

# Discipleship

## Personal comment:

*It is undoubtedly true that we can easily forget that the right way to deal with problems is to bring them to God in prayer and in worship. Most of the services of worship we go to today are designed as social occasions, not events where we meet with God to do business. In my view it is impossible to deal with evil in the community when people come to church on Sundays with an agenda to enjoy their worship and with a social agenda to meet and converse with others. They have no reason to expect that they will have to face life changing decisions and challenge. Yet if the Gospel is to be proclaimed and Satan is to be defeated, then we need to be ready for a complete change in our attitude to worship.*

## Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Reflect on what ways you can bring to the Lord your own thoughts about what is wrong and evil in the world and in your own church community. Ask the Lord to help you make godly discernments about the truth of these things, and seek the protection of the community. Let Him be your guide.*
- *Pray for the community of God's people in your village, town or city, and pray that evil will be rooted out in your midst and destroyed by the grace of God. In this world, the enemy will always return to do more damage, but we cannot stop in our obligation to fight against it and be victorious in Christ's name.*

## Final Prayer

This day, Lord God, is Your precious gift to each of us. Keep us from falling and fulfil Your purposes in us throughout our lives. Bring us to the end of each day rejoicing, and as Your disciples, may we be glad to be Your servant and praise You through all we do and say. AMEN

# Psalm 5

No: 24 Week: 196 Tuesday 16/06/09

## Prayer

I believe in You Almighty God,  
for You have made the heavens and the earth.  
I believe in You, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for You have redeemed me by Your life and death.  
I believe in You, Holy Spirit,  
for You comfort and empower me every hour of the day.  
I believe in You Lord God,  
For You reveal Yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Secularism

*Pray, and ask the Lord to raise up people who will defend the faith against the argument that all religions are the same. Ask the Lord to show Himself in power to this world.*

### On-going prayers

- *Give thanks for the opportunities God has placed before you*
- *Pray urgently for the country of Iran and its people*
- *Pray for those planning ahead for the potential flu pandemic*

## Meditation

Jesus, fill the emptiness that comes to us unwanted;  
Be close when fear and dread descend upon the soul,

When something we have done goes badly wrong:  
When the prayers we offer feel like groping in the dark:  
When others we respect reject the work that we have done:  
When sin's temptations rise within, though least expected:  
When evil hurts a friendship, and bruises those we love:  
When unfolding situations compromise our faith and hope:  
When those we love and trust turn inexplicably against us:  
When we have badly let down those we love, in ignorance:

Jesus, fill our emptiness with the power of Your Spirit;  
Break the dread silence of the soul with Your greater love.

## Bible Study - Psalm 5

**For the director of music. For flutes. A psalm of David.**

- <sup>1</sup> *Give ear to my words, O LORD;  
give heed to my sighing.*
- <sup>2</sup> *Listen to the sound of my cry,  
my King and my God, for to you I pray.*
- <sup>3</sup> *O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;  
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.*

- <sup>4</sup> *For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;  
evil will not sojourn with you.*
- <sup>5</sup> *The boastful will not stand before your eyes;  
you hate all evildoers.*
- <sup>6</sup> *You destroy those who speak lies;  
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.*
- <sup>7</sup> *But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,  
will enter your house,  
I will bow down toward your holy temple  
in awe of you.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Lead me, LORD, in your righteousness because of my foes;  
make your way straight before me.*
- <sup>9</sup> *For there is no truth in their mouths;  
their hearts are destruction;  
their throats are open graves;  
they flatter with their tongues.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Make them bear their guilt, O God;  
let them fall by their own counsels;  
because of their many transgressions cast them out,  
for they have rebelled against you.*
- <sup>11</sup> *But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;  
let them ever sing for joy.  
Spread your protection over them,  
so that those who love your name may exult in you.*
- <sup>12</sup> *For you bless the righteous, O LORD;  
you cover them with favour as with a shield.*

### Review

Psalm 5 is a song for the morning (5:3)! Yesterday's psalm was for the evening (4:4), and their common theme of hope in the face of suffering or distress is indeed something to be brought before the Lord both day and night. Both psalms talk about how God's covenant love (translated here as 'steadfast love' – 5:7) overcomes distress and suffering, but this psalm goes much further by identifying evildoers in verses 4 to 6 and 9 to 10. Psalm 5 digs deeper, imploring God to help right from the beginning of the day (5:1-3); we all know that if we wake with a problem on our hearts then it is important and the whole day will be affected unless we overcome it by the help of God. Significantly, this psalm illustrates two ways we can face our difficulties; firstly, by approaching Him in worship (5:7,8), and secondly, through the exercise of personal faith (5:11,12).

Who are the 'enemies' in this psalm? It only speaks generally about boastful evildoers (5:5); liars, bloodthirsty and deceitful (5:6). Verse 9 rebukes their words and motivation with strong words, and they are banned from taking part in any form of worship in the Temple; they are to be 'cast out' (5:5,10). This is strong stuff, and we can react by sympathising with these enemies because they have been rejected. We believe all accusations are unproven unless verified, and someone is innocent until proven guilty. This is a noble thought, but whilst some scriptures help us engage sympathetically with those who are evil, this is not what Psalm 5 is about. The psalm describes 'enemies' entirely generally, as we do when talking about the troubles we have at home or at work, in 'personality clashes' or difficult relationships. So in this psalm, evil is exposed before God,

who alone is entitled to make these judgements. The strong message of scripture is that you cannot have justice without exposing those who are unjust, which is what Psalm 5 does. God's clear judgement on all evil is necessary whatever our opinions about the rights and wrongs of particular people and what they do.

How do we deal with evil? Psalm 5 encourages us to do two things, firstly, to worship God. This begins with the approaching God to seek help (5:1), before addressing Him with a request to deal with evil (5:2,3). God is addressed by his Holy Name 'the Lord', the sacred four letters of Hebrew JHWH, and then as 'my King', and then 'my God' (5:2). The worshipper expresses caution, watching for the Lord to answer to the prayer (5:3); no one can presume to barge in to the presence of the Lord! The next three verses describe evil; 'the boastful will not stand ...' (5:5), but they read like a statement of fact, a 'confession' of what is evil ('confession' means 'to agree with', hence, confession means agreeing with God about something). Read like this, verses 4-6 read like the worshipper's discernment of what is evil, appealing to God to act to deal with what is wrong in the world. The worshipper is then granted access (5:7f.) to the Temple; 'I through your steadfast love will enter your house' (5:7) and is reduced to awe.

The second theme used by the psalm is the personal faith of the worshipper. The one who speaks the psalm reflects the problems of evil within the community (5:9,10), and seeks God's help and wisdom. Verse 9 reflects the evil found in the community, and verse 10 is a request for God's justice to be endorsed and enacted. Notice that the one who has brought this prayer began by speaking personally (note the personal tone of vv2,3,7: 'I pray', 'I plead', 'I bow down'), but now speaks for others (note the words 'you', 'your' in 'but let all who take refuge in you rejoice' and 'spread your protection over them ...' verse 11). It has often been suggested that this is a prayer of a leader of God's people, who has had the courage to turn away from personal interest and call for the favour of the Lord to deliver his community from the evils he mentions. His actions are a sacrifice of personal faith, and having suffered at the hands of evil in the community, he has brought it to God in prayer in order to have it cast it out, seeking a 'covering' (5:12) of God's protection for the whole community against evil, rather than any personal benefit. This is true leadership.

In psalm 5, one person takes action for the sake of the deliverance of all; it is typical of a priest, for example, and some believe that a priest said the psalm on a day such as the 'day of atonement' when the people confessed and were cleansed from their sins. Indeed, a Christian can say that Christ does this work for us. He is the one who identifies sin, brings it to the personal presence of the Father and deals with it for our benefit, fulfilling what Psalm 5 promises! There are many things we can learn from this psalm; it is a powerful description of how evil can be dealt with in a community, and has far more to teach us than we can glimpse within a short study.

### Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What does this psalm teach you about how to deal with evil in your life and the life of your church community?
2. Which verses of this psalm do you think will speak most directly and effectively to a new Christian about how to deal with evil?
3. How we use our voices is important. Look at these words (sigh – v1, plead – v3, lie – v6, flatter – v9, exult – v11). How can we control what we say in order to be effective for the Lord?