

This psalm appears to express what David saw as his responsibilities as king of Israel. Not only does he speak of his intention to seek personal righteousness, but he also states his commitment to protect himself from the influence of wicked people. Finally, he declares that he will purge the land of wickedness, particularly in Jerusalem, the city of the LORD.

A Psalm of David.

This title gives us the author but nothing concerning the context of the psalm. However, from the content of the psalm we can determine that it seems to describe David's commitment to the LORD, both as personally and particularly as king. Some commentators suggest the possibility that this psalm was used during coronations of later kings of Israel to express their own commitment to serve as a righteous king who was faithful to the LORD.

1 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

David is so appreciative of the LORD's mercy and judgment (justice) that he is inspired to sing the LORD's praise. These two qualities might seem to be opposites, but they are two sides of the same coin. The LORD shows mercy to the guilty who repent of the sin. His justice vindicates and rescues the righteous and punishes the wicked, which is also an act of mercy. David's praise is expressed to the LORD and not just about the LORD and his mercy and judgment. David apparently holds these two characteristics in such high regard that he will endeavor to exhibit them in his own life and reign as king.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

"I will behave myself wisely [prudently; to give attention to] in a perfect [complete; with integrity] way" – David did not resign himself to live his life moment-to-moment, making decisions impulsively. Instead, his intention was to pay attention to the way he lived his life to ensure that he was always doing what pleased the LORD.

"O when wilt thou come unto me?" – David is expressing his desire that the LORD would be ever-present in his life, guiding him in the way he should go.

"I will walk within my house with a perfect [complete; innocent] heart" – David is determined that his behavior in his private life ("within my house") would be innocent and one of integrity. Unfortunately, we often present a holy appearance in public while allowing sin into our private lives. David wanted to be the same in private as he was in public.

3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

David declares that he will not associate himself with anything wicked or ungodly in this verse.

"I will set no wicked [belial - worthless; evil] thing before mine eyes" – The Hebrew word translated "wicked" is *belial*, which is used elsewhere in the OT in phrases such as "sons of Belial," literally means "worthless," referring to something with no righteous value. Thus it is used figuratively to refer to something wicked or evil. David does not want to have anything in his presence that is spiritually worthless to him or that might tempt him to partake in wickedness. Having something wicked before your eyes provides the opportunity to savor or admire the object and be tempted by it to sin.

"I hate the work of them that turn aside [fall away]" – The context seems to be that David hates the things done by those who turn away from the LORD and righteousness to do wicked things. David has already rejected looking at wicked things and he hates the things done by those who, instead of doing as he did, have fallen into the temptations presented by looking at wicked things. These people have rejected obedience to the LORD and instead have followed their flesh.

"it shall not cleave [to cling; to stay with] to me" – David knows that little sins lead to bigger sins, and so he rejects all wicked things so that they do not tempt him to commit bigger sins. He does not want to have anything to do with them or the people committing them.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.

"A froward [twisted; perverted] heart shall depart from me" – The parallel statement in the latter half of the verse sets the context showing that David is not talking about his own heart but the hearts of men with a twisted or perverted heart. He said that he wanted nothing to do with wicked things in v. 3 and now he states that he wants nothing to do with those who do wicked things because of their perverted heart.

"I will not know a wicked person" – The Hebrew word translated "know" can refer to a range of familiarity, from merely being aware of something to having intimate knowledge of that thing through experience. The context suggests that David is talking about knowledge in the sense of friendship, fellowship, or being involved in the deeds of the wicked. David wants those with perverted hearts to part ways with him because he does not want to have any association with these wicked people.

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

“Whoso privily [*privately; secretly*] slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off [*destroy; exterminate*]” – David will not tolerate those who slander their neighbor in private instead of accusing him publicly where the neighbor would have the chance to defend himself.

“him that hath an high [*proud*] look [*eye*] and a proud [*broad; wide*] heart will not I suffer [*endure; tolerate*]” – David also will not tolerate the arrogant and proud. The two Hebrew words behind the expression “high look” literally mean “a proud eye.” The Hebrew word for “proud” means “broad or wide,” implying those who think more highly of themselves in their heart. David wants nothing to do with such people.

6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

“Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me” – In contrast to wanting to rid his kingdom of the wicked and their deeds, David’s plan as king is to watch over those who are “faithful” in order to preserve them in his kingdom. The word “faithful” implies not only are they faithful to the LORD and the king, but that they are faithful in doing right. They are dependable and a benefit to society rather than a detriment. They are what we would describe as “good people” and David wanted his kingdom filled with them.

“he that walketh in a perfect [*complete; wholesome*] way, he shall serve me” – These that walk in a “perfect” way are the same type of people that he called “faithful.” They live morally complete and wholesome lives. These are the type of people that David wants as subjects in his kingdom.

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

“My house” may refer to David’s kingdom at large, but it more likely refers to his household and the servants that work there. Servants who are caught telling lies and acting deceitfully will lose their employment. David is reinforcing his intent to be separated from the wicked and their deeds.

8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

“I will early [*in the morning*] destroy [*exterminate*] all the wicked of the land” – The Hebrew word translated “early” refers to the morning, the early part of the day. The idea seems to be that David does not want to be lax in ridding the land of the wicked. He wants to do it “early” and destroy them before they do any more harm.

“that I may cut off [*destroy; take away*] all wicked doers from the city of the LORD” – David’s purpose is to purge Jerusalem of all those who would do wickedness. Jerusalem is the “city of the LORD” where the Ark of the Covenant resided. David’s zeal for the LORD motivated him to do what he could as king to sanitize the city of the LORD.