**A Morning Prayer: Pray in Expectation**

Psalm 5:1-12

Key Verse: “**In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation**” (3).

Everybody experiences often the tough reality of life on earth. When you encounter problems, you have two options to choose: you get bitter, or you get better. What is your choice? (There are many areas of tough challenges: jobs, families, marriages, relationships, school studies, and health problems, to mention some). The Psalms teach us the secrets of how to get better when facing tough challenges. The Psalms are tools for our prayer. They give us languages to express ourselves. They help us how to respond to our covenant God in our various life situations: in sufferings, as well as in well-beings.

This morning I'd like to meditate on Psalm 5, which has been called a Morning Psalm because of verse 3. This psalm was written by David. He had to fight many battles in his life time. He faced many life-threatening moments; he made many enemies even among his own people, most notably, King Saul who was seeking to kill him. In this psalm David has come to the end of his rope. He was running for his life. What did he do in his life-threatening situation? He prayed and wrote psalms. The Psalmist David is a model believer who responds to God in all circumstances. We can learn from the psalmist how to pray in the midst of sufferings in this world.

**I. A biblical person approaches God with a sincere heart in expectation**.

Look at 5:1-3.

1 **Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my sighing.**

2 **Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.**

3 **In the morning, O Lord You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation**.

David opens his prayer by sighing: “Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my sighing” (1). Sighing is a nonverbal expression of need (Rom8:26). David was a strong warrior. But he came to God with a desperate and broken heart. He expressed himself by groaning. Sometimes we do not know how to express ourselves before God. We find no words and just sigh and groan. But the Lord hears both the inner sighing and audible prayers. We don’t need to impress God by our words. Our groaning inexpressible with words comes to the Lord's ear as a cry for help. When you are desperate, your soul will sigh and cry for help. The psalmist is seeking God's face and crying for His help. When I attend our early morning devotion, someone often prays to God by saying only few words: Have mercy on me, have mercy on me! I believe that God is there to listen to such a sincere prayer.

Look at v. 2 **“Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.”**

David knew that he was not talking to some unknown person, but he was talking to the LORD, Almighty God. The psalmist calls God "My King and my God." David approached God with reverence and awe knowing that God is the King of kings.

When we come to pray, we should know to whom we have come. Our God is the sovereign King and he is always in control. He is able to save. He is close enough to His children that we may call Him "**my God**." We can call God ‘Abba (dear Daddy)’ because he is our covenant God in Jesus Christ.

According to Hebrews, we should boldly approach God's throne; but that is only because Jesus Christ died and shed his precious blood for us. When we pray, we pray to God who is our King and our heavenly Father in Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 3**. “In the morning, O Lord You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation**."

It's not saying that God hears only in the morning; He doesn't have a morning and evening. It was David who was laying his requests for that day before God. It was David who woke in the morning and saw not only a beautiful sunrise, but another day of many problems and burdens. As he got up that morning, he had two options: to despair and stay late in bed or to go to God in prayer. He chose to go to God in prayer (which was definitely a better choice). How wonderful it is that we have such a human-friendly God (what a friend we have in Jesus)! As covenant people of God, we can go to God whenever we are in trouble.

The psalmist offered God the morning of his day. He decided God would have the best hours of the day. In Ps 57:8, he said “**Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn**.” Morning Prayers brighten the whole day. Morning prayers lift the clouds and let the sunshine in. With the dawn of each new day, God renews His steadfast love for us. "**His compassions** ... **are new every morning"** (Lamentations 3:22-23). Charles Spurgeon, a great English preacher, spoke of the importance of starting the day with God: "An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. While the dew is on the grass let grace drop on the soul."

The psalmist who is an exemplary believer starts the day in faith instead of fear. He brings his requests to God and waits in expectation. During the day he waited with expectation to see what the Lord would do for him. As covenant people of God, we can have a new start every morning. We can expect great works from God every morning. We can pray to God in the morning according to Ps143: 8 “**Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul**.”

When you offer your mornings to God, you no longer wander aimlessly, but instead you live a purpose-driven life. When you offer your mornings to God, you no longer live in fear of getting caught, but you stare fear down by the power of God’s love. I pray that we can come to our faithful God every morning with expectation.

**II. A biblical person struggles for God’s righteousness**

Look at verses 4-6.

**4 You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell.**

**5 The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong.**

**6 You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the Lord abhors**.

Verses 4-6 are the psalmist’s basic biblical conviction: God hates in the most radical way any form of evil. He is “not a God who takes pleasure in evil.” He “hates” evil. He “abhors” bloodthirsty and deceitful men. In short, God absolutely hates evil. So, the wicked “cannot dwell” with God. The proud "cannot stand" in God’s presence; God will "destroy those who tell lies.” In other words: God hates the sin and those who sin against him. God never uses a double standard himself. God makes Himself accountable for His words.

When we come to God and pray, we should have this biblical conviction: Our God is just and righteous. So, when we pray to God, we can take God by his promise and truth.

Look at verse 7. “**But I, by your great mercy (=by the abundance of your steadfast love), will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple**.”

In contrast to the wicked men, the psalmist hopes that God will allow him to enjoy His presence. When we come to God, we hope to have fellowship with God. Our hope is not based on our own righteousness, but on God's sovereign "steadfast love."

When we live in an evil world, we experience many ungodly and unfair things. In prayer, we seek God’s presence. In prayer, we turn away from the evil world and turn to God. In prayer, we bow down in reverence. We have a well-grounded hope that the Lord will answer us.

Look at verses 8-9.

8 **Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make straight your way before me.** 9 **Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit.** 10 **Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you**.

These verses are about God’s righteousness. On one hand, the psalmist prays for God to make straight his path by leading the godly in His righteousness. This righteousness of God is the saving grace for believers; thus, it is the gift of God. On the other hand, the psalmist prays that God may show himself righteous because His divine order is challenged by the ungodly. Evildoers are all around, and they are instruments of destruction and death; their mouths are filled with lies and deceit; their tongues speak words that slander and kill people. But the psalmist commits his way to the Lord.

Look at verse 10 **“Declare them guilty, O God! Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins, for they have rebelled against you**.”

When I read verses like this, I was confused asking, “Can I pray as a Christian like that?” I found that the same confusion happened to many Christians. Is the psalmist calling a curse on his enemies? No.

Actually it is about God’s justice and righteousness. In verse 10, we see the picture of the courtroom. God is the righteous Judge. Punishment should fit the crime. The wicked cannot continue to live as if their way is blessed or condoned by the Lord. The Lord will triumph in His righteousness by holding the wicked accountable for their acts.

And what the psalmist has done here is to tell God about the feelings of the suffering people of God. And it is God who is the actual hearer of these angry words, just as it should be God, and God alone, who hears our angry words. We should understand these angry words in their context as part of the language of the laments. If used rightly to channel and control our potentially sinful anger, the so-called imprecatory/”curse” psalms can indeed give us a great help: They can keep us from harboring or displaying anger against others.

We should honestly express our anger to God, no matter how bitterly and hatefully we feel it, and we should let God take care of justice against those who mistreat us. So, function of these kinds of psalms is to help us not to be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good (Rom12:21). Think about David who expressed himself with angry words in prayer, but treated his enemy Saul with kindness and respect.

I pray that we may not fight against people, but instead struggle for God’s righteousness in our prayer.

**III. A biblical person is assured of God’s protection**

The psalmist opened his prayer with sighing. Now he closes his prayer with joy and assurance. Look at verses 11-12.

11 **But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.**

12 **For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield**.

After the psalmist struggled for God’s righteousness, he prays for God’s people that God may protect them. God is faithful to His people who take refuge in Him. The Lord protects His own under the cover of His wings (91:4). The righteous God will protect the faithful, so all who love God’s name may be filled with joy.

The psalmist closes his prayer by affirming God’s promises: “**Surely You bless the righteous; You surround them with your favor as with a shield**.” When we take refuge in Him, He protects us. He crowns us with His glory. Truly the King will care for His own! We can confess to God: “In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps16:11).

We learn from the psalmist that (1) a biblical person approaches God with a sincere heart in expectation; (2) a biblical person struggles for God’s righteousness; (3) a biblical person takes refuge in God and is assured of God’s protection.

The Psalms are the anatomy of our souls. They help us to find the experience of our being human before God exposed and sharpened. They give us language to pray to God. As we read and pray the Psalms, our hearts turn to praising God; our souls are rejuvenated; and our soul begins to rejoice even in the midst of sorrow and sufferings.

Are you experiencing adversity in your life? Are you about to be overcome by an evil world? Pray the psalms. Call upon the Name of the Lord. The Lord is the answer of your questions and the best remedy of your problems. Turn to the Lord with a sincere heart especially in the morning. This is true worship. When we pray with patient expectation, we will have far greater answers to our prayers. Praise the Lord!