



God's Righteousness

Believers can live with hope knowing that God will always do what is right and just.

PSALM 5:1-12

Waking up in the morning and contemplating the day's challenges can be overwhelming, especially when yesterday's burdens are still a reality today. Psalm 5 is a morning prayer David prayed when he woke up with a heavy sigh and longed for God's help as he contemplated another day of contending with his enemies. He recognized he needed God's help for that day. David's prayer provides encouragement to believers as they wake up to similar mornings.

- ☐ What was your first thought when you woke up this morning?
Is it easy or difficult for you to acknowledge you need help?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PSALM 5

About one third of the psalms are laments. Some of these laments are expressed by or for the people of God (see Pss. 44; 74; 79), and others are the pleadings of an individual to God (see Pss. 3; 4; 7). Psalm 5 is an individual lament that was written by David. Whether they come from the community or from an individual, laments are prayers to God that arise out of a distressful situation. Often the trouble stems from the oppression of enemies as is the case in Psalm 5. The superscription of Psalm 3 indicates its context was when David fled from his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15-17). Given their similarities, it is possible that Psalms 3-7 should be understood within this context.


Psalm 5 consists of five short sections. The introductory section (vv. 1-3) comprises David’s invocation. The repetitive, parallel structure of this section stresses the seriousness of David’s situation.

In the second section (vv. 4-6), David appealed to God’s character. God is good, hates evil, and is opposed to the wicked. Therefore, David implored the Lord to defend him from the attacks of these wicked ones who were seeking to harm him.

Verses 7-8 demonstrate David’s faith in God. He experienced the abundance of the Lord’s faithful love, and he treasured his opportunities to go to the sanctuary and worship. Consequently, David worshiped the Lord and prayed that He would lead David in His righteousness.

Verses 9-10 compose the fourth section. Here David described his enemies and presented his requests to God concerning them. His reasons were not only for his sake but for the Lord’s sake also.

In the fifth and final section (vv. 11-12), David praised God for His faithfulness to bless and protect the righteous as they take refuge in Him.

 **As you read Psalm 5, identify what it reveals about God’s character.**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

THE SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (PS. 5:1-6)

¹ Listen to my words, LORD; consider my sighing. ² Pay attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for I pray to you. ³ In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you and watch expectantly. ⁴ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil cannot dwell with you. ⁵ The boastful cannot stand in your sight; you hate all evildoers. ⁶ You destroy those who tell lies; the LORD abhors violent and treacherous people.

VERSES 1-2

We can almost hear the desperation in David's voice as he cried out to the Lord in verses 1-2. The parallel phrases of ***consider my sighing*** and ***pay attention to the sound of my cry*** stress David's sense of urgency. In the Old Testament, when something is stated twice, it is the writer's way of expressing emphasis. When something is stated three times, it is superlative, the most emphatic way of describing something or communicating an extreme idea or situation. The parallelism in verses 1-2 demonstrates this. David's prayer begins with three parallel imperatives: ***listen***, ***consider***, and ***pay attention***. These three rapid imperatives, one right after another, also communicate the intensity with which David made his petition and the escalation of his anguish—from ***words*** to ***sighing*** to finally his ***cry*** for help.

God alone is sovereign over all earthly affairs.

David also used three different parallel expressions to address God: ***LORD***, ***my King***, and ***my God***. Taken together, these expressions highlight David's personal relationship with the Lord. Though a king, David knew he was under the Lord's authority. This earthly king was praying to the King of kings—his King. God alone is sovereign over all earthly affairs. Thus, David's intensity was balanced with submission, indicating that David's imperatives were not impertinent demands but reverent requests to his God. What David expressed in these first two verses laid the foundation for the remainder of his prayer. Every word demonstrates his deep reverence for God and his unwavering confidence in Him as he looked to the Lord during his desperate time of need.

VERSE 3

David's repetition of the phrase *in the morning* has more significance than simply informing readers what time of day it was when he prayed. It appears that his situation weighed so heavily on his mind that it was his first waking thought of the day. The phrase *plead my case* can refer to the idea of "setting in place or order" while preparing a sacrifice. This meaning is possible given David's description of his worship in verse 7. Even if this is what he meant, the heart of his request was that God would vindicate him as he faced his adversaries.

There are times in life when believers wake up in the morning feeling like the psalmist did. When we do, it is good to follow David's example. David communicated that out of all the things he could have done to try to deal with his problem, the first thing his heart and mind compelled him to do was take it to the Lord in prayer. He did so expectantly, knowing God would hear his voice and would answer his plea. As Jesus taught his disciples, He emphasized how important it is for believers to have faith in God and believe He will answer their prayers (Mark 11:22-24).

The foundation of David's petition was the character of God.

VERSES 4-5

The foundation of David's petition was the character of God. God is a good and loving God who cannot tolerate any form of malevolence. The Lord hates evil and is opposed to the wicked. The boasting of the wicked reveals they are full of pride.

David knew the truths about God concerning those who are arrogant, and his son Solomon later wrote them down. The Lord will tear down the object of their pride (Prov. 15:25), those who are proud are detestable to the Lord, and they will not go unpunished (16:5). Jesus taught that pride is one of the evil characteristics of those who are defiled before God (Mark 7:22). Though they try, the boastful cannot stand up in rebellion against God and survive, and they certainly will be unable to stand firm before God in the final judgment. God's hatred of *evildoers* means He rejects them and their ways, and He will ultimately punish them for their sins.

VERSE 6

David persisted in pleading his case by pointing out that God will ***destroy those who tell lies***. Solomon would later write that the Lord hates “a lying tongue,” and that “lying lips are detestable to the LORD” (Prov. 6:16-17; 12:22). Here, the word ***violent*** literally means “bloodthirsty.” This expression could refer to murderers in general, but in this context it is more likely referring to those who wrongfully cause the death of the innocent by giving false testimony. ***Treacherous people*** refers to those who fraudulently take advantage of others by dishonest gain. Apparently, David’s enemies were attempting to oust him and replace him illegitimately.

Each of these wicked descriptions of David’s enemies would fit within the context of Absalom’s attempt to seize David’s throne. Whatever the case, David demonstrated in verses 1-6 his desperation. He appealed to his good and just God to defend him from the attacks of these wicked ones who were seeking to harm him.



What were your first thoughts this morning? How do they compare with David’s first thoughts (v. 3)?

THE BENEFIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (PS. 5:7-10)

⁷ But I enter your house by the abundance of your faithful love; I bow down toward your holy temple in reverential awe of you. ⁸ LORD, lead me in your righteousness because of my adversaries; make your way straight before me. ⁹ For there is nothing reliable in what they say; destruction is within them; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongues. ¹⁰ Punish them, God; let them fall by their own schemes. Drive them out because of their many crimes, for they rebel against you.

VERSE 7

After having described the ways his wicked enemies sinned against God, it would have been easy for David to contrast himself to them by describing ways he had been faithful to the Lord. But he did not do this. Instead, he focused on the wonderful truth that God accepted him because of the ***abundance*** of His ***faithful love***. *Faithful love* is


a translation of the Hebrew word *hesed*. It refers to the Lord’s mercy, goodness, kindness, graciousness, compassion, and loyalty to His people (Ps. 69:13; 86:5,15; 106:45; Isa. 63:7). David did nothing to deserve God’s acceptance into His **house**. He was accepted by the Lord because of the *hesed* the Lord had shown him. As a result, David was compelled to **bow down** toward the Lord’s **holy temple in reverential awe** of Him. The words *house* and *temple* have led some to question that David wrote this psalm because David’s son, Solomon, built the temple after David died. However, when the tabernacle was at Shiloh, it was referred to by both these words before David was introduced into the biblical narrative (Josh. 6:24; 1 Sam. 1:9; 3:3; 2 Sam. 12:20).

KEY DOCTRINE: *Man*

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.
(See Romans 3:22-24; Ephesians 2:8-10.)

VERSE 8

In response to the grace the Lord had shown him, David desired to live righteously. Proper worship of God will always be accompanied by obedience. However, David recognized he needed the Lord to lead him in His **righteousness** because of his **adversaries**. In the face of adversity, people are prone to lose their way. David did not want this to happen to him. On the contrary, he wanted to live wisely in the face of his enemies. In the Old Testament, the **straight** way is the wise way (Prov. 3:5-6; 4:11). It is trusting in God’s guidance to know what is right and to do what is right at the right time and in the right way.

 **For what area of life do you currently need God’s guidance?**

VERSES 9-10

Verses 9-10 describe David’s enemies and what David asked God to do to them. David mentioned four characteristics of his enemies: (1) what they said was untrustworthy; (2) their goal was to destroy; (3) what they

said was meant to ruin others, and (4) they concealed their destructive intentions with words that falsely conveyed friendship and truth.

Additionally, David made three requests to God concerning these enemies: (1) declare their guilt; (2) let them be brought down by their own schemes; and (3) drive them away. We must note the reason David made these requests to God: **for they rebel against you**. Ultimately, their sin was not against David but against God, and it is this that truly validated David's requests.

How are New Testament believers to pray concerning their enemies? First, we must recognize who our true enemies are. The apostle Paul indicated that our ultimate struggle is against the devil and his forces (Eph. 6:12). Second, we must understand that people who are opposed to Christ and His Church are darkened in their understanding of the gospel "because of the hardness of their hearts" (4:18). They are blinded by Satan from "seeing the light of the gospel" (2 Cor. 4:4). Third, the Lord has instructed believers to pray for unbelievers (Matt. 5:44-48; Luke 6:27-38) and share the gospel with them so that their eyes will be opened. Jesus came for this purpose (Isa. 42:6-7; Acts 26:17-18). Given these things, we must trust God to do what is just.

Believers must recognize who their true enemies are.

GOD'S BLESSING ON THE RIGHTEOUSNESS (PS. 5:11-12)


¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them shout for joy forever. May you shelter them, and may those who love your name boast about you. ¹² For you, LORD, bless the righteous one; you surround him with favor like a shield.

VERSES 11-12

As David concluded this psalm, he exhorted everyone who loves the Lord to **rejoice**, to **shout for joy forever**, and to **boast about** Him. To love the Lord's **name** is to love Him, as His name represents who He is. Thus, those who love God will praise Him for what He has done and make Him known to others. David praised the Lord for His faithfulness to bless and protect those who take refuge in Him. The words **refuge**, **shelter**, **surround**, and **shield** emphasize this idea.

Taken together, these expressions denote warfare. *Refuge* refers to a safe place from enemies (Ps. 17:7; Isa. 30:2). *Shelter* refers to protection

by the covering or shielding of one’s head on the day of battle (Ps. 140:7). In the book of Job, Satan used this same word in Hebrew to complain about God’s protecting Job (Job 1:10). *Surround* describes enemies preparing to attack (1 Sam. 23:26), and a *shield* was carried by soldiers to protect them as they went into battle (1 Kings 10:16; Jer. 46:3). As believers today experience spiritual warfare, they can trust that God is holding nothing back to protect them from the evil one (Rom. 8:37). Because of this truth, they can join David in praising the Lord.

 **How did David’s view of the character of God affect his perspective of his circumstances?**

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare an Old Testament teaching to how it is expressed in the New Testament.*

In Psalm 5, David pleaded with God to help him in his time of distress. In the New Testament, we see people in distress coming to Jesus for help. Luke 8:40-56 is the account of two people who brought their troubles to Jesus. Read this passage, then consider the following questions: What caused their desperation? How did they turn to Jesus for help? What did Jesus do in response? What does this teach you to do with your despair? What does it teach you about Jesus’s response?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers can know for certain that God is fully righteous, and His acts will always be righteous.
- + The righteous enjoy God’s presence and depend on His guidance.
- + God will bless and protect the righteous.

○ **How does being a part of a Bible study group help you to recognize and experience God’s presence and guidance?**

○ **How can recognizing God’s loving and righteous character change the way you respond to life’s difficulties? How does it change the way you pray?**

○ **Memorize Psalm 5:12.**

Prayer Needs
