

## Prayers

### To God

*Listen to what the Lord God promises you this day. Listen, and do not give up, keep the channels of communication open between you and your Saviour.*

### For myself

*What have you bought for yourself recently, perhaps as a little indulgence, or for yourself as opposed to others. Check out with the Lord whether you have acted wisely or rightly.*

### For others

Weekly theme: The press

Dear Jesus, You were caught up in the turmoil of politics in Your day, and You were killed because crowds were manipulated, politicians argued with religious authorities and popular feeling ran wild. May we who are Your followers trust Your wisdom and guidance each and every day, and stand against the fickle judgements of the world. May we be true advocates of peace and enlightenment in this Your world. AMEN

---

## Meditation

Jesus, fill the emptiness that comes to us unwanted,  
Be close when fear and dread descend upon the soul,

Be close when something done goes badly wrong,  
When saying prayers feels like groping in the dark:

Be close when envy overrules all better judgement,  
When sin's temptations rise as least expected:

Be close when trouble bruises all our friendships,  
When life contrives to compromise all faith and hope:

Be close when failure comes to haunt the memory:  
When everything that can be done will not suffice:

Jesus, fill the emptiness within by power from on high;  
Break the dread silence of the soul with greater love.

---

## Bible Passage

### ***Psalm 5***

For the director of music. For flutes. A psalm of David.

- <sup>1</sup> Give ear to my words, O LORD;  
give heed to my sighing.
- <sup>2</sup> Listen to the sound of my cry,  
my King and my God, for to you I pray.
- <sup>3</sup> O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;  
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.
- <sup>4</sup> For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;  
evil will not sojourn with you.
- <sup>5</sup> The boastful will not stand before your eyes;  
you hate all evildoers.
- <sup>6</sup> You destroy those who speak lies;  
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.
- <sup>7</sup> But I, through the abundance of Your steadfast love,  
will enter Your house,  
I will bow down toward your holy temple  
in awe of you.
- <sup>8</sup> Lead me, LORD, in Your righteousness because of my foes;  
make Your way straight before me.
- <sup>9</sup> For there is no truth in their mouths;  
their hearts are destruction;  
their throats are open graves;  
they flatter with their tongues.
- <sup>10</sup> Make them bear their guilt, O God;  
let them fall by their own counsels;  
because of their many transgressions cast them out,  
for they have rebelled against You.
- <sup>11</sup> But let all who take refuge in You rejoice;  
let them ever sing for joy.  
Spread Your protection over them,  
so that those who love Your name may exult in You.
- <sup>12</sup> For You bless the righteous, O LORD;  
You cover them with favour, as with a shield.

---

## Review

Psalm 5 describes a worshipper who prays to God about the evils to be found within the world. The superscription gives some enigmatic musical instructions which tell us that flutes were used in David's day! It also tells us that the psalm is from the collection '*of David*' (5:1), and could therefore be written by him. So in our study, we will speak of him as the author of the psalm and consider what the psalm might mean both to David and to people today.

In general, the psalm expresses the confidence of someone who is dedicated and committed to the Lord, something that certainly reminds us of the character of David. There are five stanzas to the psalm; the first (5:1-3), third (5:7,8) and fifth (5:11,12) stanzas describe David's faith and his approach to God and his trust in the Lord who is his saviour and protector. The second (5:4-6) and fourth (5:9,10) stanzas describe the godlessness of David's opponents in Israel, their destructive lives and their sin and guilt in general. But the psalm as a whole poses a sharp question to all who read it. Is this merely a description of the feelings and thoughts of someone who is holy and can deal with trouble in this way, or does it reflect our own relationship with God? Are we so committed in our relationship with God that we can pray this prayer and be confident in its promises? Do we rest in the eternal care and protection of God like David (5:11,12)?

Psalms 5 is best read as the words of David as he comes into God's presence to worship Him; but there is trouble in David's heart, as is obvious from the first line, in which he calls on the Lord to '*give heed to my sighing*' (5:1). In the opening stanza, David addresses the Lord with His holy name 'the Lord' (in Hebrew, 'JHWH'), and then as 'my king' and lastly, 'my God'. Now we think nothing today of using these names, but together, these ways of speaking to God are characteristic of the psalms, and also of the psalms of David. They speak of someone with a very clear and personal sense of faith, and this is one reason why they speak to people throughout the ages.

But what of the substance of the psalm? David has a burden on his heart and wants to bring this to the Lord in prayer (5:2), and in contrast to yesterday's psalm which refers to going to bed at night, psalm 5 contains this phrase, '*in the morning I plead my case to you*'; so this is clearly a morning prayer! The very last word of verse 3 is interesting, because here, David says that having come to the Lord with his concerns he is content to 'watch'. He will wait on God for the answers to his prayers. So David comes to the Lord first thing in the morning with a burden on his heart, and he is intent on listening to what God has to say about his problems and concerns. Psalm 5 is certainly a psalm we can relate to today!

Verses 4 to 6 begin to open up the reason for David's concern. He finds that there is evil all around him and he resents it; why should evil abound amongst the people he seeks to serve as king? You may say that these words speak of other people, not Israelites. But if you read the story of David, its major themes and events are set almost entirely amongst the Israelite people. David fights a long battle within more than one whole books of the Bible (in both 1 and 2 Samuel) to establish stability within Israel after the catastrophic reign of Saul. His concern is the same as ours today when we find wickedness (5:4) '*sojourning*' amongst God's people, when some put themselves before God and '*boast*' (5:5), '*speak lies*' (5:6) or are otherwise aggressive towards others (5:6). These things are surely not God's ways, and while we can understand that the world is full of them, they cannot be a characteristic of God's people or the way they live their lives, and it is the job of a leader to deal such issues and bring them to the Lord.

Yet David continues his psalm with worship (5:7,8). In words of classic praise, he proclaims God's '*abundant love*' and falls down before the Lord in worship (5:7). David speaks here of doing this '*in his house ... his holy temple*' (5:7), and you will recall that in David's day there was no 'Temple' built in Jerusalem. However, these same words were used in ancient times for the centre of worship found in the 'Tabernacle', the ancient tent of worship made by Moses and the people of Israel in the desert (Exodus 26f.) For Christians today, God's location is not important, for in Jesus Christ He is everywhere. It can nevertheless be important for us to demonstrate physically that we are worshipping God, whether by bowing down or in some other demonstrable way.

There is a second statement about evil in the next verses (5:9,10), which confirms its true nature (5:9,10). David holds nothing back from his description of the consequences of evil as he observes it within Israel; lying leads to destruction and delusion (5:9), and David calls

down God's curse on those who pollute Israel in this way (5:10). Now, some dislike the psalm because of the way it speaks of God rejecting people. However, we can never compromise the holiness and justice of God for the sake of our own sensibilities. The truth is that evil and sinfulness are unacceptable to God, and although He saves people from sin who turn to Him, those who wish to go their own way set themselves up for God's rejection. All this serves as a warning which should strengthen the resolve of the worshipper to stay away from evil.

The psalm ends with two verses of praise to God for His protection of all who turn to Him; '*You bless the righteous, O Lord, You cover them with favour ...*' (5:11). But here, we notice something interesting. At the beginning, David spoke in the first person, saying '*I pray*', '*I plead*', '*I bow down*' (5:2,3,7). But at the end, he focuses not on himself and his concerns but on a purer worship of God Himself; he addresses God directly saying, '*let all who take refuge in You rejoice ...*' (5:10,11). God is the source of his help and in this light, His people find their true moral compass and judgement. When we come to the Lord with problems, we too will find our solutions by worshipping Him and being immersed in His praise.

Psalms 5 ends with a verse calling on the Lord to bless '*the righteous*' (5:12), those people of God who remain loyal to Him through all life's problems. David calls on the Lord to protect His people and shield them from the worst of life's evils, and one person has taken action for all. The leader of God's people has done what is right to deal with a problem. He has begun to fight the spiritual battle by which God's people witness within the world to the love of God. God's people can learn much from psalm 5 but it is also an example of good and godly leadership.

---

## Discipleship

### ***Application***

#### ***Bringing problems to the Lord***

It is very easy to be overcome by problems. Indeed, if there is one way of measuring whether we have been overcome by them it is surely the measure of this psalm. For if we cannot place our problems before the Lord and trust Him with them, letting them go into His hands so that we can turn our attention to praising Him, then we have indeed become consumed by them.

Psalms 5 is at its best when it is used both by church leaders and by Christians in general as a prayer that can guide us into letting our problems go into God's hands. We can use the words of stanzas 1,3 and 5 as a guide to our devotions, and allow the stanzas 2 and 4 to either remind us of the evils we face in the world, or prompt us to elaborating the particular problems we face today. In this way, the psalm is used more creatively than merely reciting it, we take its godly meaning and use it for godly purposes, and that is no bad way to use Scripture.

#### ***Worshipping the Lord, and being 'real' and about it.***

We can easily forget that the right way to deal with problems is to bring them to God in prayer and in worship. Unfortunately many services of worship we go to today seem more like social occasions, not events where we meet with God to do business. In my view it is impossible to deal with evil in the community when people come to church on Sundays with a personal agenda to enjoy their worship and with a social agenda to meet others and converse. So if the Gospel is to be proclaimed and Satan is to be defeated, then we need to be ready for a complete change in our attitude to worship.

## ***Ideas for what to do***

- Pray for the community of God's people in your village, town or city, and pray that evil will be rooted out in your midst and destroyed by the grace of God. In this world, the enemy may well seek to return to do more damage, so we must not cease our determination to fight against it and be victorious in Christ's name.
- In prayer, ask the Lord to help you make godly discernments about the nature of evil around you in your national and community life. Let the Lord be your guide.

## ***Questions (for use in groups)***

1. What does this psalm teach us about how to deal with evil in our lives and also the life of the church community?
2. Which verses of this psalm speak most directly and effectively to a new Christian about how to deal with evil?
3. How we use our voices is important. How does the Lord God help us with controlling our voices so that we do not pass on evil?

---

## **Final Prayer**

This day, Lord God, is Your precious gift to each of us. Keep us from falling and fulfil Your purposes in us throughout our lives. Bring us to the end of each day rejoicing, and as Your disciples, may we be glad to be Your servant and praise You through all we do and say.  
AMEN

---