

## Set Apart for God

By Don Green

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**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

It's a joy to welcome all of you to our Tuesday night Bible study here at Truth Community. You know, we've only been doing this for a few weeks now. It has been quite the adventure for me to begin a study in the book of Psalms and I'm so very grateful for all of you who want to be a part of that and who share in this week-by-week Tuesday night study together. I think that I can fairly say that the study of the Psalms is bound to be transforming to us. The Psalms is the worship manual of the Bible. It gives us a pattern of joy and sorrow, of repentance and growth and dealing with enemies and dealing with good times and bad times and gives inspired voice to everything that we could possibly experience in the spiritual life here on earth and so I am just very grateful for those of you that come and listen week-by-week to these often very long messages and it's just a joy to be able to study and prepare them and then be able to give them to you hopefully in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, we're still new here. We're still just kind of getting started with these Tuesday night studies. Our average attendance on Tuesday night might be about 100 people give or take. That's a healthy number but there is a significance to that number. I was reading a quote from John Wesley as I was completing my preparation for this message and it made me think of you; it made me think of what we're doing together on Tuesday night and in a broader sense in our church at Truth Community. John Wesley said, "Give me 100 men, I care not whether are clergy or laity who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God and I will shake this world for Christ." The question occurred to me after reading that quote, "What if you and I were those 100 people? What if you and I were the ones who were so completely set apart for God, so set apart from sin and so set aside for the purposes and the glory of God in whatever remaining life and breath he gives to us? What if we were like that?" Well, that's exciting to think about and I don't think it's just a mere pipe dream to contemplate that we could be a people like that under the authority and the teaching of God's word.

Well, what I'm excited about tonight is to bring you to Psalm 5 which was read earlier, to bring you to Psalm 5 because Psalm 5 teaches us the basis of life set apart for God and that's what we're going to see here this evening as we study this Psalm together: a life set apart for God. What does that look like? And we're going to see it in three different realms as we walk through this Psalm. Basically, we're only going to look at Psalm 5 tonight. We're just going to start in this text and we're going to stay in this text because it has a complete comprehensive message that stands on its own. What does a life set apart for God look like? First of all, you're going to see that a life set apart for God is dependent in relationship to God. It is dependent in relationship to God and here's what we mean by that, here's what this Psalm teaches us: those who come to God must

recognize themselves; they must see themselves in a proper relationship to him. What I mean by that is this: a life set apart for God consciously submits to God, consciously honors him, consciously trusts him in a sense of dependence. You know, Scripture says that we live and move and breath and have our being in him in the book of Acts and that is true comprehensively of the entire human race. Every single one of the seven billion people who walk on the face of the earth today draw their breath at the pleasure of God and that is just as true of us as it is of them. That is especially true of us as believers. We recognize, we know the one true God and therefore we must be conscious of the way that we are dependent upon him. And as those who are relying on the shed blood and righteousness of Christ as our only hope of justification, as our only hope of a right standing before God, we all the more, at an even greater level, are conscious of the fact that we are dependent on the work of someone else to secure our redemption. We come to God not in the boastfulness of our own merit; we come knowing that we are sinners and that we are saved only by the work of someone else and that someone else is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In David's day, as David was writing, his dependence on God was expressed in these first three verses of Psalm 5. Let's look at them together where David says, "Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, For to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch." There is a whole lot more in those verses than you might think at a first glance at them but let's just make a couple of preliminary observations before we consider them in greater detail. Notice the various ways that David appeals to God to pay attention to him. He is coming as one in need; he is coming as one in dependence and he gives these earnest words of appeal, "God, pay attention and respond to me." Look at it in verse 1, "Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my groaning. Heed the sound of my cry. In the morning you will hear my voice. I will order my prayer to you," and so in multiple ways with expressive language in a very colored way, David uses different language, different words, different expressions to call upon the Lord and it's obvious that he's praying in the midst of affliction as he does so.

And so affliction, watch this, affliction rather than driving him away from God in despair, rather than driving him away from God in disappointment or anger as if God owed him something better, his affliction drove him to the Lord in a particularly dependent way and so he cries out to God in the midst of his sorrow, in the midst of his difficulty. He is found praying to God in dependence and asking God to help him. What can we learn from that? There are three things in this dependent relationship to God that we can see from David: first of all, you can see David praying in humility. You can see him praying with a broken, submissive spirit before this great God to whom he prays. Look at how he addresses the Lord; look at the names, the labels that he uses to ascribe to God that express the attitude of his heart as he comes. He says in verse 1, "Give ear to my words, O LORD." That name that we looked at a while back a few weeks ago. Addressing God as the promise-keeping God, the covenant-keeping God of his people who will most certainly bless them. He comes before God and addresses him as Lord and says, "I am in covenant with you. You have promised to bless me. You have promised to keep me. I

appeal in dependence upon your character and promises as I enter your presence here today." Think about that and think about how you pray. David does not come with a boastful spirit. He does not burst into the scene of the throne room of God making his demands. Before he says anything else, he addresses God with terms of reverence and respect that is the appropriate way for a man set apart for God to come to him. He recognized God's sovereignty and his authority over David.

Notice how in verse 2 David says, "You are my King and my God." You know, that is particularly an interesting way for David to talk to God because think about this: David himself was a king. David himself was a man who had authority over the greatest nation on earth at the time and here David is, David as a king, comes in, as it were, into the throne room of God and before he says anything to God, he touches the scepter of God in an act of humility and says, "You are my King. You are my God." David recognized God's sovereignty. David recognized God's authority when he came in and spoke to him. Beloved, that's pretty challenging for us to contemplate because I'm guessing that you too often pray as I do. We kind of run into the throne room of God and we start laying out all of the things that we want God to do for us because we don't like the pressure that we feel from this relationship or from that circumstance and we want our life to go better and we know that God is able to make it do so and so we just want to use him to advance our own personal comfort.

Well look, that's really convicting when we view it in light of the way that David prayer. Here is David, the anointed king of God, chosen by God to lead his people, chosen by God to be the writer of incredible amounts of Scripture that we study now 3,000 years later. David, a man like that, steps into the presence of God and bows before him in humility. And David by his example shows us that a believer, for us New Testament Christians, you and I are men and women under authority. We do not make up our own rules. We do not live by our own power. There is a God with authority over us who declares his law to us. There is a God who sustains us and gives us the power and the breath and the life that is in our nostrils. So we must gather ourselves up. We must prepare our hearts before we come into prayer and remember these things about God. Beloved, you must prepare your heart before you go into prayer and remember that you are stepping into the vestibule of unparalleled greatness when you address the living God in prayer. You remember to whom you are speaking, not simply what it is that you want to talk about and you honor him with an attitude of heart that says, "Lord, I come to you as one who is in dependence upon you. I come to you as one under authority. I come in submission to you and I ask you according to your promise, not according to my deserving, that you would hear me when I pray." It's convicting, isn't it? To see the Scriptural pattern for prayer and to realize how superficially we so often approach it. Well, we need to let the word of God cut us in this matter so that the Spirit of God could begin to heal us and make us people who pray better as people who are set apart for God and honor him with a proper attitude of humility as we express our relationship to him day-by-day in prayer.

Secondly, as we consider these first three verses, I want you to consider David's urgency as he prays. His urgency is an expression of his dependence. Look at verse 3, twice he

says, he repeats it for emphasis, "In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice." Look at it, look at the text with me in verse 3, "In the morning I will order my prayer to You." Now, morning isn't the only time that we pray. We pray morning, noon and night and David, as you study the Psalms, speaks of praying at all of those different times. But here in this particular Psalm, the idea of praying in the morning shows us that approaching God was the first priority in his day. He didn't start out and go into different things and take care of administrative aspects of the kingdom; he didn't start out doing other things. He came and approached God as the first priority of his day and he repeats it twice showing how urgent this was, how pressing this priority was on him to be in the presence of God and expressing himself and trusting God for the needs of the day.

Here's what I want you to see for that, beloved: David was not merely going through the motions when he prayed. He wasn't simply ticking off his 15 minutes of prayer so that he could have his devotion time set up and then get on with the stuff that really mattered in the day. No, no, David was preoccupied with seeking the face of God and in the morning, in the morning expresses that urgency. Now, some of you may be familiar with, some of you may use the so-called ACTS model of prayer. It's an acronym designed to give structure to a prayer life and the acronym stands for: Adoration, C is for Confession of sin, T is for Thanksgiving and S is for Supplication to express your requests to God. Now look, anything that helps us pray, I suppose, has some merit somewhere along the line but here's what I want you to see about that for those of you that are familiar with praying according to that particular model or according some other model of prayer that you picked up at a prayer seminar someplace, here's what I want you to see: those models that going through the steps of a prayer model like that are not a substitute for a genuine urgency and a genuine passion in prayer. You can go through your model while your mind is engaged in something completely different, can't you? You do it all the time. I do it all the time. Even when we are supposedly praying, our mind is off someplace else thinking about what needs to be done in the day. Well look, let these words, these inspired words from King David which are actually coming to us as the authoritative word of God in our lives now, rebuke us and cause us to be stimulated into a different direction in prayer. David's heart was engaged when he prayed. His heart was prepared to speak to God and to interact with him. Before he ever got to actually expressing words, it's obvious that what had been going on in his mind was a reflection on the kingship, the majesty, the throne of God, the authority of God, the promise of blessing from his Lord.

You don't pray this way by accident. You don't stumble into this manner of praying simply by just casually approaching prayer. No, there is a discipline of mind. There is a discipline of thinking that we meditate on the person of God before we begin to approach him. We let Scripture inform our thinking, shape our approach, and then we come to him. We come to him in humility and we come to him in a sense of urgency. This is the priority of our hearts. Now look, there are young people in our congregation, people that are sitting in the audience that are 10, 12, 14 years old. I want to say a word to you: you have the opportunity at this young point in your life to settle it in your heart that you will be a young man, you will be a boy, you will be a girl, a young woman, who sets your heart on the affection of being set apart for God. Why not start now? Why not start here right in this room? As you hear these words from the living pages of Scripture, God is

calling you to set apart your life for him now and not wait until you accumulate another 10 or 15 or 20 years of sinful living and disregard and rebellion against God before you finally get serious about living for him. You shouldn't assume that you can get further into sin and somehow get more tender to God. It doesn't work that way. The Lord is calling your heart right now, young person, to settle it in your heart, to make it the framing conviction of your life, "I will be that one set apart for God. There are only 99 more to go because here I am, I'm one of them. Where are the other 99? Let's get started."

Now, for those of us that are a little bit further in life, some of you with gray hair or not hair, let's you and me think for a little while as well. I'm one of the oldest people here. It's all the more urgent for us, isn't it? In view of the shortness of the time that is remaining for our days and our trip on earth, it's all the more urgent for us as older people to be set apart for God like this, to set the pace, to show those young people who just committed themselves to be set apart like this in their own heart convictions, you and I who are older, who are elders, who both in position or by age, by chronology, it is all the more urgent for us to set the pace as the ones who are set apart for God. Are you going to be that way? There is really no option, is there? There is no alternative. This is our God. This is our King. Those of you that have taught Scripture in days gone by, those of you that have sought to lead others in the things of the word of God. Well, God bless you. I'm thankful for you. I'm thankful for your example. I'm thankful that so many of us walk in your wake. We have to understand that we have to renew our energy, repent of where we have gotten complacent, set that aside and realize that our days are shorter than they have ever been and so we must be urgent about being set apart for God. It's not only the first priority of the morning, it is the defining priority of the rest of our lives. We can grow. We have not maxed out in our sanctification. We have not reached the highest level of spiritual development that is possible, have we? Have we? We haven't and so somewhere in this is a call for us to repent of our complacency and to renew our sense of urgency as we live a life that is set apart for our saving God.

Now finally as we consider this dependency on God, I want you to contemplate one other thing here as we look at it: contemplate David's expectancy as he prays here in these first three verses. Look at the end of verse 3 where he says, "In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to You," and watch this, "and eagerly watch." I will eagerly watch. The different versions translate this differently. The underlying Hebrew could be translated a little bit differently but they all have this sense that, "I'm going to watch. I'm going to expectantly wait to see you respond to my prayers." Now, this is showing us that David was living in the spirit of James 5:16. You don't need to turn there. David was living in the attitude of the New Testament when the New Testament speaks about prayer. In James 5:16 it says, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." David in essence is saying, "Something is going to happen as you interact and respond to my prayers, O God, and I don't want to miss it."

Now, don't ask me to explain exactly how a sovereign God who has ordained the end from the beginning takes our prayers and uses them to accomplish his purposes. I can't explain that in a way that is going to be coherent to you but here is what we need to

understand: Scripture reveals to us that God acts in response to our prayers and that when we pray, things are accomplished that would otherwise not be accomplished if we neglected our prayers. God has ordained not only what will happen, he has ordained the means by which it will happen and part of the means by which he accomplishes his purposes in the world is when his people pray to him. One of the things, one of the key aspects of this is not so much moving God to do that which he otherwise would not do but to prepare our hearts to recognize it and respond in worship to God when we see him working out in response to our prayers. Our souls are sensitized to the work of God. Our spiritual eyes are open to the unfolding of his providence and his glory is displayed as we pray in a way that we would otherwise miss because we're not watching, because we're not paying attention. David would have none of that. David says, "I'll pray and I'll watch to see what happens."

Now, listen to me, we need to think about it this way: we just do not think about prayer rightly and it's because for a lot of us, we just haven't been instructed properly about prayer. We've been taught that prayer is about what we can get God to do for us and we're so selfish in our hearts that that's what we want. Well, Scripture lays out a completely different pattern, a completely different life of prayer to us if we'll just stop and think about it and receive it with humility. What you see with David is that before he ever frames requests and speak in an imperatival mood to God, before he asks God and requests God and says, "God, please do this or that," there are things going on on the front end and on the back end of his praying that we need to be aware of so that we can model our own life and our own prayer after that. Before David ever articulated his request, he had prepared his heart and he was mindful of the fact that he was coming before a sovereign King of the universe and his sovereign Lord, the one who anointed him as king. David came and was mindful of that. He approached all of prayer with an attitude of who God was. It framed everything that followed. It framed what he said and the tone and the urgency with which he said it.

Watch this on the other end: David is saying, "When I'm done praying, I'm going to watch to see what happens." You see, David didn't segment out a 15 or 30 minute segment of his life and say, "This is my prayer time," and everything else is going to be separate and distinct from that. No, what we see in David is that there is a life spirit of prayer that's animating everything that he does. He's thinking about God before he actually verbalizes requests. He's thinking about God after he's verbalized his request and says, "I'm going to interpret life in light of the way that my prayer life has been going." I'm going to be watching to see what happens in response. Beloved, if you're a man or a woman that has gotten bored in prayer, let's just be really candid with each other, let's be direct about the poor condition of our spiritual lives. If your prayers have gotten stale and you wonder what is the point, look, the problem isn't with God, the problem is with the spirit of prayer that you brought to the task. Charles Spurgeon said this and helps us understand what's going on in our own hearts when he said and I quote, "Do we not miss very much of the sweetness and efficacy of prayer by a lack of careful meditation before it and of hopeful expectation after it? We too often rush into the presence of God without forethought or humility."

So, do you want to be one of those 100 that are set apart for God that we talked about? Do you want to be that man, that woman, that young person set apart for God? Well if you do, you need to stir yourself repeatedly to think about yourself rightly before your King and your God. You submit to him consciously with deliberate thought about who he is and what you are doing and you trust him. You depend upon him to be faithful to his promise to keep you and here in the New Testament era for those of us that are Christians, we go even further than what David was able to do because he lived before the cross. We think about the fact that we have a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who voluntarily laid his life down for the forgiveness of our sins at Calvary, that he spilled his blood, that he gave his life on the cross of Calvary so that our sins and transgressions and iniquities, our violation of the law, the curse of the law that was upon us because of our disobedience, Christ stepped into the world, shed his blood, so that all of that could be removed and that the barrier to our reconciliation to God could be removed. The Lord Jesus Christ, we depend upon him not only for our earthly life, not only for the sense of blessing, but we are mindful of the fact that we are dependent upon him alone for our justification, for our right standing before God, that it is only on his merits that we come before this God. We are totally, completely reliant upon this God. That is fundamental. That is a cornerstone of being set apart for him is to realize that you're dependent upon him in submission to him.

Secondly, as we continue on in this prayer. It's not just that we are dependent in relationship to God, we see that we are distinct in our relationship to sin. We are distinct in our relationship to sin. That's our second major point for tonight. Now, implied in a right relationship to God is a right relationship toward sin. The people of God consciously separate themselves from the deceit and the bloodshed of this world. Look at the way David prays in verses 4-6. In verses 4-6 David brings the holy character of God to bear on the sin and upon the sinners that are around him and sees himself in distinction from them. He is distinct from his world environment. He stands opposed to the world. Look at verse 4, David says, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit." And so what David is doing here is he is positioning himself against sin. He is aligning himself with the character of God against sinners. He takes God's holiness and applies it to the world around him and affirms God's absolute hatred of evil. He says, "You don't take pleasure in wickedness, God. You hate all who do iniquity. You abhor the man of bloodshed and deceit."

Look, this aspect of the holiness of God, this reality about his character should provoke serious fear in the hearts of men. You know, you hear so often people try to soften the edge of the holiness of God by saying, "Well, God hates the sin but loves the sinner." Whatever you may want to say about that by way of common grace and the extension of mercy in the proclaimed gospel, understand this: understand that this passage is saying more than God hates the sin, this passage says that God hates the sinner, that God is actively opposed to the person who is doing the sin. Look at the text with me. He says, "The boastful," verse 5, "shall not stand before You. You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood." It's not just that he banishes the lie, he destroys the

one who speaks them. Beloved, eternal hell is the final proof and will be the ultimate judgment of God on the people who commit iniquity. We should not soften the edges of God's holiness and make him less holy and less opposed to wicked men than what Scripture reveals him to be. God is not only aligned against sin, he is aligned against sinners. He is opposed to them. The wrath of God abides upon those who do iniquity.

Let me speak to the hypocrite in the audience tonight. Doesn't that smite your heart? Knowing that God sees through your charade? That God sees through the spiritual veneer of your false profession of Christ? And God sees how you drink in sin when you have the opportunity? Doesn't it provoke fear in you to realize that the Lord abhors a man like you and will bring his judgment to bear upon you? Oh, my friend, you need to abandon your charade and flee to Christ. Part of the reason that God brought you here today was so that you could hear a word that would convict you of sin, convince you of your guilt and realize how utterly unable you are to deliver yourself from that wretched condition so that you would turn and flee to Christ for mercy and say, "Lord, have mercy on me the sinner. Be merciful to me because I am in need of grace." You're in need of grace tonight if you're not a Christian. You need to realize that all of the forces of the magnificent power of God are arrayed against you and the only reason that you haven't perished in perdition to this day is because God is giving you opportunity to repent. It's not because he tolerates your sin. It's not because he accepts you as you are. It is to give you one more opportunity for you to repent and turn to him and that's what you need to do tonight. You need to repent and turn to Christ.

Well, having addressed the wicked and David distinguishing himself from them by application of the holiness of God, how do we appropriate that as believers? There is something really important here in the text that I want you to see. To be distinct from sin and over here on the one side to recognize that there are sinners and their wickedness and all of that and I'm going to be distinct from that, I'm going to separate myself from the world. I don't love the world. I'm going to be apart from the world. You might be thinking that the counterpart of that is to say, "Oh, and so therefore look at my own righteousness. Look at how good I am," and that David might turn around and boast about, "God, I'm not like them," like the Pharisee in Luke 18 prayed, "Lord, I thank you that I'm not like these other sinners. I tithe all that I get," and all of the other things that he prayed in that prayer which Jesus rejected. Here's what you need to see: David was not in the spirit of a Pharisee as he said these things about the sinners in verses 4-6. David is not self-righteous here in Psalm 5 and you can see that by looking at verse 7. Look at it with me, he says, "But as for me, by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house, At Your holy temple I will bow in reverence for You."

Look at the text with me. Put your finger on verse 7 and look at it with me. David says, "But as for me." He sets an emphatic contrast, "They're like that, I'm like this. The two are separated from one another because, God, I'm set apart for you." But notice what he says in verse 7, "But as for me," here's where his reliance is, here's where his trust is. Here's what distinguishes him as a man of God. He says it's, "by Your abundant lovingkindness I will enter Your house." His reliance for favor with God is not upon his own obedience. His reliance is upon the mercy and the faithful loyal love of his God. He



says, "I'm separate. I'm distinct from them not because I'm righteous in myself but because I am relying on your mercy. They are indifferent to your character. I am here relying on your mercy. God, I'm here and I acknowledge my need of grace." You see, the man set apart for God does not approach God with his head held high in pride but with his knees bent low in reverence and with his heart acknowledging its need for grace. The godly counterpart to a sinful lifestyle is not an assertion of self-righteousness, rather it is an expression of dependence on the grace of God. David was not a prickly moralist who could talk about his own obedience and assert priority and superiority over other men around him. No, David was a penitent mourner over sin. He is separate from sin and he depends on grace in the presence of God.

Do you want to know if you're set apart for God? Here's one way to measure it: what do you think, what's on your mind when you approach God? On what basis should a holy God listen to you and pay heed to the words of your groaning? On what basis? Well, it's not simply because, "Well God, I'm really unhappy here." There is nothing in us. There is nothing about us that should cause God to lend his ear and cast the ear of heaven, bend the ear of God toward earth to hear you. There is nothing about us. We're fallen. We ourselves have fallen short of the glory of God. We are mere creatures. What does the timeless Creator, why would he condescend to listen to us? That doesn't make any sense if it's about us approaching God in our merit and earning, deserving, having acquired some kind of standing that God is now obligated to hear us. No, no, the man of God, the woman set apart for God, realizes how unthinkable that mindset is and says and comes on bended knee saying, "Lord, it's only by your abundant lovingkindness that I approach you. It's only the shed blood, the merits of Christ. Your mercy, your grace that you initiated to my favor, to my benefit when you were totally unobligated to do so, it's only on that aspect of your great character that I approach you. And so yes, I stand separate. I am opposed in principle to the sin and the sinners in the world but that doesn't mean that I'm set apart in my own righteousness, it means that I'm in a completely different realm. They're in the realm of human sin, I approach God distinct, set apart for him because I am relying upon the realm of divine grace and divine mercy revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ in the pages of the 66 books of Scripture." That's the distinction of the man set apart for God, separate from sin, depending on grace.

There's a third point as you continue on and the label for this third point is a little bit awkward. I think it will make sense for you when we explain it. The man set apart for God is dependent in relationship to God; he is distinct in relationship to sin. Thirdly, he is discerning in relationship to men. God, sin and men, those are the realms in which we find ourselves thinking through in order to be set apart for God. As you come to verse 8 in Psalm 5, David is now turning to his actual prayers. He's laying forth the request that he is asking God to grant to him. First, he prays for himself. Look at verse 8 where he says, "O LORD, lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes; Make Your way straight before me." This is the parallelism of Hebrew poetry. David is saying the same thing in two different ways. He's saying, "God, lead me in your righteousness, make your way straight before me." What he's saying is, "God, I want to be set apart for you. I want to live a righteous life that pleases you and there are foes, there is opposition, there are obstacles to me being able to fulfill that desire. I lack the strength. I lack the wisdom. I

lack the power to do that on my own and so, God, I appeal to the resources of your great omnipotence and I ask you to exercise your power to help me live this life that is set apart for you." He's asking God to guide him away from the hands of his enemies and their sins; to guide him away even from the sins of his own heart, to help him overcome the obstacles that might hinder his life of obedience. You see in this prayer that David realizes that he is vulnerable and he humbly seeks the protection of God as he seeks to live out his life as the anointed king of God's chosen people. It's incredible.

Beloved, I just want to bring you back once again to the reality of what that is saying to us. This is David. This is the king. There is no one who can successfully challenge his authority. Oh, he has opponents that throw their brick bats at him but in the eyes of God, in the plan of God, David is the anointed king over the people of Israel and here is David, David, like that in that position saying, "God, I am weak and needy and vulnerable. Won't you please guide me in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake?" He prayed that way in Psalm 23 also, didn't he? And so you see the humility of David and the desire of David, "God, I want to be set apart for you. It is urgent that my life be used for your purposes and so, God, please lead me in that very thing that I desire. That which you have commanded me to do, to live a life set apart for you and your righteousness, O God, won't you please help me do what you've asked me to do, what you've commanded me to do? Give me strength and power to be that kind of man." Beloved, I've got to ask you: is that the prayer of your heart right now as you're under the authority of the teaching of the word of God? Is that your prayer? It ought to be. There is no excuse for us if that's not the way that our mind and our heart is inclined in light of what God has shown us through these first eight verses of Psalm 5. "God, lead me. Make me a man like that." That is the goal of godly living, to be set apart.

You know, there's something that needs to be said at this point to join a couple of theological terms together. We are justified, we are declared righteous, based on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a declaration of God that he accepts us based on Christ and that all the demands of the law have been fulfilled on our behalf and the merit and the obedience of Christ is credited to our account. That's justification. We are declared right in the eyes of the law of God and God accepts us based on the obedience and the shed blood of Christ. Well, there are a lot of teachers in the world today that like to stop there and say, "Okay, that's all that matters." That's not all that matters! That's not all that matters. God saved us by his grace and put inside us a principle of grace, a dynamic principle of grace, that is designed to change us so that we would be increasingly sanctified, set apart from this world, set apart from sin, set apart from our own wicked desires so that we would be set apart for him to live for his glory. It's the same principle that we've studied in Titus 2, the Lord redeemed us to have a people for his own possession zealous for good works. If you're not zealous for good works, if you're not zealous to be sanctified, set apart for God, you have every reason to go back to the very starting point and ask yourself, "Am I even a Christian or not?" If you don't care about the godly life, there's no reason to think that God dwells in you.

David said, "Lord, lead me in your righteousness." Let me say this: some of you could start separating yourselves simply by taking an honest look at that which you use for

entertainment, that which you watch, that which you do and engage in. Yeah look, I'm trying to step on your toes right now because we are far too comfortable with the sinful entertainment of the world and we are far too willing to vicariously enjoy watching others do that which we know that we could not do on our own. Look, if you should do it yourself, you shouldn't watch someone else do it or someone else pretending, acting to do it. Let's start right there in the realms of what we use with our leisure time and what we use to entertain ourselves. If you shouldn't be doing it, you shouldn't be watching someone else do it. We just need to get serious about holiness and let that be an aspect of separating ourselves and letting God lead us in righteousness through that very principle. You need to guard the portal of your mind, the portal of your eyes, and not let anything sinful come through them. And to the extent that you've done that, you need to confess it as sin and repent and ask God in the spirit of verse 8, "Lord, in light of how prone I am to this kind of wickedness, O God, won't you lead me in your righteousness because of my foes."

Now, David prays for himself in verse 8 and now in verses 9 and 10, he directs his prayer toward the enemies of God. Look at verses 9 and 10 with me. He says, "There is nothing reliable in what they say; Their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave; They flatter with their tongue. Hold them guilty, O God; By their own devices let them fall! In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out." That's a very strong prayer and David is praying against evil men who speak wickedly. Their words expose what is true about their heart. Jesus said in the gospel of Mark that "out of the abundance of the heart, the man speaks." What we say is an expression of what comes out of our hearts. When dirty words come out of your mouth, you're giving evidence of the fact that there are dirty things going on in your heart and David says, "This is the mark of wicked men." They're marked by destruction. There is evil and bloodshed and deception that is woven into the very things that come out of their mouths. All of the organs of their speech: their throat, their tongue, their lips, are devoted toward this wickedness. And what is worse, he says at the end of verse 9, "they flatter with their tongue." They try to cloak it all as though they were your friends.

You've had people like that in your life, haven't you? I have. People that you know are bent on your destruction, would like nothing more than to trample over you so that they can accomplish their objectives and yet they cloak it in flattery. They say, "Hey, how are you doing? Good to see you. Wish you were dead, but it's still good to see you." No, David sees all of that and in the midst of that, in the midst of his contemplations, his meditations, he says, "God, vindicate your righteousness. Bring them down so that your righteousness may prevail." And here's what I want you to see about this, beloved, remember we're talking about a man set apart for God. How does that look like? What does that look like? Well, here's what you've really go to understand: people get all tied up in these prayers of imprecation, "God, deal with the enemies. God, bring them down, cast them down, destroy them. What you need to see and understand here is that David is not praying this way out of a sense of personal vengeance, because he wants retribution, because he wants revenge for wrongs done to him. It's not about him here in verse 10. It's not about David. Do you see that?

Well, let me show you how you can know that for sure. Look at what he says at the end of verse 10. He says, "Lord, thrust them out for," because, "here's why I want you to do this, O God. Here's why I'm praying against these wicked men, it's because they are rebellious against you." He has identified with the purposes of God. He is set apart for the purposes of God and so when he prays that God would bring down these wicked men, it's not because they're making life difficult for David, it's because they are rebelling against God himself and David has so subsumed, he has so brought himself into line with the purposes and the character of God that he merely prays, "God, vindicate your name. Vindicate your character against these wicked people because I can't bear to see their opposition to you." He is set apart for God and so naturally he opposes that which opposes God. Naturally, he lines up against those people who line up against God.

That's the heart of David and whenever you read David praying this way, you need to remember that as you read about the life of David in the Old Testament history books in 2 Samuel and in the book of Chronicles, you need to realize as you read that that on a personal level, David was one of the most magnanimous forgiving men that you could have ever met. He refused to raise his hand against King Saul even when he had opportunity and reason to do so. He refused to have the head cut off of Shimei who cursed him as he was fleeing Absalom. He says, "Who knows, maybe God is speaking to me through him. Let him be." He reached out to Mephibosheth after Jonathan was gone and showed mercy to Mephibosheth. All of that to say that you have in David personally when his personal interests were at stake, he was a forgiving gracious man. He was marked by that. When it came to the enemies of God, he said, "God, act because they are opposed to you and I want you to vindicate your name because I'm set apart for you." So beloved, as we contemplate our own relationship to the world around us, we see that there is just a sharp distinction that should be in our minds, "Not only will I not walk in the path of sinners, I'll ask God to vindicate his name against them and thrust them down so that their rebellion could come to an end."

Now thirdly, David has prayed for himself; David has prayed for and against the enemies of God. Look at how he prays in verse 11 as he prays for the people of God. He says, "But let all who take refuge in You be glad, Let them ever sing for joy; And may You shelter them, That those who love Your name may exult in You." David identifies himself with the people of God and he is eager to see them know and enjoy the blessing of God. There is such a largeness to David's heart. He's not so wrapped up in himself that he forgets the enemies of God; he asked God to deal with them. And he's not so consumed with the problems of the world that he can't think about the people of God and pray for God to extend spiritual blessings to them. "O God, help them to abound in joy. O God, shelter and protect them. O God, work in their lives so that they would exalt in you and be glad." That's a man set apart for God. He identifies with them. He wants them to abound in joy. God has set apart these people for himself, David being set apart for God identifies himself also with them and prays for blessing upon them.

So he sees things clearly, "God, help me to walk. God, deal with your enemies. God, bless your people. I'm set apart for you. Accomplish your purposes in me. Accomplish your purposes against your enemies. Accomplish your purposes by blessing your people.

God, I'm just set apart for you. The desires of my heart and prayer are expressed by asking you to do what you are already inclined to do." And how can he do that? On what basis does he pray that way and pray particularly for the people of God? Look at verse 12 as we come to a close here. David says, "For it is You. Here is why I pray this way, God, it's because of who You are. It is you who blesses the righteous man, O LORD. I'm asking You to do this because You are the only one who can. Bless Your people with joy. No one else can do that. God, if you were to withhold Your hand, Your people would not have this blessing and so, God, I'm asking You to give to them what only You can do. If you set them apart, I know it's because you want to bless them so please do that as I align myself with them and with your purposes." Notice, there is a word picture that he uses here that's very vivid. He says, "You surround him with favor as with a shield. God, you surround the righteous man, that man who loves you and seeks after your purposes. God, you surround that man with favor like a shield." In other words what he's saying here is that, "You protect them. You surround them with blessing." The word for "shield" that he uses here is not the smaller shield that would merely protect the vital organs, it refers to a full body shield. A large shield that covered everything about the man. It's a picture of total protection, of total provision. Surrounded with favor as a shield. As surrounded as this large shield protects the entirety of the soldier's person in battle. Matthew Henry said, "The favor of God is to the saints a defense on every side. While they keep themselves under the divine protection, they are entirely safe and ought to be entirely satisfied."

There you have it, beloved. In the words of that great Puritan expositor you see the benefit of being set apart for God. We are entirely safe because we are under the providential protection and the guiding hand of a sovereign God who is using us for his purposes to direct us to the end of eternal glory. Of course we're entirely safe. Of course we can be at peace under the hand of a God like that. And we ought to be entirely satisfied to be in that position even though earthly sorrows hit us from time-to-time. The wife of Jonathan Edwards after he died, she wrote to her daughter and was expressing her contentment with God and said, "There I am and there I long to be. I want to be simply content in the presence of God even though a divine stroke of affliction has come into my life."

It's precious, isn't it, to think about? This is ennobling. This gives you a sense of the greatness of the call of the Christian life, to be dependent in relationship to God, to view him for who he is and to honor him accordingly, to be distinct in relationship to sin. Not drinking in the iniquity of the world but being separate from it and trusting in divine mercy to deliver you from it and to be discerning in relationship to men. "God, guide my path into righteousness. Deal with your enemies and thrust them down. Deal with your people and bless them and build them up." So do you want God to use you? To shake your world? Do you want to be a man set apart for him? Well, renew your dependence on Christ. Consider his hatred of evil and turn from every known sin and let your prayers be against the wicked and for God's people.

Do you know what I'd like to see for those of us at Truth Community? Those of us that gather together around his word? Let's be that kind of people. Let's be that kind of church

that is set apart for God and that actively pursues that. Let's just be that way and then let's watch and see what happens.

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Father, we thank you for the opportunity to study these words together and we pray that you would make us a people set apart for your purposes, set apart for you. Father, there are enough people around already that want to use you for their purposes to advance their agendas and for you to make their name great. Well Father, our prayer is completely different. We pray that you would use us to make your name great. We want to be set apart for you as we've seen from Psalm 5 and we pray now, God, that you would help us to that end. And for these dear people who so patiently listen to your word, O God, I pray that as they take refuge in you that you would cause them to be glad, that as they respond to you that you would let them ever sing for joy. I pray, Lord, that you would shelter and protect and provide for them in so tangible ways that they could see or an outworking of the hand of God in their lives that those who love you may exalt in you. We pray this way, Father, not because we deserve it but because you are the one who blesses the righteous man. O Lord, you are the one who surrounds those who seek you, those who know your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, you surround ones like that with favor as with a shield. Father, we want to tell you and we want to affirm tonight that we understand and we rest and we joy in the fact that in your hand we are entirely safe and Father, in your hand, we are entirely satisfied. We praise you and honor you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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