

# *Prayer for Protection from the Wicked*

*Psalm 5:1-3*

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*For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David.*

*1 Give ear to my words, O LORD,  
Consider my groaning.*

*2 Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God,  
For to You I pray.*

*3 In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice;  
In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.*

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As with quite a few of David's Psalms, in this one we see him picturing himself (and, I'm sure, quite literally) turning to God for protection and deliverance from the unredeemed and wicked around him. This is another individual lament, and the first instance of a Psalm with prayers for the personal downfall of the enemies. Such Psalms have in view a situation where one is faced with bloodthirsty and deceitful persecutors. David is the attributed author, but there is no information on whether a particular experience of his was the occasion for the psalm. It seems as though his intention was for this to be sung in one instance or another.

The first one and a half verses indicate for us a couple things that kind of set the tone for what follows:

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*For the choir director; for flute accompaniment. A Psalm of David.*

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This tells us three definite things that give a little color to what follows for us:

1. "For the choir director" - not surprisingly informs us that this Psalm was designed to be sung, most likely in one relationship to the Tabernacle or another (remember that David had no direct part in the actual building of Solomon's Temple; perhaps with the exception of communicating the need and the desire for the Temple to be constructed; and perhaps the setting up and providing of the start of the necessary provisions for that temple.
2. "...for flute accompaniment." Tells us that David, at least to some degree not only "the sweet singer of Israel" but also a musician/composer. He had a specific idea just how he wanted this Psalm, when finally used for its' intended purpose, ought to sound. There would not only be the words, but the melody and manner of playing also. It might also be that this Psalm was intended to be for use in a congregational setting as worshipful prayer offered together.
3. We're also told that this is Psalm of David. Our information here is that this is one of David's Psalms, written by him in its' entirety. There

are quite a number of Psalms that are by others, so this is a valuable tidbit of info.

There have been a number of suggestions given for the general outline of the Psalm, which gives us an idea of just how David intended the thought of the Psalm to run in our minds:

- A Morning Prayer to be given courage in the face of enemies - 1-3
- This Prayer is intended to bestow a sense of God's goodness and justice - 4-6;
- Earnest Prayer secures God's guidance - 7-8;
- It Seeks His protection and punishment of enemies - 9-10;
- It guarantees Answer and His blessing upon the righteous - 11-12,

We begin a study of this Psalm by taking a look at the very first phrase in the first verse:

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*Give ear to my words, O LORD,*

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The first couple words, “**Give ear**” are in the imperative voice. It is a particularly interesting form to think about. The basic tense of the verb is called the “Hiphil” and generally is used when the intent of the writer is that the verb be understood to be addressed to a single hearer. It is also given in the imperative which, because it is clearly addressed to God, called Yahweh, referring to God and Master and Sovereign Lord of the universe, ought to be understood in what is called the “Jussive” sense, which has the idea of a desperate and confident plea to one capable and able to answer what is being asked. It is most definitely, given the fact that David most definitely knew and understood Who it was that he was addressing this request to, NOT and attempt or intention to command God in any way. David is never pictured as possessing that kind of arrogance or presumption. So, his intent here is that he is making a plea to His Master, confident and assured that God would both hear and respond to what he was asking.

It is not just an empty plea; there is certainly confidence in a God who hears prayer and Who has interest in responding and giving an acceptable and, in this case, a powerful answer to this request. This “command” is built upon the word for “ear.” It takes its place alongside parallel requests that God would pay careful attention to the supplicant and his sufferings (Pss. 17:1; 55:1, 2). This was, in fact, one of David's favorite topics in his Psalms – he knew that God was One Who desired the best for His people and would take what steps were necessary to protect and provide for them.

David asks God to give heed to his (David's) “words”. As his son Solomon would do, David gives an example of just how a believer ought to form his prayers to God – that is as definite particular requests asking precisely for what he needed and desired. The term is obviously a noun phrased as masculine and plural; lending a personal sense to his requests. He also places it in the “construct” which speaks of a definite sense. He is not merely speaking of

conversation in general, but of specific words spoken. David is referring to a specific request that he had offered to God. He goes on to ask that the Lord “consider” his “groaning”, referring to the emotional sense of what is asking. “Consider” speaks of paying attention to or examining what he is saying. Once again we see the imperative used, and we remember that this is not intended as a command, but is an expression of David’s will to treat the One to Whom he offering this prayer with the idea that he knows that He will hear and answer. There is, to this form, a real sense of emotion lent to his request. It is clear, from here and from other expressions in the Psalms, that David very deeply and fervently believed that God would hear, receive and respond to his request.

He describes this praying and asking as “groaning”, which lends some depth and emotion to his action. The word “groaning” can be interpreted as “sighing”. He goes on in verse 2 and asks the LORD (from the start of verse 1) to “*heed the sound of my cry for help*”. “Heed” asks that the LORD “pay attention to” or “listen attentively” to his words. It is in the same form that we have already spoken about; an imperative and paralogic form. It is speaking to one expectantly and intensely, with great confidence that God will hear and respond. We note again that this not a command given to God, demanding or believing that GOD, if only we believe enough, will DO what we are saying.

It is profound that he finishes this section with a reference to GOD as his King and his God. King is a basic reference to One Who exercises rule over others. It is used in the NT reference to OT Kings. David himself is referred to as the “king”, using a form of this same word. God in this phrase is not Yahweh” ass it has been elsewhere in this Psalm. It is “Elohim” (el oh heem). It speaks of God in His greatness and Deity, as Judge and One Who rules over all.

David sums up this verse 1&2 part of his statement by tells us his logical and powerful conclusion, his explanation why it is that he has said that which he has said in these first two verses.

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*... For to You I pray*

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Prayer is a sacred and very specifically defined thing in the OT. God’s people were to pray to Him and to Him alone. They were NOT to offer ANYTHING, prayers included, to any source other than the One True God, and he alone. David, who desired but was not permitted by God, to build the Temple in Jerusalem, knew these “rules” for worship and prayer well. And so, for him to end these few verses in the beginning of this Psalm with “for to You I pray” was significant indeed. It was (and still is) one thing to pray incidentally to another god (it was (and still is) NOT acceptable to do so, but it happened a good deal (and still does).

The word “to pray” is another of those interesting word in the OT. It is the Hebrew word “palal” (pronounced ‘paw **lal** - with the last part emphasized). It carries all of the modern ideas of just what prayer is; that which is made to a deity, entreating, approaching, supplication, pondering or meditation, and the

like. It sometimes mean to ask that a deity intervene and provide. It can also refer to one praying in order to seek intervention for some other. It is another of the verbs here that is in what we would know as the imperfect tense, implying that we are beseeching God to do that which, as Sovereign, He has already determined to do. In other words, we are not telling Him anything **He does not already know of** and has no desire, **already to take action** with.

Verse three sums up the section we have been considering:

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*3 In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice;  
In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch.*

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The starting phrase here “in the morning” can be, and often is viewed as the time of prayer (Pss 59:16; 88:13) and/or of deliverance (Ps 30:5). It is a colloquialism for the rising of the sun, the earliest time that one can sensibly see and interpret his surroundings. As there were no alarm clocks in those days, the sun, and the life habits of people were often used to judge the time of rising. It was also used to express the idea of preference or of significance and priority:

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*<sup>16</sup> But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength;  
Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning,  
For You have been my stronghold  
And a refuge in the day of my distress. (Psalm 59:16)*

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David also used the phrase in Psalm 88:13:

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*13 But I, O LORD, have cried out to You for help,  
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.*

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In Psalm 30:5 he speaks of the ultimate coming of the realization and redemption and the welcome time that trials cease and our salvation will come:

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*5 For His anger is but for a moment,  
His favor is for a lifetime;  
Weeping may last for the night,  
But a shout of joy comes in the morning.*

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David is telling us of the coming time in which he will pray and in which he is sure that God will hear his voice. He extends and develops his statements by saying that it is “*in the morning*” that he will offer or order his prayer and expresses his confidence in the fact that GOD will answer because he concludes y saying that he “eagerly watch” for God’s answer. The word we have given as “offer” actually means “order” or to lay out in an organized fashion, or even to set in rows. It is given as something that David had determined to do before, but would take action upon at a later time. “Watch” means to look intensely upon, or to scan with emotion.

I have often desired that my own prayers would reflect the confidence that David expresses here. He KNEW that God would be attending and even answering his requests and it colored the manner in which he offered them.

Thus he “ordered” them, not just saying them in whatever fashion seemed right to him at the time. Also, he offered them at the best and earliest time that he could manage, the morning. Would that we might make prayer the same kind and depth of priority, and offer it with the same degree of confidence.