-good delights in evil,  
but you—no evil man can be your guest.**

- 6 *Let no boasters stand before you.  
I hate all evildoers,*
- 7 *destroy those who tell lies!  
The man of idols and figurines  
Yahweh detests.*
- 8 *But thorough your great love  
I will enter your house;  
I will worship toward your holy temple,  
among those who fear you, O Yahweh.*
- 9 *Lead me into your meadow  
because of my rivals,  
Your way make level before me.*
- 10 *For there is nothing firm in his mouth,  
his belly is an engulfing chasm;  
A grave wide-open is their throat,  
with their tongue they bring death.*
- 11 *Make them perish, O God,  
let them fall because of their schemes;  
For their numerous crimes  
hurl them down,  
Since they have challenged you.*
- 12 *While all who seek refuge in you will rejoice,  
forever singing with joy;  
And you will shelter them,  
that they who love your name  
may exult in you.*
- 13 *For you will bless the just man yourself, O Yahweh,  
as with a shield  
you will surround him with your favor.*<sup>1</sup>

**I Introduction:** The approach we will take as we examine the fifth Psalm is to first consider its form. Next we will review the passage itself, and last we will see how, and how not, to apply it within our own walk. Yes, you did hear me correctly, “how not to apply it,” for this is the first of the imprecatory prayers, a concept which will be explained further on.

Now, unlike some of the earlier psalms, this one is much more general in focus. It doesn't seem to relate to a specific incident in the life of David. (In fact there is some thought he might not have even written it, but it was sung to one of the familiar tunes of the day, written by him). Keep in mind it really doesn't matter who wrote each individual Psalm. What is important is the Holy Spirit inspired the authors and chose which to include in Scripture.

*“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16).*

It would be helpful to have an outline of the Psalm for further our understanding, so I have borrowed the one given by H. C. Leupold<sup>2</sup> and modified it slightly.

<sup>1</sup> Dahood, Mitchell, *The Anchor Bible*, “Psalms 1,” Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978, p. 28-29.

<b>I</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>II</b>	<b>A plea to be heard</b>	<b>Verses 1 - 3</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>The wicked may not abide in the presence of God, but God's true children may.</b>	<b>Verses 4 - 7</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>A prayer for guidance, and condemnation of the wicked.</b>	<b>Verses 8 - 12</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	

The overall focus of the poem is the need for moral standing before the Lord. The need is understood from the context of an Old Testament perspective. The Psalmist knew God was just and required that mankind meet His standards. This is still the case today. Where individuals reject the sacrifice of Christ as payment for sin, they place themselves in the same position as the wicked of the Old Testament.

Through the birth of Jesus, God has provided a way for people to be restored to a relationship with Him. Nevertheless, He has not changed His standards and He will not accept anyone who has rejected Christ. As Jesus said:

*“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well” (John 14:6-7).*

God is not a different God in the Old Testament than He is in the New.

**II A plea to be heard:** “Now Hear This!” This Psalm is referred to as a morning prayer because of verse 3. It represents the reflections of the author as he urgently approaches the Lord with his concerns. His prayer is an act of sacrifice, as Spurgeon notes speaking of the word ...

*DIRECT* “It is the word that is used for the laying in order of the wood and the pieces of the victim upon the altar, and it is used also for the putting of the shewbread upon the table. It means just this: ‘I will arrange my prayer before thee;’ I will lay it out upon the altar in the morning, just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice.”<sup>3</sup>

The petitioner presents all that distresses him to the only one who can truly respond, the one who is both His God and His King. The Lord is the one with all authority to deal with the burdens of His people. It is worth noting that underlying the prayer is the truth that God only hears the prayers of those who are His own, desiring to be obedient to His will.

The author has the confidence God hears not only the words of his mouth, but also the sighing of his heart, the inarticulate expressions that are not even understood by the one making them.

*“We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will” (Romans 8:26-27).*

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<sup>2</sup> Leupold, H. C., Exposition of Psalms, Baker Book House, 1969, p. 74-78.

<sup>3</sup> Spurgeon, C. H., The Treasury of David, Vol. 1, MacDonald Publishing Co., p.46.

Finally it should be noted, not only does the petitioner go before the Lord in confidence, he demonstrates trust, by waiting on the Lord for the answer to His prayers. We often pray this way, when we recognize that God already has our answer, and all we have to do is wait to see it worked out. Conversely as Alexander Maclaren notes

*“ Many a prayer is offered, and no eyes afterwards turned to heaven to watch for the answer, and perhaps some answers sent are like water spilled on the ground, for want of such observance.”*<sup>4</sup>

**III The wicked may not abide in the presence of God, but God’s true children may abide:** Obviously the conditions of the day burden the heart of the author. Dealing with the issue of sin, he starts first from the negative position. Wickedness abounds and so his prayer reflects the reality that God will not accept unrighteousness. He will not accept the wicked before Him. Now understand the wicked are all who have rejected the way of the Lord. Wickedness is not synonymous with a life style that would cause society to put the individual away. Instead it reflects a rejection of God.

First the psalmist notes, God hates all forms of unrighteousness and second, He will destroy the wicked. There may also be a prophetic aspect to this, looking towards the day when God will finally bring down judgment on all unrighteousness. It is this truth that allows Paul to instruct the Romans; **“Hate what is evil ...” (Romans 12:9)** The whole thrust is the truth that God’s very nature cannot accept unrighteousness. Leupold notes at this point in the psalm the author is simply expressing his confidence in the righteousness of God.<sup>5</sup>

**IV A prayer for guidance, and condemnation of the wicked:** In contrast to the wicked, the righteous can enter into God’s presence with confidence and hope. Even here the basis for approaching God is His mercy, not the worthiness of the one praying. The author comes for God’s leading, specifically as it pertains to walking in the midst of all of his enemies. Remember as we walk in God’s ways, His enemies are our enemies. Jesus said,

*“ All men will hate you because of me,...” (Matthew 10:22).*

In contrast, again pointing to the wicked, the psalmist notes their totally deceitful nature and prays God will first bring all their plans to naught. As Jesus spoke of the “white washed tomb,” so the psalmist compares the wicked with the stench that comes out of the grave. Their words filled with lies, destruction and treachery, betray their wickedness.

Second the psalmist prays God would bring destruction upon them. He notes, as his support for this request, that underlying all their sin is the fact they are in rebellion against the Lord.

It is the rebellious nature of mankind that demonstrates how we can see individuals who are “upright” by society’s standards, but still meet the definition of wicked from God’s perspective. There are many individuals carrying out “good” works, claiming to follow the Lord but their motivation is self-righteousness, which is nothing more than rebellion against God’s righteousness, against God Himself.

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<sup>4</sup> Maclaren, Alexander, The Psalms, A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1901, p. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Leupold., p. 77.

The psalmist closes with the confidence of the righteous man before a loving God. It is God who is the source of his security and protection. It should be noted his righteousness comes from his choice to follow God and is therefore imputed by God to him, for none of us have any righteousness in and of ourselves. Because we have chosen to follow after the Lord, then with the psalmist, we too can have confidence in the care and protection that the Lord provides to His own.

**V Conclusion:** Now there are three points I want to take from this passage.

- A. The first is God is a just and righteous God. Accordingly, we can approach Him regarding all that concerns us because He is also loving and merciful.
- B. Second, while God is just, and does hate all unrighteousness, as His followers in the Church Age, it would be inappropriate for us to pray God would bring down judgment on the wicked as we observe the psalmist praying.
- C. Finally, we can rejoice in the security available to us through our prayer life. The greatest gift we have, next to our salvation, is direct access to the God who holds all things in His hands.

Based on these factors we need to be in prayer for the concerns of our heart. Too often we feel guilty if we continually go to God regarding the same concerns. We sometimes are told this demonstrates a lack of faith. Maybe sometimes it does, but then again, if we are burdened by something, then we need to go to the Lord for relief. Prayer is to be a continuing work. As we struggle through the difficulties of our lives, then we need to depend on God and prayer is part of that process.

It isn't wrong for individuals to wrestle with the Lord over the question of the need for work, or spending time dealing with career directions. Take time to talk to the Lord about the pain of a marriage, or the fears in raising children. If I am to serve those to whom I've been called, then I must make them an ongoing issue in my prayer life, a task at which I often fall far short. King David is our example, for many of the prayers found in Psalms deal with the same battles and concerns, but he shows us the blessing, and comfort that comes from an ongoing relationship with the Lord.

The psalms themselves can serve as a basis of our own prayers, especially when we need help in our praise and worship of the Lord. Having said that, it should be noted that some of what is found is clearly not appropriate as a basis of prayer for us. As I pointed out at the beginning of the message, this is what is called an imprecatory psalm, that is a psalm in which a prayer is offered up to God, calling for His judgment and destruction on the unrighteous. As noted before there may also be a prophetic aspect to this call for judgment.

Anyway, we are of the Church, and therefore our responsibility isn't to pray for the working of God's judgment on the unrighteous. In fact to the contrary, we are called to pray for them and their salvation.

***“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:44-45).***

The day will come again where the saints of the Lord will plead for His judgment, but that day isn't today.

***“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who have been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (Revelation 7:9-10).***

Now David wasn't wrong in praying for God's judgment on his enemies, but we would be. Our concern is to be the healing of mankind. We are to strive to bring all to Him and to aid in their growth. This is the marching order of the church.

***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).***

Finally let's stop and remember just how greatly we are blessed, because each one of us, no matter how young, no matter how old, whether a new believer or a long-time one, we have access to the throne of God. I don't know about you, but I know for myself that I often take this for granted, and I need to resolve that I will continue to make the effort to go to God as frequently when things go well as I do when I'm under the gun.

There is so much joy available to us from an ongoing and continuous relationship with God through the work of prayer.

***“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name” (Psalm 100:1-4).***

**Final Comments:** Often it gets discouraging as we see the fallen world around us. I know that it gets to me when I see the pain of the lives of people with whom I come in contact. But wait! Remember our hope. The more we understand the nature of the world and its wickedness, the more we can rejoice in just what a loving Lord we have.

***“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).***

No matter how far man has fallen,, God is there offering the way back up out of the mire and into His arms. This is the message of joy and hope we have to offer to people around us. This is the true message of the Gospel.