

PSALMS

Chapter 5

Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. ² Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. ³ O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. ⁴ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. ⁵ The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. ⁶ You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. ⁷ But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you. ⁸ Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. ⁹ For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. ¹⁰ Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you. ¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. ¹² For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

Ps 5 This morning prayer, perhaps offered at the time of the morning sacrifice, is the psalmist's cry for help when his enemies spread malicious lies to destroy him. (CSB)

Psalm 5 is a morning prayer like Psalm 4. Only in this case the psalmist faced a different threat – people were lying maliciously about him. His consolation was that he was not separated from the sanctuary but was still able to enter the sanctuary and bow before God in the holy place. His prayer for help, then, is based on the strong conviction that God is bound to defend the righteous because he is a righteous God; and yet, when contrasting himself with the wicked, he does not list his righteous acts but declares that God's loyal love has made him acceptable to God. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

The reality of life on earth frustrates the full joy of the godly. Fears swell up in our hearts as we contemplate the harshness of life. This psalm is full of encouragement to those suffer adversity and is, appropriately called a “morning prayer.” The Christian had boldness through the Savior to approach God (Heb. 10:19) and to make personal needs known to the heavenly Father in the name of the Son. (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Psalm 5 is a psalm of prayer against false teachers and the rebellious spirits. It harshly condemns both their glistening teaching and their works, by which – under the name of God – they do great harm to the pure Word of God and true worship of God. The psalm prays for the righteous, that is, for the pure Word of God and the pure worship of God. In the last verse it promises that such a prayer will be heard and the rebellious spirits will be condemned.

This psalm belongs to the Second and Third Commandments, in which we are commanded to keep both God's name and God's Word holy. It belongs to the first and Second Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, in which we pray that God's name, honor, and kingdom will be advanced. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

This psalm may also be from the time of Absalom's rebellion when David's enemies spread vicious lies to discredit him. The first half of the psalm declares that the godly have access to the Lord in prayer, but the wicked are excluded from his presence. (PBC)

Format: Vv 1–3, prayer and sacrifice; vv 4–6, God's hate; vv 7–8, God's love; vv 9–10, prayer against enemies; vv 11–12, bless the righteous. (TLSB)

5:1–3 Initial appeal to be heard. (CSB)

Because we are God's children through faith in Christ Jesus, we can come before him with all boldness and confidence as dear children come to their loving father. God's gospel tells us God loves sinners. (PBC)

This initial plea is marked by a certain sense of urgency, which is in the spirit of the reminder that "the effective fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." (Leupold)

5:1-2 The first two verses form a strong appeal for God to hear the prayer; the psalmist asks God to "give ear" and "pay attention" to his cry for help, "consider" his sighing, and "pay attention" to his cry for help. The piling up of appeals strengthens the urgency of the petition. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:1 The lament is an expression of a great need felt by the psalmist. He expresses himself with audible sounds, whether they be words or groan. In his state of mind he does not think about the formalities of prayer, because he knows that the Lord hears both the inner thoughts (in the form of "sighing" for the moment of redemption) and the audible prayers. The "words" and the "sighings" (groanings) reveal his need and come to the Lord's ear as a "cry for help." The "sighing" is a nonverbal expression of need. (cf. Ps. 39:3; Rom. 8:26). (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

5:2 *King*. King David acknowledges Yahweh as King of kings. (TLSB)

In addressing the Lord as his King and his God, the psalmist is acknowledging that the Lord is the supreme judge and administrator of all of all his affairs, and because his King is the Lord God in heaven, he is also sovereign over the whole earth. "King" is appropriate as a title for God (see Ps. 68:24), because the "government" is a theocracy. If this psalm was in fact written by the king, then the earthly king is appealing to the divine King for help – the monarchy was under the theocracy. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:3 *in the morning* – As soon as the dawn breaks, his first task shall be to offer up his prayers. (Leupold)

Prayer is the most important part of the day. In other words, the day will start, be filled, and end with prayer. (TLSB)

With the dawning of each new day, prayer is renewed, with the hope that the Lord will soon respond. The "morning" is symbolic of a renewal of God's acts of love (Lam. 3:23). The change for darkness to light brings with it the association of renewed hope. In the early morning hours (Pss. 55:17; 88:14; 92:2) the psalmist sought the Lord (his covenantal God) in prayer because he knew that Yahweh would not forsake him. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Lay my requests – The word used to express this though is borrowed from the terminology of sacrifice, having as its object such things as the wood of offerings or the offerings themselves. (Leupold)

Expectation – ESV has “watch.” Wait in expectation. (TLSB)

And after the morning prayer he will then watch for the answer. The verb “I will wait in expectation” can be used with the sense of waiting for revelation (see Hab. 2:1). The petitioner will keep vigil, waiting for answer to his prayer; like a watchman. Isaiah 21:5 and Micah 7:4 are the OT background for watching and praying. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:4–6 An appeal to the righteousness of God’s rule over mankind. (CSB)

5:4 *not a God who delights in wickedness.* Deeply ingrained in Israel’s belief system and developed in her Wisdom literature is the conviction that the God of Israel hates evil in every form. (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

evil may not dwell with you. There is not any part of the way of wickedness that God tolerates. Evil cannot even lodge temporarily in God’s presence. It cannot be God’s guest, for that would entitle evil to God’s care and protection. Evil is not welcome in God’s house. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:5 *The arrogant.* Those who refuse to live in humble reliance on the Lord. They arrogantly try to make their way in the world either as a law to themselves (see, e.g., v. 18; 10:2–11; 73:6; 94:2–7; Dt 8:14; Isa 2:17; Eze 28:2, 5; Hos 13:6) or by relying on false gods (see Jer 13:9–10). Hence “the proud” is often equivalent to “the wicked.” (CSB)

The “arrogant” people are vain boasters, arrogant fools (s.v. Ps. 33:1). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

It must be noted that all the thoughts that are expressed in reference to the wicked are not as yet prayers spoken against them but primarily an expression of confidence that the Lord will deal with all such after a given pattern, and that one and the same lot awaits them all. (Leupold)

Stand – Because they exalt themselves independently of God and therefore over God, they cannot take up any place in his presence. This verb could be taken to refer to “standing” in the judgment (as in Ps. 1:5–6), or to a decision in court, or to the court in the service of the king; however, it could refer to standing before the Lord (as in Ps. 2:2; here “in your sight”). Where the Lord makes his presence known, these fools cannot stand their ground or retain their position. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Hate – Chemnitz: “God hates sin and is exceedingly angry not only at the original fall into sin but at our actual sins.... It cannot be said that God is the will which causes anyone to sin” (*LTh* 1:191, 218). If God did not hate evil, His love would not be holy and just. Melancthon: “He has poured out His great wrath against sin upon His Son who was put to death for us and paid our penalty. By the intercession of this payment we are received” (Chem, *LTh* 2:657). (TLSB)

If God “hates” them, it means that he rejects them completely because they are incompatible with his holy and righteous nature. These ideas are amplified in verse 6, which parallels the order of verse 5. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:6 *speaks lies* – The evil that the psalmist was confronted with took the form of lying. “Lying” is paralleled with deceit. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Abhors – The verb “abhors” is related to the well-known noun “abomination (s.v. Ps. 14:1), which describes that which is totally abhorrent to God – off-limits, taboo, so if the psalmist was being endangered by people God abhorred, he could feel more confident in his prayer. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Bloodthirsty – Literally “men of blood, the plural of “blood,” indicates that they shed blood. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:7–8 The psalmist presents his plea to the Lord in humble reverence (v. 7), trusting in the Lord’s great mercy (v. 7) and righteousness (v. 8). (CSB)

5:7 *steadfast love*. The Hebrew for this phrase denotes befriending. Appeal to God’s “(unfailing) love, kindness, mercy” is frequent in the OT since it summarizes all that the Lord covenanted to show to Israel (see Dt 7:9, 12) as well as to David and his dynasty. (CSB)

The psalmist has by faith entered into covenant with the Lord, and because of the Lord’s loyal love for his people, he has access into the sanctuary (“your house” // “your holy temple,” where evil-doers cannot stand). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Holy temple – The tabernacle or the heavenly temple, where God and human beings will dwell together. The great temple of Jerusalem was built by Solomon after his father David’s death. (TLSB)

5:8 *Lead me*. As a shepherd (see 23:3). (CSB)

The verb “lead me” is used in Psalm 23:3 of the divine shepherd, and of the Lord in Psalm 31:3. The guidance he desire is centered in the righteousness of God (Ps. 1:5). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

righteousness. Very often the “righteousness” of God in the Psalms (and frequently elsewhere in the OT) refers to the faithfulness with which he acts. This faithfulness is in full accordance with his commitments (both expressed and implied) to his people and with his status as the divine King—to whom the powerless may look for protection, the oppressed for redress and the needy for help. (CSB)

In the Bible this righteousness is identified with God’s character, for he is righteous, but it also refers to the righteousness that he gives to those who believe (see Gen. 15:6 and Rom. 3:21, 22, 25). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

make straight your way. May the way down which you lead me be straight, level and smooth, free from obstacles and temptations. The psalmist prays that God will so direct him that his enemies will have no grounds for their malicious accusations (see 25:4; 27:11; 139:24; 143:8–10). (CSB)

To offer protection and guidance on the path of life. (TLSB)

God’s own have this confidence in him, that they are always being led along a path of God’s choosing and not without plan or purpose. But so fully is God in control of every situation that

he not only is the one that determines the road that is to be taken but is capable also of making it that road – life’s pathway – level or straight if it would seem that the going is about to be somewhat difficult. (Leupold)

This imperative (s.v. Ps. 67:4) is a request that the direction be free from hinderances and temptations, that the way be straight and plain. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:9–10 Accusation (a common element in the prayers of the Psalter) and call for redress. (CSB)

5:9 *word from their mouth.* The most frequent weapon used against the psalmists is the tongue. (CSB)

There is nothing trustworthy in their mouth. The word “trustworthy” (from s.v. Ps. 93:1) means that nothing they say is firm or settled – it cannot be counted on or trusted. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

curses. † Many ancient Near Eastern peoples thought that by pronouncing curses on someone they could bring down the power of the gods (or other mysterious powers) on that person. They had a large conventional stock of such curses. (CSB)

lies. Slander and false testimony for malicious purposes (see, e.g., 1Ki 21:8–15).]. The psalmists experienced that the tongue is as deadly as the sword (see 57:4; 64:3–4). Perhaps appeals to God against those who maliciously wield the tongue are frequent in the Psalms because only in God’s courtroom can a person experience redress for such attacks. (CSB)

heart. In Biblical language the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action—“the wellspring of life.” (CSB)

Their heart is destruction, that is, their desired plan is to destroy the righteous in one way or another, no matter what they say. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

One’s physical and emotional core. (TLSB)

throat ... grave. For the imagery of death (or the grave) as an insatiable monster feeding on its victims. (CSB)

Devoid of life. (TLSB)

Their “throat” means their speech; and the metaphor “open grave” means that what they say leaves death and ruined lives in their wake. That the grave is open speaks of the swiftness of the destruction and the efficiency of getting rid of those destroyed (as in the efficiency of battle with no time for decent burial; see Jer. 5:16). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

they speak deceit. For the plots and intrigues of enemies, usually involving lies to discredit the king and bring him down, see Ps 17; 25; 27–28; 31; 35; 41; 52; 54–57; 59; 63–64; 71; 86; 109; 140–141—all ascribed to David. Frequently such attacks came when the king was “low” and seemingly abandoned by God (as in Ps 25; 35; 41; 71; 86; 109). In that case he was viewed as no longer fit to be king—God was no longer with him (and so he could no longer secure the safety of the nation; see 1Sa 8:20; 11:12; 12:12; 25:28; 2Sa 3:18; 7:9–11). In any event, he was an easy prey (see 3:2; 22:7–8; 71:11). See also Paul’s use of this verse in Ro 3:13. (CSB)

The verb has the idea of smoothing something over to conceal it (see Ps. 36:3 and Prov. 29:5; it is used of words in Ps. 55:22). It certainly is the equivalent of lying, but it is done in such a way as to give the false impression of trustworthiness or truthfulness. Then in the unfolding of the event, the true intent is revealed, and it is malicious. It takes divine guidance to avoid the snares of such crafty and dangerous enemies. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:10 The presence of so-called “imprecations” (curses) in the Psalms has occasioned endless discussion and has caused many Christians to wince, in view of Jesus’ instructions to turn the other cheek and to pray for one’s enemies (see Mt 5:39, 44), and his own example on the cross (see Lk 23:34). Actually, these “imprecations” are not that at all; rather, they are appeals to God to redress wrongs perpetrated against the psalmists by imposing penalties commensurate with the violence done (see 28:4)—in accordance also with normal judicial procedure in human courts (see Dt 25:1–3). The psalmists knew that he who has been wronged is not to right that wrong by his own hand but is to leave redress to the Lord, who says, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay” (Dt 32:35; see Pr 20:22; Ro 12:19). Therefore they appeal their cases to the divine Judge (see Jer 15:15). (CSB)

Banish them. From God’s presence, thus from the source of blessing and life (see Ge 3:23). (CSB)

God will not leave their sins unpunished if they do not repent. (PBC)

rebelled against you. By their attacks on the psalmist. (CSB)

This prayer is not merely a personal vendetta; the wicked are the psalmist’s enemies because they were first God’s enemies – thus “against you” in the text (see Ps. 139:19-22). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

5:11 The psalmist expands his prayer to include all the godly. A common feature in the prayers of the Psalter is a concluding expression of confidence that the prayer will be or has been heard (as in 6:8–10; 7:10–17; 10:16–18; 12:7; 13:5–6 and often elsewhere. (CSB)

Rejoice...sing for joy – The prayer is that these will “rejoice” (s.v. Ps. 48:1) and “shout for joy” (give a ringing cry; s.v. Ps. 33:1). (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

spread Your protection. “He daily preserves and defends us against all evil and misfortune” (LC II 17). (TLSB)

your name. The name of the Lord is the manifestation of his character (see notes on Ex 3:14–15 [**3:14** *I AM WHO I AM*. The name by which God wished to be known and worshiped in Israel—the name that expressed his character as the dependable and faithful God who desires the full trust of his people (see v. 12, where “I will be” is completed by “with you”; see also 34:5–7). *I AM*. The shortened form of the name is perhaps found also in Ps 50:21 (see NIV text note there). Jesus applied the phrase to himself; in so doing he claimed to be God and risked being stoned for blasphemy (see Jn 8:58–59). (CSB)

His name, made known through His deeds and Word, evokes love and causes joy. (TLSB)

Note from 3:15 *The LORD.* The Hebrew for this name is *Yahweh* (often incorrectly spelled “Jehovah”; see note on Dt 28:58). It means “He is” or “He will be” and is the third-person form of the verb translated “I will be” in v. 12 and “I AM” in v. 14. When God speaks of himself he

says, “I AM,” and when we speak of him we say, “He is.”]; 34:6–7). It has no separate existence apart from the Lord, but is synonymous with the Lord himself in his gracious manifestation and accessibility to his people. Hence the Jerusalem temple is the earthly residence of his name among his people (see 74:7; Dt 12:5, 11; 2Sa 7:13), and his people can pray to him by calling on his name (see 79:6; 80:18; 99:6; 105:1; 116:4, 13, 17). The name of the Lord protects (see 20:1; Pr 18:10); the Lord saves by his name (see 54:1); and his saving acts testify that his name is near (see 52:9). Accordingly, the godly “trust in” his name (20:7; 33:21), hope in his name (see 52:9), “sing praise” to his name (7:17; 9:2; 18:49) and “rejoice in” his name (89:16). Both the “love” and the “fear” that belong alone to God are similarly directed toward his name (love: 69:36; 119:132; fear: 61:5; 86:11; 102:15). (CSB)

5:12 The psalmists stood before God, the royal King, as his servants responsible for the well-being of his people. (CSB)

righteous. One of several terms in the OT for God’s people; it presents them as justified or declared righteous and hence living rightly. In every human relationship they faithfully fulfill the obligations that the relationship entails, remembering that power and authority (of whatever sort: domestic, social, political, economic, religious, intellectual) are to be used to bless, not to exploit. (CSB)

shield – The shield would be a large shield for the whole body (see 1 Sam. 17:7), harmonizing with verb, “to surround.” The simile, drawing on military terms (see also Ps. 91:4), emphasizes the often-expressed idea that God protects his people. God’s favor (s.v. Ps. 30:50, meaning the favorable dealings God has for his people, forms a protective shield around them so the malicious designs of the wicked deceivers will not ruin the people of God. and this favor, according to Psalm 30:5, lasts a lifetime. (A Commentary on the Psalms – Ross)

Ps 5 Boasting and deceit inevitably lead to destruction. David’s petition reveals that God leads us out of such sins and covers us with His favor. God declares us righteous and thus covers us with His favor through faith in Christ’s atoning sacrifice for all of our sins. • Keep us ever mindful of this great gift of righteousness by faith alone, O Lord. Through Word and Sacrament, cover us and remind us of Your constant and protective favor. Amen. (TLSB)