

“How to Live Among the Wicked”

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Series: *Psalms*

Bible Text: Psalm 5

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If you have a Bible you can be turning to Psalm 5 this morning. If you don't have a Bible, you can follow along in the worship guide. It's there, printed for you. If you're joining us for the first time, this is our summer. We're going through some of the Psalms, and today we're at this Psalm that is a prayer of David that sounds like a lament, because it is a lament. We always say that the Psalms give us language for life, situations, emotions, but language doesn't always get you somewhere. We use a lot of words to describe a lot of things, and we stay just as stuck as we've ever been. But the Psalms can actually get us somewhere, so let's read this one and see exactly where it gets us. Psalm 5. This is God's word.

To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.

[1] Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning.

[2] Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray.

[3] O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare for you and watch.

[4] For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you.

[5] The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers.

[6] You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

[7] But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.

[8] Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

[9] For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue.

[10] Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.

[11] But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

[12] For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield. (ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Would you pray with me?

Lord, we do ask for your help. We need your ability to think rightly about your word, but more than that, we need you to take what's on the page and illuminate it to our understanding. Help us to feel how we're supposed to feel as we read your word. Help us to want to do what we're supposed to want to do as we read your word. Make us whole people who have been renewed in Christ. Help us now, we pray, in his name, amen.

If you're raising children, if you are children, if you remember what it was like to be children, if you know anything about children at all, you know this. Their world is filled with injustices. He got in my space. She pulled my hair. He punched me. She took my toy. He touched me. He got in my breathing space, and I didn't like it. Half of parenting is not growing weary in putting on your robe and acting as a judge at all times. Sometimes kids even know that they need to ask the parent to discipline the offender. They come and sometimes they even say it. It's not just, here's what happened to me. What are you going to do about it? Do you have any power? Do you have any authority in this house? That's the implied question. That's right and good, right? We want them to do that. I want my kids to come to me when something has happened. If I need to get involved, then I want them to come and ask me to get involved. That's good. That's right. It would be rare, nay, non-existent, for a kid to come to mom and say, yeah, all right. He punched me. I punched him first. I'm so sorry. I've already apologized to him. I feel terrible. I'll do anything to make it up for him. Can you help me with my anger? Do you think you can help me come up with some strategies to deal with things differently in the future? If that's what your kids are doing, just go ahead and write your parenting book. Actually, you know what? Just be quiet about it. We don't want to hear it. We don't want to know.

We're hardwired to ask for justice when somebody commits injustice against us. That's right. That's good. Sometimes we also have to reckon with ourselves and our own responses and what is going on with me as well. There's a dynamic in the Christian life like this. If you belong to Jesus, you're told this very clearly. You will deal with injustice, betrayal, wickedness, darkness from the world, your friends, your neighbors. You might not feel like you have any enemies. It's a lie. You're surrounded by them all the time. You're going to have to deal with them. Sometimes you might even be overwhelmed by them. Periodically, you're going to feel the wickedness of yourself. You're going to have to deal with that too. As we look at Psalm 5, it's very clear that the righteous live among the wicked and they're sometimes overwhelmed by the wickedness, but the call here is to bring the wicked and yourself to the Lord God. Let's talk about that.

What does it mean to bring the wicked to the Lord?

That's the first point here. We don't know the situation that drew this Psalm from the mind, heart, and pen of David. Many scholars argue that it must have been during the rebellion of Absalom, his son. That would fit. Injustice, betrayal, darkness. His son rises up and tries to kill him. That would fit. We don't know. But whatever is going on, *verse 1*, he tells the Lord, *consider my groaning*. Whatever his prayer is, it's mostly a sound. It's mostly a groan. Sometimes that's kind of all you can muster. The word here is an under-the-breath growl. Have you ever been so frustrated or so sad or so overwhelmed that all you can muster is an inaudible to most but very present growl? At least it's a God-ward sort of growl. That's a good thing. It's asking God to

understand it, to consider it, to give attention to it. But he's not happy, and he's not doing well. It's not like he is just constructing these great sentences necessarily. He's groaning. The reason for it is in *verses 4 through 6*. Just follow the words here. *There is wickedness and evil and people who are boastful and proud. There are evildoers, liars, deceivers, and a very descriptive word. There are the bloodthirsty.* Whatever's happening, he's overwhelmed by wickedness, and he calls it what it is. There's evil in the world. There are people who can be all of these things. You don't have to look very far to see that. David knew it well.

I don't know if you've ever read through his story in the Old Testament, but there's a point where Saul has lost his mind again and is trying to chunk a spear through David. David's on the run, and he's on the run in this one place, and you run across one of the most punchable people in the Old Testament. His name is Doeg the Edomite. I don't know if you know anything about Doeg the Edomite, but David sees him at one point, and he says to himself, that guy is going to rat me out to King Saul. And sure enough, within minutes, Doeg the Edomite goes and squeals to Saul. He's a bloodthirsty liar of a man.

David knew plenty of people like that. He knew the arrogant and proud, even within his own house, even within his own mighty men. Joab, for all of his good things as a commander of the army, is a pretty impulsive, arrogant man who goes too far pretty often. David knows these people, calls them what they are, and interestingly, what he doesn't do is just say this to himself, or say it to his friends, or say it to his neighbors, or write a lengthy online post about it. He doesn't do any of those things. He breathes this complaint to God himself. He calls evil, evil to God, and as he does that, he recites in this prayer back to God what God thinks of the wicked, and it's kind of shocking language. Not only does God not like evil, and not only evil may not dwell with him, a holy God can allow evil in his presence. That's all true. The boastful can't stand before him. A proud human in the presence of the living God is a condemned and destroyed human. He hates evildoers, that's what it says. He destroys liars. He abhors the murderous and deceptive. That word abhor is related to the word abomination. He considers them an abomination. He's praying back to God things that are true, the way that God thinks about wickedness. This is what he actually believes, and the way that God actually considers it. It would be important to pray those things when you're surrounded, and when it feels like the evil are winning, when it feels like the wicked are actually winning the day.

What does God have to say about it? Not just that, but what are these people really like? That's the other thing that he brings up here. Look at *verse 9*. *There's no truth in their mouth.* That's what they're really like. Regardless of what they say, there's no truth in their mouth. Whatever they seem like on the outside, their inmost self, their true being is destruction. It's not order and calm and peace and goodness. *Their throat is an open grave.* Every time they open their mouth, death is not far away. That's what's really true. They flatter with their tongue. Their smooth words are poison. He says this to God, certainly telling God what he already knows. He's also telling himself what's actually true, and it's important to do that because you know this. The wicked don't show up with a giant sign that says, I am the wicked. I am the evil. They don't come to you. It would be great if they did and say, you know what? I'm a liar and a destroyer, and I'm going to flatter you right now and make you feel really good, but it's only so that I can pull the

rug out from under you and absolutely crush your soul. I mean, it would be really helpful if they would do that. They don't.

One of the benefits of movies that portray good and evil is how clearly they portray evil. If only every evil thing and person looked like an orc, that would be really helpful, but evil often comes to us looking like virtue, light, and goodness, and sometimes evil comes to us, and all it does is ask some subtle questions. Did God really say that? He knows that you would be like him if you did that. I don't know why he would withhold that from you. Don't you think he wants you to be happy? Subtle, quiet, deceptive lies. That's how evil shows up.

The last thing David brings to the Lord is what he would like for the Lord to do with the wicked. *Verse 10, make them bear their guilt.* Let them fall by their own counsels. Cast them out. Their ultimate problem is not just the symptoms and the things that David observes, but that they have rebelled against God Almighty Himself. That's why they do what they do. It's because they've rebelled against God, and they're not repenting. These aren't broken people who are repenting. These are people who have decided, I'll do whatever I want, and nobody cares about the consequences. He asked God to evaluate them and do what a just God should do. Hold them to account. Let their schemes fall in. Throw them out of your presence. These are not good people who are misdirected. These are wicked people who are trying to destroy.

He's asking the just judge of all the world to do what is right. He's asking God for judgment. He's not complaining to the neighbors. He's not sitting and stewing. He's pouring out his complaint, calling them what they are, remembering what God says about them, and calling God to do what only God can do.

Sometimes it's best not to identify your enemies and figure out how to take it to them. Sometimes you identify your enemies, and you take your enemies to the one who can actually do something about them.

But do we do that? That's the question. Do we actually do that? Do we feel like we have the freedom to do that? What do you do when you feel like an injustice has been committed against you? You have been betrayed. Everybody has done something dark, or they're just evil voices, whatever your situation is. What's your default reaction? I'm going to split all humans into two categories here, which is totally unfair. I'm going to do it anyway. The internal and the external.

Some of you are internal, and you think internally, and you feel your emotions internally. If you're an internal sort of person, and you're surrounded by darkness, you are probably going to just turn inward, and you're probably going to feel real anxious. You might get caught in some infinite thought loops where you're just constantly mulling over or churning over this situation or this person, and you'll know that you're doing that because you'll do it in your sleep, and you might make speeches when you're driving in your car. Nobody else can listen. You might make speeches about this person when you're in the shower, but you're just constantly churning and anxious, and you're just trying to solve it for yourself. People go mad doing such things. They become debilitated with anxiety and rage, and sometimes they boil over, and they explode. That

happens. Sometimes they swing, and they realize, well, I can't solve this, so I give up. I'm out, and that's depression, despondency, cynicism.

Is that how you tend to handle things when it seems like the world is enclosing over you? It's just good to know ourselves.

Others of you don't understand what I just said because you've never had a thought that didn't come out, and you've never had a feeling that someone else didn't need to feel from you. You're the external person. Whatever it is that's going on on your insides must come outside, and so if you experience injustice, you're probably going to be most likely to spew forth to everyone, anyone, and all who will listen, and even some who don't want to listen that's going to happen. Can't not rant about it online. That's an external sort of way of dealing with things.

How do you deal with things?

What's your predisposition, and you might flop between the two depending on what day it is, but do you turn inward to yourself, or do you turn outward?

Let me say a caveat. There is a time to go and talk to someone else when something terrible has happened in your life. Right? We all know that. It's good to get wise counsel. There are times when an injustice happens, and you need to actually go talk to the cops or an authority of some sort. There's a place for all of those things. We're not talking about that at this moment. We're talking about what is your internal turn? Do you turn to the Lord? Do you turn to yourself? Do you spew on other people?

If you're a Christian, you have a much better way.

You can tell him what frustrates you.

You can tell him what that person did.

You can tell him that you're angry.

You can tell him what you're afraid of.

You can groan.

You can recite the truth back to him.

You can recall his perspective on evil and say it to him.

You can even ask him to be just and to execute wrath and to be the just judge of all the world and to get it right.

You can ask him to do all of those things. When you do that, here's what happens for you. When you go to God with all of those things, it's a practice in believing what's true. It helps you to actually believe the things that you're praying to him about. It helps you cast on his shoulders all of that stuff. Someone who can actually do something about it as opposed to us. Human authorities can help you if that's what you need, but even when they get it right and sometimes they don't, they can only go so far. But there's a God who actually holds all things to account, sees all things, understands it and will handle it. He will handle it. It's really good news.

Here's the other thing. Every time we bring evil done to us to God, we strike a blow at our own internal drive for vigilante justice, and we've got it. Every time we take all of this stuff to the Lord, we're laying down our own pitchfork and we're calling off the posse and we're entrusting it back to him. Before David prays this psalm, he feels like someone should do something. In this prayer, he goes to the one someone who can do something, and he lays it at his feet.

Will you do that?

Let me say this, because we're Southerners. Some of you are Southerners. Some of you, I don't know what you are, you might be a Northerner. Southern niceness doesn't apply to prayer. Say that again. Southern niceness does not apply to prayer. You should go to God with honesty, boldness, clarity. You can be as politically incorrect as you need to be. You just say what you need to say to the Lord and trust that he actually hears you. Take it to him and wait.

Now, you've already probably thought of the risk. What if you're wrong? What if you don't see it all properly? What if you're asking God to pour out his wrath on this person and you haven't actually grappled with the fact that you made a contribution to that particular situation as well?

That's why we have to have the other half of the Psalm as well. We believe in human depravity. Paul uses verses 9 and 10 in Romans 3 to describe the state of all human beings outside of Jesus. Let's see how David doesn't just bring his enemies, but he brings himself. We're called to bring ourselves to the Lord as well.

Look at *verse 3. Oh, Lord, in the morning you hear my voice. In the morning I prepare for you and watch.* I know the ESV says I prepare a sacrifice. They're trying to make sense out of a phrase that says I arrange for you, which could be sacrificed, but it's not clear enough to go ahead and say that. Either way, whether he's sacrificing or not, he's praying in the morning, praying faithfully, and he's watching. He's switching back and forth between himself and the wicked and himself and the wicked.

After talking about how God views the wicked, he switches back to himself in *verse 7. But I will enter your house.*

The boastful can't stand before God, but he will enter the temple and stand before him in worship.

The boastful can't stand before the Lord, but David says he will bow down in the Lord's holy temple in fear of him. It's a different posture. It's a different frame of heart.

The wicked are arrogant, full of lies and death, but he's coming to God in humility to worship, to lay himself before the Lord and essentially say, like, here I am, laid bare before you, do what you will.

In the midst of his groaning and being overwhelmed by evil, he worships. He doesn't bring a ledger of his morality versus their morality and make a case for himself to say, I need you to punish these bad people because I'm so good. He doesn't say that. But he does come lay himself before the Lord in worship, and he asks for help, too.

Look at *verse 8. Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies. Make your way straight before me.* That's an acknowledgement that his enemies would like to veer him away from the straight path.

He knows that he could be led away from righteousness.

He knows that he could easily become vengeful.

He could easily make a plot against them.

He could scheme against them. He's the king. He has an army at his disposal. All he has to say is, go, and they will crush his enemies.

He could answer bloodthirst and deceit with bloodthirst and deceit of his own.

There's also the prospect, I suppose, that if the pressure was strong enough, there might be a point where he just stops fighting and joins his enemies. That's a temptation for all of us. At some point, why don't I just join them? It's too difficult to beat them. So why don't I just join them? Help, he says. The way is narrow that leads to life. Make it straight for me. Help me not go off course. This is a prayer confessing his weakness and his need for the Lord to show up. Help me, O Lord.

And then in *verses 11 and 12*, he brings all the rest of us into it as well. *Let all who take refuge in you, the wicked or not, but we're trying to take refuge in you. Let us rejoice even as we suffer. Cover us with a shield. Spread your protection over us.*

Why should God help David?

You ever thought of that? Why should God help David? David had moments when, *verse 9, the truth was not in his mouth.* David had moments when *his throat was an open grave and he flattered with his tongue.* You will recall he had an affair with a married woman and ordered the murder of her husband who was one of his loyal mighty men, and he didn't even feel bad about

it until God sent a prophet to shock him back into reality. If somebody deserves to be cast out, isn't it the murderous, adulterous king who takes advantage of a woman in his kingdom and orders the murder of her husband? Shouldn't he be cast out? Shouldn't he be crushed with the weight of God's wrath?

And he would have been were it not for two tiny little Hebrew words. One is the Hebrew word *khen* (or *chen*), pronounced *hien*, and it's in verse 12, and it's translated *favor*. And the other is in verse 7, and in Hebrew it's the word *hesed*. It's two words in English, *steadfast love*.

How can David enter the house of God?

Through the abundance of God's steadfast love.

Not through his own merits or through his goodness. Sustenance love is God's love that's set on someone based on his covenant promises. It's a, I've said I'll love you, I'm going to love you, your love for me is going to fail, but mine is not going to fail for you. You can't outrun it. He can enter the house of God because God has set his love on him.

Why has God set his love on David?

Is it because he is just a really great guy? You know, super military, strategic mind, comes from great family. You know, no, none of that. In fact, he's the youngest, he's not the oldest. He's not a good guy.

The thing about favor is that God gives it because he gives it, and the only explanation that he gives it for why is that you aren't worthy for it. It's the only explanation.

And the word for favor in the New Testament is the word *grace*. Paul says, *by grace you've been saved through faith. It's the gift of God. It's not a result of works so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:8,9)*.

What makes David different from them? Nothing in David. The grace and covenant love of God Almighty is the only thing that makes him different.

What makes him able to repent? Is he just really good at repenting? Is he just, you know, more spiritually sensitive than other people? No, it's the grace and the steadfast love of the Lord for David that makes him able to repent.

What makes him humble and able to ask for help and to worship? It's the grace and the steadfast love of God Almighty for David. And it's that alone.

And it's grace and steadfast love that guarantee that when he asks for help, there's help to be found. And there's help to be found. He looked forward to it, we look backward to it, and it would come in the form of one of his own descendants, which is Jesus.

Jesus who groaned.

Jesus who wept.

Jesus who was surrounded by his enemies.

Jesus who prayed morning and evening and never strayed from the path of righteousness.

Jesus who was crucified by bloodthirsty liars who flattered and deceived him.

Jesus who died for every liar, deceiver, flatterer, and murderer who will repent and believe the good news about him.

Jesus who was cast out on the cross so that those who were his by faith will never be cast out from the Father's presence.

Jesus who was raised in glory and power and promises that when he returns, he will execute justice. He comes riding on the white horse at that point, and he takes care of all liars and murderers and the bloodthirsty. They will fall by their own counsels and be cast out forever.

But his own people will be blessed forever, covered with a shield, protected, singing for joy all of their days, and all of that we can start to experience now. We can actually know the protection and covering of God. We can know joy in the midst of sorrow. We can know all of that. Not perfectly yet. It's not a consummated kingdom, but it begins now, even while we suffer, which Jesus told us we would.

If you're here and you're not a Christian, I want to implore you, you're going to have to deal with this. Don't think that you don't have to deal with it now. If these words are true, and the rest of scripture are true, apart from union with Christ by faith, you're dead in your sins, and God is just and will make you bear your guilt. If you're apart from Christ, you will be cast out forever. Not my words, his words. Why? Because you've rebelled against the God who made you. That's the bad news. That depravity applies to everyone but Jesus, but Jesus is your only hope. You can trust him. Trust that his death was in your place, and wrath was taken, and that he was raised to raise you too, and it all kind of changes. We'd love to talk to you more about that, if that's where you're at.

If you're trusting in the Lord Jesus, do you think you can bring yourself to God like this?

Do you think you can bring yourself to him, stand before him, because you stand united to Christ?

Do you believe that you can enter his house and bow down and ask for help?

Well, you can, because you don't enter his house on your own. You enter united to Christ, and when Jesus gave you himself, he gave you access to all the help you'll ever need. When you come to him, you can trust that the Father's not going to hand you a snake when you ask for a fish. That's not how it works. You can come to him and sing for joy, even when you're full of sorrow. Only Christians can sing through days of sorrow, and you can know his protection and covering and his favor and his covenant love, but will you come to him and tell him about what your fears are?

Have you ever voiced your fears to God?

I'm afraid that I won't have enough money.

I'm afraid that my kid is going to turn out like a pagan.

I'm afraid that this sin is going to destroy me.

Have you ever listed your fears before God?

Do you feel like you can? If the gospel is true, you can and should and do it.

Do you think you can voice your rage to him when things don't go right and people do offend you, and there is injustice? Can you take rage to God? If you can't take it to him, you can't take it anywhere.

Do you think you can take sin to him and believe that he actually meets you with mercy?

Brothers and sisters, the gospel is true. You can bring him all of that, and you can trust that he hears you, and that even if you have to wait, he will cover you with a shield and with protection, and you will know his steadfast love and his favor, so make it a habit.

We'll face trouble until glory. Jesus said it would be that way. Sometimes you'll feel overwhelmed. Sometimes you're not going to want to talk to him about it, but there's an old gospel song, which I think I've decided to just sing to you in its entirety now, if that's okay. I'm just kidding. I didn't like this song as a kid, but at least this part makes more sense now.

You can have a little talk with Jesus. Tell him all about your trouble. He will hear your faintest cry or your groan, and he'll answer by and by.

Probably going to have to wait. Then the song gets weird, and I have no idea what it's talking about, but we'll leave that for another sermon.

Bring him your enemies.

Bring him the wicked.

Bring him the darkness.

Bring him everything that is absolutely flooding over your soul.

Be honest about it. Trust that the judge of all the earth will be just.

And bring him yourself, yourself united to Jesus, and trust that everything that you can voice to him, he wants to hear. He will answer in his own time, and that you have his favor and his steadfast love because of the person and work of his son, great David's greater son.

Let's pray together.

Help us, Lord. Help us to be people who come to you and voice our complaints. Help us to be people who bring wickedness and evil and darkness and injustice and sin and all of it to you. Judge of all the earth. We trust you to do what's right. Take away our vengeance and our desire for our own brand of justice. Help us to believe what's true about you and about the wicked and about ourselves. Help us to bring you ourselves, Lord, our sins, our rebellion, our weakness, but help us come to you to repent and to rest in the person and work of Jesus again and to be renewed more into his image. Lord, make us people who bring our enemies and ourselves to your throne. We thank you that when we do, you hear and you answer. And Jesus, we pray in your name. Amen.