

Psalm 5

“The Straight Way”

August 13, 2023

1. Intro

- a. In 1660, an uneducated, 32-year-old preacher in England was imprisoned for preaching God’s Word
 - i. He had been wonderfully converted by the Gospel, and he had an irresistible burden to preach it far and wide
 - ii. Sadly, the Church of England during this time was in a season of corruption and spiritual apathy, so they didn’t take well to this unlicensed upstart teaching and preaching the Word of God
 - iii. He was thrown in jail, with the offer that, as soon as he promised to never preach again, he would be released
 - iv. The man refused, and he would spend the next 12 years in prison
 1. But these years were not unfruitful
 - a. In 1668, this man who had once been just a simple tinker, an uneducated tradesman, wrote in prison what would become the second-best selling book of all time, with only the Bible selling more copies
 - b. This man was John Bunyan, and the book was *The Pilgrim’s Progress*
 - i. This fantastic little book is an allegorical tale of a man who, after reading the words of the Bible, sees his own sin and depravity, and begins a journey – a pilgrimage – to the Celestial City
 - ii. It is a tale of what it looks like to walk the straight way of the Christian life
 1. His journey was full of joy and awakening to the grace of God
 2. But it was also full of peril, and sorrow – from his own foolish mistakes, but also from the attacks that came from all those who opposed his way
 - c. Throughout the story, the main character – whose name at the beginning was Graceless, but was soon changed to Christian – encounters men who strengthen him on his journey
 - i. Men with names like Evangelist, and Good-Will, and Faithful
 - d. But Christian also encounters men who try to steer him off the path
 - i. Men like Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and Lord Hategood, and Talkative
 - e. In every encounter, Christian is forced to make a choice...
 - i. Will he stay on the Straight Way that will lead him to the gates of Heaven, the Celestial City?
 - ii. Or, will he choose to listen to the men of the world – men who have all sorts of appealing advice that sounds good on the surface, but inevitably ALWAYS leads Christian off the path?
 - b. These are the choices that all of us are faced with, every day... aren’t they?
 - i. The life of a follower of Christ is a journey, a pilgrimage to the City on the Hill
 1. And, every day that we wake up and are given breath in our lungs, we must decide which path we are going to travel
 - a. That is how I want to approach our Psalm this morning
 - b. In Psalm 5, verse 8, David prays to the Lord, “make your way STRAIGHT before me...”
 - i. As we’ll see in just a moment, I believe we can look to this Psalm as a faithful and true guide for OUR journey along the way
 - ii. Let’s look at Psalm 5 together...
- c. Psalm 5
 - i. *(To the choirmaster: for the flutes. A Psalm of David.)* ¹Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. ²Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. ³O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. ⁴For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. ⁵The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. ⁶You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the

bloodthirsty and deceitful man. ⁷But 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. ⁸Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me. ⁹For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. ¹⁰Make 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. ¹¹But 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. ¹²For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.

- d. On this journey along the Straight Way, we must...
 - i. Start the day in the right direction
 - ii. Travel in good company
 - iii. Let love AND fear lead us
 - iv. Warn those who stray off the path
 - v. Walk in righteousness
2. The first thing we must do on our journey is, we must start the day in the right direction
 - a. Psalm 5:1-3 opens as David sings...
 - i. *¹Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. ²Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. ³O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.*
 - b. David teaches us a very important principle in these verses, doesn't he?
 - i. If the life of a Christian truly is a journey, where we are called to be consistently moving closer and closer to our goal, then we must start out each day of that journey by making sure we have the right directions
 1. We don't know the context of Psalm 5, but we know that David is clearly in some kind of stressful situation
 - a. He opens by saying to the Lord, "Consider my groaning, give attention to the sound of my cry..."
 - i. The picture here is that David is struggling to even find the words to voice his prayer
 1. "Consider my groaning" could also be said as, "consider my meditations"
 2. It's similar in meaning to what Paul wrote in Romans 8:26, when he said,
 - a. *²⁶Likewise 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.*
 - b. David was in a situation where his groanings were almost too deep for words
 - i. He needed direction on how to continue his journey
 - c. So what did he do?
 - i. He prayed to the Lord IN THE MORNING
 - ii. Verse 3 says that, "IN THE MORNING, he prepared a sacrifice to the Lord and watched for His answer..."
 1. This phrase is actually made up of a couple of military terms
 - a. When David says that he "prepared a sacrifice to the Lord," he used a word that conveyed the idea of when generals would call their troops to attention, and they would line up according to ranks and battalions
 - i. The picture is that David carefully ordered his prayers before his King and his God
 - b. And then he says that he "watched"
 - i. This word was used for the soldier who was assigned to the watchtower, whose job it was to watch for the runners that would bring news back and forth to the palace

- iii. So David carefully ordered his prayers before the Lord, and then he eagerly awaited the Lord's response
 - 1. And he did all of this IN THE MORNING, before he set out on the journey of his day
 - a. My friends, this must be our practice as well!
 - i. Martin Luther once said, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."
 - 2. We may not have the ability in our lives to spend the first three hours of our day in prayer, BUT, it is still crucial that we lay our sacrifices in the Lord in the morning
 - a. Before the craziness of the world hits us
 - b. Before the distractions of life pull us away
 - c. Before our schedules get derailed by a thousand different things
 - i. We must go to the Lord, and prayerfully lay our day before Him
 - ii. And then we must go to His Word and wait for His answer
 - iv. Now, don't misunderstand me here
 - 1. I'm not saying that God will give you a verse that will speak specifically to every specific prayer that you pray
 - a. But I DO believe that the Word of the Lord is living and active
 - b. And I DO believe that it is useful for teaching, and reproof, and correction, and training in righteousness
 - i. Therefore, if we are to truly set our gaze on hearing from the Lord every morning, we must read and study and meditate on His Word!
 - ii. Before we start the journey of our day, we have to make sure we start by getting our directions correct, through the Word and through prayer
 - 2. And then, as we set out on our journey, we look to the second point...
- 3. We must travel in GOOD company
 - a. In Psalm 5:4-6, David says...
 - i. *⁴For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. ⁵The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. ⁶You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.*
 - b. David writes that evil may not dwell with God
 - i. And as His children, neither should it dwell with us!
 - 1. David unpacks some different characteristics of evil people in this passage...
 - a. The evildoers are wicked
 - b. They are boastful
 - c. They speak lies
 - d. They are bloodthirsty
 - e. And they are deceitful
 - 2. And David gives us a very sobering dose of biblical reality in verse 5, when he says, "God HATES all evildoers"
 - a. This isn't a very popular thought in many churches today
 - i. What we WANT David to say in this verse is that God hates all EVIL, but He loves all who do evil
 - 1. But that's simply not what it says, is it?
 - 2. David says that God hates the EVILDOERS
 - b. Does God also love the whole world?
 - i. Of course!! That's John 3:16, right?
 - 1. For God so LOVED the world, that He gave His only Son...
 - 2. So, Yes and Amen, God most certainly loves the world
 - a. But the Scriptures also clearly say that God hates evildoers
 - b. We cannot omit that from our Bibles, nor should we
 - ii. So as we think about this truth in the context of our message this morning, the application is clear:
 - 1. If God hates evildoers, then we should not be travelling with them in our journey

- a. As I mentioned before regarding Pilgrim's Progress, this was one of the main causes for Christian's MANY detours off of the Straight Way
 - i. When Christian first leaves his home and begins his journey, two men from his hometown accompany him... Obstinate and Pliable
 - 1. Obstinate doesn't stay with them for long, for he stubbornly refuses to give up the ways of the world
 - 2. Pliable goes with Christian a little longer, but when the journey gets hard, he gets discouraged and turns back
 - ii. He also encounters men like Formalist and Hypocrisy, who, rather than entering the Straight Way through the Narrow Gate, instead try to climb over the walls of the path, attempting to find the easy way into the Kingdom
 - b. None of these men succeed in making it to the Celestial City
 - c. But MANY of them succeed in drawing Christian off the path
 - i. The message Bunyan is conveying is clear: on OUR journey to the Kingdom, we must travel in GOOD company
 - ii. For God HATES evildoers
- iii. Does this mean that we are never to interact with nonbelievers?
 - 1. Of course not!!
 - a. If that were the case, how would anyone EVER be saved?!
 - 2. No, we must certainly seek out and interact with and love on those who do not know Christ
 - a. This is the non-negotiable prerequisite to the Great Commission
 - i. How will we make disciples if all we ever do is hang out with Christians???
 - 3. BUT, to use the language Paul uses, we are not to YOKE OURSELVES with unbelievers
 - a. He writes in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16
 - i. *¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God...*
 - b. Who are your closest friends?
 - c. Who are those you look to for wisdom and guidance and counsel?
 - d. Who is walking with you on your pilgrimage to the Kingdom of God?
 - i. If you look around you, and you see no one but unbelievers, then you are in great danger – for God is not pleased with your company
 - 1. What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?
 - 2. What fellowship has light with darkness?
- c. Travel in GOOD company, Christians
 - i. For we ALL need all the help and encouragement we can get on this journey!!
4. The third thing we must do is, we must let love AND fear lead us along the way
 - a. Psalm 5:7-8
 - i. *⁷But 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. ⁸Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me.*
 - b. David puts before us a very important paradox of our faith in these verses...
 - i. It is ONLY through the abundance of God's steadfast love that we are able to enter His house
 - 1. If our God was not steadfast in His love, if He was not generous with His grace and mercy, if He had not first moved toward us...
 - a. We would NEVER have ANY hope of being called His friend
 - b. And we most certainly would NEVER have been called His children!
 - i. But because God LOVED us, we are now His
 - ii. But David reminds us that, even in the midst of this incredible love, we still must FEAR the Lord
 - 1. David says that, "through the abundance of God's steadfast love, he will enter God's house..." AND he says, "I will bow down toward your holy temple IN FEAR of you"

- c. Love AND fear
 - i. These provide the guardrails that we so desperately need on our journey
 - 1. For, if we walk only in the love of God, we will eventually fall off the cliff of thinking that God is our buddy, or “the big guy upstairs”
 - a. And, because God loves us so much, he really isn’t bothered too much by our sinful lifestyle or habits
 - i. After all, God just wants me to be HAPPY, right?
 - 1. Isn’t that the way a loving God would be?
 - b. This is the great danger of walking ONLY in the love of God
 - 2. But, the other side is just as dangerous
 - a. For, if we walk only in the fear of God, we will eventually fall off the cliff on the other side of the path – the cliff of legalism
 - i. Which eventually leads us into guilt and shame
 - ii. For those who walk on that side are always trying to measure up to God, aren’t they?
 - 1. They’re always trying to earn their way into God’s favor
 - 2. And they always fail
 - iii. Walking only in the fear of God is REALLY good at making Pharisees, but its awful at making disciples
 - ii. My friends, we must travel this journey with the love of God guiding us on one side, AND the fear of God guiding us on the other
- d. We have to remember that the straight way is also the strait way
 - i. Let me clarify that...
 - 1. The straight way, s-t-r-a-i-g-h-t, is ALSO the strait way, s-t-r-a-i-t
 - a. This was what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14, and you can hear it the best in the King James Bible,
 - i. ¹³Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat...
¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.
 - b. Strait is the gate – s-t-r-a-i-t
 - i. The path that David prays for is a straight path, one that isn’t crooked, where the destination is clearly in front of him
 - ii. The path that Jesus calls us down is the strait path, meaning it is narrow and hard and few will find it
 - 1. For Christ himself is the Gate
 - a. And no one enters the Kingdom except through him
 - ii. The world doesn’t like this teaching, does it?
 - 1. That kind of teaching is far too exclusive, far too demanding, far too NARROW
 - a. And they are exactly right
 - i. For this is the Way that God Himself has ordained
 - 1. We must not only enter by the narrow gate of Christ
 - 2. We must also stay on the narrow path Christ commands
 - 2. If we decide that we just want to walk in the love of God, then we will eventually try to widen the gate, so all can get in
 - 3. And if just walk in the fear of God, we will make the gate so narrow that NO ONE can get through
 - a. We must walk in both the love AND the fear of God
 - b. We must walk the straight and narrow path of Christ
- 5. The fourth thing we must do on our journey is, we must warn those who stray off the path
 - a. Psalm 5:9-10
 - i. ⁹For there is no truth in their mouth; their inmost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue. ¹⁰Make 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.

- b. As we are walking this journey to the Kingdom, we don't just put our blinders on and focus on the mansions that await us in heaven
 - i. We must open our eyes, and we must see all who are straying off the path, all around us
 1. And David reminds us how grave their situation really is
 - a. For all those who do not walk the straight and narrow path, the only thing that awaits them is destruction
 - b. Because they have turned from Christ, there will be no one to bear their guilt but themselves
 - c. Because of the abundance of their transgressions, they will be cast out, for they have rebelled against the very God that has created them
 2. My friends, what is your response to these realities?
 - a. In your heart, do you secretly say, "Good riddance! Let them get what they deserve!!"?
 - b. Or, is your heart broken over the future that awaits them?
 - i. Are you horrified and distraught at the thought that God will one day cast them out, for all eternity?
 - c. C.S. Lewis, the great Christian philosopher of the 20th century, captured this idea in a way that only he could
 - i. In his book, *The Weight of Glory*, Lewis wrote,
 1. "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal... it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."
 - d. Do you look at people in this way?
 - i. Do you realize that your Christian brothers and sisters who travel this path alongside of you will one day be majestic beings, full of light and splendor and holiness, without even a speck of a blemish of sin in their hearts?
 - ii. And do you ALSO realize that those who have chosen the broad road that leads to destruction – those who annoy you and aggravate you, those who slander or persecute you – do you realize that they will one day be cast into the fire of eternal torment, and they themselves will become a horror that is the stuff of your worst nightmares?
 1. As long as we look on at the world and just think about how much they irritate us, we will never have any motivation to share the Gospel with them
 - a. We must walk with diligence and steadfastness on the narrow path
 - b. AND we must warn others of the very real, and VERY tragic, consequences of choosing to walk the broad path of the world
 2. David reminds us that these will be cast out
 - a. They will bear their own guilt
 - b. They will fall by their own counsels
 - c. They will be cast out from the presence of God
 3. If we do not warn them of these things, who will???
6. And finally, as we journey this road as pilgrims longing for a better country, we are to walk the straight way in righteousness
 - a. Psalm 5:11-12

- i. 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. ¹²For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favor as with a shield.*
 - b. You bless the righteous, O Lord
 - i. You cover them with favor as with a shield
 - 1. As we come to the conclusion of David's hymn, we are reminded that, even though the Straight Way is the hard and difficult way, it is also the way of God's blessing
 - 2. For God will surely bless the righteous, and cover them with His favor
 - ii. But we run into a problem at this point, don't we?
 - 1. For doesn't Paul say in Romans 3:10, "NO ONE is righteous, no, NOT ONE..."?
 - a. So if no one is righteous, how will the righteous ever be blessed?
 - b. If, as Paul goes on to say, "ALL have turned aside, together they have become worthless," how will ANYONE ever get through the narrow gate?
 - i. How will ANYONE ever stay on the Straight Way?
 - c. Thankfully, Paul answers this problem a few verses later in 3:21-26...
 - i. ²¹*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that HE might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*
 - d. So how does ANYONE enter through the strait gate?
 - i. Through FAITH in Jesus Christ!
 - e. How does anyone STAY on the Straight Way?
 - i. Through the righteousness that GOD has poured out upon us!
 - 1. And Paul tells us in verse 27 the reason for WHY God has set things up in such a way:
 - a. So that ANY boasting on our part, WILL BE EXCLUDED
 - ii. Christian, are you on the Straight Way?
 - 1. If so, then as David says, you can rejoice... you can ever sing for joy!
 - 2. Regardless of how hard the journey gets
 - 3. Regardless of the difficulty of your pilgrimage
 - a. You can rejoice, God has put forward His Son, on your behalf
 - b. You have been justified by His grace, AS A GIFT!!
 - f. So how are we to walk on the Straight Way?
 - i. We must start the day in the right direction
 - ii. We must travel in good company
 - iii. We must let love AND fear lead us
 - iv. We must warn those who stray off the path
 - v. And we must walk in the righteousness given to us by God
 - g. We'll close with this poem from Bunyan in Pilgrim's Progress, as he writes
 - i. "This hill, though high, I covet to ascend;
The difficulty will not me offend.
For I perceive the way to life lies here.
Come, pluck up, heart; let's neither faint nor fear.
Better, though difficult, the right way to go,
Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe."
 - h. May the Lord strengthen us for the journey
 - i. May He help us to pluck up our hearts, that we might stay on the Straight Way
7. The Lord's Supper
- a. As we move now into our time of celebrating the Lord's Supper, I want to give you all some time to examine your own hearts
 - i. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29,

1. ²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

- a. As you examine your heart in light of what we've just learned in Psalm 5, maybe you have begun to realize that you have drifted off the Straight Way of the Lord
 - i. This is the time when you need to be honest about that with the Lord
 - 1. Confess your sins to Him, and the Bible promises that He will forgive you
 - 2. But do not come to the table in an unworthy manner
- b. Maybe, as you've heard God's Word proclaimed this morning, you have begun to realize that you never have known the joy of the Lord's salvation, for you have never truly surrendered your heart to Him
 - i. If that is the case for you, and you believe that the Lord is softening your heart to the truth of his Gospel, then come to him in brokenness and repentance and surrender
 - ii. Confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord
 - 1. And again, the Bible promises that forgiveness will be yours
- c. But if you know in your heart that you have not surrendered your life wholly to Him, and you are not ready to do so today, then we would simply ask that you not participate in the Lord's Supper
 - i. There's no saving power in these elements
 - ii. All they will be for you is bread and grape juice
 - 1. But the danger is that you may be eating and drinking judgment upon yourself
- d. May we all spend these next moments examining our hearts and confessing our sin, that we might not come to the table in an unworthy manner
 - i. Time of reflection/self-examination

b. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- i. ²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.