



Title: Story and Song – Psalm 5

Text: Psalm 5

Date: July 10, 2022

Main Idea: As we cry out to Our King, God, we can trust that He hears us and covers us with His favor.

Personal Study Guide

READ ENTIRE TEXTS: PSALM 5

Highlight – What stands out?

1. What active words are mentioned in this text?

2. What is the setting or occasion of this text? What words help you understand the tone of this psalm?

3. Did you read any words, phrases, or ideas that were familiar to you? Any that were unfamiliar to you?

4. Did these passages remind you of any other passages you have read or studied before? Write those down.

5. Is there a verse, phrase, or idea that stood out to you, convicted you, or spoke to your life experience? Write that down.

6. Do you notice any contrasting ideas or groups of people in this psalm?

Explain – What does this mean?

*Note: These introductory notes to the psalms will help as you study these first 8 psalms this summer.

The psalms can generally be divided into 3 categories:

God	King David	Wicked	Righteous (“those who take refuge in you”)

3. In Psalm 5, King David reveals the essence of prayer and specific actions of prayer. Using his words, answer these questions:

- What is prayer?

- When should we pray? Why? Where?

- What emotions are involved in prayer? How does God respond to prayer?

4. Read these verses for affirmation and elaboration on King David’s understanding and practice of prayer. How do they help explain prayer and its purpose?

- Psalm 19:14

- 2 Sam. 7:18-29

- Psalm 51
- 1 Chron. 29:10-20

Apply – How does this change me?

1. In verse 2 King David addresses God with 2 titles, my King and my God. What is significant about the separation or delineation of these for him? Consider your own views and worship of God. Is God your King? How does your life show this to be true? Is He your God, your only God? How does your moment by moment living reflect this?
2. Psalm 4 ends with King David praying as he goes to sleep at night (4:8). In Psalm 5 King David cries out to his King and God in the morning (5:3). What is the last thing you think of at night? What is your bedtime routine? What is the first thing you think of in the morning when you wake up? What is your morning routine?
3. In verses 11-12 King David portrays God as actively being the source of joy and protection for those who "take refuge" in Him. As a child you may have sung a church song, "His Banner over me is Love" taken from the Song of Solomon 2:4 (written by King David's son). The image of covering and spreading over is repeated in the Psalms and throughout the Old and New Testaments (see Psalm 91:4, Ruth 2:12 for examples). The image is of branches or wings which denotes nurturing and is one Jesus uses to describe his feelings for the people in Jerusalem in Matt. 23:26. How has God been a safe place for you? How has he "covered you with favor as a shield"?

4. Look back at the table in the Explain section. How does this compare and contrast help give perspective to what David is experiencing? How does it help give perspective to what you experience when suffering and evil is all around you?

Respond – What’s my next step?

1. The Psalms are considered the song books of the Jewish people and central to their corporate worship, the “mini-Bible” according to Martin Luther, and the words/book of Bible “that Jesus quoted most”, according to Tim Keller. How could you use the gift of the book of Psalms in your personal worship or relationship with God?

2. Psalm 5 has 5 stanzas or declarations that center around specific pronouns:
 0. You (God) and me in verses 1-3
 1. You (God) in verses 4-6
 2. I in verses 7-8
 3. They (wicked) in verses 9-10
 4. They (righteous) in verses 11-12

Using this same format, write a personal prayer to God one morning this week and say it or sing it aloud to Him in a time of worship.

3. Some scholars believe King David wrote this prayer/song in the wilderness while he was running from his son, Absalom, who was

seeking his life and throne. Read King David's request in 2 Sam. 18:5. What or who are you lamenting, groaning, or crying over right now? How can you turn this sorrow or pain to God and 'watch' (verse 1-3)?

4. Take time this week to "cover" your family and class members using verses 11-12 as your prayer.

Commentary: Taken from “The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life” by Dale Ralph Davis

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PRAYER TUTORIAL

PSALM 5

For the music leader. To nehiloth. A psalm of David.

- 1 Give ear to my words, O Yahweh,
understand my murmuring.
- 2 Pay attention to the voice of my cry for help,
my King and my God,
for it is to **you** that I pray.
- 3 O Yahweh, in the morning you will hear my voice,
in the morning I will set in order (my requests) to you
and watch expectantly.
- 4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil can never be a guest of yours.
- 5 Arrogant men will never hold their ground in your presence;
you hate all evildoers.
- 6 You cause those who speak lies to perish;
Yahweh detests bloodthirsty and deceitful men.
- 7 But **I**, in your overflowing and faithful love.
will enter your house;
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.
- 8 Yahweh, lead me in your righteousness
because of those lurking for me;
make your way straight before me.
- 9 For there is nothing reliable in their mouths,
their heart is destruction,
their throat is an open grave;
with their tongues they speak smooth talk.
- 10 Hold them guilty, O God!
Let them fall because of their schemes;
banish them for their many rebellious deeds,
for they have revolted against you.
- 11 But let all who take refuge in you rejoice,
let them shout for joy forever;

and may you be their shelter,
and may those who love your name exult in you!
12 For **you** will bless the righteous one, Yahweh;
you will wrap him round with favor like a shield.

Moody Stuart once asked John ('Rabbi') Duncan to preach for him. Rabbi Duncan replied, 'I'll be glad to preach, if you'll take the prayers; I'm not able to pray at present, but I can preach a bit, and would like it.' We may be unsure how to take Rabbi Duncan. He assumed preaching was easier than praying (I think he's right). I don't know what was behind his 'not (being) able to pray.' But his attitude is far ahead of one that assumes all one needs is a reservoir of pious lingo and turns of phrase. The best posture for praying is to realize that we need help for praying. We begin prayer by praying, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1), and mature believers find themselves praying that petition again and again. And I have a suspicion that in the Holy Spirit's filing cabinet there is a folder marked 'instruction in prayer' and inside, among others, is a copy of Psalm 5. In this psalm David teaches us how to pray when we are in dangerous and lousy circumstances. In his own prayer he models prayer for us and provides us with a prayer tutorial, so that, as he himself prays, he seems to leave behind directions for our prayers. Let's look at these.

Prepare your prayer

First he says: prepare your prayer (vv. 1–3). Note that David does not pray to a distant stranger. He is speaking to Yahweh, 'my King and my God' (v. 2). Yahweh is the redeeming God who is there for his people (Exod. 3:1–15) and he has brought David into a personal bond with himself. On this basis prayer can begin.

Note how he describes his prayer. It consists of spoken words ('my words,' 1a) but also of broken words ('my murmuring,' 1b). 'Murmuring' may mean groaning or sighing; in Psalm 39:3 it seems to indicate a disturbed sort of 'musing' that is non-verbal. The murmuring here may be like that—distraught concerns that cannot be formulated in words—and he asks Yahweh to 'understand' it! As if he already knows a Romans 8:26 kind of God! And he comes with desperate words, for he speaks of 'the voice of my cry for help' (2a). His prayer is not calm and sedate but is driven by the urgency of his dangerous situation.

Yet for all this tension he comes with prepared words: 'in the morning I will set in order my requests.' The verb means to set out in order, to arrange, to set in rows. It is used in Leviticus 1:7–8, of the priests arranging the wood on the altar fire and arranging the chunks of the sacrificial animal on the altar; it is used of arranging the showbread in two rows of six loaves each on the tabernacle table (Lev. 24:8). It's an orderly verb! It does not have an explicit object here in verse 3, but I think David is thinking of his prayer, his requests. The priests may be setting the morning sacrifice in order but David is getting together and ordering his prayer. He is *preparing* his prayer.

We find too little of this in the church. We don't order our prayers; we simply start in with our religious rattling and easy Christian clichés. 'We just want to thank you, Lord; we're just really glad to be here; we ask you, Lord, to just give us a really good time in your presence; just help us to worship you in Spirit and in truth [How many ponder what that means in John 4? Has it perhaps become an empty phrase that simply makes excellent 'filler'?] tonight and we'll be careful to give you all the honor

and glory ... blah, blah, blah.' Then if we need to pad the prayer or to boost its 'earnestness,' we can always insert 'Father' or 'Lord' every third or fourth word—go ahead; surely God's not too interested in our keeping the third commandment anymore. I suppose some might call this 'free prayer.' It's certainly free, I doubt if it's prayer. Sometimes we may need to revert to using the written prayers of others to get back on track. Like praying the psalms themselves as our prayers. Or using the *Book of Common Prayer* (gulp for some) or the Puritan prayers collected in *The Valley of Vision* or chunks out of Matthew Henry's *Method for Prayer*. There is a difference between prayer and drivel. I do not want to advocate eloquence in prayer, but I want to reject thoughtlessness in prayer. 'In the morning I will set in order my requests to you.' Prepare your prayer.

Know your God

David seems to give a second direction: know your God (vv. 4–6). Be sure to note the connection in the first of verse 4, 'For you are not ...' The NIV exasperatingly omits the 'For.' But it is important. These verses are giving the reason or supplying the basis for David's expectancy in verses 1–3. Why is David watching expectantly (3c)? Because ('For,' 4a) he knows what God is like; he knows his character.

But what a character God is! He is not a God who delights in wickedness (4a); evil can never be a house guest of God's (4b); arrogant men will not stand in his presence (5a). Well, yes; that's probably the way we want a holy God to be. But it gets more surprising; at least David seems a bit shocking to a sentimentalized twenty-first century mind-set: Yahweh hates all evildoers; will cause those who speak lies to perish; and detests bloodthirsty and deceitful men (5b–6). No tame God here! How vigorous God is in his righteousness! Verses 5b and 6b sort of blow up the myth about God 'hating sin yet loving the sinner.' He does not hate the evil done but evildoers (5b); he doesn't detest merely bloodthirsty deeds but bloodthirsty men (6b). What holy, praise-worthy hatred! You do not pray to a bland blob. Yahweh has a certain *character*. And because David knows that character, knows what Yahweh loves and what he hates, he has real hope that he will come to his rescue.

How does this instruct us in our prayers? For one thing, it infects our prayers with praise. Look back over these verses (i.e., vv. 4–6). David is declaring Yahweh's character but, in doing that, he is at the same time praising Yahweh for the way he is. Sometimes I like to have our congregation begin a worship service with a confession of faith—like Article One of the *Belgic Confession*:

We all believe with the heart
and confess with the mouth
that there is only one God,
who is a simple and spiritual Being;
he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable,
infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good,
and the overflowing fountain of all good.

Now you may think you are *only* confessing your faith with those words. But of course that is not the case. You *are* confessing your faith but you are also oozing into praise. You can't say those words and mean them without at the same time declaring both

your belief and praising the God you believe in. That is the way in David's prayer: he rehearses Yahweh's character and in so doing he 'slips' into praise!

Then there is another bit of instruction: we must know what God is like before (or as) we pray. The character of God is the basis and springboard of our prayer. Some years ago while I was serving in academia I remember how a faculty associate was to meet with an administrator to argue his case about making certain changes in a departmental academic program. He was a bit worried that this administrator would be a 'tough nut to crack.' The faculty member, however, knew of an autobiographical memoir the administrator had written. So he got himself a copy of it and read it. He wanted to know everything he could about this administrative 'animal' so that he could press his case to the greatest possible advantage. And that is the case in prayer. Because Yahweh is the sort of God he is (vv. 4–6), David can make particular kinds of petitions (for example, vv. 10–11). After all, why should you pray for some of the world's governments or leaders to be overthrown unless you know that your God hates oppression? Why pray for suffering Christians in hostile environments to be delivered unless you know a God who has said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people'? Know your God.

Make your request

Thirdly, the time comes to make your request (vv. 7–9). David prepares to make his request (1) on the basis of grace, 7a; and (2) in an attitude of reverence, 7b.

The pronoun ('But I ...') in 7a is emphatic. David has just testified that Yahweh hates evildoers and detests bloodthirsty and deceitful men (vv. 5–6), so we might expect him to contrast his own superior resume and morality. But there is nothing of the kind. 'But I ...,' he says, can enter your house only by 'your overflowing and faithful love' (lit., 'in the abundance of your unfailing love'). David does not come on the basis of his religiosity or his deserts but only by grace.

And he comes by fear. 'I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you' (7b). What a combination we have here (as in all quality worship). In 7a we meet the welcome, friendship, and acceptance grace extends, and yet 7b reflects the majesty, kingship, and trembling that fear knows. Glad welcome and trembling reverence together. This reminds me of Andrew Bonar's story about the Grecian painter who had produced a remarkable painting of a boy carrying a basket of grapes on his head. It was so true to life, so realistic, that when the painting was displayed in the Forum, the birds pecked the grapes, thinking they were real. His friends praised the painter, but he was displeased. 'I should have done a great deal more. I should have painted the boy so true to life that the birds would not have dared to come near!' In short, he should have attracted them and repelled them all at one blow. So here; David is both lured by grace yet sobered by fear—just the right packaging for worship!

Now for the petition. It is the primary petition—and we get half-way into the psalm before we get to it. 'Yahweh, lead me in your righteousness because of those lurking for me; make your way straight before me' (v. 8). His danger—'those lurking for me'—clearly drives his prayer; these enemies are bent on his destruction and will use deceit, even with its honey and sugar, to get it done (v. 9). So, he prays, 'lead me in your righteousness.'

But what does that mean? I take him to mean in this context 'the righteousness that you require of me,' the 'right way you want me to go.' In the next line he speaks

of 'your way,' apparently a way of conduct he is to follow. Perhaps there's a subtle implication that, in this mess, walking in righteousness is even more critical than walking in safety. In any case, in view of the danger and deceit of his enemies, he needs to see the next step, the clear way in the muck of his circumstances, one that pleases Yahweh.

It's a simple and brief petition. One might say that its New Testament equivalent is Matthew 6:13 ('Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one'). Sometimes we may not be fully aware of all the details—not know all the particular dangers or various pitfalls, nor even the precautions required. Sometimes it looks like there are no roads in what's ahead of us. But we can pray verse 8. Here's a lovely young wife. A servant of Jesus. Cancer. One day at the surgery ward and all of life has tumbled in on this young couple. In the sadness and tears and what-must-we-do-nows, how can I pray for them? How can they themselves pray? What prayer makes more sense in such anguish than: 'Yahweh, lead me in your righteousness ... make your way straight before me'?

Declare your confidence

And then we might say that David's fourth direction would be: declare your confidence (vv. 10–12). He continues his prayer but gains confidence as he goes. Verses 10–11 contain his two-pronged petition: prayer *against* his and Yahweh's enemies in verse 10, and prayer *for* God's people, for their joy and protection, in verse 11. Would you pray as David does in verse 10? *Hold them guilty, O God! Let them fall because of their schemes; banish them for their many rebellious deeds.* Does it make you uneasy to pray like that? But you haven't any choice, for the petition of verse 11 cannot be answered unless that of verse 10 is answered; that is, God's people cannot enjoy security and safety (v. 11) unless—at some point—their enemies are taken out of the way (v. 10). What community can rest easy so long as a rampaging murderer-rapist has not been apprehended and punished? The New Testament carries the same testimony. Paul says to the battered Thessalonian saints that they will receive rest when—at Jesus' coming—God deals out affliction to those who are afflicting them (2 Thess. 1:6–7).

We may wish prayer could be all courtesy and finesse. If so, we've no business messing with the Psalms. Prayer must often have a hard edge about it, because it has to deal with evil. There's a *ruggedness* about true biblical piety. Why is the psalmist so ecstatic over Yahweh's coming to *judge the earth*? Because it means that at that time he will *put things right* ('he will judge the world with righteousness'); and only when that happens can the cosmic party begin (see Psalm 98:7–9).

In verse 12 David sets down the confident assurance on which his two-fold petition rests: 'For you will bless the righteous one, Yahweh; you will wrap him round with favor like a shield.' (This assurance is very similar to Psalm 1:6.) David does not know precisely when or how this will be done, but he knows who will see to it—the 'You' is emphatic; 'You will bless the righteous one.' This security extends to the individual ('righteous' is singular here, not plural) and is complete (the word for shield, *sinna*, refers not to the hand-held but large, body-sized shield) and close (Yahweh 'wraps him round'). Derek Kidner refers to the other occurrence of this verb I have translated 'wrap round.' It appears near the end of 1 Samuel 23 when Saul almost has his men hooked on David and his men. Saul on one side of a hill, David & Co. on the other side. David and his

men are hurrying to get away from Saul, and Saul and his men 'were closing in' on David and his men to nail them (v. 26). He had surrounded David, was ready to wrap him up. Oddly enough, just at that moment a breathless messenger caught up with Saul with the news of a Philistine invasion—Saul had to let David go and go himself to defend his country. Saul had been closing in, but Yahweh was closer. The enemy cannot wrap us up when Yahweh has already wrapped us round with his favor.

In his autobiography German theologian Helmut Thielicke tells an incident from his earlier school days, when about ten years of age. He and his classmates had taken an intense dislike to another lad in their class. Hans exuded a kind of lackadaisical attitude toward studies and yet, when asked a question in class, he could spout off everything one might know about the matter. For this and other quirks Hans earned the ire of Thielicke and his friends. Hence they decided that the whole bunch of them needed to give Hans a thrashing. But on the morning set for the ambush, a strange thing happened. Hans' father was walking with his son that day to school. His father was one of the most highly respected men in town. The 'gang' noticed what happened when Hans and his father parted in front of the school. They saw how Hans' father stroked his son's hair and patted his cheek as they parted; then, several times as they both began to go their separate ways, father and son would turn and wave at each other. Thielicke said that he and his cohorts were very touched by this scene. It was as if they came to a collective, if unstated, conclusion: 'Whoever was loved by such a father stood under a protective taboo and could not be molested.' They were gripped by an unexpressed awe. And so Hans was spared. One might say he was wrapped round with favor as a shield!

So David ends his prayer with the confidence that nothing can finally hurt the righteous, for Yahweh's favor will always surround him. But what are we to do in the meantime, when we are living in an arrogant, deceitful, lying world, facing one pitfall after another? Keep praying the prayer the Lord has taught us to pray: *Yahweh, lead me in your righteousness because of those lurking for me; make your way straight before me.*¹

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, [Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life: Psalms 1–12](#) (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 61–70.



Group Study Guide

*This lesson is for the Group Leader to use to teach the lesson and facilitate the discussion. It is not intended that you will use every question in this guide during your group time. You will likely only be able to cover 4-5 questions, depending on how discussion goes. This guide is longer than what you will need but provides the freedom and flexibility to pull questions out for discussion that will best serve your group time.

Tip: You may want to pull one question from each section for discussion or spend more time on a particular section than another on. It's totally up to your discretion.

Introduction

Icebreaker Question:

Can you think of a time in your life when you felt the covering or protection of God?

or

Can you share a time when you had a real enemy? How did you respond?

READ ENTIRE TEXT: PSALM 5

* Suggested answers are in red to help guide the Group Leader

Highlight – What stands out?

1. What active words are mentioned in this text?

Give ear
Give attention
Groaning
Crying
Hear
Sacrifice
Wickedness
Abhors/delights
Enter your house
Bow down
Lead me
Let them fall
Take refuge
Sing for joy
Spread your protection
Bless and cover

2. What is the setting or occasion of this text? What words help you understand the tone of this psalm?

There is distress and struggle.
David is under duress
Evil and righteousness are at odds

3. Did you read any words, phrases, or ideas that were familiar to you? Any that were unfamiliar to you?

Answers may vary

4. Did these passages remind you of any other passages you have read or studied before? Write those down.

Answers may vary

5. Is there a verse, phrase, or idea that stood out to you, convicted you, or spoke to your life experience? Write that down.

Answers may vary

6. Do you notice any contrasting ideas or groups of people in this psalm?

Evil and righteous

Destroy the evil/protect the righteous

Destruction/living/blessing

Explain – What does this mean?

*Note: These introductory notes to the psalms will help as you study these first 8 psalms this summer.

The psalms can generally be divided into 3 categories:

- Orientation: Telling you what life is supposed to be like
- Disorientation: Telling you what life is like

- Reorientation: Telling you what life will be like after deliverance (future or present)

There are also different genres of psalms:

- Lament – the life that is struggling
- Thanksgiving – the life that is delivered
- Praise/Hymn – the life that is content

1. Based on these explanations above, what kind of psalm is this one? How would you explain your answer?

Lament – it's a cry of suffering out to God

Note: This would be a good small group activity of 2-3 people. If your Group is larger you could break into smaller groups and then come back together with your answers.

2. In this psalm written to be sung possibly to flutes or wind instruments, King David is declaring allegiance to his King, God, while crying out “in the morning” his lament because of his enemies. Like the previous 4 Psalms in Book 1, he continues comparing and contrasting the wicked and the righteous. But in this Psalm, King David is much more personal (“My King and my God”) as he adds his own descriptions of God’s character and actions along with his personal commitments and requests. Using the table below, write down terms and descriptions for God, King David, the wicked and the righteous.

God	King David	Wicked	Righteous (“those who take refuge in you”)

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3. In Psalm 5, King David reveals the essence of prayer and specific actions of prayer. Using his words, answer these questions:

- What is prayer?

Crying out to God

Going to God with our complaints

- When should we pray? Why? Where?

Whenever and as often as we want

In the morning and in the evening

- What emotions are involved in prayer? How does God respond to prayer?

Struggle, sorrow, fear, confusion

He answers us and delivers us

Note: This would be a good smaller group activity. Each group could read the verses. Or you could ask Group members to read the verses to encourage Group participation.

Read these verses for affirmation and elaboration on King David's understanding and practice of prayer. How do they help explain prayer and its purpose?

- Psalm 19:14
- 2 Sam. 7:18-29
- Psalm 51
- 1 Chron. 29:10-20

Apply – How does this change me?

1. In verse 2 King David addresses God with 2 titles, my King and my God. What is significant about the separation or delineation of these for him? Consider your own views and worship of God. Is God your King? How does your life show this to be true? Is He your God, your only God? How does your moment by moment living reflect this?

2. Psalm 4 ends with King David praying as he goes to sleep at night (4:8). In Psalm 5 King David cries out to his King and God in the morning (5:3). What is the last thing you think of at night? What is your bedtime routine? What is the first thing you think of in the morning when you wake up? What is your morning routine?
3. In verses 11-12 King David portrays God as actively being the source of joy and protection for those who "take refuge" in Him. As a child you may have sung a church song, "His Banner over me is Love" taken from the Song of Solomon 2:4 (written by King David's son). The image of covering and spreading over is repeated in the Psalms and throughout the Old and New Testaments (see Psalm 91:4, Ruth 2:12 for examples). The image is of branches or wings which denotes nurturing and is one Jesus uses to describe his feelings for the people in Jerusalem in Matt. 23:26. How has God been a safe place for you? How has he "covered you with favor as a shield"?
4. Look back at the table in the Explain section. How does this compare and contrast help give perspective to what David is experiencing? How does it help give perspective to what you experience when suffering and evil is all around you?

Respond – What's my next step?

1. The Psalms are considered the song books of the Jewish people and central to their corporate worship, the "mini-Bible" according to Martin Luther, and the words/book of Bible "that Jesus quoted most", according to Tim Keller. How could you use the gift of the book of Psalms in your personal worship or relationship with God?
2. Psalm 5 has 5 stanzas or declarations that center around specific pronouns:
 5. You (God) and me in verses 1-3
 6. You (God) in verses 4-6
 7. I in verses 7-8
 8. They (wicked) in verses 9-10
 9. They (righteous) in verses 11-12

3. Some scholars believe King David wrote this prayer/song in the wilderness while he was running from his son, Absalom, who was seeking his life and throne. Read King David's request in 2 Sam. 18:5. What or who are you lamenting, groaning, or crying over right now? How can you turn this sorrow or pain to God and 'watch' (verse 1-3)?

4. Take time this week to "cover" your family and class members using verses 11-12 as your prayer. Maybe even break into smaller groups to pray these verses over each other.

Additional Resources:

Podcast + Extra Resources: [Help Me Teach The Bible: Mark Futato on the Psalms](#)

Video: [Psalms Overview: The Bible Project](#)

Sermon: [Personal Prayer by Tim Keller](#)

Book: Buy and use the book: *The Songs of Jesus: A year of Daily Devotionals in the Psalms* by Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller.

Song: [Poor Bishop Hooper on Psalm 5](#)

Extra Commentary from Mark Futato on Psalm 5

◆ E. Psalm 5

NOTES

5: TITLE *flute*. The word *nekhiloth* [5155, 5704] occurs only here, and "flute(s)," while not certain, is likely the sense. (See Kraus 1988:27 for a more detailed discussion.)

5:1 groaning. The Hebrew term (*hagig* [1901, 2052]) is used elsewhere only in 39:3 [4], where it refers to inaudible “thought” (so NLT), but in this context the term probably refers to audible groans (so DCH 488).

5:2 my King and my God. The exact expression occurs elsewhere only in 84:3 [4], but “my king” is used with “God” also in 44:4 [5]; 68:24 [25]; and 74:12. In 3:3, God is a “shield,” a royal image; in Pss 3 and 4 the psalmist is looking to the divine king for protection.

5:3 Listen. An imperfect from *shamaʿ* [8085, 9048] used as an imperative (Joüon and Muraoka 1991:§113m), which echoes “hear” in 4:1 (Brennan 1980:27).

I bring my requests to you. Lit., “I arrange before you,” with no expressed object for the verb. Possible objects include: sacrifice (Lev 1:8, 12; Weiser 1962:125), words (Job 32:14; Craigie 1983:86), and case/charges (Job 13:18; 23:4; Ps 50:21; Dahood 1965:30). Words/requests is supported by 4:1–2.

5:4 take no pleasure. As the righteous “delight” (*khepets* [2656, 2914]) in the Lord’s instruction (1:2), so the Lord does not “take pleasure” (*khapets* [2655, 2913]) in the wicked.

5:5 may not stand in your presence. This verb in the Hithpael (*yatsab* [3320, 3656], “take one’s stand”) is used elsewhere for assembling in the presence of God (Josh 24:1; 1 Sam 10:19; see Kraus 1988:155); see also 1:5.

you hate all who do evil. This is contrary to the popular oversimplification that God hates the sin but loves the sinner (see also 11:5).

5:6 You will destroy. The verb is the Piel of *ʿabad* [6, 6], the root used in 1:6 (“destruction”) and 2:12 (“destroyed”).

those who tell lies. The word for “lies” (*kazab* [3577, 3942]) is also found in 4:2 [3], and serves to connect the two psalms.

5:7 unfailing love. The Heb. *khesed* [2617, 2876] is related to “the godly” (*khasid* [2623A, 2883]) in 4:3 [4]. The NLT leaves *rob* [7230, 8044] (abundance of) untranslated. The “abundance of” the Lord’s unfailing love contrasts with the “abundance of” (*rob*; 5:10 [11]) the sins of the “many” (*rabbim* [7227, 8041]; 3:2 [3] and 4:6 [7]) who rebel against him.

your house ... your Temple. Kraus (1988:154) argues that the use of *bayith* [1004, 1074] (house) proves that the title’s attribution of the psalm to David is spurious. But in Josh 6:24 and 2 Sam 12:20 (where David is on the scene) the Tabernacle is called *beth-yhwh* [1004/3068, 1074/3378]. See also 1 Sam 1:9, 2:22, and 3:3, where God’s dwelling at Shiloh is variously called *hekal* [1964, 2121] (temple) and *ʾohel* [168, 185] (tent); see Delitzsch 1982:124.

worship at your Temple. Lit., “bow down toward your holy Temple.” The “holy Temple” was located on the “holy mountain.” For prostrating oneself in prayer in the direction of the Temple, see 138:2, 1 Kgs 8:35, 38, 42, and Dan 6:10.

5:8 the right path. This is the “path of the godly” (1:6) in contrast to the “path of the wicked” (1:6; 2:12).

my enemies. This expression is used 5 times in the Psalms: 5:8 [9], 27:11; 54:5 [7]; 56:2 [3]; 59:10 [11].

5:10 O God, declare them guilty. This request contrasts with “O God who declares me innocent” in 4:1.

5:11 all who take refuge in you. This echoes the final blessing of 2:12.

Spread your protection over them. This is Hiphil of *sakak* [5526, 6114] (cover) and evokes the refuge metaphor; see 31:20 [21] for *sukkah* [5521, 6109] as “refuge, shelter.”

5:12 For you ... O LORD. This is the characteristic formula of lament, as in 4:8 [9] (Brennan 1980:27).

shield. Heb. *tsinnah* [6793A, 7558], which is a large body shield, as opposed to the small shield of 3:3 [4] (see Keel n).

love. Heb. *ratson* [7522, 8356] is used in the Psalms in the sense of desire or what pleases someone (see 145:16, 19) or “the pleasure that God takes in someone and makes clear through blessing” (HALOT 3.1283; see 30:5 [6], 7 [8]). Here the latter sense is intended. The English word “favor” has the same two senses: “friendly regard” (as in “I am the object of his favor”) and “act of kindness,” (as in, “Would you do me a favor?”).

COMMENTARY

At the end of Psalm 4, David lay down in peace to sleep, and Psalm 5 is a prayer offered in the morning that follows. Psalm 5 is a bifid, which is comprised of a twofold prayer (5:1–7 [2–8] and 5:8–12 [9–13]), the structure of the second half mirroring that of the first. Each prayer is comprised of a request to the Lord (5:1–2a and 5:8; note the “O LORD” in the first line of each stanza), followed by reasons for the request (5:2b–7 and 5:9–12). Each reason is bifurcated into a shorter reason (5:2b–3 and 5:12; both introduced with *ki* [3588, 3954]) and a longer reason (5:4–7 and 5:9–11; both introduced with *ki*), the longer reasons containing a contrast between the wicked (5:4–6 and 5:9–10) and the righteous (5:7 and 5:11). Thus the structure:

PRAYER (5:1–7)

Request (5:1–2a)

PRAYER (5:8–12)

Request (5:8)

Reasons (5:2b–7)

Reasons (5:9–12)

Shorter reason (5:2b–3)

Longer reason (5:9–11)

Longer reason (5:4–7)

Shorter reason (5:12)

The request is quite general in 5:1–2a: “hear,” “pay attention,” “listen.” And it is offered to “my King and my God,” the human king articulating his dependence on the divine king who rules in heaven (2:4). The request becomes more specific in 5:8—“lead me,” “make your way plain.” The psalmist is asking the Lord for instruction (see 1:2) in the face of continuing opposition from “enemies” (see 3:1; 4:2; 5:8).

The bulk of the psalm is taken up with reasons as to why the Lord should answer the prayer. The first reason is short and simple: “for I pray to no one but you” (5:2). Prayer to the Lord denotes dependence on the Lord’s answers. While praying, the psalmist waits expectantly (5:3). For what? The fourth reason, also short and simple, provides some detail: The king is waiting for the Lord to “bless the godly ... surround[ing] them with [his] shield of love” (5:12). The appeal is to the truth that the divine king characteristically grants protection to those under his sovereign rule (1:6; 2:12; 3:3; 4:8)—i.e., the human king and his followers.

The second reason is longer: God detests sin and sinners, so they have no access to his beneficent presence. By way of contrast, the godly have access to the presence of God through his “unfailing love” (5:7). The verbal sins of 5:6 are amplified in the third, also longer, reason (5:9–11): The “enemies cannot speak a truthful word,” “their talk is foul,” and “their tongues are filled with flattery,” all with “deepest desire ... to destroy others” (5:9). In 5:10 imperatives replace the indicatives of 5:4–6, as the rebellion is not simply against the king and his followers but against God himself. The rebellion is verbal in particular, as has been the case in the previous psalms (2:3; 3:2; 4:2). By way of contrast, those who take refuge in the divine king use their mouths to “sing joyful praises forever” (5:11).

The opposition experienced by David was not unique but was owing to sinful human nature, so Paul can quote 5:9 [10] as true of people in all times and places (Rom 3:13). Jesus, however, is the exception. When Jesus’ enemies told lies about him (e.g., Matt 26:57–61), he did not respond in kind but entrusted himself to his Father’s protection, a protection which he experienced at his resurrection. So, too, we his followers can pray to our Father for protection and use our mouths to “sing joyful praises forever” (5:11),

knowing that the divine King will bless us and surround us with the shield of his love for Jesus' sake.²

² Mark D. Futato, [“The Book of Psalms,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 42–45.