

Lenten Devotional February 21, 2018

Scripture

Psalm 5

- ¹Give ear to my words, O LORD;
give heed to my sighing.
- ²Listen to the sound of my cry,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.
- ³O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.
- ⁴For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;
evil will not sojourn with you.
- ⁵The boastful will not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
- ⁶You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful.
- ⁷But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love,
will enter your house,
I will bow down toward your holy temple
in awe 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 mouths;
their hearts are destruction;
their throats are open graves;
they flatter with their tongues.
- ¹⁰Make 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.
- ¹¹But 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.
- ¹²For you bless the righteous, O LORD;
you cover them with favor as with a shield.

Devotional

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One of the hardest books of the Bible for me to read is the Psalter. It is not difficult because of its poetic language and structure or because of its symbolism and allusion. In fact, those attributes make it one of my favorite books.

Rather, the Psalter is difficult for me to read because I can't help singing the songs that are drawn from it when I come upon those passages. I might be happily reading or praying a psalm when suddenly a

verse leads me into a well-known song. The melody plays in my mind and the words of the song, rather than the psalm, drift into my consciousness. The music takes me to a place that I didn't intend when I began reading. Often the experience deeply enriches the reading.

When I read verse 8 of Psalm 5, the words and music of Samuel Wesley, grandson of hymn writer Charles Wesley, waft into my mind:

*Lead me, Lord, lead me in thy righteousness,
make thy way plain before my face.
For it is thou, Lord, thou, Lord only,
that makest me dwell in safety.*

The repetition of "thou, Lord only" in the song emphasizes the uniqueness of the Lord's protection. The drawn-out syllables in "safety" settle us securely in a protective shelter. Rather than detracting from the psalm, these elements of the song complement the psalmist's themes and enhance the experience of reading or praying. So, this Lent, let us find our refuge in God and ever sing for joy!

Prayer

Protector God,
Who straightens our paths and harkens to our cries:
Hear our words,
Heed our sighings,
Hide us from our enemies,
That we may take refuge in you
and rejoice in your protection with songs and exultations;
Through Jesus Christ the Crucified,
Amen.