

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Elements of Effectual Praying

By
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Psalm 5

The first four psalms show forth a contrast between the righteous and the wicked. Psalm 5 follows that same pattern. The righteous man is righteous by the grace of the Lord and the wicked oppose the righteous. The man who is not saved by the mercy of God in Christ will be opposed to the Lord. We might ask why this is so. The only answer is the native depravity of man. Since the fall men have been divided into two camps, the camp of the godly and the camp of the ungodly, the righteous and the wicked, the saved and the unsaved.

I. David Knows God As A Prayer Hearing God and King

He begins this psalm by asking the Lord to give ear to his words, to heed the sound of his cry for help, and he addresses him as my King and my God. He knows God as the sovereign of the universe, the supreme Ruler over all things. He believes that the God he is addressing is *my God*. He is not some unknown deity but a personal, knowable, prayer hearing, prayer answering King.

David was hurting. We all can feel hurt. There are times, people, and circumstances that can distress us and eat us up inside. He asks God to consider his groaning. In other words, look upon my inward agony, my distress of heart that accompanies this prayer.

His prayer is anything but perfunctory. David is earnest and importunate. There is urgency and fervency in his prayer. This should be the element in our prayers as well.

Beloved friend, God knows when we hurt. He sees our pain. Some prayers rise up out of agonizing circumstances. Prayers can even be offered while lips are silent, straining upward from deep distress and an aching heart. Those are times of groaning mingled with hope that God would see our distress and intervene to help us.

David makes it his business to seek the Lord in the morning. . In Verse 3 he says, **In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.**

This is the time when the dew is still on the roses and the earth is hushed and still. The night hopefully has brought refreshing sleep and he makes going to God the first order of business. The day is yet before him and he knows that it can have its own set of challenges and dangers. Temptation may cross his path and he needs a fresh supply of grace for the day

Prayer should be the opening key of the day and the closing lock of the night. Spurgeon wrote: ***An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening.***

But note that his prayer is not just words offered up, they are words offered up expectantly. He has thought through his prayer so that it is intelligent, Christ-honoring and worthy of God's response. He sets himself to watch for the answer or for some change in circumstances that would then warrant a change in the way he has prayed.

I heard the story of a raunchy nightclub built right next door to Saint Luke Baptist Church of God in Christ. The good folks of SLBCOGIC decided to start a prayer vigil. Amazingly, the nightclub's business dwindled so much that they had to close the doors. This wasn't altogether good news because the owner of the nightclub brought a lawsuit against the members of the SLBCOGIC, accusing them of ruining his business with their prayers. The attorneys for the church argued there was no way their prayers could

have had any effect on the poor performance of the club. The judge agreed. He ruled in favor of Saint Luke, saying, ***“While the nightclub owner strongly believes in the power of prayer, the church membership does not.”***

David has carefully aimed his prayers. He has a target, a premise and a promise. A man who sets to work at any task has an expectation, a goal for completion. So with praying, a man should not pray without expecting to see some result from calling upon the Lord. Where is faith if we do not expect to see our prayers get answered? David set a watch after he had prayed. This is just as much a part of prayer as offering up the prayer. We pray and watch for an answer. If the prayer was a good prayer and it was prayed with a desire to glorify God and not to consume it on one's lusts, then God may be expected to take note of it and answer it sooner or later.

We usually think of prayer as private and personal for some personal problem for oneself or family but David's prayers were for more than just himself. He was anointed by Samuel to be a king and eventually he was crowned the king of Israel, so his prayers were not only for himself but for Israel and the public good. I believe the words of Eugene Peterson are worthy of quoting: ***Prayer is political action. Prayer is social energy. Prayer is public good. Far more of our nation's life is shaped by prayer than is formed by legislation. That we have not collapsed into anarchy is due more to prayer than to the police.***

Prayer is a sustained and intricate act of patriotism in the largest sense of that word--far more precise, loving, and preserving than any patriotism served up in slogans. That society continues to be livable and that hope continues to be resurgent are attributable to prayer far more than to business prosperity or a flourishing of the arts. The single most important action contributing to whatever health and strength there is in our land is prayer. -- Eugene Peterson, *Earth and Altar*. Christianity Today, Vol. 30, no. 1.

II. David Knew That God Hates Sin

David now cites something very basic that will reassure him in his prayer that God will protect him and deliver him out of his distress. David knows that God is a holy God who though he is merciful and gracious will also be ever and always an enemy to the wicked. This is a theological truism. We know for certain that God does not take pleasure in any form of wickedness; that he will not allow evil to dwell with him. He is against the proud and boastful man. He hates all who do iniquity. David affirms in verse 6: ***You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.***

This does not deny the fact that God can and does forgive sin and pardon the wickedness of men when they repent. David himself was a sinner saved by grace. He knew that he had been forgiven. But the opposite is true too. The sinner who continues on in his sin, who is unrepentant, who does not seek God's mercy in the Son of God will not be approved of God. God will destroy the sinners who do not repent. So these words of David do not mean that a man cannot be forgiven, only that wickedness and deceit will be judged as he has stated it here. He would remind himself and all people that sin will be sooner or later be dealt with according to God's holy character with severity and expulsion from His presence. And this is an element in his prayer. He cites the knowledge that God is holy and righteous in all his ways and that the wicked are ultimately doomed to destruction.

Then he affirms anew that his desire and intent is to worship the Lord, to enter the holy temple and bow reverently before the Lord. He asks in his prayer that God would lead him in righteousness because of his foes. In other words, let me do the right thing even though my foes do the wrong thing. Let me not imitate the ways of the wicked that are crooked and untrustworthy. Make thy way straight before me. He wants to walk in the truth. He desires to walk in the light of the Word of God. Lead me Lord, lead me in thy righteousness!

In verse 9 David says that the souls of sinners are infected with a desperate disease. He understands the doctrine of original sin. He realizes that the whole head is sick and the whole heart is contaminated with an evil and loathsome sickness. You can't believe anything the sinner says. Verses 9 tells us, **There is nothing reliable in what they say; Their inward part is destruction itself.**

Their throat is an open grave; They flatter with their tongue.

We get the visual picture of a corpse turning to corruption with no dirt thrown upon it to smother and cover the stench that is coming from it. This is the figure

God uses of the speech of the wicked before him. Their deceit and treachery are issuing forth in their speech like the stench of an open grave. Justice will require that they be held guilty. God will let them fall by their own devices.

Haman swung from the gallows he built for Mordacai. Absalom pursuing his father David ran headlong into an oak tree and his long locks got caught in the branches and that became his gallows of death. Goliath had come against David with his oversize sword and David took it and cut off his head with it. King Saul had failed to obey the Lord in utterly destroying the Amalakites; he had pursued David wrongfully and had tried to kill him; he had gone to a witch for light after the Lord had left him to his own devices and he ended his life by asking an Amalakite to kill him with his own sword.

David cites the fact that sinners commit many sins, not just a few. He says in verse 10 **Hold them guilty, O God; By their own devices let them fall! In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out, For they are rebellious against You.**

The sinner has set his mind to rebel over a long enough period to have committed many, many sins. Actually, even though they may have opposed David they were really opposing God. Man's rebellious nature is against the government of God. They hate His Law and they hate His rule. So they rebel and commit all manner of sins.

Sin is always progressive. The sinner does not stop with a few minor sins. Sin builds upon itself until finally there is a multitude of transgressions. The heart has grown harder and harder until there is no remedy. The axe of judgment must fall. They must be banished from the presence of the Lord forever.

III. The Gladness And Joy of The Righteous Vss. 11, 12

David ends this psalm on a high note of praise and gladness for the blessing and protection of God to the righteous. This shout of gladness is a shout of victory. God will love those who love Him with an everlasting love. His Name is a shelter, a refuge, and a shield. He does not love without imparting all that his people need, both now and in heaven. His favor is worth all that any soul can possibly want or need. The contrast of the righteous man as over against the wicked is pronounced and definite. The wicked will know nothing but misery and lost ness forever while the righteous will be glad and have joy forever. This life is but a little while and then we will see the final separation take place. The wicked will go to their

place and the righteous will go to their place. The one will know the Lord here, going to the house of God, seeing prayers get answered, being led by the Lord in paths of truth and righteous, while the wicked walk contrary to the Lord and sink deeper and deeper into sin and finally are expelled from the company of God and His people in a place called hell. What a terrible end to those who walk not in faith and love of the Lord. But all who call upon the Lord Jesus Christ are assured of a place in heaven. They need to turn from sin to Christ, from rebellion to obedience, from sin to the Savior. Have you done that? Then you are blessed today and always.

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