

A PALADIN'S DARK VOWS



PALADINS ARE UNDISPUTED HEROES AND champions of noble causes. These brave knights walk a lonely road, maligned for being “too uptight,” or “Lawful Stupid” by their less scrupulous companions. Yet despite their renowned moral code, paladins can still succumb

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to the darkness that tempts all living creatures. The following roleplaying prompts and class features are perfect for Evil paladins, but can be used by any paladin who chooses to stray from the straight and narrow path.

THE DOORS OF DARKNESS

Darkness enters a paladin's heart through the flaws in his or her personality. Flaws are prompts for exploring how the paladin goes astray. They are the corruptions of the proper paladin virtues of bravery, loyalty, and wisdom.

AGGRESSION

Aggressive paladins have a penchant for dominance and destruction. Many suffer wounds of the heart and mind. A wrathful paladin's blood boils so hot that they lose their divine virtues in a haze of fury.

d10 Flaw

- 1 Few things satisfy my sadistic urges as well as smiting my enemies.
- 2 I take my anger out on others, even if they are not personally to blame.
- 3 In the fight against Evil, collateral damage is the sign of a worthy battle.
- 4 Once I get angry, I cannot stop myself from yelling.
- 5 I slap the recipients of my Lay on Hands for their deficiencies.
- 6 It excites me to toy with foes that I've cornered or challenged to a duel.
- 7 I lay awake at night thinking about how I will kill my enemies.
- 8 I am righteous. Therefore, I never compromise.
- 9 I show people my affection by boxing their ears.
- 10 Only the weak confide their worries. Only the false confess their sins.

BLIND LOYALTY

To dutiful paladins, service and obedience are the source of comfort and justification. However, they risk over-burdening themselves to the point

of neglecting their own conscience and upkeep. These paladins are the type to commit atrocities in the name of Good, perform seemingly-virtuous tasks for a secret Evil, or wear themselves to the breaking point.

d10 Flaw

- 1 I always obey my superiors, even if it seems wrong.
- 2 My work leaves me too exhausted for prayer and other spiritual activities.
- 3 "Humility" means never using my full potential.
- 4 I make more promises than I can keep.
- 5 When my honor is questioned, I punish myself.
- 6 When I am upset, I cannot put my thoughts into words.
- 7 I am an underling to a greater member of my order; I prefer to let him make big decisions.
- 8 When someone speaks against my faith or order, I threaten to duel them.
- 9 I resent my role in my faith or order, but I'm too afraid of them to show disloyalty.
- 10 I am uncomfortable with others unless our relationship is formally defined.

NAÏVETÉ

Naive paladins are unfamiliar with the ways of the world. Their actions are well intended, but in their haste for justice they bite off more than they can chew. Those who lack diligence or patience may find themselves accessory to a villain's plot. Soft-hearted paladins will someday discover the brutality of their profession, and the wisdom to accept that is hard-won.

d10 Flaw

- 1 I think everyone wants to be a loyal subject of the law, and I must teach them how.
- 2 I find the teachings of my oath, faith, or order confusing and disorienting.
- 3 Critical thinking hurts! I avoid it by reciting catechisms.
- 4 I am guided on the path of righteousness, so my plans needn't account for failure.

d10 Flaw

- 5 I rarely interact with people outside my faith or community.
- 6 Nobody understands my burden; I regularly tell them so.
- 7 I'd rather play dice or cards than pray.
- 8 My prayers are so loud and fervent, I often forget about my surroundings.
- 9 Even in my dreams, I cannot escape the carnage I wreak in the name of virtue.
- 10 I find no peace in quiet moments; my thoughts return to the lives I couldn't save.

NEW CLASS FEATURES

Paladins of any alignment may take these features. Their power comes not from Good or Evil, but from the scars of broken hearts and troubled minds.

BLOODY HANDS

This optional class feature replaces Lay on Hands.

Many paladins are holy healers, but your soul yearns to kill. You have a pool of murderous power that replenishes when you take a long rest. With that pool, you can deal extra damage equal to your paladin level times 5. Whenever you deal or expend damage from this pool, you also take half that much damage.

When you hit a creature and deal damage, you can draw power from the pool to deal extra damage to that creature, up to the maximum amount remaining in your pool. You can apply this extra damage after you see your damage roll result.

Alternatively, you can expend 5 extra damage from your pool to wreath your weapon in murderous energy, allowing your next weapon attack to ignore its target's damage resistances and immunities.

OATH OF THE PURGE

The Oath of the Purge dictates that impurity be cleansed by fire. This impurity may take many forms, such as a cult to an Evil god, a plague of



Obtaining Bloody Hands

Paladins who already have the Lay on Hands feature may replace it with Bloody Hands by performing a ritual over the course of three hours, which can be done during a long rest. During the ritual, the paladin anoints their body or weapon in blood—be it that of a sacrifice, a fallen foe, or their own. Paladins with Bloody Hands are not always evil, but are often filled with hate and rage. They frequently neglect other ideals to sate their thirst for blood.

undeath, the invasion of a monstrous war band—or perhaps less overt threats, like a duke who refuses to bow to your glorious cause. Paladins of the Purge adorn their clothes and armor with imagery of dragons and flames, to serve as both warning and promise. Their reputations as purgers, red knights, and flame-lords proceed them wherever they travel.

Tenets of the Purge

Though the nature of any particular Purge varies by incident, the tenets serve as self-perpetuating, self-enforcing guidelines to annihilate the foe. Paladins who uphold these tenets are often paranoid and reactionary.

Scorch the Earth. If I see any opportunity to remove evil, it is my duty to do so. I never allow a vanquished enemy to threaten me again.

Seek Out Contamination. To protect the pure, all possible agents of impurity must be annihilated. I know that not all threats are apparent, and that nobody should fear me unless they too are a threat.

Foster Purity. I am as the doctor who cauterizes the wound. When I am not on the front lines, it is my duty to serve the pure, the brave, and the healing.

Oath Spells

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

Oath of the Purge Spells

Paladin

Level Spells

3	<i>burning hands, sanctuary</i>
5	<i>scorching ray, zone of truth</i>
9	<i>fireball, protection from energy</i>
13	<i>aura of purity, wall of fire</i>
17	<i>flame strike, disintegrating smite</i>

Channel Divinity

You gain two Channel Divinity options:

Searing Weapon. As an action, you can imbue one weapon that you are holding with elemental fire, using your Channel Divinity. For 1 minute, you add your Charisma modifier to attack rolls made with that weapon (a minimum bonus of +1), and change the weapon's damage type to fire. The weapon emits bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light 20 feet beyond that. If the weapon is not already magical, it becomes magical for the duration.

You can end this effect on your turn as part of any other action. The effect ends early if you are no longer holding or carrying this weapon, or if you fall unconscious.

Wild Fire. As an action, you let out a mighty roar which causes fires to jump and spread wildly, using your Channel Divinity. Each burning object within 25 feet of you flares with increased energy. Creatures adjacent to or sharing a space with an affected burning object must make a Dexterity saving throw. If a creature fails its saving throw, it takes fire damage equal to 1d6 + your paladin level and catches on fire, taking 1d6 fire damage at the start of each of its turns. If the target or an adjacent creature uses an action to put out the flames, or the fire is otherwise doused, the ongoing damage ends. On a successful save, the creature takes half damage and doesn't catch fire.

Razing Flames

Starting at 7th level, your spells and features that deal fire damage over an area of effect also burn objects caught in the conflagration. You ignite

and destroy any unattended, non-magical objects caught in such areas of effect if the object's break DC is less than your spell save DC.

Piercing Flames

Beginning at 15th level, when you use your Divine Smite, the target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the target becomes vulnerable to fire for one minute. If the target is resistant to fire, it instead loses that resistance. If the target is immune to fire, it instead becomes resistant.

Burning Path

At 20th level, as an action, you can wreath yourself in flames. This wreath of flames lasts for 1 minute. It extends in a 10-foot radius, emanates bright light in a 25-foot radius, and dim light 25 feet beyond that. Whenever a hostile creature enters the wreath of flame for the first time on its turn or starts its turn there, the creature takes 40 fire damage.

In addition, for the duration, you have immunity to fire damage and resistance to cold damage.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

OATH OF SUPREMACY

Taking the Oath of Supremacy is a declaration that your cause is the one, the true, and the only; to use the word "best" would imply a sense of competition. Paladins may proclaim the moral supremacy of any single cause, such as their faith, ideal, leader, movement, order, race, or sect. Such paladins indicate their elite status by donning the telltale emblems of their cause—be it their national colors, their order's sigil, or their leader's dress code. Outsiders refer to them as supremacists or gold knights, but these paladins would prefer to be greeted as brothers and sisters of the faith.

Tenets of Supremacy

The tenets of the Oath of Supremacy vary by

paladin and cause, but all guide the paladin to be an elite entity in an inferior world.

Power. Assert your superiority through unwavering confidence and domination.

Self-Assurance. Your actions are just, and you need not answer for them. However you treat others, that is what they deserve.

All for the Cause. For the community of your cause, you must serve, sacrifice, and obey.

Oath Spells

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed.

Oath of Supremacy Spells

Paladin

Level	Spells
3	<i>command, heroism</i>
5	<i>enhance ability, hold person</i>
9	<i>fear, haste</i>
13	<i>banishment, stoneskin</i>
17	<i>circle of power, dominate person</i>

Channel Divinity

You gain two Channel Divinity options:

Invoke Fealty. You can use your Channel Divinity to compel a foe to kneel before you. As an action, you point to a creature within 10 feet of you, filling it with fear and awe. The creature must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or fall prone, groveling. While groveling, the creature's speed is reduced to 0 and it cannot take actions or reactions. The target has advantage on its saving throw if it has more hit points than you. The creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns. On a success, the effect ends.

Vow of Disdain. As a bonus action, you can use your Channel Divinity to utter a vow of disdain against a creature you can see within 10 feet of you. The vow shrouds you in warding energy for one minute, or until you or the target drop to 0 hit points or fall unconscious. While affected by your vow of disdain, the creature has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks against you.

Aura of Certitude

Starting at 7th level, you and all friendly creatures within 10 feet gain a bonus to Charisma checks and Charisma saving throws equal to your Strength modifier (minimum of +1).

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 ft.

Soul of Disdain

Starting at 15th level, you need not waste your time to deal with the foe denounced by your Vow of Disdain. When a creature affected by your Vow of Disdain makes an attack, they instantly take radiant damage equal to 1d10 + your Charisma modifier.

Aspect of Perfection

At 20th level, you can ascend to a more perfect form. As you approach perfection, you emanate a holy glow, and gusts of ethereal wind follow your movements. Your body itself may also change by adding muscle mass, healing from old scars, aging to become more proud and intimidating, or returning to the beauty and power of youth.

Using your action, you undergo a transformation. For 1 minute, you gain the following benefits:

- ▶ You gain resistance to all damage types, except psychic damage.
- ▶ You gain the benefits of the haste spell, and do not have to maintain concentration on it.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.