

“The Good, the Bad, and the Godly” - Psalm 5

Adam Casalino - Messiah Bible Church - September 10, 2025

Introduction: “A Fateful Loose Shoelace...”

I once read a story about a Christian who traveled to Jakarta, Indonesia for business. One morning, he was crossing the hotel lobby on his way to a meeting, when he saw that his shoelace was untied. He stopped to tie it, pausing behind a large marble pillar by the hotel entrance. At that very moment, a terrorist set off a bomb right outside the building. The blast was so powerful, the man saw bodies fly across the room. But because he had stopped behind that pillar, he was completely unharmed.

I don't have to tell you that we live in a dangerous world. From terrorists to con men, evil people are always seeking their next victim. Sadly, this is how's it been for a very long time. Even 3,000 years ago, people were in constant peril from evildoers. We don't have to spend much time reading the Bible to know this was true. Just ask King David.

The life of this man of God was shaped by the constant threat of evil men. The man whose name means “beloved” was hated by many. His brothers despised him, his father neglected him, and his father-in-law tried to kill him. And that's not even mentioning his enemies! But how did David face the realities of a sinful, dangerous world? Did he cower in the shadows? Did he take matters into his own hands? No. He poured out his soul to the One who could save him from evil, including the evil within.

What is a *Lament Psalm*?

Tonight we are looking at one of David's seminal works. Psalm 5 is part of Book 1 of the Psalms. Book 1 includes Psalms 1-41; most of them are psalms of David; they are mostly of the lament genre. Psalm 5 is considered a lament psalm.¹ As you might

¹ "Traditionally, this psalm has been classified as an *individual lament*..." Craigie, Peter C, Marvin E Tate, and Dennis Tucker. 2016. *Psalms 1-50*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

have guessed, lament psalms are powerful cries to God.² The psalmist is pleading with God for help, direction, comfort, and deliverance. These are some of the most emotional passages of scripture in the Bible. The psalmists hold nothing back. These works teach us that God wants us to be open and honest with him.

You'll notice an important detail, though, in Psalm 5 and other laments. David is honest with God, but he remains worshipful and reverent. He is expressing his deep pain, but he doesn't forget who's the boss. The psalmist submits all his thoughts to his God and Savior, knowing that he is going to help. Most of the time, lament psalms end on a positive note—even if it's the very last line. The problem hasn't changed, but the writer has. These psalms are precious because they reveal profound truths about God's nature and his promise that he'll never leave nor forsake his people. We learn that a believer is able to overcome a problem when **he takes his eyes off himself and puts them on God.**

A Few Details about Psalm 5

Before we delve into the text, here are a few quick facts about Psalm 5. David is attributed as the writer of this psalm. We don't know exactly when he wrote it,³ but the phrase "To the choirmaster" in the opening suggests he was already king. David is crying out to God for help when facing the treachery of evil men.⁴ But there is much more to this psalm. In these twelve verses, David explores some major theological truths about fallen man, our righteous God, and how these two can somehow be reconciled.

² "For the laments, the introduction is most often characterized by a first-person cry to God—an invocation—in which the distressed speaker (individual or corporate) calls on God directly to hear and respond to a plea for deliverance." Gerald Henry Wilson. 2002. *Psalms*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.

³ "The content of the psalm is of such a general nature that it is not possible to specify with certainty either the date or the author. The substance of vv 4 and 8 may imply that the psalm was composed and used during the time when the temple was functioning, but that is so extensive a period that the information is of little help." Craigie, Peter C, Marvin E Tate, and Dennis Tucker. 2016. *Psalms 1-50*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

⁴ In entreating God to hear his morning prayer, David expressed his confidence in drawing near to God (who hates iniquity) and prayed for divine leadership and blessing for the righteous, and destruction for the wicked. Ross, Allen P. "Psalms." In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

My message for tonight is titled, *“The Good, the Bad, and the Godly.”* We are going to learn how to respond to a world full of evil.

Point 1: Expect God to answer your prayers (Psalm 5:1-3)

Let’s quickly review the superscription: *“To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.”* (Psalm 5:title, ESV). As we’ve said, David wrote this for the choirmaster. King David was deeply involved in Israel’s worship. 1 Chronicles 25 even tells us he picked the musicians and singers who served in the tabernacle. So, we shouldn’t be surprised he also provided them with songs. This psalm was to be played to the music of flutes.⁵ Flutes, as you might imagine, are light, airy instruments. Huh, that’s interesting, isn’t it? A lament was played to what would have been pretty cheerful music. I don’t know about you, but if I was listening to a *lament*, I’d want to hear low, mournful-sounding instruments. Maybe a bagpipe or two. Something, to really get me into a sad mood. Yet, David’s choice to use flutes already tells us something. Even when faced with trouble, we have reason to be hopeful, even cheerful.

David begins the song this way: *“Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.”* (Psalm 5:1–3, ESV). If you ever want to grow in your prayer life, here’s a tip: study David. Early in the morning, the very first thing David did, was cry out to God.

And how does he pray to God in the morning? With a solemn, “Our Father...” kind of prayer? Nope, he’s groaning! The Hebrew word is הָגִיגַּ hāgîg, which can mean “groaning” or “sighing.”⁶ But sometimes it’s translated “meditation,” as in Psalm 1:2.

⁵ “The Hebrew word Nehiloth is taken from another word, signifying “to perforate,” “to bore through,” whence it comes to mean a pipe or a flute; so that this song was probably intended to be sung with an accompaniment of wind instruments, such as the horn, the trumpet, flute, or cornet.” Spurgeon, C H. 2004. *The Treasury of David : Spurgeon’s Classic Work on the Psalms*. Grand Rapids, Mi: Kregel Publications.

⁶ הָגִיגַּ hāgîg 2× sighing, meditation [1901] Mounce, William D. *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

These aren't just mindless groans of pain; this is David pouring out his deepest thoughts and emotions to God. David is yearning for the Lord to hear him; to take note of the pain he's going through.

He calls the Lord his "King"⁷ and "God." This is deliberate.⁸ This psalm is actually a legal appeal to God. David's not crying out to God for emotional support. He is making a case to the true king of Israel—and the world. You see, David understands that prayer isn't merely wishful thoughts being thrown up into the sky. He is addressing the ruler and judge of the world. Prayers to God carry weight, because he's in charge of everything. David knows that the decision God makes regarding his situation is the ruling of a judge. It is binding; nobody can overturn it. This is critical to keep in mind as we move through the rest of this psalm. David isn't just praying for help, he's appealing to God as king and judge.

The ESV translates the second part of verse 3 as "in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you." The Hebrew used here implies putting something into rows or order.⁹ It can be used to describe setting up rows of soldiers for a battle. The ESV is evoking the law's sacrificial system. When a Jewish priest offered up a sacrifice, they would arrange the parts carefully on the altar (see Leviticus 1:6–9). David is being very careful and deliberate with his prayers, following the pattern set down by Moses. That doesn't just include a sacrifice, but as we'll read, faith and humility in his heart. Because he is following a certain protocol in his prayers, he expects a response. He writes "I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch." What does he mean by that?

Well, that brings us to our first point for the evening. How do we respond to a world full of evil? Pray and **expect God to answer your prayers**. David wasn't praying

⁷ "God, as David's king, standing at the head of the Israelite theocracy, cannot let evil triumph in his kingdom, or His believing subjects call for help against their unbelieving foes in vain." Fausset, A. R. n.d. *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Job–Isaiah. Vol. III.* London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

⁸ **"God as Defender of the Righteous"** The psalmist petitions the divine King to hear his morning prayer, which may accompany the morning sacrifice (cf. Lev. 6:12; 9:17)." Fee, Gordon D., and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., eds. 2011. *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

⁹ עָרַךְ 'ārak 75× [Q] to arrange in rows; put in order, take up (battle) positions; [Qp] to be arranged, be put in order, be put in formation. Mounce, William D. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

because it's a nice, religious thing to do. He's got a lot of problems. He's crying out to God, the true king of Israel. But he is also anticipating that God will respond. So much so, that he's willing to watch and wait for that response. That takes a lot of faith, doesn't it? But it's what God wants all of us to do.

The Bible calls us to "seek the Lord." What does that actually mean? Is God hiding in a cave somewhere and we have to go find him? No, we usually mean prayer when we say that. But the reason we say "seek" is because we have an expectation that we will find God. In other words, we *will* receive an answer from him. The ancient Israelites would travel all the way to the tabernacle to seek an answer from the Lord. And, more often than not, they would not leave until they got it. Hannah famously did this when she cried out to God for a son. She prayed and she prayed, pouring out her anguish to God, until the high priest gave the answer, "*Then Eli answered, 'Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him.'*" (1 Samuel 1:17, ESV).

The scriptures teach us that when we seek God and wait for his response, he gives it to us. God was pretty vocal in biblical times, wasn't he? Do we believe he is still vocal today? You know, we have an advantage that the old covenant believers didn't have. We have the Holy Spirit with us all the time. Yes, you can pray and wait in your room until you get a response. But here's the kicker, God goes with you when you get up and go about your day! Watching and waiting doesn't necessarily mean you have to stay in one place and wait. But it does mean having **an attitude of expectation that God is really going to answer your request.**

You probably heard of a man named Paul Bunyan. He was a great Christian author who wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He also wrote a book called *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, about his personal life. In this book, he wrote about the heavy load of guilt his conscience carried because of his sin. At one point he was so wracked with grief, he felt like he was losing his mind. He cried out to God, like David, for an answer.

The answer came. He described it this way, "But one day, as I was passing a field, fearing that all was not right with my conscience, suddenly this sentence

fell upon my soul, ‘Your righteousness is in heaven,’ and I thought I saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God’s right hand. There, I say, is my righteousness.”¹⁰ **The weight of guilt was lifted as he realized the power of forgiveness that is found through Jesus Christ. He asked God for an answer to a pretty big question, and God gave it.**

Now, perhaps you’ve never heard from God in this way. But it happens more often than you think. God speaks to us through the written word. Moreover, if you believe in Jesus Christ, his Spirit lives within you. And he is constantly providing grace, wisdom, and truth to your heart and mind. The moment you pray, he is there listening. Oh, he loves to hear you pray. Even when you are not at your best, he is happy to listen. And when we watch and wait, expecting an answer, he will give it to us.

Point 2: Trust in God’s righteousness. (Psalm 5:4-8)

David opens his psalm entreating the king and judge of the world. After calling out to God to listen, he makes a sudden pivot. He writes, *“For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.”* (Psalm 5:4–6, ESV). Seems like a pretty shocking turn after the first three verses, eh? But if we remember that David is referring to God as king and judge, it starts to make sense. He is desperate for God’s help, but he acknowledges a hard reality. Yes, God is his only help. But the God of Israel, the true king, is not like the gods of this world. He can’t be bartered with. He can’t be bribed or coerced into helping David. Even with sacrifices, David can’t presume he is buying God’s help.

And why is that? Because God, is a righteous king. He is purely good. He does not approve of the actions of sinful men. David confesses that sinners are not even allowed to enter into the king’s presence. If you’ve read a systematic theology book, chances are they quote this passage when discussing the *holiness of the Lord*. God is

¹⁰ Bunyan, John. 2013. *Grace Abounding*. Barbour Publishing, Inc.

so good that he can't even "look upon" sin. In practical terms, that means he will not approve of anything—in word or deed—that violates his nature. Anything that goes against God's good nature is what we call sin.¹¹

David continues using kingly language when he explains the reality of sin. A sinner cannot enter into the king's court and ask for help. The phrase "stand before your eyes" in verse 5 is critical. Standing is a pretty important concept in the Bible. If you were in "good standing" with a ruler, it meant you could actually go up to his throne, stand before him, and speak with him.¹² A criminal or enemy couldn't do that. They had no right to stand before a king; the best they could do was grovel at his feet.

The concept is best described in one word: righteousness. That term in the Bible, more than anything else, describes right standing with God. If you are righteous, you are "right" with God. Sinners have no such standing before the righteous king of the world.¹³ Because of Adam and Eve's disobedience, all their children lost their right to approach God.¹⁴ We can't, in and of ourselves, expect help from such a good and holy God. But how bad is the situation, really? Pretty bad, folks. David says in verse five that God "hates all evildoers."

Wait, what!? Doesn't the Bible say that God is love? "For God so *loved* the world..." right? I won't belabor this point too much, but it needs to be explained. The psalms are works of poetry¹⁵ and, as such, employ metaphor. I said once in a sermon

¹¹ "God is holy. Central to the biblical message about God's character is His holiness. "Holy" in the Bible basically means "separated, dedicated." There are two important aspects of God's holiness. (1) He is separated from and elevated above all that is transient, impermanent, finite, imperfect, as well as all that is evil, sinful, and wrong." Menzies, William W. *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*. Edited by Stanley M. Horton. Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1993.

¹² Position or condition in society or in a profession *especially*: good reputation (a member in good *standing*) Merriam-Webster, Inc. 2003. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

¹³ "In terms of our legal standing before God, any one sin, even what may seem to be a very small one, makes us legally guilty before God and therefore worthy of eternal punishment." Grudem, Wayne A. 2020. *SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, SECOND EDITION : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. 2nd ed. S.L.: Zondervan.

¹⁴ "Because God takes no pleasure in wickedness, evil (or evil persons) may not be his guest or stand in his presence, as the psalmist is doing (vv 2–4, 8–9)." Craigie, Peter C, Marvin E Tate, and Dennis Tucker. 2016. *Psalms 1-50*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

¹⁵ Poetry—has been well defined as "the measured language of emotion." Easton, M. G. *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893.

that Americans are hyper-literal—we don't like symbolism or metaphor in our art. So, many stumble over verses like this. David's not contradicting John 3:16. Yes, God is love. This passage is describing just what a pitiful state we are in, because of sin. Sin is a violation against God and demands punishment. And there is nothing you can do to "pay back" God to remove that punishment. So, although God is loving, when you are in your sins, the consequences you face are no different than if he hated you.¹⁶ Rough, I know. But David isn't going to soften this truth and end up misleading someone into thinking their sin is no big deal.

Spurgeon put it this way: **"O let us be very faithful in warning the wicked around us, for it will be a terrible thing for them to fall into the hands of an angry God!"**¹⁷ David is warning his listeners that, because they have no standing before God, they can't expect a warm welcome into his throne room. Verse 6 puts it bluntly, God destroys those who disobey him. But, why is David bringing this up now? Didn't he start this with confidence that God was going to answer him. "Hey, Adam, wasn't your first point that we should expect God to answer us? How can we expect him to do anything good for us, when we have no standing with him?"

Those are some good questions, thank you for asking them. You could interpret verses 1 through 3 as desperate pleas for mercy from God. David going out on a wing and a prayer, hoping that maybe, just maybe God would answer him. But there is much more confidence in his words than just that. Because God is not a "maybe" kind of God. *He* is the one calling us to pray to him. He is the one extending mercy if we would just come to him. In Jeremiah 33:3 (as well as in many other Bible passages), God promises that if we call on him, he will answer.

So, the question we are left with is this: why is David certain that God will answer him, even though he is no better than these sinful people? The answer comes in the very next passage of our psalm, ***"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. Lead***

¹⁶ "This is strong language but consistent with the psalmist's belief that Yahweh cannot coexist with evil or condone the acts of evildoers." Gerald Henry Wilson. 2002. *Psalms*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.

¹⁷ Spurgeon, C H. 2004. *The Treasury of David : Spurgeon's Classic Work on the Psalms*. Grand Rapids, Mi: Kregel Publications.

me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me." (Psalm 5:7–8, ESV). David doesn't write, "Hey, God I'm nothing like those awful sinners. You better answer my prayers and accept me!" Not even close. David is only confident that he can be welcomed into the king's house, because of God's steadfast love. That is a well-known word in the Hebrew: **חֶסֶד** *hesed*. Bible versions translate it many ways: lovingkindness, mercy, loyal love, unfailing love, steadfast love.¹⁸ This word communicates God's faithfulness to his people, because of the covenant he's made with them. He loves David and will take care of him—not because of David's loyalty to God—but because of God's loyalty to David.¹⁹

This brings us to our second point. How do we respond to a world of evil? We **trust in God's righteousness**. Not our own. David realizes the only reason he can be welcomed into God's house is because of God's steadfast love. He can't do anything to scrub away his sin himself. *Hesed* can also be translated "grace," God's unearned favor. Grace is given by God to those who do not deserve it, cannot earn it, and are not worthy of it. Grace is only meant for people who, because of their sin, have been disqualified to know God.

J. I. Packer put it this way: **"The grace of God is love freely shown toward guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity and had no reason to expect anything but severity."**²⁰

Isn't that amazing? God, the awesome king and judge of the world, is giving us a chance to enter into his house. Not because we can earn our way in, but because of his love and grace. Read these verses considering the kingly tone of this psalm. Of course, a great and mighty king like God would have an amazing house. To be welcomed into

¹⁸ *hesed* describes the special relationship God has with his covenantal people, and as such can be a difficult word to translate because it is so specific: "steadfast love" (ESV, RSV); "loyal love" or "covenant faithfulness" (NET); "unfailing love" (NLT); "loving-kindness" (KJV). Mounce, William D. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

¹⁹ "The psalmist himself stands in contrast to such evil people, even though he recognizes that his access to God's presence arises because of God's grace (his great love [*hesed*], or covenant loving kindness). He comes into the sanctuary and bows down towards the temple, made holy by God's presence." Tremper Longman. 2014. *Psalms : An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: Ivp Academic/Intervarsity Press.

²⁰ Packer, J. I. 1973. *Knowing God*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

someone's house is a big deal. You don't let strangers into your house. And you certainly don't let your enemies in. A person's house is their refuge; the place they go to be safe and enjoy the company of their family. It is, in many ways, a sacred place. When you welcome someone into your house, you are saying, "I want to share this special place with you." It is no small thing to be welcomed into God's house.

When the Bible talks about being in God's house, it is conveying closeness to God. Obviously, God does not live in a tent or building. The language means being in his presence, and thus, experiencing his favor. To dwell in God's house is the same as saying you are in "good standing" with him. It means he accepts you. He wants to talk to him and he back to you. David is telling us that something as precious as this—to be in God's house—is not offered on the basis of our merit. We can't do anything to win God over. So, David proclaims that God will let him into his house because of his *hesed*, his steadfast love, or grace.

But how can God do such a thing? David just said he does not let evildoers into his presence. So, how can the righteous judge of the world look past our sin and accept us? It's found in that word *hesed*. As I mentioned, it conveys a **covenantal love** God has for people. God's love is accessible, through a covenant—a binding agreement—he makes with us.²¹ Back then, he established a covenant with Israel through the law of Moses. That covenant was a prelude to a greater covenant that he made for all humanity. But this covenant is not built on the blood sacrifices we make (as the old one was) but through the shed blood of his Son.

Jesus Christ made it possible for sinners like us to be welcomed into God's presence. He explained in Matthew 26:26–28 that he shed his blood to bring about this new covenant, which provides forgiveness of our sins. He died in the place of bloodthirsty evildoers like you and me. You no longer have to fear that God will one day destroy you, because Jesus suffered that punishment himself. Like David, we can have

²¹ "When God makes a covenant with his creatures, he alone establishes its terms, as his covenant with Noah and every living creature shows (Gen. 9:9). When Adam and Eve failed to obey the terms of the covenant of works (Gen. 3:6), God did not destroy them, but revealed his covenant of grace to them by promising a Savior (Gen. 3:15). God's covenant rests on his promise, as is clear from his covenant with Abraham." Packer, J. I. *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993.

confidence that we can experience God's presence. This is key in understanding God's steadfast love. You don't do anything to earn it. It's just the opposite.

There are countless movies where the hero does some great thing to win the heart of a woman. The prince has to kill the dragon. A man has to defeat the old ex-boyfriend. In fact, I remember a story once (this was real life) where a young woman was being harassed by some guys at a local watering hole. Just then, her new boyfriend shows up and beats the living daylights out of them. The woman as so overcome by the feat of strength, she fell for him then and there. They've been married ever since. That actually happened to my aunt and uncle.

We are not the heroes of the story, folks. We don't swoop in and do something so amazing, that God falls head over heels in love with us. It was the other way around. The great champion of the story is Jesus. He slayed the dragon, beat up our old lovers, to win our hearts.

We normally think of righteousness as what we do for God. Even as saved Christians, we fall into a trap, believing God is only happy with us when we do the right things. Thinking that way creates distance between us and God, because we think we can't rely on him... until we do something good. Doing right is pretty important, but it does not secure your standing with God. In fact, we need to first be welcomed by God, forgiven of our sins, before we can think about doing right. David says, in verse 8, that it's God who leads us in *his* righteousness. He makes our way straight. We don't do right to keep him happy with us. He is happy with us, because of Jesus. And now, we can learn from him how to live—without fear of messing up and losing his love.

When you stop trying to earn God's approval and just listen to him, he is able to teach you how to live. You will embrace a moral standard you couldn't reach on your own. But it also means he will guide you in such a way that you will avoid disaster. Notice how David asked God to lead him in righteousness, *because of his enemies?* Righteous living is more than just doing good deeds. It means we are being led by God away from bad situations. Every step we take needs to be ordered by the Lord, otherwise we can lose, big time.

Years ago, a powerful Wall Street investor named Bernie Madoff was exposed for conducting a massive Ponzi scheme. This man took millions of dollars from investors, pretended to invest it, and kept it for himself. Eventually, the law came down hard on him and he went to jail. But do you know that the people he duped were wealthy and intelligent? Some of them were great businessmen and leaders of industries, like Stephen Spielberg. Yet this man was able to deceive them because they trusted in their own wisdom. If smart, rich people can be so easily tricked, how much more regular folks you and me?

When you have good standing with God, he provides for you. He gives you wisdom to avoid bad decisions. He will step in and mend your mistakes. He will bring healing, provision, good relationships, and so much more. That sounds too good to be true, so we often assume we have to do something to earn all this. But as David said, it is God's steadfast love that makes this all possible. He does not expect you to "pay him back." This love is given freely to you, because of Jesus.

Points 3: Know that evil will be punished. (Psalm 5:9-10)

David is calls on God to lead him in righteousness. And we know why he needs God's help so much: because evil men want him dead. He continues, spending a bit more time elaborating on these people. *"For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. 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."* (Psalm 5:9–10, ESV). We're back discussing evildoers. David is contrasting God in verses seven and eight, with the wicked in verse nine. God is offering steadfast love and righteousness. Sinners? They might speak flattery, but they are out for blood. God is welcoming us into his temple. But evildoers went to send us to an early grave. An "open grave" hits on purification laws in the Old Testament. If you touched a grave, even a sealed on, you were made unclean. David is evoking this language as a warning to his listeners. Evil people defile everything they touch, even with their speech.

By verse ten, though, David quickly pivots and reminds us what's waiting for these evildoers. They will fall as a consequence of their evil actions. But more than that, God will "cast them out."²² David is harkening back to that kingly language of an evildoer being kicked out of the king's throne room. His original listeners might have even thought back to Genesis 3, when God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden. David faced plenty of enemies during his life. Goliath, the Philistines, warring Gentile nations, even some of his own people. He understood that, while in his life he might have had a few victories over them, God was the one true judge who decided their fate. And it was not a good fate, to say the least.

The bring us to our third point: **Know that evil will be punished**. The kind of language David is using in this passage is common in the Psalms. Israel faced some terrible enemies. They commonly asked God to strike them down and pay them back for their sins. Is that what we are supposed to do, today? We are living in a new covenant, mind you; we are living at a time when God is offering salvation to all people. Are we supposed to pray that evil people be punished by God? Should we relish in watching sinners get what's coming to them? No, because only by God's grace are we saved from that very same punishment.

On one hand, this message is supposed to comfort us. We know that the evil happening in this world originates from our true enemy. We do not wage war against people, but a spiritual enemy called the devil. He is the spirit at work in the disobedient. When we see all the evil going on in the world today, we can take comfort in knowing it will one day come to an end. Evil has an expiration date, halleluiah!

I'm a bit of a nerd... so I grew up reading comic books and watching Sci-fi/Fantasy movies. And one of the best parts of those stories is when the bad guy finally gets what's coming to him. The villain has been terrorizing the heroes

²² "He further calls on God to banish them, using a verb (ndh) that means 'to force out' and is used elsewhere in reference to the exile from the Promised Land (Neh. 1:9; Jer. 8:3; 24:9; Zeph. 3:19), whose background is found in the covenant threat that rebellion is punishable by expulsion (Deut. 30:4)." Tremper Longman. 2014. *Psalms : An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: Ivp Academic/Intervarsity Press.

all throughout the story. He struts around gloating. But then, bam! He gets his. I especially love what happens at the end of *Return of the Jedi*. Oh man, Luke is on the ground, writhing in pain as the Emperor torments him and laughs. But then what happens? Luke's father, Darth Vader, turns on his master. The Emperor is helpless as Vader picks him up and throws him down that shaft! He screams helplessly as dies a well-deserved death. Finally, that vile serpent is put down!

The book of Revelation tells us that God's people will rejoice when "Babylon," Satan's realm, is finally destroyed. It won't be like this forever.

While we might assume David is relishing the downfall of his enemies, let's think a bit more on this. I claimed that verses five and six were warnings to his audience. That's likely true for this section as well. David wants to wake up his listeners to what's awaiting them, if they don't turn to God. Those who persist in ignoring God's word and reject his Son will face permanent and eternal separation from God. That is described in the Bible as a burning lake of fire. Nothing in scripture suggests that hell is figurative. It is literal and it lasts forever.²³

As Christians, we know that we will never have to fear that punishment. But this passage should put some urgency into our hearts. But we know plenty of people in this world who will face eternal judgment. Some of them have mistreated us; some might have done us or our families much harm. But don't rejoice when you think about what will happen to them on the Day of Judgement. They need salvation. We must pray earnestly for them. And we must share the good news of Jesus with them, whenever we have opportunity.

Point 4: Rest in God's grace. (Psalm 5:11-12)

After describing the fate of those who rebelled against God, David contrasts them with another group. He ends his psalm on a positive note, "*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those*

²³ "All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. A man may lie without danger of the law of man, but he will not escape the law of God. Liars have short wings, their flight shall soon be over, and they shall fall into the fiery floods of destruction." Spurgeon, C H. 2004. *The Treasury of David : Spurgeon's Classic Work on the Psalms*. Grand Rapids, Mi: Kregel Publications.

who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with favor as with a shield.” (Psalm 5:11–12, ESV). Often, the main point of a psalm doesn’t become clear until the final passage. David weaves together truths about God and mankind through his song. Then, he ties them all together with these last two verses.²⁴ Evildoers will face God’s wrath. But there is a group of people who don’t have to fear that, because they take refuge in the Lord.

David moves from talking just about himself and extends the message to a much larger group of people. He says “all” almost as an invitation to his listeners. Refuge is another one of those common terms from the Old Testament.²⁵ The Israelites knew the value of refuge. They had literal fortresses used for protection. Cities were surrounded by tall and thick walls. To “take refuge” in something was to enter into it and let its walls protect you. To take refuge in the Lord means faith. These people are trusting in the Lord to protect them. David says people who do that should rejoice, because the great king and judge of the earth will never let them down.

He will spread his protection over them.²⁶ That’s better than walls six feet thick. God is so faithful, that even in hard times these people can rejoice in praise. They love the name of the Lord. God’s name is always associated with his nature, that holy, unbreakable nature we talked about. God is always good. He never messes up. He never forgets his people. There is good reason to love his name. The name of God is so potent, it is often synonymous with his very presence. To love God’s name means you

²⁴ “These two descriptions of the character of God (vv. 4, 12) bracket the core contrasts of the psalm (vv. 5–11) at the beginning and end as a sort of variation on the inclusio.” Gerald Henry Wilson. 2002. *Psalms*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.

²⁵ “The theme of taking refuge in Yahweh is an important one in the Psalter and has already been initiated in the blessing that concludes Psalm 2: “Blessed are all who take refuge in [Yahweh]” (2:12). The immediate image evoked by these terms is that of fleeing to a fortress or place of security in time of trouble. Such trust is more than a temporary desire for protection or security. It evidences a willingness to commit one’s whole destiny to God.” Gerald Henry Wilson. 2002. *Psalms*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.

²⁶ “The psalmist prays that God will “set a screen” over (v 12; or, “overshadow, cover,”) his people, evoking perhaps the imagery of God’s protection being like that of a bird covering its chicks protectively with its wings (cf. Ps 91:4). In v 13, the metaphor is expanded into the simile of the large body-shield which protects the entire body from the assaults of enemies. Both the metaphor of v 12 and the simile of v 13 develop the initial statement concerning those who “take refuge” (v 12a) in God, and that refuge makes possible both exultation in God (v 12d) and the receipt of God’s blessing (v 13a).” Craigie, Peter C, Marvin E Tate, and Dennis Tucker. 2016. *Psalms 1-50*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

love him; you desire more than anything else to be near him. David says those people will exult, celebrate God—because he is with them.

David ends his psalm with a powerful promise. God will bless the righteous. God goes out of his way to show the righteous favor, that's kindness, benevolence, and special treatment. He covers them with this favor the way a soldier is covered by a large shield.²⁷ That sounds pretty good to me. These folks don't have to fear Goliath or any other evil man, when the great king of the universe is surrounding them with his favor.

That brings us to our final point for tonight. How are we to respond to a world full of evil? We **rest in God's grace**. David opens this psalm with an earnest plea for help. But, as I pointed out, this lament song ends of a very high note. After discussing the plight of sinners, the ongoing threat of violent men, David is confident that the Lord is going to take care of his people. I need to point out something very important. In verse eleven, David discusses people who take refuge in the Lord. Verse twelve, he refers to this type of person as "righteous." Do you see the correlation? What have we learned throughout this psalm? Nobody is righteous by their own actions. We are all evildoers who should be put out of God's presence.

But when we take refuge in the Lord, when we put our faith in him, he makes us righteous. From Old Testament to New, the word of God proclaims that, "The righteous shall live by faith." Faith is relying on God to save you, take care of you, cleanse you from all your sins. I want to underscore this truth, because our human instinct is to read "the righteous" in verse twelve and think, "Okay, so God only blesses people who do righteous things." Wrong. If this psalm teaches us anything, it's that God welcomes us into his presence because of his loyal, steadfast love for us. His covenantal love provided by grace—unearned favor. We do nothing to be worthy of his love. It is by his grace that we are forgiven and made righteous. Then, he is the one who leads us in a life of his righteousness, not a righteousness that is derived from our self-effort.

When you prioritize trusting in your Savior, making your daily goal hearing his voice, then he takes you by the hand and leads you in right doing. And look at what

²⁷ "צָנָה is the large body-shield, as distinct from , the smaller shield; cf. O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 222–24." Craigie, Peter C, Marvin E Tate, and Dennis Tucker. 2016. *Psalms 1-50*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

happens when we consent to be led by God, rather than try to earn our place beside him. He covers us with favor as with a shield. That word cover can also mean surround; wrapped around.²⁸ That's even better than a literal shield. God is surrounding us roundabout with his favor, his grace. Nothing can touch us when God is the one protecting us.

But you might be thinking, "Well, Adam. Bad things happen to Christians all the time. Sometimes there isn't a pillar blocking the blast." That's true. So, does that mean God doesn't always protect his people? Does that mean, sometimes, we have to look after ourselves? No, of course not. God's favor on our lives is so powerful, it extends beyond this mortal life, into eternity. We can count on God to take care of us and our families—and afterward? We can count on him to carry us into his heavenly kingdom. How should we respond to this reality? We rest. Why do I say "rest"? We still have problems. We still have difficulties. There are still Goliaths and Sauls running around trying to hurt us.

But when you realize that the great king and judge of the universe is spreading *his* protection over you—do you really have any reason to worry? All those problems facing you tomorrow morning... are they really all that big of a deal? Jesus promised that all who come to him will have rest. Rest from worry. Rest from struggle. Rest from trying to make life work out in our own power. We can... take a deep breath and know that God has our back. Our efforts don't work things out in our life. Sure, we've got plenty to do between the time when our eyes open and when they close. But it is the Lord who assures us that everything's under control. That's what sovereignty is really all about, friends. He's got us in his hands, always.

One time there was a group of men, in a boat. They were trying to get across a lake. Suddenly, a storm swept over the water. It was so bad, they thought they were going to die. But sitting at the bottom of the boat was their pastor... asleep. They shook him awake and said, "Don't you care we're about to drown!" The man simply spoke and the storm went away. He basically said to them, "Was

²⁸ "עָטַר 'āṭar 2× [Q] to surround, close in upon." Mounce, William D. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

this why you woke me up?” You probably already know this story. Jesus rebuked the wind and there was a perfect calm.

That same Jesus is alive today. He is the one who spreads his protection over us. He is the great king and judge David trusted in. It is his name that we love. It is his divine favor, his grace, that surrounds us every day like a shield.