

Psalm 5 moves back and forth between two narratives, and shows the polarity that so often characterizes our prayers, our petitions to our Lord God. On the one hand, we have the Lord God in his majesty and holiness and glory. He is in his holy temple and his righteousness is undisputed. On the other hand, you have humans below. So many who walk in wickedness, boast in themselves, speak lies and act with bloodthirsty vengeance.

So we find in this psalm a walking back and forth. First, a petition to the Lord to hear and pay attention to him. Then he thinks about those who cannot come before him in their wickedness. Then he contrasts that with himself and how he comes to the Lord in his steadfast love and righteousness. He looks again at the wicked with their lies, destruction, death, and transgressions. Finally, closing with thoughts of the refuge and protection the LORD provides, he prays for that protection.

We have a psalm that comes before the LORD God with that request. There is the opening appeal to the Lord to give ear, consider his plight, to pay attention to his cry. The impression we may receive is that sometimes even words do not come forth in the request. We may think of what Paul wrote to the Romans, that we do not always know what to pray for as we ought, yet the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. This psalm is again asking God to hear both his spoken words, and the words left unspoken. Sometimes we're able to articulate what is pressing upon our hearts, but sometimes we don't quite know how to put to words our struggles. This psalm calls upon God to consider both, for he knows us more than we know ourselves.

This psalm highlights for us a good amount about the nature of man. Since our hearts can be so deceptive, and we ourselves are so prone to sin, it is good for us to be reminded again in this psalm about the extent of man and our need for protection. It's when we read of what righteousness and holiness is, and learn more about who God is and what may be in his presence, that we learn to recognize evil. We begin to see what is wicked, what boasting is, how bloodthirsty the hearts of man can be. Through the lens of Scripture, we gain a clearer understanding of the depth of the depravity of the world and its desperate need for salvation. And for those who refuse to come before the Lord, our own need for protection.

The contrast this psalm highlights for us shows to us that there is only one truth. There is only truth to be found with the Lord, and that everyone outside of that truth can be described as boastful, bloodthirsty, deceitful, destructive. If we do not find ourselves in the way of the Lord, if we do not come in his steadfast love, if we do not bow down in the fear of his Name, we too fall by our own counsel, bear our own guilt, and will be cast out. We confess that truly there is no one righteous before God. We need to recognize our sins and misery, and therefore our need for deliverance, our need for redemption from ourselves. Indeed, one of the enemies we ask God for deliverance from in the sixth petition is our own sinful nature!

Jesus Christ knows better than we do our need for protection. He knows that we need to be kept in his Father's name. That only being guarded by God Almighty would keep us safe. We need to be kept as his people given to Christ from out of the world. Our Saviour's petition echoes the petition of this psalm, a psalm that acknowledged coming before God in divine righteousness.

Our great high priest in his devotion for us knew how much we need God's protection, for he bore the impact of who we'd be outside of his protection. The pronouncement of judgment in verse 10 fell upon him: we do not bear our guilt, he did; we do not fall by the counsel of man, he did; we are not cast out from his presence because of abundance of transgression, he was. That's the contrast he affords us who can now take refuge in God and sing forever in joy.

Even as he was making preparations to go to the cross, our King brought our needs before God seeking our protection, our shield. He does not ask for complete removal from the world, but asks that his people be kept from the evil one. We remain in the world, sent into the world by the one who was sent by the Father for our deliverance. And in the protection he asks for us, he asks for sanctity in truth, truth found in the Word of life. The words of truth and life that come from God, over against the death and decay of the open grave of the unrighteous.

Brothers and sisters, with that prayer, that petition for our benefit, our Saviour went to his betrayal and arrest. He went to the cross to suffer and be cast out. His sacrifice was given to deliver us from evil, to protect us from our own sin. That enables the LORD to bless us as righteous, to consider us in his righteousness, to cover us with favour won with his blood.

We see the urgency for praying for protection. We recognize our need to pray for protection. In our Saviour's prayer and in his action, we see the assurance in seeking protection. We have confidence that as surely as the Father heard the prayer of the Son, so he surely hears our daily prayer for protection. We may know that each morning's prayer that calls upon God to spread his protection over us and to cover us with favour is one that he hears willingly in the name of Jesus our Lord and King.

It paints for us a very powerful picture in knowing our prayers may be answered. The prayer and action of Christ Jesus reflects as truly the nature of God as the description of God's reaction to wickedness in this psalm. Just as absolute a frame of reference God's righteousness and holiness is for us to consider the wickedness of man, so also is he an absolute frame of reference for considering the outcome of this prayer, the seeking of divine protection and shielded favour. He will never allow evil to have the last word, but is unceasing in pouring out blessing for us. As surely as we ask him for protection from the world and from our sinful nature, so surely is he there for us.

May we therefore rejoice and be glad! A prayer for protection does not make it a dire prayer. We do not ask for protection because we are afraid of the world, or afraid of our old and dying nature. After all, the world's inner self is destruction! The power of the world has nothing on the King. We pray for protection not out of fear, but in joy and confidence that we remain in the world because we are sent into the world, and we will not succumb to it when we are shielded in the favour of God most high. Seek his protection, and live under his protection!