

## Opening Words

The Bible uses strong words to describe God's attitude toward evil – The Lord hates, the Lord abhors, the Lord detests, the Lord destroys. They are not words we are accustomed to hearing today, but some people give themselves over so fully to evil that they become the objects of God's wrath. Let's learn more about this today.

## Psalm 5 Part 1

We live in a world where righteousness is opposed and wickedness is exalted in many places. The killing of unborn babies, the restriction on prayer and Bible reading in schools, homosexual marriages, the widespread approval on cohabiting before marriage. We could add other issues to this list and it is not our purpose to throw stones at others for their failures especially because the Church itself needs cleansing and renewal. The Church must be an example and a holy people, to shine light in the darkness that is around us. But I make this statement as a reality check and as a reminder that we live in a world where righteousness is opposed and wickedness is exalted.

This is the kind of world in which King David lived. He was surrounded and challenged by wickedness, and he often wrote about it. Such is the case with Psalm 5 which we will look at today. We have shared with you frequently how the psalms give expression to every human emotion – from joy to despair, from blessing to sorrow. It is a rich storehouse of human experience to observe as we live with our emotions. I hope you will use these psalms to help you find expression of your heart to God. No matter what you are going through – whether you are having great times and can thank God for them or grieving over loss and need solace – there is something in this book for you.

Psalm 5 is a psalm where David was feeling surrounded by enemies. He was a victim of the violence, deceit, and lies of others. Let's see what he wrote about his experiences. Listen and see if there is anything in here that you can identify with.

Listen to my words, LORD,  
consider my lament.  
<sup>2</sup>Hear my cry for help,  
my King and my God,  
for to you I pray.  
<sup>3</sup>In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;  
in the morning I lay my requests before you  
and wait expectantly.  
<sup>4</sup>For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness;  
with you, evil people are not welcome.  
<sup>5</sup>The arrogant cannot stand  
in your presence.  
You hate all who do wrong;  
<sup>6</sup> you destroy those who tell lies.  
The bloodthirsty and deceitful

you, LORD, detest.  
7 But I, by your great love,  
can come into your house;  
in reverence I bow down  
toward your holy temple.  
8 Lead me, LORD, in your righteousness  
because of my enemies—  
make your way straight before me.  
9 Not a word from their mouth can be trusted;  
their heart is filled with malice.  
Their throat is an open grave;  
with their tongues they tell lies.  
10 Declare them guilty, O God!  
Let their intrigues be their downfall.  
Banish them for their many sins,  
for they have rebelled against you.  
11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad;  
let them ever sing for joy.  
Spread your protection over them,  
that those who love your name may rejoice in you.  
12 Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous;  
you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

What words of desperation! What words of emotion calling out to God! I wonder, can any of you see yourselves in this psalm? Four themes will emerge as we look at it closely. We see an appeal to God for help. We see a description of the wicked. We see the judgment of God upon the wicked, and we see the blessing that comes to God's people.

The psalmist begins with a cry for help. He calls his cry a lamentation, or, in some translations, a groaning. These are not the words of a theologian or a poet composing spiritual theories. These are the reflections of a man who has passed through difficult times and who is seeking God. His prayer is a priority. He says in verse 3 that God will hear his prayer in the morning and he also says that he will wait expectantly for God's answer. This is not a one-way conversation. He expects God will answer him and lead him.

We find in the opening words a clue why David was confident in approaching God and was confident God would answer. In verse 2 he calls God his king. This is David's affirmation of the sovereignty of God. He lived, as we do, in a world of competing claims. He lived in a world where men were defying the kingship of God and setting up their own kingdoms in defiance of God. But David said, "My king is Yahweh. My king is the eternal God who is the creator of all." David showed his faith in the present reign of God and in the future consummation of God's reign that would restore paradise to earth – a day that would see the cessation of all competing voices.

This is the perspective we need as we face our struggles and as we face competing claims against our God. It is our God who is king over all. We must walk by faith that he is king now and that he will perfectly manifest his kingdom in the future. Only faith in the sovereignty of God will strengthen us to call upon him when we are surrounded by enemies.

From this point, this psalm gives us a picture of what God is like and a picture of what wickedness is like. David tells us four things about God.

1. In verse 4, God is not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness. Evil is not welcome in his presence.
2. In verse 5 we learn that God hates all those who give themselves over completely to iniquity and he will not let any boastful person stand in his presence. We are reminded of Psalm 1 where the writer says that the wicked will not stand in the judgment. The righteous will stand, but the proud will fall.
3. In verse 6 we see that God destroys those who give themselves to the lies of idolatry,
4. Finally, also in verse 6, we learn that God detests or abhors those who are bloodthirsty and deceitful.

These are strong words – the Lord hates, the Lord abhors, the Lord detests, the Lord destroys. They are not words that we hear today. We like to focus on the love and kindness of God, and how grateful we are for his everlasting love, but some people give themselves over so fully to evil that they become the objects of God's wrath.

I recently finished a book by a Christian and his wife who ministered for many years in one of the most difficult places on the planet – Somalia. That country in the 1990s disintegrated and its people suffered unimaginably as the result of the kind of men David was describing – bloodthirsty, boastful, wicked, deceitful men.

He tells the story of the leaders of one of the warring clans in this country. They were living like kings. They were feasting sumptuously every day. And they would throw the carcasses of dead animals that they had butchered for their meals over the walls of their compound where starving children with bloated bellies would wait, hoping to get a piece of raw meat to put into their mouths to sustain life for another day.

The author asked one of the fighters in one of the clans why he was fighting and without any expression on his face the fighter said, "I fight because it is Thursday. Tomorrow is Friday and we stop fighting because we pray in the mosque. Saturday, we fight again." That was his answer. It is almost as if he had forgotten why he was fighting. He was a bloodthirsty man, a wicked man. These were the kind of men that surrounded David. These are the kind of men who still exist in many places of our world.

David used seven words to describe them: wicked, evil, boastful, doers of iniquity, liars, bloodthirsty, and deceitful. And in these descriptions, we find an interesting phrase. In the original Hebrew, David says that no evil sojourns with God. No evil such as this can make its home with God. What a contrast this is with Psalm 15 where David describes the kind of person who does dwell with God. Listen to these words.

LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent?  
Who may live on your holy mountain?  
<sup>2</sup>The one whose walk is blameless,  
who does what is righteous,  
who speaks the truth from their heart;  
<sup>3</sup>whose tongue utters no slander,  
who does no wrong to a neighbor,  
and casts no slur on others;  
<sup>4</sup>who despises a vile person  
but honors those who fear the LORD;  
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,  
and does not change their mind;  
<sup>5</sup>who lends money to the poor without interest;  
who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.  
Whoever does these things  
will never be shaken.

What a contrast! Can you see it? Instead of a deceiver we see one who speaks truth from his heart, that is, he is not just saying words but he really means it. Instead of someone doing evil we see someone doing righteousness. Instead of someone being bloodthirsty we see someone who does no wrong to a neighbor. Instead of someone being boastful we see someone whose walk is blameless. He isn't bragging about it. He is living his life before God seeking to please him. This is the kind of person who dwells with God, but the other kind of person, the person we see in Psalm 5 is the one that God will never let dwell with him. No evil lives with God.

Friends, this is what should motivate us to pray. The condition of this sinful world should motivate us to pray and the fact that our God is sovereign should motivate us to pray.

I want to point out one more thing about prayer. The Hebrew text in verse 1 begins with the phrase, "my words." It ends with the phrase "my groaning," or, "my lamentation." And right in the middle of the psalm is the name of God, Yahweh. Friends, in all our praying, in all our crying, in all our groaning and lamentation, let's make sure that all of it has God in the center. Let's make sure that all of it is God-directed. He will hear and he will act.