

## Learning God in the Psalms: Psalms 5 – An Imprecatory Psalm

### INTRODUCTION:

1. The Psalms express some of the greatest emotion of any writings found in the Bible.
2. Within them we find the expression of love, joy, anger, fear, frustration, hatred [for the right things and reasons], hope, praise, etc.
3. These expressions of emotion, along with the various reasons for expressing them, allow us to categorize the Psalms, though not with the precision that all might like.
  - A. If you were to research the types of psalms, you might find as few as five main categories, with all the smaller types clumped together as the sixth category, or as many as fifteen or more categories, all depending on how one looks at them.
  - B. One often sees the main categories to be psalms of praise/thanksgiving, imprecatory/justice psalms, lamentation psalms, royal/enthronement psalms, and wisdom psalms.
4. Though these psalms are different in many ways, what they have in common is that within them the Holy Spirit allows us to see God and his nature.
- 5. And that is what I want to focus on today and in some future lessons, Lord willing—what we can learn about God from the different types of psalms.
- 6. For today's lesson I want to examine **Psalm 5**, a Davidic psalm, which is what we call an **imprecatory psalm**, or a psalm where one calls upon God for justice upon his enemies—the wicked of this world. I do this in hopes of learning about:
  - A. The heart of one who approaches God
  - B. What we can learn about God's relationship to the wicked and the righteous
  - C. God and David's cry for justice.

### BODY:

- **I. The heart of one who approaches God** (Psalm 5:1-3 – “Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my groaning. <sup>2</sup> Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray. <sup>3</sup> In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.”).
  - A. One who approaches God **believes** can hear and will listen—that He will “give ear” to one's words (5:1).
    1. That David asks God to *give ear to* and *consider* his *groanings* means that David:
      - a. Believed God can *look closely at*, *give attention to*, and *understand* his words and plight.
      - b. That David took his *groanings* to God for consideration means David brought to God his *complaints*, sighing, or his *meditations*—it can have any of these meanings.
      - c. That begs the question: “Do I truly want God looking closely at my *complaints* about life or my *meditations*—what I think about?”
    2. One who can truly approach God is one who is **open to God approaching them**—open to His inspection of their heart, words, and actions.
  - B. One who approaches God believes **He is the sole answer** for life and its daily challenges (5:2).
    1. David wants God's ear because he *depends completely on God*—it is *God he prays to*.
      - a. This is only natural because David was rightly petitioning **his King and His God** [*Elohim*, the Creator God and Lord of all – Gen. 1:1].
      - b. Here you have *a king* (with all his resources) bowing before *the King*, realizing that God is the one with the power to provide the answers!
    2. When I truly understand who God is in my life—that He is *my King* and *my Creator God*—to who else would I look to for answers? There is no other on whom I can hope or depend!
  - C. Believes God is the foundation for **daily life**—that God is the means of facing one's day (5:3a).
    1. David emphasizes that God would hear his voice *in the morning*, his ordered prayer *in the morning*. He dared not face the day without God's help! Do we?
    2. That David presented his voice in the morning as an *ordered prayer* to God is significant.
      - a. To *order* his prayer means he “set it in a row, arranged it” before he approached God.

- b. In other words, David's prayers were not casually given, not an afterthought, or ritual, but well-arranged thoughts offered to God for His inspection and response!
  - c. I believe we would have a greater appreciation for prayer and its power if we all gave thought and arranged our praise, requests, complaints, etc., before coming to God.
- D. Believes God will answer. And he will *eagerly watch* for God's answer (5:3b).
  - 1. To watch means to "to lean forward, to peer into the distance; await."
  - 2. When David approached God, he did so with complete faith that God would answer Him.
  - 3. This has always been the proper attitude for those who seek God's hand in their lives (Jas. 1:5-8 – "But if any of you lacks wisdom, **let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**" <sup>6</sup> But **he must ask in faith** without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> **For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,** <sup>8</sup> being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.").
  - 4. So, those who can approach God knows Him to be the God who can hear and will listen, who is the sole answer for their life and its daily challenges, and who will answer their prayers.
- II. **God and the wicked** (5:4-6 – "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You. <sup>5</sup> The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. <sup>6</sup> You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.").
- A. To bring his complaint to God, David's expresses and praises God's righteous attitude and actions toward evil!
  - 1. I want you to note the progression of God's righteous response to evil, beginning with how He *takes no pleasure in* evil (5:4) to His *hatred* of sinful ways (5:5) to the ultimate end of *His wrath being poured out* in destruction of the wicked (5:6)!
  - 2. Like David, we must understand that God has no love for or connection with evil (1 Jn. 1:5-6 – "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.").
- B. Note how David specifically acknowledges God's attitude and actions toward evil. That He...
  - 1. Takes no pleasure in wickedness and no evil dwells with Him (5:4).
    - a. God has no delight in, no favor for, wickedness of any kind.
    - b. This is why one cannot hope to dwell, to find hospitable shelter, with God and do evil.
  - 2. Removes the boastful from before Him and hates those who do iniquity (5:5).
    - a. The **boastful** are the *arrogant*.
      - i. They are those who *make a show* and are often seen as *shining lights* in this world.
      - ii. Yet, nothing they *claim for themselves* or that is *perceived of them* by others holds sway in God's presence—they cannot and will not stand before Him.
    - b. For, God **hates** those who do iniquity, unrighteousness, injustice—they are His enemy and will be treated as such.
  - 3. Destroys the liar and abhors the violent and deceitful (5:6).
    - a. God **destroys**, demolishes, breaks, causes to perish **those who tell lies**...period.
    - b. He **abhors**, loathes, detests, despises **bloodthirsty** and **deceitful** men.
- C. **The point:** To know God (who He is) is to know His severe and unbending hatred of sin.
  - 1. I know this is not a popular view of God today. But, no matter how Satan and the world spins it, sin finds no favor in His sight. He hates and abhors it and those who persist in it! He does not give them grace, but bring his wrath upon them instead.
  - 2. So, because God our Father hates and abhors sin, so must we as His children, which means taking it eternally serious in our lives and in the world and lives of people around us.
- III. **God and the righteous** (5:7-8 – "But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, at Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You. <sup>8</sup> O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes; make Your way straight before me.").

- A. David, **who is seeking God's justice against his evil enemies**, knows he is only able to approach God because of God's *abundant lovingkindness* (5:7).
  1. David knew that no one could stand before God's righteous scrutiny by their own merit.
    - a. Psa. 130:3 – "If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"
    - b. Psa. 143:2 – "And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous."
    - c. Thus, that sinful people can enter God's house, of which Christians are members today (1 Tim. 3:15), is truly a wonder of God's mercy and grace.
  2. So, David rightfully states that his approach to God in worship would always be given in *reverence*, or *fear*, before His King and God.
    - a. David knew that for a perfectly holy God to allow him, an imperfect sinner, to enter His house and receive worship and praise from him is nothing short of a miracle!
    - b. People today need to learn this same truth that they might know to worship God in reverence, in fear, as well.
    - c. Too many think they are approaching God in worship today when they are worshipping themselves, bringing to God what they want, not what God has revealed that He wants.
- B. Knowing God's abhorrence of the wicked, David sought God's guidance in the way of righteousness (5:8).
  1. David knew that God saves those who follow His righteous way—that what distinguished one receiving God's lovingkindness and one receiving His wrath was *how one lived*!
  2. That is something all who approach God must learn—that the difference between salvation and condemnation, between hope and hopelessness, is *following God's way*.
    - a. I am not denying the necessity of God's abundant lovingkindness in our salvation—David mentioned that above.
    - b. But David also understood by his knowledge of God that he must seek do what is right if he hoped to stand before God!
  3. When we truly grasp this, our daily prayer will be, as was David's, an earnest appeal to God for His guidance in the way of righteousness that God might be for, not against us.
- **IV. God and David's cry for justice and grace (5:9-12).**
  - A. David cries for **justice** (5:9-10 – "There is nothing reliable in what they say; their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. <sup>10</sup> Hold them guilty, O God; by their own devices let them fall! In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out, for they are rebellious against You."").
    1. David begins by calling on God's scrutiny of His enemies (5:9).
      - a. David presents to God how their ways, their characteristics, are the very things God hates, abhors, and destroys (5:4-6). Do so in our prayers would remind us as well!
      - b. Note how their wickedness encompassed their whole being!
        - i. There is nothing reliable, nothing firm, only lies come from their **mouth**.
        - ii. Their **innermost self** is destruction, ruin, and corruption.
        - iii. Their **throat** is a wide-open grave—a place of death waiting for its occupants!
        - iv. They **flatter** with their **tongue**, making their words smooth, deceitfully masking their intent of instability, ruin, and death!
    2. Because God's righteousness and glory are being opposed by their actions, David seeks God's just punishment against them (5:10). He seeks for God to:
      - a. **Hold them guilty**, as the righteous Judge of all, exposing their wickedness before all.
      - b. **Bring about their downfall** through their **own devices**, collapsing their schemes, their intrigue, against the righteous down upon them.
      - c. **Thrust them out**, expelling them from His presence for the multitude of their transgressions, not because they have harmed David, but because they are **rebellious** against God!

- B. Next, David cries for the righteous (5:11-12 – “But let all who take refuge in You be glad, Let them ever sing for joy; and may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in You.”<sup>12</sup> For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor as with a shield.”).
  - 1. David seeks God’s favor for all who choose to take refuge in Him (5:11).
    - a. He seeks God’s gladness and joy, knowing God abundantly supplies this for those who flee to Him for refuge.
    - b. He seeks God’s shelter, a covering of protection, for those who love God’s name.
  - 2. Why?
    - a. That God might be praised, that they **might exult**, jump for joy, **in Him—in God!**
    - b. For, David knows that God is the answer—that it is God who blesses the righteous, surrounding them with His favor like a shield (5:12).
- C. From David’s cry we learn that:
  - 1. God is not opposed to His people calling for justice against the wicked who oppose us.
    - a. I know our culture rejects this idea, but when we are motivated by how people’s sin oppose God’s glory and righteousness, it is right to ask this.
      - i. When Satan attacks the subjects of God’s kingdom, God’s people, Satan is attacking the king of that kingdom, or God Himself. And God takes that personally!
      - ii. It is like when Paul was persecuting the church and Jesus questioned him on his way to Damascus asking, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4)!
    - b. Yet, we should know that it is foolhardy to seek God’s justice while living a morally reckless life oneself—to seek God’s justice on others in hypocrisy.
  - 2. God actively differentiates between the wicked and the righteous.
    - a. He brings **justice** on the wicked—a guilty verdict, bringing condemnation on them by their own deeds, casting them out of His presence.
      - i. David knew when he asked this that no man, including himself, can claim righteousness on his own.
      - ii. Yet, he also knew that those who persist in evil scheming against God’s people and rebellion against God must not escape his righteous justice.
    - b. God gives **grace** to the righteous—showing abundant lovingkindness and favor, showering them with blessings and being their shield against evil.
    - c. So, in the end with God it will always be like the proverb says (Proverbs 29:6 – “By transgression an evil man is ensnared, but the righteous sings and rejoices.”)

#### CONCLUSION:

1. I hope I have dealt with this psalm in the proper fashion to give you some valuable insights into, or maybe valuable reminders of, God’s nature and character.
2. For, our God is like no other. His hatred for evil and justice against the wicked, as well as His purity and love for righteousness and the righteous, are unrivaled and show Him to be worthy of our awe, faith, love, and devotion.
3. So, where do you find yourself in this Psalm—on God’s side as one who is actively seeking to be righteous—or as His enemy because you refuse to submit to His will, repent, and be saved?
4. This is so important because the greatest expression of God’s love, which was shown toward sinners and helps us understand His anger against those who persist in wickedness, is His willingness to send Jesus to die on the cross for all the world’s sin.
5. What will you do with God and Jesus today, right now, as we stand and sing?