

Why Evil Must Lose!

Psalm 5

One of the difficulties that many people have with the truth of a good God who is sovereign over all of life is that He seems to be doing so very little to destroy evil.

Evil men continue to commit terrible crimes, and God appears to be indifferent. Those who have no fear of God have not been held accountable. In the present, the world is not always governed by a just hand. God's people whom He loves are often ridiculed and slandered for no good reason.

The next three psalms deal with the problem of evil. They are not philosophical treatises on the problem of evil. They are the struggles of one man, the king of Israel, who wants to help his subjects to continue believing in God's promises of joy and peace in the face of evil.

Psalm 1 lays out an expectation that the godly will flourish, and the wicked will perish. Psalm 2 makes clear that the LORD has appointed David as His representative ruler on earth.

Therefore, we have an expectation that David will be conquering all his enemies and ruling over Israel in righteousness.

A good king ruling over his realm in righteousness is the recipe for peace and joy for all his people.

Only that is not how it is working out. Evil people are opposing David, and the LORD has not removed these men.

That is the situation of the next three psalms. There are more psalms that deal with this issue than these three. But these three will be sufficient to help us get a feel for the terrible struggle in which David repeatedly finds himself.

Why should you care whether David finds victory over his enemies? It is important to remember that David is God's appointed king. He is the one whom God has personally promised blessing and victory over every enemy.

David's lack of victory over his enemies is a loss for every member of his kingdom. If it were only David's loss, then we might think that we could do better. But if David is your king, you need him to win over his enemies. His victory means your victory. His loss means your loss.

So, when you read this Psalm do not read it as if David is just another man. Read it as if your hopes depend upon his conquering his enemies.

David is a foreshadow of Jesus Christ. The presence of evil in our world flies in the face of God's promise to put all of Jesus' enemies under His feet. If Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, why has God not destroyed all evil? And how do we maintain a hope that God will destroy all evil as we see its power growing all around us?

David is deeply disturbed by evil, and the men who oppose him. He is truly distraught, and fighting against despair. But he is also clinging to truth.

Read Psalm 5.

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ESV **Psalm 5:1** TO THE CHOIRMASTER: FOR THE FLUTES. A PSALM OF DAVID.

Give ear to my words,
O LORD;
consider my groaning.

The one who should be basking in his victories, instead is groaning.
He is so confused and frustrated that he cannot put words to his feelings.
God's anointed king should be experiencing peace and joy. Instead, he is groaning.

David's groaning reminds us of the inward groanings of the Spirit within our hearts.

Romans 8:26 ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Why is it that the Spirit is groaning within us?
Because the promises of redemption have not yet been fully realized within us.
We still live in a fallen world and are surrounded by pain and suffering.

In a mysterious way that I do not fully understand, this sort of groaning in our hearts is every bit as much a product of the Spirit as the feelings of peace and joy.

Even apart from his words, David's LORD hears his groanings. But the fact that God knows David's groanings does not keep David from putting a voice to his prayer.

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

David prays as a king, to his King.

ESV **Psalm 2:6** "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."

This is one of five more times in the Psalms that the psalmist refers to the LORD as "my King".

David is a man who has been declared king by God, but he does not allow this to make him arrogant.
He maintains a humble posture before His LORD and King.

Israel wanted a king to rule over them because they really did not want God to be their king.
But here Israel's human king makes it clear that the LORD is his Divine King.

The human king over Israel lives in submission to His covenant LORD.
David recognizes that he is not above God, but His servant.

In the Psalms, there is an ongoing exploration of the relationship between Israel's human king and God who is our Divine King.

The only way that the human and the divine kingships become one is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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3 O LORD,
in the morning
 you hear my voice;
in the morning
 I prepare a sacrifice for you
 and
 watch.

David combines his prayer with the offering of a morning sacrifice. There is an understanding that there must be the sacrifice of blood if the LORD is going to receive David's prayer. We no longer combine our prayers with sacrificial offerings. We enter the throne room of God through the blood of Jesus Christ alone.

It is appropriate that this prayer is offered in the morning. The morning is the transition from darkness to light.

As such, it is a visual reminder that God who is Himself "Light" will indeed destroy all darkness and rule in the light of his righteousness.

Why does David continue to cry out to his King and his God to destroy the evil forces who oppose him? Why does he continue to believe that Evil must lose?

Answer: The character of God.

4 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
 evil may not dwell with you.
5 The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
 you hate all evildoers.
6 You destroy those who speak lies;
 the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

These are verses that are worth coming back to again and again in your heart. Many of the deceitful ideas permeating the world today have their origin in some form of denial of the truths in these verses.

We often do not understand why God has not yet destroyed evil. But we must never embrace the lie that God has somehow gone soft on evil.

But as soon as we accept God's hatred of evil, we should also begin to fear what that means for us. We too have evil within us. If we take the time to honestly look at ourselves, we find that we too have some degree of hatred for God's rule over us. We would rather be left alone to rule our own lives.

As much as we are willing to condemn the terrible evils around us, our own conscience pricks us because we know that evil also abides within our own heart.

There are many times in the Psalms where the Psalmist seems to only be concerned about the evil in others, with no thought of the evil in his own soul. There are other psalms in which the Psalmist does emphatically state his own need for forgiveness and cleansing. So, we know that personal sin is not ignored.

But what are we to think when the Psalmist fails to mention his own struggle with sin?

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Just this: The Psalmist is not writing a systematic theology. Maybe, if you looked at the entire 150 Psalms, you could develop a systematic theology. But you should not expect every Psalm to say everything about our sin and redemption.

David is expressing his honest emotions in the moment in which he finds himself. Right now, David is surrounded by evil men who would love to destroy him.

David is experiencing many enemies who are wrongly slandering his character. They are questioning his right to rule as God's appointed king.

They are fighting against David's rule over them, and so they are resisting God's rule over them. At the core of the evil that they are perpetuating is a thirst to throw off the yoke of God.

Psalm 2:2-3 ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

David, who himself has already acknowledged his commitment to have God rule over him as King, is wrestling with how God will respond to those who defy his rule, and God's rule.

Psalm 1:6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 2:12 ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.

David wants a strong reason to believe that God will indeed rise up and conquer his enemies. That reason is God's character, the unchanging nature of God that abhors all evil.

The LORD's hatred of evil must drive him to bring an end to all evil. Evil must perish from God's kingdom.

The question of how an evil person might be redeemed is not the focus of this psalm.

But God's hatred of all evil does provide a solid foundation for rightly understanding redemption. Redemption is not God changing His mind about evil. Redemption is God applying His covenant love to His hatred of evil.

The LORD abhors, He loathes, He feels revulsion for evil... and evildoers. The LORD cannot cease to abhor evil else He would cease to be God.

"No creature has any adequate conception of the evil of sin. None but God comprehends it." Plumer 80

Apart from God's absolute hatred of evil, there is no understanding of the cross. If God could tolerate evil, then it would have been the greatest of evils to pour out His anger upon His righteous Son. Only as the sole solution to our sin does the cross make any sense. God does not change His mind about our evil in order to redeem us. His hot anger was poured out upon His Beloved Son that we might be fully forgiven.

When we make much of God's love for you, remember that it is a holy love that abhors all evil.

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As much as God's character gives David confidence that God will rise up and conquer the enemies around him, so we can trust in God's character to give us confidence that He will conquer and destroy all the evil that remains within our heart.

The cross extinguishes God's holy wrath against us. But it is God's continued abhorrence of all evil that moves Him to send His Holy Spirit into our heart. Instead of consuming us, the Spirit in us is now determined to consume all the evil of our sinful nature.

Only union with Jesus Christ guarantees the destruction of all evil within you. You may destroy some evil. But you will never, of your own resolve, destroy all evil within you. This is what makes union with Christ so very necessary. Only as you are joined together with the One who abhors all evil can you have assurance that He will destroy it down to the last dregs.

And it is Christ's rule over his kingdom that ensures us that no evil will abide there. David has not been able to destroy every evil man because that job can only be accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, when you squirm at the powerful statements of God's abhorrence of evil, remember that His loathing of evil is your only hope of ever being entirely free from all evil.

David is not writing a systematic treatise, but even as he is focused on the destruction of evildoers, he knows that his own ability to enter God's holy temple is only the fruit of God's "steadfast love."

7 But
 I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
 will enter your house.
 I will bow down toward your holy temple
 in the fear of you.

The LORD has declared David to be His son.

David knows that he has not earned this, but that it has been graciously bestowed upon him.

"Steadfast love" is the only cause of David's hope of bowing before the LORD in worship.

"Steadfast love" is "Hesed". It is God's faithful covenant love to David.

David's assurance that he will enter God's house and bow before Him in worship is profound on several levels.

First, the physical temple has not yet been built. There is some sort of structure in which the ark of the covenant is kept. But the temple will not be built until Solomon's reign. And yet, David rests in the assurance that he will enter the temple.

Second, the Mosaic Law forbids anyone but the High Priest from entering the Holy of holies. And yet, David expresses confidence that he will do so.

David does not work out how this is possible. He is not writing a systematic treatise. But he writes enough for us to ponder our own desire to enter into the Holy of holies and bow before our Holy God.

And because we have the complete Word of God, we can connect David's hope with our hope.

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Hebrews 10:19-22 ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Third, even though we know that David is not perfect, he makes clear that the hunger to bow before God necessarily implies a turning away from evil.

David approaches God “in the fear of God”.

He wants God to rule over him.

We too must want God to rule over us when we come before God to worship Him.

Back to David’s situation. David has deceitful men around him. They are plotting his destruction. And they are doing it in secretive ways. They are laying booby traps for him; hidden land mines threaten his every step. And so, he feels the need for guidance.

It is one thing to experience the occasional evil in life. But David is experiencing a coordinated conspiracy against him. Many powerful enemies are plotting his downfall. It is easy to see the connections of the leaders in Jerusalem, plotting the destruction of Jesus.

David needs supernatural guidance to walk through the minefield of his enemies.

⁸ Lead me,
 O LORD,
 in your righteousness
 because of my enemies;
 make your way straight before me.

Lead me in the “right” way.

I get confused on how to walk in the straight way.

I need your help.

David’s main problem is that he does not know how to handle these bloodthirsty and wicked men who are always fighting against him.

Make my way straight before me.

Help me to know how I ought to respond to them in a righteous way.

⁹ For there is no truth in their mouth;
 their inmost self is destruction;
 their throat is an open grave;
 they flatter with their tongue.

It is important to remember that David is not describing how people relate to one another.

He is describing how they relate to God’s appointed king.

It is not that they lie in every situation. It is that they are not honest about their rebellion to the LORD, and His king. Their words indicate that they are not rebellious to God. And yet, in their hearts they are constantly seeking ways to throw off the shackles of God’s rule.

They will say that they have no beef with God. They will talk like they want God to rule over them. But their words are like open graves.

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Why did the Pharisees hate Jesus so much?

Because Jesus was a threat to their own power.

But did the Pharisees ever admit that they hated God's rule over them?

Never. Even as they were plotting Jesus' death, they were talking about their devotion to the LORD.

In the book of Romans, when Paul is arguing the rebelliousness of all men, he uses the language of Psalm 5.

Romans 3:10-18 ¹⁰ as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

The truth is that people rarely declare their hatred of God's rule over them. But this is the heart of all sin. We resist God. We want to throw off the shackles of His rule over us.

David is the brunt of their hatred because he is God's appointed king.

As a person who does not have many enemies, I found it hard to relate to David. In the Psalms, he seems to have more enemies than you can shake a stick at. They are everywhere. But when I understood that David has these enemies because he is God's appointed king, it began to make more sense.

I learned that I did not need to look for enemies. I did not need to manufacture enemies. The Psalm is not about people's hatred of me personally. It is about people's hatred of God's rule over them.

Will there be times when they will hate me because of my allegiance to Jesus? Of course. Jesus promises it. But it is not about you and me so much as it is about people being enemies of God, and His rule over them.

David's prayer in verse 10 makes perfect sense.

¹⁰ Make them bear their guilt,
 O God;
 let them fall
 by their own counsels;
 because of the abundance of their transgressions
 cast them out,
 for they have rebelled against you.

David asks for God to make them bear their own guilt. He wants them to be righteously sentenced by God for their rebellion.

He wants them to "fall by their own counsels". In other words, he wants God to bring to light what is hidden in darkness. And he wants their rebellion to come back upon themselves.

David wants this because he understands that their hatred of him is really their hatred of God.

David is surrounded by enemies, but because he believes the promises of Psalms 1 and 2, David continues to trust that God will thrust down his enemies.

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This is our hope as well. We live in a world that continues to rebel against the LORD. There is not an earthly king for them to hate today. But they continue to resist the LORD Jesus as He rules from His throne in heaven. And because of their hatred of Jesus, they will often hate us who continue to declare that Jesus is Lord.

In my lifetime, I have watched the world's stance towards Christianity completely flip. In my early years, it was a benefit to put your church affiliation on a resume. As I got older, my Christian allegiance became something of indifference. Today, it is looked upon by the world as the primary cause of the world's problems.

Will God reverse this downward spiral?
He certainly has the power and authority to do so.
But our hope is not bound to our immediate situation.
Our hope is bound up in the character of God and His covenant promises to His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Just as David continued to believe that the LORD would judge his enemies, so too must we continue to believe that Jesus will judge all who refuse to bow to Him.

The final judgment of evildoers is the moment when all who take their refuge in Jesus will know the fullness of their salvation. Judgment and Redemption go hand in hand.

11 But
 let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
 let them ever sing for joy,
 and
 spread your protection over them,
 that those who love your name may exult in you.
12 For you bless the righteous,
 O LORD;
 you cover him with favor as with a shield.

Verses 11 and 12 are David's declaration of faith. It is important to recognize that David's enemies are still all around him. There has been no change in his situation.

It is David's faith that enables him to rejoice.
David chooses to believe that the LORD will protect him from evildoers.
He chooses to believe that the LORD will cover him with favor as a shield.
Blessing will be his.
David believes himself to belong "to the righteous".

David does not systematically work this out.
He knows from Psalm 1 that it is the righteous who are blessed.
And he is trusting the LORD for blessing. He is taking refuge in the LORD.
And he sincerely wants the name of the LORD to be exalted.

In the end, David is confident that evil will lose!

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David knows this because he knows God's hatred of evil.
David knows this because of God's promises to him as king.

You too should place your hopes in the fact that evil must lose.
Evil must lose because the LORD hates evil and evildoers cannot stand in his presence.
Evil must lose because the LORD has promised to place every enemy of our LORD Jesus under His feet.

No matter how strong the evil around you, its reign will be short.
I know that short is a relative term. David wrote these words 3,000 years ago.
But they are just as true today as they were then.

We must remember:
The LORD abhors evil... and evil men.

"Wrong views of the character of God spoil all religion..." Plumer 89

This means that we must live with a tension.
We are not yet completely holy.
But through faith in Christ we are declared holy.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
And when we cast ourselves upon Jesus to save us, we are asking him to conquer all the evil within us.
He has not yet completed His work.

We must live with the frustration that we are not yet who God has promised to make us.
We must strive to submit our heart to our King and our God.
But we must also find rest in the fact that it is His commitment to destroy our sin that is our true hope.

And when it comes to evil men in the world around us.
We must continue to cry out to God to act.
He is the only one powerful enough to conquer all evil.

Sometimes, God conquers evil men by redeeming them.
But in the end, if a person remains opposed to having Jesus as their king, they will be crushed.
No evil will be able to stand in His presence.
And Jesus' presence will permeate the entirety of the New Creation.

Is it hard to imagine a world in which all evil is erased? A world in which no evil man will be free to dwell?

That is the world that Jesus died to give you.
In this world, you will have tribulation, but take heart, Jesus has overcome this evil world.