

The Lord is a Refuge for the Righteous

If you are a parent, I am confident you will agree with my next statement. Kids cry a lot! Kids also cry about **a lot** of things! As a dad of 4 boys, in the past I implemented the no cry rules...rules for what you can and cannot cry about. For example, it's ok to cry when you get sick, hurt or disciplined. But it's not ok to cry when you are told no more ice cream, get back to bed, or your brother wants a turn. A few months ago, one of my younger sons asked, "Dad, do you ever cry?" After a brief chuckle, I said yes, son even dads cry on occasion. It just happened to be that only a week prior to his question I had shed tears over a very difficult situation. As I prepared for this sermon, I realized that the times I have cried over the past decade have all been for the same set of reasons - extreme painful suffering.

This brings us to Psalm 5, our text this morning. Psalm 5 is a lament. A lament is a passionate expression of grief or sorrow. Psalm 5 is a loud cry from a man, King David who experienced pain and suffering throughout his life, often at the hands of unrighteous men.

3000 yrs after David wrote Psalm 5, it is still applicable to us. We live a sinful, broken world. We see and experience evil all around us. We see lawlessness continuing to abound, the love of many growing cold, and morality decline daily. In our culture, people are becoming more and more hostile towards Christianity. As Christians, we should expect that unrighteousness will only increase and bring more suffering.

Whether you suffer because of your own sin, sickness, painful emotional trauma, or persecution from this culture, there is help for you. King David shares with us a wonderful secret revealed in Psalm 5. The Lord is a refuge for the righteous.

We are going to explore this idea through 3 points.

1. The Lord hears the righteous.
2. The Lord hates the unrighteous.
3. The Lord helps the righteous.

The first point is the Lord hears the righteous. What exactly does the LORD hear from the righteous? He hears the cry of their suffering. Look with me v 1-3

Psalm 5:1-3 1 Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. 2 Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. 3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice...

Last week in Psalm 4, part of David's prayer was to hear God. This week, David's plea is for the LORD to hear him. Hear my voice O LORD! As we have seen the past few weeks David was a man familiar with trouble and grief. Though David doesn't mention the specific context of Psalm 5 many believe it was likely penned by David later in life as he recalled the agony, he suffered during his son Absalom's persecution. As you recall from the story from the past few weeks, Absalom won over the hearts of the Israelites through his cunning acts. After David fled Jerusalem, He was humiliated when his son erected a tent and publicly slept with David's concubines in broad daylight. Then David fled in fear of his life at the hands of his own flesh and blood. Surely if there ever was a time to cry out in deep pain it would be this situation.

Maybe this morning you are suffering from some bad decisions you've made in your life. Maybe you have experienced injustice or have been humiliated, for things outside of your control. Maybe you feel like you are in a hopeless marriage, maybe you are having a difficult time trying to conceive children. Whenever life is difficult, we often need someone to hear us, someone to give attention to the sound of our cry, we need someone to lean on. It's like the famous song by Bill Withers, "Lean on Me".

Sometimes in our lives
We all have pain

We all have sorrow

...

Lean on me
When you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on...

It's therapeutic to lean on someone else and cry upon their shoulder. It brings comfort to pour out the cries of our heart. That's why counselors exist to hear your problems and your to listen to your cries for help. And the Bible is full of real-life stories of regular people like you and me. So, if it's ok for a king to cry out in time of distress, then it's ok for us to do the same. God is the perfect counselor to lean on, and to cry out to because he is faithful and trustworthy to hear you. ***Proverbs 15:29 The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.***

Who exactly is it that hears the prayer of the righteous. Yahweh - the LORD in all caps. Again, look with me at v 1-3. ***Psalm 5:1-3 Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. 2 Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. 3 O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;...***

When we read LORD in the OT in English, generally your Bibles will have it spelled in all caps. This is to signify it is the Hebrew word Yahweh (or the English transliteration Jehovah) which means literally "I AM who I AM, the self-existing one, the eternal God". Also, note in v2 Yahweh is King David's King and God. Even an earthly king has One greater to rely upon for help, for justice and mercy. Brothers and sisters, we serve a supreme God who knows all things and who controls all things and who exists outside of time. That means the Lord knows your

suffering and is sovereign over whatever suffering you encounter in this life. The Lord hears your voice!

1 Kings 18 tells us the story of a competition between the prophet Elijah and the priests of Baal during the reign of the wicked King Ahab. The story is a competition of who's god would hear and answer.

1 Kings 18:26-29 And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. ²⁷ And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." ²⁸ And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. ²⁹ And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

1 Kings 18:37-39 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."

When we face various trials, we all functionally cry out to something for peace, escape, and joy. The question is to what or to whom do you turn to? Is it your own self-reliance, or a streaming service like Netflix to escape reality as you veg and binge watch, or social media to fantasize about everyone else's deceptively perfect life... alcohol, pain medication, pornography, immoral sexual relationships. False gods DO NOT hear you?

No matter how hard you try to ease your pain with idols, they will only result in more pain, suffering, and crying, because false gods do not hear and therefore cannot answer you. But the LORD God almighty is a King who hears, who answers, and who is a refuge for the righteous in times of trouble.

The LORD hears the righteous. However, this is not the case for the unrighteous. This leads us to our 2nd point. The LORD hates the unrighteous. Why does the LORD hate the unrighteous? Because He is Holy. Look with me at v 4-6.

Psalm 5:4-6 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.

David's cry to the Lord for help is an appeal to the justice of God. All injustice is ultimately against the LORD therefore, David can forgo his own vengeance and appeal to the nature of God – His Holiness! The holiness of the LORD is revelatory. What do I mean?

In the ancient near east, god's were not considered holy in the way we think. Consider, the Moabite god, Chemosh. Chemosh had a thirst for human blood. Human sacrifice was a part of the rites worshiping Chemosh. How about Molech. Molech was a Canaanite god who required child sacrifice. Worshipers would burn their children in the fire as an offering to Molech. I recall visiting Chichén Itzá, in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico when I was on a 9th grade Spanish class trip. As we ascended one of the Mayan Pyramids there sat a hand like container carved out of stone where the Mayan priests would offer a freshly sacrificed human heart to their pagan gods. How about Yin and Yang. In Chinese philosophy Yin and Yang are a pair of opposites representing oneness. Light/dark and good/evil.

Then in the OT, there is the revelation of Yahweh... the LORD. God is Holy, unlike any other. He is perfect, without sin, transcendent and completely set apart from every other being in this universe. Because He is holy, He is by nature a God of righteousness and justice.

Therefore, he hates sin and unrighteousness. It begs the question...what happens to the unrighteous?

The LORD will punish them. Look with me at v 10 - ***Psalm 5:10 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.***

Keep Verse 10 displayed as we step through these bullets.

- Make them (the unrighteous) **bear their guilt**, O God. or as the CSB translates it..." **Punish them** God". It implies righteous punishment for being guilty of sin.
- **Let them fall** by their own counsels; Like Ahithophel who conspired against David with Absalom but who's was rejected, and he went and hung himself
- **Because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out**, (implies out the presence of God) – evil may not dwell with God because the LORD is Holy
- Why are they to be punished and bear their own guilt? **For they have rebelled against you**. In the context of Psalm 5, Absalom who rebelled against his father, King David, is the typification of the unrighteous sinner who rebels against the Almighty King – Yahweh the LORD.

V10 reveals God's intense hatred of sin and sinners. The uniformed, the secular skeptic, and sadly even some in other Christian circles will say, no, no, no Josh. God hates sin but not the sinner. God may want to punish sin, but He doesn't want to punish the sinner. God is a God of love only and not a God of wrath. Brothers and sisters, the elders at GCF, as RC Sproul once put it, we "are called to teach correct theology over political correctness". We are called to be committed to the authority of scripture, and God is holy, and He therefore hates unrighteousness and will not let the sinner go unpunished.

Now if you are Christian, as you sit here this morning, you might be thinking, thankfully I am part of the righteous group. But before any of us get a sense of superiority, we need to pause!

The problem of sin is total and pervasive. Sin has affected all of humanity. In one sense this section in Psalm 5, describes us all at one point in time.

Notice in David's description of the unrighteous in Psalm 5:9. It states, ***"Psalm 5:9 For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue."*** The apostle Paul quotes this verse in Romans 3, his chapter where all peoples are condemned equally for their sin.

Romans 3:10-13 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."

According to the Bible, all of us straight out of the womb are born sinfully unrighteous. None is righteous. There has and will forever be only one man born righteous. There is only one man that was without sin, that lived a perfect life and that has fully upheld the righteousness demanded by a Holy God. That man is the multi-great grandson of King David, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because no one is righteous we all deserve to bear our own guilt and suffer the punishment of the unrighteous described in this Psalm. We all have been deceitful, we are all liars whose throats are like open graves, we all are proud and arrogant. God is Holy and will not tolerate sin. So, it seems we all have a problem. But the most amazing news is if you are a Christian your problem has been solved. The perfect man Jesus already suffered punishment for our unrighteousness.

Listen to the how Jesus is a substitute for the unrighteous person of Psalm 5.

- **5:6 For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you**
 - Jesus was treated as evil and wicked by God instead of you
- **5:6 You destroy those who speak lies**
 - Jesus was destroyed as he was put to death for liars like you and I
- **5:6 the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man**
 - Jesus was murdered on the cross for the blood thirsty and murder
- **5:10 Make them bear their guilt, O God**
 - Jesus bore your guilt on his shoulders and was punished for my unrighteousness on the cross
- **5:10 let them fall by their own counsels;**
 - He fell by the counsel of unrighteous men (His own leaders and the Romans) on our behalf
- **5:10 because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you.**
 - Jesus was cast out of the presence of God, as he was cast out of the city of Jerusalem and as he hung on the cross where cried, My God, My God why have you forsaken me, as He bore the wrath of a Holy God, for our abundance of transgression and because of our rebellion against the LORD;

The Lord Jesus Christ is our refuge from the wrath of God. On the cross Jesus swallowed up every last ounce of punishment, he bore every drop of our guilt of sin, and has wiped our slate clean, because the LORD, is a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. He is a refuge for the righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we

might become the righteousness of God. Me?? The righteousness of God?? Yes, and not because of anything we've done, but in contrary to all that we HAVE done, Christ was made to be sin and now his righteousness has been imputed to us – credited to our account if you have faith in him.

This is the gospel! This is the best news you could ever hear. Whether you feel righteous or not, if you are a Christian, then you are the righteousness of God. Thank God it doesn't matter how we feel. Today, if there is anyone here in this room, that does not know the Lord Jesus Christ as savior, no matter what you have done, whatever evil you have committed, there is a refuge for you! There is a way to have a new life, to escape the wrath of God, to have peace with God the creator of the universe, and it is found in the man, Jesus Christ. But it means surrendering your life to the God of the Bible. It means repenting of your sins and believing that Jesus died in your place and rose from the grave victoriously as King of King and Lord of Lords. It means the Lord can be your refuge as well.

So far, we have looked at how the Lord hears the righteous and hates the unrighteous. Our third and final point is to consider how the Lord helps the righteous.

The Lord helps the righteous. How does he help? He helps through the hope of his presence. Look with me at v 7 ***Psalm 5:7 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.***

If you were home and I were to open the door of your house, and walk in, I would inevitably be in your presence. God is omnipresent, yet in ancient Israel, God's presence was said to have dwelt in the tabernacle in the Holiest of Holies where the ark of the covenant sat. The tabernacle was a place of meeting for God and man – called the house of the Lord. The children of Israel during their time in the wilderness would set up the tabernacle in the center of their camp. God's glory as a cloud would descend upon it. It is the place where God would meet face to face with Moses as his glory would descend upon it.

King David in his times of great distress, would find comfort as he would come to the house of the LORD. When God struck down his child from Bathsheba because of his adultery and murder, we are told it was in the house of the LORD that David went to worship and find consolation in His presence. The house of the Lord was a refuge for David.

Verse 5 told us that the unrighteous will not stand before the eyes of the LORD, they will be cast out of his presence because of the **abundance of their transgressions**. But notice the contrast now in V7 ***Psalm 5:7 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.*** 7 tells us that the **abundance of the LORD's steadfast love** is the door into his presence. The door in is not our righteousness, but instead it is his steadfast love towards us. We see this clearly at the cross. God's love is on wonderful display as he substitutes Jesus on the cross for you and me. It's through the cross that we are now made righteous and have entrance to his presence. Instead of being cast out from God's presence, we now can enter it. This morning if you are a new creation in Christ, then the living God himself dwells within you. That means no matter what may come your way, you have access to the very presence of the Triune God.

You will never encounter a closed sign at the entrance to the Throne of God. If you are distressed, if you are suffering, if you are persecuted falsely, if you are lonely, know that you have unlimited access into the presence of the LORD. The book of Hebrews tells us that we can approach boldly the throne of grace to find help in time of need. When you spend time individually in His presence, real genuine time with him, something amazing happens. All fears fade, and only the reverent fear of a Holy God remains. And like Moses whose face shone

brightly as he beheld the glory of the LORD, when you also spend time in his presence, you will be changed from one image of glory to another.

We also can experience his presence not just individually but corporately as we gather together as the church. When we do this, we as individual spiritual stones make the up House of the Lord, His dwelling. So, if you want to experience the Lord's presence and the glory of the Lord descending upon you, then regularly gather Sunday morning and worship together with the body of Christ. Do not forsake the assembly, the gathering of the church. It is where God manifests his presence to help.

How else does he help? Through leading us in righteousness. Look with me at v 8

Psalm 5:8 Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.

David was a strong military leader. But even David as leader of Israel, put his ultimate hope and confidence in the LORD's leading. People put trust in their leaders. We trust people to lead us in the right direction and to make right decisions, yet so often they fail us. (Please pray for the elders at GCF, that we make wise and right decisions as leaders.)

I have an old friend who is blind. He lost both eyes during a suicide bombing attempt on his life while he was serving in Iraq. On multiple occasions I had the privilege of leading him as a guide on different trips and adventures. One time we hiked through Indian painted rocks. As I led him during the hike, he would sometimes hold onto me physically. Other times he would hold on to a rope that connected both of us. And other times he would follow my lead through the sound of my voice. I remember thinking how he was completely dependent upon my leading for his ultimate protection as we hiked up and down rocks and traversed the differing topography. I was intently focused on helping make the way straight for him.

So often we are blind to our sin and blind to spiritual things around us. In times of suffering, we don't always see the path clearly. But the LORD loves to help by leading us in righteousness, which simply means to put all of your hope and trust in Him. He loves your dependence upon him and will never let you down. That means follow him, listen to his voice and his leading. Put all of your hope, trust and faith in the LORD's leading and for Him to make your path straight.

How else does he help the righteous? He helps through his protection

Psalm 5:11-12 "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."

These final 2 verses are the capstone to Psalm 5. As David is working through his lament he ultimately ends in rejoicing, singing for joy and proclaiming the LORD's blessing upon the righteous. The Lord is a refuge and protection for the righteous.

At the end of June, Spokane experienced an intense heat wave. We hit record highs. The heat was unbearable at times during the day. I know some of you lost power and were without AC. During that time some of you sought refuge from the suffering of the intense heat and when you found it you rejoiced!! Brothers and sisters, I know many of you would echo me in saying, I could not imagine living this life without the Lord as my refuge. Life is hard and difficult. We learn from David that all who take refuge in him during times of suffering can rejoice and sing for joy and in exult in the Lord because he spreads his wings of protection over them and covers them with favor as shield. The LORD blesses the righteous. What an awesome God to serve and to follow.

The elders recently read the book Prepare. It's part of the set of books for our upcoming discipleship curriculum. The main idea of the book addresses how the church should prepare for the reality of coming persecution against Christians. Prepare, is not a prep book. It doesn't give you 3 steps on how to geocache, knit your own clothes, and stock up on ammo. But one thing it does teach is how to have a joyful hope in the Lord during trouble. One of the final chapters in Prepare is titled "God our Hope". When the day of trial does come, the righteous have hope in God's protection as a refuge.

God is for us. If God is for us, then who can be against us. God helps the righteous. In the midst of your suffering, during the middle of your trials of this life, you can find refuge in the rock of your salvation and rejoice because of his protection over you. Turn to him today for comfort and solace. Rejoice in the Lord, love the Lord, sing for joy, exult in Him, for there is none other like him.

In conclusion, we have considered how the Lord is a refuge for the righteous. We've looked at three points. The Lord hears the righteous, The Lord hates the unrighteous, and the Lord helps the righteous.

As it's been said many times here...God does not promise Christians an easy life. Life will be difficult. What God does promise us is found in Psalm 5 - the LORD Himself is our refuge. Therefore, it is far greater to put all of your hope and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ and suffer injustice in this life (having your sins paid for and having the Lord as a refuge to turn to), then it is to suffer in the next life being cast out of the presence of God for all eternity as you bear the guilt of your unrighteousness deeds. Jesus is a wonderful savior. Let us all find refuge in the Lord.