

2001

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Recommended Citation

Keller, Walter E., "Psalm 5: To the leader: for the flutes. A Psalm of David." (2001). *Walter E. Keller's Devotional Studies of Psalms*. 8.
<https://scholar.valpo.edu/kellerpsalms/8>

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Psalm 5

To the leader: for the flutes. A Psalm of David

(NRSV)

- ¹ Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.**
- ² Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.**
- ³ O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.**
- ⁴ For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.**
- ⁵ The boastful will not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.**
- ⁶ You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.**
- ⁷ But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
will enter your house,
I will bow down toward your holy temple
in awe of you.**
- ⁸ Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness
because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.**
- ⁹ For there is no truth in their mouths;
their hearts are destruction;
their throats are open graves;
they flatter with their tongues.**
- ¹⁰ Make them bear their guilt, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
because of their many transgressions cast them out,
for they have rebelled against you.**
- ¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
so that those who love your name may exult in you.**
- ¹² For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover them with favor as with a shield.**

Psalm 5 is traditionally thought to have been authored by David. His prayer is an intense groaning (ESV translation) out loud (verses 1-2) (the NRSV translation *sighing* is too weak), occasioned – again – by enemies who lie in wait for him (verse 8), and who have rebelled against God (verse 10). The alternative and proper antidote to the wickedness of the wicked is to go into the house of the LORD (verse 7), in the reverent fear of God, and there to pray that God will overthrow all evil (verses 3, 4), and the rebels who perpetrate the evil (verse 10).

You may care to note that verse 4 speaks of evil and wickedness. Then in verses 5-6 the Psalmist lists five categories of wickedness: the evil person, the boastful, liars, they who shed blood, and deceivers, and in verses 9 and 10 expands this list to include flatterers and those who rebel against the commandments of God. And while the Psalmist intends to characterize others with those categories of evil, it easily turns into a personal checklist, which helps us inventory our own inner life and our need for turning to God to overthrow also the evil within us. Verses 11-12 are divine promises which invite our faith in the God who makes them. They who take refuge in the LORD, who love the Name of the LORD, and who are righteous will be glad and sing for joy; they will receive shelter; and they will be defended by the LORD's favor.

Of particular note in this Psalm is the encouragement we receive in verse 3 for our **Early Morning Prayer**. Of the customary times for worship, the morning seems to have been the most important (see for example Psalms 55:17, 59:16, and 88:13). Of Jesus too it is written that he prayed before sunrise (Mark 1:35).

Prayer to accompany Psalm 5:

Holy Lord, all justice and all goodness come from you; you hate evil, and abhor lies. Lead us in the path of justice, so that all who hope in you may with the Church rejoice in your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.