

PRAYER PRESSURE

PSALM 5 MAY 22 & 29, 2016

Good morning! It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here with you. We have fond feelings for you guys over in Hanford. I think, perhaps, we may have gotten it backwards: We sent the seasoned veteran last week and today you'll have to endure the apprentice.

If you have a Bible or a device with a Bible app on it, join me in turning to Psalm 5. For your reference, I'll be reading out of the New King James version. It's a well-loved Psalm, written by David. In verse 1 he begins:

Psalm 5

- 1 **Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.**
- 2 **Give heed to the voice of my cry,
My King and my God, for to You I will pray.**
- 3 **My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord;
In the morning I will direct *it* to You, and I will look up.**
- 4 **For You *are* not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness,
Nor shall evil dwell with You.**
- 5 **The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.**
- 6 **You shall destroy those who speak falsehood;
The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.**
- 7 **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.**
- 8 **Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
Make Your way straight before my face.**
- 9 **For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;
Their inward part *is* destruction;
Their throat *is* an open tomb; They flatter with their tongue.**
- 10 **Pronounce them guilty, O God!
Let them fall by their own counsels;
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions,
For they have rebelled against You.**
- 11 **But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;
Let those also who love Your name be joyful in You.**
- 12 **For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous;
With favor You will surround him as *with* a shield.**

The book of Psalms is remarkable not only because of how deeply personal these prayers are, but also because of the great variety we find within them. They are written across centuries by multiple authors from a wide range of backgrounds. They're written in the midst diverse situations that touch our own emotions and experiences. Some Psalms give us the specific biographical circumstances under which they were written. But many, including this one, do not. Often times, due to certain clues, scholars will package Psalms 3, 4, 5 and 6 together. The

original compilers of the book *were* very thoughtful about how they ordered these songs. Taken together, these 4 Psalms give us a pattern where David talks about morning, then evening, then morning, then evening. And so, some suggest that Psalm 5 was written at the same time as Psalm 3, during the rebellion of Absalom. And that *may* be true. But we're not told the *historical* setting in the text. However, we *can* sense a bit about the *personal* setting here. David found himself, as he often did, in a time of pressure and difficulty in his life. We don't know exactly where the strain was coming from. And that's a *good* thing! Because each of us have a lot of situations and circumstances playing out in our lives today. Some of them are common, some of them are unique. No matter what notes are being played in your life right now, God desires to speak to you and reveal Himself to you through them. And one of the wonderful things about Scripture is that it includes both very specific direction in some places that will address something in your heart or life with precision. And elsewhere, the direction is more universal and able to speak to all of us at the same time despite differences in our experience. Perhaps you have a prodigal child who has broken your heart. If that's the case, Psalm 3 is a wonderfully *specific* text for you. As would be the parable of the prodigal son. But here in Psalm 5, rather than a *specific* formula we have a broader example. What we see is a man in prayer, considering his situation and his Savior, looking back and forth between these two things and not only making requests, but coming to some great realizations. In the end, the confident conclusion David comes to is that, no matter what the situation or the stresses, his Savior is a shelter and support and shield. The culmination of this prayer is that God, in the *multitude* of His mercy, is faithful to His people and will set us on a path to joy and triumph in life and over death.

As David considers these things, he looks into the hearts of his enemies, he looks into his *own* heart and he looks up through the clouds into the heart of heaven. And, as he does so, we can stop at five points of interest.

First, we notice the **preoccupation** of David. Look at verse 1 again.

Psalm 5:1-3 - ¹Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my meditation. ²Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, For to You I will pray. ³My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct *it* to You, And I will look up.

We have 3 little ones at home - a 6 year old, a 3 year old and a 15 month old. If the baby cries in the middle of the night we'll go in and grab her from her crib and bring her into bed and we'll all go back to sleep. Some days, in the small hours of the morning, I'll be jolted awake by the swift kick of tiny, soft feet! It's an alarming way to wake up.

This Psalm is often referenced as a 'morning' Psalm, but as I read it, it seems to picture more a man who has been awakened in the middle of the night. Psalm 4 ends with the line, "I'm going to lie down and sleep in peace." And here, in verse 3, David will say, "In the morning, I'm going to get up and pray some more and spend that time with You, Lord." So, to me this seems to be in between. David's life was full of tension at this moment. His heart and his thoughts were preoccupied with the situation he was facing.

Notice this: in his preoccupation he was **concerned**, but he was also **courageous**.

David was concerned. He asked God over and over that He would *hear* the prayer and *listen* and *consider* what he was saying. We can sense the urgency in his voice. "Lord, I need You to answer my call. Lord, I need You to *listen* and to *consider* what's going on in my life. Lord, I need You to

intervene on my behalf. Please Lord!” Perhaps in your translation rather than the word ‘meditation’ you see the word ‘groaning.’ And that’s what this was. There’s a richness of emotion in the language. This prayer is not casual or routine. David is crying like a hurt child wanting to be rescued by their father.

He was *concerned*, but he was also *courageous*. It is so instructive to see that David wasn’t shy to make these requests to God. He’s going to make at least 10 requests in this little prayer and he makes them *boldly*. I mean, he says, “God, I have something to say, I want You to listen, I want You to think it through, and I’m making an appointment for myself later today and we’re going to talk about this stuff again!” It wasn’t pride that made David speak that way, it’s that he understood the character of God. He had insight into the heart of God. He knew that God is mindful of us and that *His* concern for our lives go far beyond our own.

The reason David was going to the Lord was because he knew that God is sovereign and God is supreme and so, of course, he could bring these strains and stresses to the Lord so that the Lord could address them. But that quickly turned his thoughts off of his own preoccupation and onto our second focal point: The **purity** of God.

Psalm 5:4-6 - For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

David was a very thoughtful man. He liked to study mankind and consider their end. But his mind would often wander. And usually we see it wandering upward into the presence of God where David would fix his eyes and contemplate the greatness and the glory and the majesty of the Lord. This is one of those times. He comes in prayer, heavy-laden and full of preoccupation, but then, he looks *up!* And suddenly his thoughts are arrested as he gazes on the **purity** of God. And David comes to the intense realization that God does not take pleasure in sin and, therefore, sinners have a big problem.

Our wickedness must, ultimately, be dealt with. The Lord shows David a glimpse of His plan to bring righteousness to the world and purge His creation of sin. The Lord’s long-suffering waits at the moment, but the day is coming where He will fully and finally judge sin. And the only ones who can stand in His presence are those who stand in Christ Jesus. Apart from faith in Christ, all our good works, all our good intentions are filthy rags before the purity of the Lord. Another Psalmist would write in Psalm 118, “Open unto me the gates of righteousness that I might enter in!” That is the only hope for the sinner because sin has no place in glory. It must be dealt with.

We see David gazing upon the purity of God and considering not only the problem of sin, but also the pleasure of God. He says that God takes no pleasure in wickedness. What *does* God take pleasure in? That’s an important question for each of us today. To realize that we can bring God pleasure. As we study the Bible we find that there are a lot of things that bring God pleasure - things each of us can participate in as soon as we’d like. **Faith** brings God pleasure. In the Gospels, Jesus would get so excited when people exercised faith in Him and in His word. Personal **integrity** brings God pleasure. There in Job chapter 2 the Lord held a meeting in heaven and said, “Have you noticed My servant Job? He’s a man of complete integrity.” God was *excited* about that. When people get **saved** it gives God pleasure. Paul wrote that it is God’s want and desire that men would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. While we are not

responsible for someone else's decision, we *are* responsible to proclaim the Gospel that men *might* be saved. And so, our **preaching** brings God pleasure. Just to name one more, we learn in Jeremiah chapter 9 that when we exercise **lovingkindness** and **righteousness**, God is delighted and takes pleasure in it.

Not *one* of those things is outside of our reach. Let's each make a plan to please the Lord with our lives and continually forsake our sin to, rather, go God's way.

So, David began **preoccupied**, he then considered God's **purity**, and that led him to our third point: The **path** of life.

Psalm 5:7-8 - 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. Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.

"But as for me." David put his desire into operation. He could not control his external circumstances, but he could control his own steps. His choice was to go to the house of the Lord and worship toward the temple because of the multitude of the mercy of God.

You see, David understood that he too was a wicked man who deserved none of the blessings of God. He had spoken falsehoods. He was a bloodthirsty man, a man of violence. He had worked iniquity, going to the land of the Philistines and living a brutal and thieving life. Of course we know about his adulteries and murder. Any time spent dwelling on the holiness of God would quickly remind him of his own transgression. He would pray in Psalm 51: "create in me a clean heart O God!" It was only by God's mercy that David was allowed to continue in life and continue in worship and continue in service to the Lord. And he *knew* it. But he *knew* mercy was there and accessible to him. Recognizing his own sinfulness, he declared with hope and certainty that he was going to go right into the house of the Lord because of God's available mercy. And rather than continue in the wickedness described in verses 4 through 6, David asks the Lord, "Lord, please *lead* me in Your righteousness. I want to conform to what *does* please You."

That cleansing and that access is made possible by the multitude of God's mercy. Or, your translation may have it, by God's abundant lovingkindness. That merciful lovingkindness is described as plentiful and abundant, like a great multitude. There's a largeness and a breadth to it that covers the whole world. And then we realize that we not only gain access to righteousness and mercy, we're called to walk in them. We're not only *recipients*, but we are *agents* of that mercy. I love the picture here in David's mind that he will find mercy, find lovingkindness, in the house of the Lord. David came not only with requests he wanted answered, but he came with worship to offer and he came intending to be a part of the righteousness of God, living it out as he walked through life.

What a great encouragement these verses are. Because I don't deserve access to God or His house or His ear or His power and neither do you. Yet God has given us those things *anyway* in Jesus Christ. He invites anyone who is willing to come through the gates of righteousness, to enter in, to be hid in Christ and not only *receive* but *become*. Become a person transformed by God's lovingkindness and defined by His righteousness. It is no merit of our own, but all of God's mercy. And there, David says, "I want this to be the **path** of my life. Now Lord, I have enemies wanting to trip me up, so please carve the way out for me, straight down the center so that I can walk in Your ways. *Lead* me in that path of righteousness." Not the path of comfort or the path of

success or anything else, David says, “make for me the path of righteousness”. Here David shows that a healthy and growing fear of God isn’t only concerned with freedom from the penalty of sin, but it is concerned with the fullness of Christ actively operating in us.

This reference of his enemies makes David switch his attention once more to our fourth area of note. He’s been **preoccupied**, he’s seen God’s **purity**, he’s decided on a **path**, for his life and now he remembers that he will therefore be up against those **profane** enemies around him.

Psalm 5:9-10 - For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue. Pronounce them guilty, O God! Let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You.

Notice in these descriptions just how **corrupted** these people are truly revealed to be. He uses graphic language to show how dead and decayed a person is who has rebelled against God. But that was us before salvation. Our lives were like a fresh grave, full of nothing but death. Since it was death inside, death came out. And, notice, it’s not as if David was describing some satanic blasphemer. He seems to be referencing people around him who *flattered* him. That should make us think, “Wow. I need the Lord!” Because, even if we’re saved, that old, profane nature still exists within our hearts. Through Christ we have power and victory over it. Now we are no longer dead to God but because of the cross we are dead to sin. But the more David looks in, up and around, the more we realize our need for God’s intervention in our lives. Lord, I need You not only to save me from my enemies, but save me from myself! That deceitful heart that beats inside of me, Lord, cast that out. Conform me into the image of Christ. An image of mercy and faithfulness and righteousness. Rather than my life producing dead words, let me speak life. Rather than be a danger to passers by, God make me into a light that directs them to You. That I become the example not of the open tomb but the *empty tomb*. Notice the contrast there between verses 10 and 7. God, I want to find myself not in the multitude of my transgressions, but in the multitude of Your mercy. How is that possible? By God’s intervention and our surrender. God *has* intervened. He’s put everything in place that we might have abundant life. It’s His power and His plan and His pleasure to take a corrupted person and redeem them and conform them into the image of His Son. But we cooperate with that by ending the rebellion in our hearts and obeying and turning to God in faith.

When that happens, we see finally in David’s closing thoughts, our **prospects** as God’s people.

Psalm 5:11-12 - But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield.

In *The Empire Strikes Back* there is a famous conversation between Luke Skywalker and Yoda. Luke is trying to convince Yoda to train him as a Jedi so that he can fight against Darth Vader. The back and forth comes to a head when Luke says, “I’m not afraid.” To which Yoda replies, “You *will* be.” Yoda knew that Luke had reason to fear.

There were some big stresses in David’s life when he wrote this Psalm. Serious pressures, dangerous enemies. But in the end he found that as a child of God he didn’t have reason to fear, but reason to *celebrate*. Notice, he didn’t come to that conclusion after his prayers had been answered, but as he was bringing his requests to God. He makes this huge, broad statement,

inspired by the Holy Spirit and applicable for every Believer in every generation: “Let *ALL* who trust in You rejoice. Let them *EVER* shout for joy because You defend them and surround him as with a shield.” The word for shield there is not the typical, smaller shield held in battle. It’s the word for the larger shield that covered the entire body. In fact, it was so large it was often carried by an attendant.

As David brings his thoughts to a close, he realizes that our great God does not have to be convinced to love us or act on our behalf. He realizes that God has come onto the battlefield of life with a shield to completely cover and surround us. Those who *believe* in Him now *belong* to Him and as we take refuge in Christ, the Lord goes out to defend us and cover us. In that regard, God does not only give His people an exit strategy, but He also gives a protection plan.

In battle scenes, one of the phrases often heard is, “TAKE COVER!” And what a great order for us to give to our hearts this morning. Take cover under the shield of God. Find shelter in Christ by entering in through the gates of righteousness and walking from this day forward on that path. It means believing God knows the better way. In fact, He knows the *only* way that leads to everlasting life. The Bible explains very clearly that there is one way to salvation and that is through faith in Christ. We turn to Him and believe He is God, believe that because He died in our place our sins can be forgiven and that now He has a new life for us, a new path for us to walk.

Because of all of this we have reason to celebrate. Reason to be glad. Because God has decided to surround His people with His favor, His grace and His mercy and His love. So David, who began this pressure-filled prayer just hoping God would *hear* him, comes to the end of these verses realizing that he’s received so much more. Blessing and surrounding and favor and joy.

So, how can we turn this on ourselves as we bring this to a close? This is all well and good for David, but what about me? Well, we can put ourselves in the place of David. Perhaps you’re facing incredible pressures. We may be eternal beings, but we find ourselves in a temporal world. So much of our lives and our energies and our hearts can be spent reacting to the *physical* pressures of life. David would have us see today that the most significant factor of our lives is the God of multiplied mercy. And our most important concern is how I can walk with Him along the path He has set before me. In our minds I hear the objections: “Yes, but, I have this problem,” or, “I have this enemy,” or, “I am at my last moment!” Those objects pop up in my mind too. And those issues are real. But the most important element is the God of abundant lovingkindness. The righteous God of multiplied mercy. He sees. He hears. He knows. And He promises that as we seek first His Kingdom and our place in that Kingdom and His righteousness, these things shall be added unto us: His covering. His defense. His joy. His guidance. His salvation. The God who hears our prayers doesn’t just file them away somewhere. He has interceded and has for each of us whatever we need no matter where we find ourselves. We have such wonderful prospects because of our wonderful God. The Lord thy God, in the midst of thee, is mighty and mercy and ready. Pray to Him. Consider Him. Consider what He has granted to us and given to us freely. And then walk in His righteousness, rejoice in Him, trust Him to shelter and lead us on into more of His abundant life.