

The Multitude of Mercy

Psalm 5

All the psalms show us how to pray, but in Psalm 5 David marshals his words, makes the case why God should hear him, and declares his confidence He will. He cries to the Lord to both preserve him and to destroy his enemies (vv6, 8). Not only is this not an endorsement of personal vengeance, it's the antidote to all ungodly violence. David commits the psalm to the chief musician leading the strings so God's people would sing and shout with joy.

First Thing

David calls on God to give ear, consider, and heed his words, his meditation, and his cry (vv1-2). The word *meditation* occurs in verbal form in Psalm 1:2, and can also be translated *ponder* or *study*. This is intentional, thoughtful prayer. He's imperative, but it is his King and God that he calls on with due reverence (v2). God is the only one who can hear and deliver, so David wastes no time in bringing it to Him. When you come to God truly as He is, you really can come directly and boldly. He emphasizes that it is in the morning when God will hear his voice; in the morning he will direct/arrange his prayer (v3). The word *direct* is the same word used to describe what the priest does with the wood and animals on the altar, and the bread on the tables in the tabernacle (Lev. 1:7-8, 24:8). David is not praying "Lord, just help me, just do your will, just bless us." He lays out meaningful words, thoughtful meditation, and urgent cries. We are not to pray many words, but knowing we pray to God the Father Almighty, we ought to compose ourselves (Eccles. 5:2). He caps the first stanza: "And I will look up." If you actually say something to God, and if you believe He hears, then look up for His answer. What God-honoring faith to tell Him: "I'm looking for your answer." Similarly, at the end of his three-chapter prayer, Paul says "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us..." (Eph. 3:20). This is how David prays when he wakes up. We are made to sleep at night and rise in the morning with another day before us. You can wake up grumpy, anxious, scattered and ignorant of what you have received, or grateful, eager, and ready to seek your Maker. Will He hear you in the morning?

What God Hates

The reason David will look up is *because* God takes no pleasure in wickedness, and no evil can live with Him (v4). The boastful can't stand before Him, and He hates all the workers of iniquity (v5). He will destroy liars and abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man (v6). It's not the case that you can do evil at night and wake up expecting God to hear your prayers. David is praying against men who are doing evil, and the reason God is willing to listen to him and not them is because they are wicked. Don't make it more complicated than it is. If God hangs out with evil, listens to the proud and boastful, embraces the iniquitous, enables liars, and encourages murderers and deceivers, what kind of God is He? Not the true one, not the Triune God of Scripture. Because we are fallen and sinful we have a hard time remembering that God is God and we are not, that He is righteous and we are not. Apart from His grace we despise Him, and our deeds—some of them described here—require His anger and judgment. This is not "Old Testament" doctrine, as if Scripture can be broken (Jn. 10:35). It comes from the nature of God Himself who is searing holiness and goodness: "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn. 3:36). We get angry and call for justice to fall on the perpetrator when we see a video of a man being murdered. God sees every single

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person's wicked thoughts, words, and deeds, and His justice is coming. Those on the side of justice—His side—want it.

Multitudes

David is not like these men and he knows it, and yet he is not arrogant: “But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple” (v7). The difference between David and those whom God is against is a multitude of mercy. The fact that David doesn't sin like they do is part of God's mercy to him, but so is His forgiveness for all the sins David has committed and will commit. We can tell that God is working truly in David because of his humility: “Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face” (v8). If God does not lead him in the straight way, he knows he will be vulnerable to his enemies who are busily trying to bring him down. Verse 9 is quoted in Romans 3:13 where Paul applies it to Jews and Greeks, showing that all people are naturally estranged and guilty before God. He concludes: “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19). Outside of Christ men are treacherous, destructive, exhaling death, and full of flattery, so David calls on the Lord to declare their guilt, let them fall by their own counsels, and cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions (v10). David prayed God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, and He did (2 Sam. 15:31; 2 Sam. 17:14). David is calling on God to do something about the evil in the world instead of watching it grow and dominate. There are two multitudes in this passage: a multitude of mercy that ushers David into God's house, and a multitude of transgressions that cause God to cast the rebellious out (vv7, 10). The one who repents of his multitude of sins receives a multitude of mercy. The one who won't repent will not abide with the Lord. There are far too many Christians—a tragic multitude—who will not read this psalm honestly and understand the world in light of it. Absalom and his followers were circumcised, church-attending people. No doubt their compromises started small but then grew until they were persecuting the righteous. Still, they would not win. David tells those who put their trust in the Lord to rejoice and ever shout for joy because He defends them (v11). They're to rejoice, an action, but also to be joyful, a lasting disposition. This is because He will bless them and surround them as a shield (v12). Things can be, and seemingly at this point are, coming apart, and yet the one who comes to God in a multitude of mercy is shielded so that his joy that can't be overcome.