**Prayer to my King and my God** 12/12/21 dkm

Read: Psalm 5, James 3

Text: Psalm 5

Psalms: 1, 27:7-14, 55:16-22, 72old

What is the first thing you do each morning? Do you head to the dining room for breakfast? Do you head to the gym or to the park for exercise? Or do you head to the study for prayer? For a committed Christian like David, prayer is more important than porridge or pancakes. Spiritual food is as important as physical food to the person who realises the need to nourish their soul, as well as their body. Psalm 5, like many Psalms, is a prayer brought to God in the morning. It is an earnest prayer, a cry to the Lord to hear his prayer and act against the wicked. The wicked are speaking vile things against God’s servant, although there is nothing personal about David’s call for God to judge the wicked; their rebellion is against God (5:10).

The title of this Psalm tells us that David wrote it, most likely while he was king of Israel- although he may have been in exile at the time. There is also a word for the ‘Chief Musician’, and a Hebrew word generally translated ‘flutes’, but which may refer to the tune. There is nothing in the title, or in the Psalm itself, to indicate its precise historical context, but the context of the two previous Psalms is not out of place. What we do see in this Psalm is a broadening of reference to include all who love the name of the Lord. So it is a Psalm for today, a Psalm we can sing in congregational worship.

The Psalm, as written in our Bible, is set out in five strophes or stanzas. We will follow this pattern as we look into the Psalm under five subheadings.

**1. My King and God, hear my prayer**

The first words of the Psalm are uttered with a ‘sigh’ or ‘groan’; these are other translations for the word ‘meditation’ found in the NKJV. David’s first approach to the Lord, to Yahweh, his covenant God, is a deep sigh or groan from the heart. Maybe he was not sure what he should pray, a feeling Paul speaks of in Romans 8:26. But as he comes into God’s presence in prayer, words come to mind, and in keeping with his confidence, his voice becomes clear. ‘If men trust Him [God] enough to cry to Him, that will please the Almighty so much as to make Him inclined to hear their petition’.

Knowing the Lord as, ‘my king and my God’ is sure to instil confidence as we come before him in prayer. David was himself king of Israel. He had people bringing their concerns to him and he would make judgments- as kings did in those days. Each morning he would sit on his throne in a great hall and listen to cases brought before him. Moreover, the king had lots of servants whom he told to do things, and they obeyed- although he also had enemies, as this Psalm indicates. Jesus was astonished at the faith of the Roman centurion who spoke of having soldiers under him who did whatever he said (Mat 8:9-10). As King, God has authority, ultimate authority, to deal with his subjects according to his will. David knows God’s pleasing and perfect will, and that God is not pleased with wickedness (5:4).

In the morning David directed his prayer to the Lord, to ‘my King and my God’. This morning prayer may be linked to the morning sacrifice which David regularly attended to. It may also be linked to the morning spent hearing cases brought to him by the people. The people came before the king with fear and reverence, but also with the expectation of justice. They would look up to the king, seated high on his throne, hoping for justice.

**2. My King and God is holy and hates wickedness**

We reject the popular notion that, ‘God hates sin but loves the sinner’. I do not know the origin of this idea, but it is not the Bible. Here in these verses we read that God hates wickedness, and ‘all workers of iniquity’ (5:5). God is holy, and no evil can dwell with him (5:4). David describes evil in a number of ways; evil is always associated with human beings, of course. Evil is seen in the pride and arrogance of individuals, in those who boast of their achievements or possessions. God dwells ‘in the high and holy place, and with him who has a contrite and humble heart’- not with those who are arrogant (Isa 57:15).

Arrogance is sin in itself and it also leads to further sin. It leads to lying or ‘speaking falsehood’, to deceitful words and behaviour, and even to violence- ‘men of blood’ (5:6). The behaviour of David’s son, Absalom, may be in mind, although David came across many men to whom these characteristics applied. You will have come across people to whom the words ‘deceitful’ and ‘liars’ apply, even if they were not ‘men of blood’. We have to be careful while driving on the road these days with so many cases of road rage. Sadly, men of deceit and lies can even be found in the church.

David was not a perfect man himself, but he did repent before the Lord. And he knew that God, in his covenant love, forgave him. What he is stating in this Psalm by way of recalling the attributes of God, is that God hates sin and sinners, and will destroy them if they refuse to humble themselves before almighty God. Is this only an attribute of God in the OT? Certainly not! Jesus similarly denounced the arrogance and hypocrisy of religious leaders, saying they were ‘like whitewashed tombs’, and then declaring, ‘Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell’ (Mat 23:33).

**3. My King and God, and his covenant love**

‘But as for me’ says David, as he contrasts himself with those rebelling against God. As we just said, David was not without sin by any means, but he knew that God in his covenant love forgives sin. See how many times the Lord forgave the Israelites when they rebelled against him and against Moses in the desert. God set his love on these people, and in his mercy delivered them out of Egypt. He made them his people. David was one of these chosen people of course, and God had made a separate covenant with him as king of Israel.

But David never forgot that God was King of kings and Lord of lords. David humbly came into God’s house to worship the true King of Israel. Some critics say the temple was not built at this time so it was not David who wrote this Psalm, despite what is written in the title. But God’s presence was in the tent of meeting, the forerunner of the temple. Besides, David knew that the true house of God was in heaven. He worshipped the Lord as we do, knowing God to be the God of love and of justice, and as such knew the fear of the Lord (5:7).

David was crying to the Lord at this time because of his enemies (5:8). He was king and could probably have crushed these enemies in an instant. But he refrained from taking matters into his own hands. We are prone to take everything personally and to avenge ourselves. David, like Paul, felt the attacks of his enemies, but brought matters before the Lord, knowing that He will judge righteously. Our judgment is so easily flawed, what with ‘conflict of interest’ and all that! David prayed for the Lord to deal with his enemies, but not before asking the Lord to show him the way he should walk: ‘Make your way straight before my face’ (5:8).

In this time of trouble, David came into God’s house and committed himself into the hands of the Lord. Should we not do the same? It is amazing how our perspective on our problem changes when we avail ourselves of the means of grace that God has given. You know these means of grace I am sure- but are you using them?

**4. My King and God, judge the rebels guilty**

In his prayer, David reflected on the holiness and righteousness God, and his hatred of sin and sinners. In verses 9-10, his focus returns to the wicked people rebelling against God. They are thoroughly despicable and untrustworthy individuals, with ‘hearts full of destruction’ (5:9). Their mouth, lips and tongue are given to flattery, and all manner of foul speech. Jesus said, ‘By their words you shall know them’ (Mat 12:34) and, ‘Those things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man’ (Mat 15:18). James reminds us that ‘the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity’ (James 3:6). Our words are windows to our hearts.

Judging by the foul words of many today, many hearts are full of arrogance and bitterness. We are even hearing foul words spoken in our parliament, which is a reflection of our society. Do you cringe and turn away when you hear outbursts of foul language, language reflecting the smell of an open grave? Cursing is so common these days; with social media people think they can curse with impunity. Social media also promotes flattery, with people sending ‘likes’ to messages sent. In fact, if people are not flattering, they are cursing! Some people are like this without social media; one day they are flattering and the next day cursing you. It becomes hard to believe anything they say. The apostle Paul found the words, ‘Their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue’ (5:9) ‘worthy’ of inclusion in his list of Scriptures proving that ‘all are under sin’ (Rom 3:13).

Having made this observation about the wicked, David calls upon the Lord to ‘pronounce them guilty, O God’ (5:10). If such people repent God will forgive, but if they don’t God must act justly and condemn them. God cannot turn a ‘blind eye’ to injustice because he is a holy and righteous God and King. If the wicked are allowed to prevail then God will appear impotent, or at least uncaring. So David, like many other godly men, called upon the Lord to judge the wicked.

‘Let them fall by their own counsel’. Destruction came upon David’s son because he listened to bad counsel (2Sam 15:31). The kingdom of Israel was divided because Solomon’s son listened to bad counsel. The counsel of a wicked heart will be bad counsel, even if wicked hearts are in the majority! God often makes the plans of the wicked backfire. Many a wicked person has fallen into the pit they dug to trap others. Divine retribution often fits the sin, making it a message to the sinner. David calls upon the Lord to cast out the wicked because of their rebellion against the Lord’s anointed, and against the Lord himself (5:10).

**5. My King and God protects those who love his name**

The Psalm ends on a note of joy and divine assurance, as with most Psalms. Those who trust in the Lord can rejoice in the Lord. ‘Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice’ are words Paul wrote from prison (Phil 4:4). He could write such words because of the assurance he had of his name being written in the Lamb’s book of life. David was assured that God would defend and protect him in the face of attack by enemies, and from all affliction and adversity. He calls upon all who trust in the Lord, and love his name, to rejoice and shout for joy (5:11). Lips that offer praise to God are lips that please ‘My king and my God’.

The Lord is just and powerful to condemn and destroy the wicked, but also loving, and powerful to ‘bless the righteous’ (5:12). He will protect his chosen ones, covering or surrounding them as with a shield. The only other occurrence of the Hebrew word translated ‘surround’ is found in 1Samuel 23:26, where David was being ‘encircled’ by Saul and his men. At that moment a messenger came to Saul telling him to come quickly because the Philistines were invading the land.

How quickly we forget all the wonderful deliverances we have had as a result of people crying to the Lord for us. Folk who recently escaped the terror of Taliban rule in Afghanistan will remember, with thankfulness to the Lord, his great deliverance in response to the prayers of family and friends. We will never forget the greatest deliverance of all, will we, the deliverance from sin and death in and through the blood of the righteous Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ?