Opening Words

The grace of God, the complete forgiveness and acceptance by God did not lead David back into sin. Instead, it made David pursue God more.

Psalm 5 Part 2

In our previous message, we began looking at Psalm 5, a psalm where David was surrounded by enemies. He was a victim of the violence, deceit, and lies of others. It is a psalm where he describes the wicked and where he also describes the abhorrence of such people by God. We will finish looking at this psalm today and see how the psalmist comforted himself in the presence of God.

It's a scary world out there. There are wicked, evil people and there are wicked, evil nations. I shared with you a story from the life of missionary Nik Ripken where he described some of the atrocities that have occurred in Somalia. But it is not just a few random people who live this way. It seems that the entire country has become this way. Listen to this proverb from Somalia –

> "I and Somalia against the world; I and my clan against Somalia; I and my family against my clan; I and my brother against my family; and I against my brother."

What kind of thinking, what kind of life creates a proverb like that? And that country has reaped terrible, devastating results from such a belief-system.

Let's look at Psalm 5 again. Listen as I read it to you.

> Listen to my words, LORD,
> consider my lament.
> 2 Hear my cry for help,
> my King and my God,
> for to you I pray.
> 3 In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice;
> in the morning I lay my requests before you
> and wait expectantly.
> 4 For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness;
> with you, evil people are not welcome.
> 5 The arrogant cannot stand
> in your presence.
> You hate all who do wrong;
> 6 you destroy those who tell lies.
> The bloodthirsty and deceitful
> you, LORD, detest.
> 7 But I, by your great love,
> can come into your house;

in reverence I bow down
toward your holy temple.
8 Lead me, LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies—
make your way straight before me.
9 Not a word from their mouth can be trusted;
their heart is filled with malice.
Their throat is an open grave;
with their tongues they tell lies.
10 Declare them guilty, O God!
Let their intrigues be their downfall.
Banish them for their many sins,
for they have rebelled against you.
11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may rejoice in you.
12 Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous;
you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

What a description of finding comfort in God and what a description of why we need to take refuge in God! We saw in our previous broadcast a description of the wicked in verses 4-6. We saw that David used seven words to describe them. But he wasn't done. In verses 9-10 he gave four more descriptions of them. He used the different parts of their anatomy; their heart was filled with malice. With their tongue they lied. Their throat was an open grave, and their mouth gave no word that anyone could trust. It is interesting that of the four parts of the body mentioned, three of them are the organs that produce speech.

It is also noteworthy that Paul quotes from this psalm in Romans 3. In that great chapter of that great book Paul uses these verses to talk about the sinfulness of all mankind. These are not just verses about extremely wicked people that we see on the news. These are verses that are true of all of us to some degree. No, we may not manifest wickedness in all the ways that David or Paul describes, but it is in our hearts to some degree because all of us are fallen and all of us are guilty before a holy God.

David said in verse 10, "Hold them guilty, O God. By their own devices let them fall. In the multitude of their transgressions, thrust them out. For they are rebellious before you."

And that would be the case with all of us were it not for the grace of God. Only by the grace and mercy of Christ can we be delivered from our sinful ways and be brought into the presence of God. This is what David wanted and this is what he experienced.

Listen again to verse 7: "But as for me by your abundant lovingkindness I will enter your house. At your holy temple, I will bow in reverence for you."

The Hebrew word for lovingkindness is hesed. It is translated "unfailing love" in some Bibles and "steadfast love" in others. It is hard to find a word or phrase that captures the full meaning of hesed. It carries the idea of grace, mercy, compassion, patience, faithfulness, loyalty, and love. It is one of the premier words in the Hebrew language to describe the character of God.

When God appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai, this is what God said about himself, "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin." Twice God uses the word lovingkindness to describe himself and this is the word writers of the Old Testament used to describe God. Listen to these words:

> Psalm 23:6 – Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,
> And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.
>
> Psalm 103:4 – Who redeems your life from the pit,
> Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;
>
> Psalm 103:8 – The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
> Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.
>
> Psalm 103:11 - For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
> So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

David experienced this kind of hesed, this kind of lovingkindness from God. He knew he wasn't a perfect man. But he also knew how to humble himself and seek God. This is why he would cry out to God. This is why he would groan. Rather than joining the wicked, David wanted to be different. He did not want anything to do with these kinds of people, these kinds of kings, these kinds of nations.

In verse 7 he said, "Lord, as for me, by your abundant lovingkindness I will enter your house. At your holy temple, I will bow in reverence for you." David knew that God's hesed, God's lovingkindness was abundant. He knew that his sins were forgiven and that he was accepted by God into God's covenant by grace. He knew that he could not enter the presence of God because of his worthiness but only by the grace, the hesed, the lovingkindness of God.

What a contrast between David and the wicked. The wicked are boastful before God. But David is humble. The wicked stand and justify themselves before God. David, on the other hand, does not presume to stand in this way before God. He says, "I will bow in reverence before you." David is not standing with belligerence. David is kneeling in humility. This should be our posture before God, at least in our heart, if not in our body – we should humbly kneel before him with gratitude for forgiving us and for allowing us to enter his presence by grace.

Then he says in verse 8, "O Lord, lead me in your righteousness because of my enemies. Make your way straight before me." The grace of God, the complete forgiveness and acceptance by God did not lead David back into sin. Instead, it made David pursue God more. This reminds me of Romans 5-6 where Paul speaks of the super-abundant grace of God and then says, "What shall we do in light of this amazing grace and complete acceptance? Shall we continue in sin that grace might increase?"

And then Paul goes into his treatise on what it means to be dead to sin. He says "God forbid! How shall we who died to sin, still live in it?" Our death to the penalty of sin by the abundant grace of Christ is not an excuse to indulge in sin, rather it is motivation to pursue Christ even more. David shows this attitude in Psalm 5. He stated that the abundant hesed, the abundant lovingkindness of God is what enabled him to escape the corruption of the enemy and enter God's house to worship.

Once he was done worshipping he asked God to lead him in righteousness. He didn't want a one-time experience. He wanted a lifestyle of being led by God in righteousness. He said, "God, make your way straight before me. I want to see the path before me clearly so that I can walk in it."

David concludes this great psalm with these words:

> 11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad;
> let them ever sing for joy.
> Spread your protection over them,
> that those who love your name may rejoice in you.
> 12 Surely, LORD, you bless the righteous;
> you surround them with your favor as with a shield.

David's experience was not for himself only. He wanted God's people to escape the clutches of evil. He wanted God's people to take refuge in the Lord. Notice how he describes those who do this. He describes them as being glad and singing for joy! The world says sinful pleasure brings happiness. God's word teaches that taking refuge in him is what brings gladness and joy.

David realizes he is not the only one to experience trials as he described. He prays that God would spread his protection over all his people so that those who love God may rejoice in him. David has supreme confidence in his prayer because he knows the character of God. This is why he closes this psalm with the statement, "*Surely*, Lord, you bless the righteous." *Surely, absolutely, with no doubt*, I know that you bless your people because you are a faithful God. You surround them with favor. The wicked may surround them, but I know your favor is around them like a shield.

That was David's prayer. That can be your prayer. That can be your prayer for your loved ones. Don't let the wicked overwhelm you. Go into the presence of God by grace, kneel before him, let him lead you in his righteousness, let him protect you, bless you and bring you into great joy.