

PSALM 5

THE WORDS OF THE WICKED DESTROY THE RIGHTEOUS (A LAMENT)

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INTRODUCTION: The superscription attributes authorship of Psalm 5 to David, with instructions that it is to be accompanied by "Nehiloth" (i.e., flute-like instruments). Psalm 5 is a **lament psalm**, which puts forward a complaint (i.e., something the psalmist believes to be an injustice that has not been adequately addressed by God). In this psalm, the underlying situation is that wicked people, enemies of David (and God), are speaking lies against him (i.e., the wicked are using words to destroy the righteous); the heart of the complaint is found in verse 9. The particular instance in David's life that gave rise to this psalm is not discernable, but there could have been many such instances. For example, when Doeg the Edomite told King Saul that the priests had helped David, which led Saul to slaughter the priests (1Sam22:9-10), or when David's son Absalom turned the hearts of the people against him, which led to civil war (2Sam15:1-6).

- [1] David opens by petitioning the LORD to "consider my meditation" (i.e., his lament, or complaint; cf. v9).
- [2] David seeks correction of the injustice from the "LORD" (v1), who is his "King", and "God". This is the correct course of action, for the LORD has said, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense" (Deut32:35), and "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom12:19). Since God is just, He must deal with every injustice (in His appointed time; Cp., Rev6:10).
- [3] David's pattern was to pray "in the morning", as was that of Jesus (Cp., Isa50:4-5). Note that "heaven" is above (Cp., Exod20:4).
- [4] It is because David understands God's attributes of righteousness, holiness, and justice that he can petition Him on this basis (Cp., Hab1:13). This is profoundly important; namely, that an intimate knowledge of the attributes of God should inform the prayers of believers.
- [5] The fact that "God so loved the world" (Jn3:16) must be harmonized with the fact that He "hatest all workers of iniquity". Note, it does not say God hates their works, but that He hates the "workers" (Cp., Mall:3) — although that hatred is based on their works. That "the foolish shall not stand in thy sight" is a recognition that God's attribute of justice demands that He judge in His appointed time.
- [6] The LORD "abhors" (Webster 1828, "to hate extremely, or with contempt; to loathe, detest, or abominate") the "deceitful man"; again, it is the "man" who is abhorred. Justice demands that those who "speak leasing" (Webster 1828, "falsehood, lies") be "destroy[ed]".
- [7] Here, "house" and "temple" are not anachronisms, since the Temple did not exist during David's lifetime, but both terms (in Hebrew) are used of the Tabernacle (cf. Josh6:24; Ps23:6; 1Sam1:9,24). David worships the LORD in "fear" (cf. Matt10:28), but also recognizing His attributes include the "multitude of mercy".

- [8] In the context of the unrighteousness of his enemies, David calls on the LORD to be led according to "thy righteousness" (i.e., the righteousness), which is the ultimate standard of righteousness to which all men are held (cf. Matt5:20; Rom1:16-17).
- [9] Here is the heart of the lament/complaint. The wicked destroy the righteous by means of their "mouth", "throat", and "tongue" (i.e., words; Cp., Jas3:5-10). Their speech is lies, since "there is no faithfulness" in it (Cp., Heb11:6).
- [10] The psalm ends with a brief imprecatory petition (cf. Gen12:3). Namely, "Destroy thou them". The desire is that they be destroyed in an embarrassing fashion, "let them fall by their own counsels" (e.g., as Haman was hanged on his own gallows; Esth7:10). Note, the assault of the wicked on David is characterized as rebellion against God, as all sin is (Cp., Ps51:4).
- [11] Note, the righteous are those who "put their trust in thee" (i.e., God), which denotes justification by faith (cf. Gen15:6; Rom4:3-6), even in the O.T. The righteous "rejoice" and "shout for joy" when God judges the unrighteous, because they "hate" what God hates (vv5-6; Cp., Ps139:21-22).
- [12] The "LORD wilt bless the righteous". For Israel in the O.T., temporal blessing was based on practical righteousness obtained by keeping the Law of Moses (cf. Matt5:20; Luk1:6; Philip3:6); in the N.T., the blessing of eternal life is based on positional righteousness in Christ (cf. Rom1:16; 2Cor5:21).

PRACTICAL VS. POSITIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS				
TIME	BASIS	RIGHTEOUSNESS	SCRIPTURE	RESULT
O.T.	Old Covenant	Practical	Matt5:20; Luk1:6; Philip3:6	Temporal Blessing
N.T.	New Covenant	Positional	Rom1:16-17; 2Cor5:17,21	Eternal Blessing (Life)