

Prayer

Thank You for the gift of this day, Heavenly Father, which brings with it all the fresh promise of what is possible as Your Holy Spirit works through us. Even though we may never know the full picture of everything You are planning, may we play our part in doing Your will, and so be fulfilled in every part of life. May Your eternal plans come to completion, and may we rejoice in them. Thank You, Heavenly Father: AMEN

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Kneel to pray, or find some other similar position different from sitting in which you are comfortable to pray

On-going prayers

- **Pray for countries of different religious beliefs.** *Pray for Hindu countries, and for relationships between Hindus and Christians.*
- *Give thanks to God for sleep and for health*
- *Pray for those involved in the future of space exploration*

Meditation

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

Be close when something done goes badly wrong,
When prayers offered feel like groping in the dark:

Be close when envy overrules all better judgement,
When sin's temptations rise as least expected:

Be close when evil hurts and bruises friendship,
When life contrives to compromise all faith and hope:

Be close when failure comes to haunt the memory:
When everything that can be done will not suffice:

Jesus, fill the emptiness within by power from on high;
Break the dread silence of the soul with greater love.

Bible passage - Psalm 5

Psalm 5 describes a worshipper praying to God about the evil that can be found within the world. Evil separates people from God, but those who turn to Him in worship find a blessing.

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

¹ Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.

² Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God, for to you I pray.

³ O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.

⁴ For you are not a God who delights in
wickedness;

evil will not sojourn with you.

⁵ The boastful will not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.

⁶ You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and
deceitful.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Lead me, LORD, in Your righteousness
because of my foes;
make Your way straight before me.

⁹ For there is no truth in their mouths;
their hearts are destruction;
their throats are open graves;
they flatter with their tongues.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² For You bless the righteous, O LORD;
You cover them with favour, as with a
shield.

Bible Study

Review

Psalm 5 describes how evil is dealt with by God, and although it begins by presenting God with human need (5:1f.) it ends with a worshipful call for God to bless His people (5:11). It is best read by imagining someone at worship who is speaking to God, and talking with Him about evil and its consequences.

At the beginning, the worshipper comes into God's presence (5:1-3) and approaches the Lord in a worshipful manner. God is addressed by His holy name 'the Lord', (Hebrew JHWH – 5:1), and then as 'my King', and 'my God' (5:2). The worshipper then expresses caution, watching for the Lord to answer to the prayers that have been said (5:3). All this shows us that it is wrong to barge in to the Lord's presence, and all who wish to worship Him would be wise to honour Him respectfully.

After this, the worshipper reads a statement saying evil and wickedness have no place before God (5:4-6). Together, these verses describe evil very generally, and there are many others like it in the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. There is no special meaning in the words mentioned here, such as 'bloodthirsty' or 'deceitful', because they simply illustrate all that is contrary to God's moral laws. There are many such lists throughout the Bible, for example in the Old Testament Law, or in Paul's lists of the 'sins of the flesh', and someone who is god-fearing must be wary these things and know God's Word well enough to understand what is truly evil and what is not.

After being reminded of these things, the worshipper then continues to worship (5:7), and asks the Lord for help to avoid evil (5:8). In Old Testament times, such worship was located in the Temple, where God was supposed to live. So when the psalm says '*I will bow down towards your holy Temple*' (5:7), the worshipper is not honouring a building, but respecting the place where God dwells. For Christians today, God's location is not important, for in Jesus Christ He is everywhere. It is nevertheless important for us to demonstrate physically that we are worshipping God, whether by bowing down or in some other demonstrable way.

The second statement about evil is found next (5:9,10), and this confirms its true nature (5:9,10). It serves as a warning, and strengthens the resolve of the worshipper to stay away from evil. It emphasises the consequences of evil, which are all destructive and lead to conviction (5:9,10). Now, some dislike the psalm because it says that God rejects evildoers (5:10), and they dislike the idea of God rejecting anyone. However, the truth is that evil and sinfulness are unacceptable to God, and although He saves people from sin who turn to Him, those who wish to go their own way always set themselves up for God's rejection.

The psalm ends with two verses of praise to God for His protection of those who turn to Him; '*You bless the righteous, O Lord, You cover them with favour ...*' (5:11). But here, we notice something interesting. At the beginning, the psalm was spoken in the first person (see; '*I pray*', '*I plead*', '*I bow down*' 5:2,3,7), but towards the end, the psalm changes as the worshipper addresses God; '*make them bear their guilt, O God ... let all who take refuge in You rejoice ...*' (5:10,11). What has happened is this; the worshipper began by focussing on personal needs, but has ended up focussing on God Himself!

This psalm appears to reflect the feelings of someone who has suffered. Here, the problem has been submitted to the Lord God so that the worshipper may not be taken captive by evil's power, but receive the Lord's protective covering. But at the end there is more, for the worshipper concludes by calling on God not only for personal protection, but protection for the whole community (5:11). One person has taken action for the sake of all, as would be expected of a priest, for example, and some think that this psalm was said on the 'day of atonement' when all Israel confessed and were cleansed from their sins. For us, today, of course,

this priest is Christ. He identifies with sin for us, and He brings it into the presence of the Father and deals with it for our benefit, bringing our salvation and also fulfilling Psalm 5!

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What does this psalm teach us about how to deal with evil in our lives and also the life of the church community?
2. Which verses of this psalm speak most directly and effectively to a new Christian about how to deal with evil?
3. How we use our voices is important. How does the Lord God help us with controlling our voices so that we do not pass on evil?

Personal comments by author

We can easily forget that the right way to deal with problems is to bring them to God in prayer and in worship. Unfortunately many services of worship we go to today seem more like 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 a personal agenda to enjoy their worship and with a social agenda to meet others and converse. So 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

- *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 may well seek to return to do more damage, so we must not cease our determination to fight against it and be victorious in Christ's name.*
- *In prayer, ask the Lord to help you make godly discernments about the nature of evil around you in your national and community life. Let the Lord be your guide.*

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
