

# The Imprecatory Psalms



by

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## The Imprecatory Psalms 1.0



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# Preface

*“Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD” (Psalm 70:1)*

Christian wish no man ill-will. Nevertheless, we live in an anti-Christ, anti-truth world with politicians who love death; that is, there is a time and a place to pray the imprecatory psalms.

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# The Imprecatory Psalms

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Psalms 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 79, 83, 94, 137, 139, and 143



# Psalm 5 - Destroy the Wicked

## A Morning Prayer for Deliverance



This is a psalm of David and there is no reason to doubt his authorship.

### The Psalmist's Pleading for God to Hear His Prayer.

*Psalm 5:1 To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth, A Psalm of David. Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.*

“Give ear” is a Hiphil imperative — a plea to the LORD to “bend his ear,” and to cause Himself to hear the voice of the plaintiff. God’s attention is the first concern of this litigant.

The noun “meditations” (hagiyyg) refers to the inner groans, whispers, moans, and musings of a man. The noun appears to be related to the verb “meditate” (hagah) in Psalm 1:2 which refers to the “roar of a lion” in Isaiah 31:4.

Hear, distinguish, recognize, and consider my pleas, my moans, and my roaring. Hear my inarticulate groans that I can’t put into words. I know you hear prayers; but Lord, hear my prayer!

If my prayer is right, honor it; if my prayer is deficient, correct it. “Hear me, O Lord, or I die” is the heart cry of every saint.

He calls this prayer his “meditation” to convey that it was not his wordsmithing, but the burdens and the affections of his soul that will come before to the throne.

The spirit of prayer is better than the ritual of prayer. The spirit of the prayer is better than the words of prayer. It is not one’s eloquence in prayer, but the genuineness of prayer that is of chief concern.

### *2 Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.*

Again, the concern is that the Judge will honor his prayer . . . not to his uttered words, but to his incoherent cry — that deep, heartfelt sense of anxiety that men often feel — a desperation so entangle with self-concern and the glory of God that one cannot unravel the painful knots into intelligible strings of thought.

David isn’t looking to men or to his own abilities for assistance, but to God alone. God, not man; God, not government is his object of worship. As long as he breathes, he will present his needs to his Protector and Provider.

Because God is David's Creator, King, Master, and Lord, he has a legal right to come into the throne room to present his petition.

*3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

David will not be silent; he will not be too busy; he will not be lazy; He will not be mute. Vigilant, he wills to reach God with his morning prayer. Before the duties of the day begin, he talks to God before he talks to men.

David wants the dew of heaven to fall upon his field before the harsh Sun bleaches his crops. He wants the morning showers of grace to settle on him before the mid-day heat saps his strength. He wants personal peace before engaging in public battles. He wants shalom with God before he faces conflicts with man; he wants provision from His Provider before men make their demands upon him. He looks up before he looks outward. He looks up, not inward.

Like a farmer, he plants his seed and expects a harvest. What he expects, he inspects.

Spurgeon said prayer without expectation is like hunting with a dead dog, and prayer without preparation is like hawking with a blind falcon.

What kind of farmer plants his grain, and then fails to return to check the growth of the kernel? Let us not be like turtles that leave their eggs on the beach to hatch. Look up. Look around. Look for evidence of God at work.

### **His Pleading Against His Enemies**

*4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.*

David is not naïve. He realizes his day will be filled with conflict — turmoil caused by personal enemies — clashes with men who are also enemies of God — strife within that is contrary to the law of the LORD God.

Jesus called them “tares” and “goats” (Mt. 13; 25) Paul called them “Jews” (1 Thess. 2:14); we call them “liberals,” “democrats,” “Zionists,” and “globalists.”

David advanced his most powerful argument to His Commander. My enemies are also Your enemies — enemies who take pleasure in wickedness — enemies to whom you have issued a death warrant.

When I pray against my adversaries, I pray against the sinful energies which you also hate. The things I pray against are the very things that offend Your holiness. If You, Lord, have no pleasure in wickedness, how can I be content to be controlled by evil at work in others? Men may kneel before tyrants and strike a peace accord with agents of the Devil, but I will make no peace with evil . . . or evil men!

*5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*

The word "stand" is a Piel verb implying intense, certain action.

The word "workers" means "makers" of iniquity; that is, God hates all those who manufacture evil . . . deception . . . lies . . . and, schemes to defraud. He is probably referring to the politicians and the wealthy elite of his day.

He does not say here that he hates iniquity. Rather, the Spirit says **God hates the workers of iniquity**. Yes, there are men that God hates. Hate is a virtue of the LORD God. Praise the Lord!

Spurgeon said, "A little sin is great folly, and the greatest of all folly is great sin."

Fools are small men with great sins . . . and often in high places in positions of power. Believing there is no god, they know little restraint in their folly.

Fools may gain the affection of men, but they have lost affiliation with God.

The sophist that thinks God is all sugar and no salt and doesn't have both oars in the water.

Modern apostates teach that God is love and that he loves everybody—even idolaters, murderers, pimps, baby butchers, sodomites, schemers, blasphemers, and thieves. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Four errors are hereby exposed:

- God loves everyone
- God loves everyone equally
- God hates the sin but loves the sinner
- God does not hate anyone.

To correct errors, consider the following: God hates at least one person (Esau: Malachi 1:2, 3; Romans 9:13) and God hates wicked deeds (Deuteronomy 32:19; Psalm 7:11; 10:3.; Proverbs 6:16; 22:14; Jeremiah 44:4; Zechariah 8:17).

The theology that God loves all men equally, and that all are going to heaven is as naïve of as possessing a pet rattlesnake. While God generally loves the whole world and offers his love to sinners, He does not love all men specifically, nor does he offer the rebellious a place in His house. God forbid!

It would be better to eat at a Hindu steakhouse than be in a church that believes in love and not hate; that has exchanged truth for tolerance.

Could a righteous man tolerate a heaven populated with the likes of Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Pol Pot, Billy the Kid, and Black Bart?

That Christians are to love the sinner and hate the sin is a misguided pundit.



Sin is not like the wind existing outside of man. Evil is not in the environment, it is in men. Sin is in the sinner and sin does not exist apart from the sinner.

The capacity to hate properly is an attribute of God! But, His ability to hate does not diminish His power to love.

While the Holy God hates those who manufacture evil, He also condemns frivolous, fleshly, petty, causeless hatred, of which many need to be redeemed (Titus 3:3).

God loves what is good and He hates what is evil. He also calls us to love what is good and hate what is evil. But, is it possible to love what is good without hating what is evil? It is not desirable or even possible to hate sin and not hate a person bound to it.

While we are called to love our personal enemies, we are not commanded to love criminals. Hating God's enemies and sponsors of evil (professional crooks, con-artists, and cheats that work in government) is Biblical.

Something is wrong with us if we do not hate sin, wickedness, the Devil, and those who defy God and His law. Otherwise, our soul shrivels to be "two-sizes too small."

Billy Sunday punched it:

"Listen, I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist, I've butt it as long as I've got a head, and I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old, fistless, footless, and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition."

*6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.*

The term "leasing" (kazab) refers to falsehood, lies, and deception. The modern day media that spins every story so that it conforms to the leftist agenda comes to mind.

Targeted for destruction are liars and schemers (speak leasing), bloody men (murderers, assassins), and defrauders (deceitful, covetous men).

These are men who violate the First-Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Commandment.

The verb "will abhor" is a Piel verb adding an emphatic emphasis that God has an intense plan of destruction in store for these professional lawbreakers.

He reasons God must protect him from his enemies, because his enemies are also God's enemies.

The men David resists were professional schemers—those who rebelled against God's law . . . exploited fellow citizens . . . and defrauded neighbors of their property.

“You will destroy” them, reasons David. Why not act now by delivering me from their snares? Your deliverance will be consistent with your intention to destroy “all the workers of iniquity.”

**7 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.**

Having described the fate of the wicked, David now articulates the fate of the righteous. Because God has favored David, conviction that he shares the destiny of the sons of God fill his heart.

David announced, “I will come into your house.” Not because of his own worthiness, but because of the greatness of God’s mercies.

David knows he is not better than other men. He has a place in God’s House is due to the grace of His Host, and not to the grace at work in his own heart. David possesses a multitude of sins, but God possesses a multitude of mercy. David is a great sinner, but he has a great Savior.

“In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple” -- The temple, not the military, was the hope of Israel!

The term “worship” (shachah) means “to bow down” to one who has authority. David is not referring to singing in a choir, but surrendering to the rule and reign of the LORD God as a soldier of Christ.

If David’s faith was the mercy of God, David’s fear was an offended God.

A provoked God was a greater threat to peace than standing armies. The fear of offending his LORD caused David to live conservatively. He knew he was one of God’s children, but as God’s child, he did not presume upon that love . . . upon His forgiveness . . . “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 1:4).

### **His Pleading for Guidance**

*8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.*

The term “lead”(nachah) is first used in connection with Eliezar who traveled hundreds of miles through foreign lands in search of a bride for Isaac among Abraham’s relatives. Having found the daughter of Bethuel on his journey, he immediately attributed the success to the hand of God: “I being in the way, the LORD led (nachah) me to the house of my master’s brethren” (Genesis 24:27).

David pleads his cause: “Lead me, O LORD.” The verb “lead” is an imperative . . . a command . . . the voice of prayer. The subject of the verb “lead” (na’tah) is “You,” and the object is “me.” His concern is not that he would make good choices, but that God would guide him through his day of conflict.

The phrase “in thy righteousness” would include law, ethics, goodness, truth, and prosperity.

The word “straight” (yasar) in Hebrew parallelism extends the meaning of “righteousness:” that is, make my way clear, smooth, level, without the twists and bends that lead to confusion.

You led Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, lead me! As a Good Shepherd who “restoreth my soul . . . lead me in the paths of righteousness for *Thy* name’s sake.” Don’t be silent. Don’t be aloof. Don’t leave me to my own reasoning. Life is too complicated, and I am not that talented: “Lead me!”

Show me the way through this corrupt wasteland we call “life.” The road is crooked and filled with pot holes. It is a briar patch loaded with thorns. Clouds block the sun. Darkness rules the day. Cold shivers the bones. Robbers abound. Liars are perched on every corner hawking their wares. Men hell-bent on controlling the world want to control me . . . register me . . . manipulate me . . . steal from me . . . and even to kill me.

My eyes are weak and I am frail. “Make thy way straight before my face,” prays the psalmist. Make it level. Make it smooth. Make it right. Make it balanced and fruitful and good. Make my way straight.

**9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.**

David now introduces the characters on this road: the shysters, chiselers, scammers, flaw-yers, pimps, perverts, and politicians.

The word “faithfulness” (kuwn) is negated by the adverb “no.” The word (faithfulness “refers to stability, fixed principles, steadfastness, firmness, trustworthiness, and that which is stable. A modern synonym for “faithfulness” is conservatism. The opposite of “faithfulness” is liberal, progressive, relative, revolution, and the promotion of “change.”

“A great democracy has got to be conservative or it will cease to be reliable and trustworthy.” (A corrective to Teddy Roosevelt’s progressive philosophy).

“A country that abandons God’s law-order will prove itself untrustworthy and promote distrust among the nations.”

“A nation that promotes change / liberalism becomes unpredictable and unreliable.”

“A society that forsakes God’s law will change for the worse and end up in the graveyard of the nations.”

“Promote moral change and fools will love you.”

“Practice faithfulness to God’s law-order and you will earn the respect and trust of people.”

I need to be delivered from neighborly liars, religious liars, business liars, educated liars, media liars, Hollywood liars, medical liars, and political liars. "Lead me, O LORD!"

Three of the four descriptions refer to their lips.

**First**, their mouth is described as unfaithful. The word faithful means "fixed" or "firm." It refers to pillars upon which a house is built (Jud. 16:29); that is, their words are **not** "faithful," but are founded on fraud, fickleness, and faithlessness.

**Second**, the term "wicked" refers to men with evil desires and selfish ambitions. Wickedness bubbles like a witch's brew in a kettle at the core of their being.

**Third**, their throat as an open sepulcher full of outhouse rot. Every time they open their mouth the foul odors of profanity and perversions burst forth to disturb, defile, and deceive the listener.

**Fourth**, when they speak, they cast a spell . . . a spin on facts . . . an attractive lie. They "flatter" with their tongue; that is, they are experts at telling you what you want to hear, but the outcome is always death (Proverbs 8:36). Life is hard enough without covetous monsters eyeing the righteous as a meal upon which to feast. But, it is even harder when truth is covered under a table of lies.

We need to be delivered from neighborly liars, religious liars, business liars, educated liars, media liars, Hollywood liars, medical liars, and political liars.

*10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.*

The verb "destroy" is a Hiphil (causative) imperative verb in the emphatic position. It refers to "guilt" and the punishment rebels deserve; that is, punish them as their sin deserves, O God.

David is not addressing the flaws, mistakes, or peccadillos of men, but of political leaders who willfully, maliciously, and callously violate God's law-order; that injure their fellow men; that steal property and divide families.

David is asking God to pronounce them guilty and to punish them accordingly . . . that is, to apply the death penalty to these political outlaws.

In modern times, it has become posh to think of love as the answer to all things. It is not. Love is only part of the answer. When love is not guided by law, love loses its discrimination of the intelligent use of things. True love forgives a multitude of sins, but it cannot tolerate the viral spread of evil.

Justice is the other half of the answer to corruption at work in a nation.

In this case, David pleads that God would remove His enemies. The removal, and, or death of the wicked ends a political crisis and restores health to society.

David was once a prince in training and then an appointed king. His enemies were political: politicians . . . wealthy nobles . . . judges . . . lawmakers . . . media pundits . . . elders . . . governors . . . and rulers.

Because God's enemies sold themselves to the Devil, David does not pray for their conversion.

The answer to corruption is not conversion but condemnation followed by execution.

David prays that the Lord would raise His gavel and sentence his enemies<sup>1</sup> to death—now, in this life. Why? Because David is hateful? No! But, because He wants to restore health and integrity to the nation.

### **His Pleading for God's People**

*11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.*

David has a prayer for the wicked, but he also has a plea for the righteous -- a prayer for the protection, preservation, and prosperity of God's people.

While David prays for condemnation of the wicked in his nation, he also prays for the commendation of the righteous in the nation — misery for the corrupt; but music (joy) for the upright.

The wicked often rise to power. Their laws and selfish ambitions often prevail in political affairs—and the godly suffer.

David prayed that joy might be restored to those trusting<sup>2</sup> in the Lord. The righteous are not smart enough to avoid all the clever schemes that wicked politicians plot against men. The sheep need a Shepherd to defend and to protect them. Joy comes when the humble recognize the hand of God in their daily affairs.

When the wicked are destroyed, the righteous are delighted. When the wicked groan, the righteous are glad. When madmen die, melodies strike a chord in the hearts of good men.

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<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon: "Against thee:" not against me. If they were my enemies I would forgive them, but I cannot forgive Thine. We are to forgive our enemies, but God's enemies it is not in our power to forgive.

<sup>2</sup> The word "trust" in this text means "to take refuge in." The idea is that of a little bird seeking shelter from the storm in a vast tree.

*12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless (Piel) the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass (Piel) him as with a shield.*

He ends this psalm with a promise: The Lord will bless the righteous—sometimes in this life, but surely in the life to come.

His confidence is astounding. The psalmist employs two Piel verbs: “He will,” and “He will bless” the righteous. His blessing knows no limits, no depths, and no fetters. The godly are the crown jewels over which he sets a jealous guard.

More accurately, the text says He crowns the righteous with a helmet that not only adorns, but protects. Forensic righteousness is available to all who trust Christ as their Savior (Romans 3:21).

“Thou compass him” is also a Piel verb implying intense protection: the Lord not only helmets his soldier, but armors the whole man. Nothing shall come into the life of the righteous that cannot work for good (Romans 8:28).

Not all that comes into the life of a righteous man is good, but God is at work, even in the midst of corruption, to work good for His people.

# Psalm 6 - A Prayer for the Sick

## Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak



Here is a wonderful psalm to consider when one is physically and spiritually ill.

Every word in the hymn is a powerful anti-oxidant that restores health to the soul.

We are being lied to. If you are looking for reality, you won't find it at parties and parades. Reality is found on battlefields, hospitals, and old folks homes. The truth is that we live in a world stalked by angels of death. There are no safe places, safe spaces, or safe ages.

"Be safe" is a utopian myth . . . an ideal of the snowflake generation. People get sick and they suffer. Some survive to live another day; others die by the hands of the Grim Reaper.

The joy of this psalm is that we are permitted to gaze into the heart of a sick saint, and see him rise from his bed of tears a new man with a renewed commitment to fight the Lord's battles.

*Psalm 6:1 <To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,*

Though there is a placement issue regarding the inscription of this psalm, we believe that it was delivered to the chief Musician to compose a melody fitting with the themes of grief, repentance, and assurance of answered prayer.

According to Albert Barnes, the phrase "upon Sheminith" occurs here for the first time, and modifies the meaning of the title. The word Sheminith – שְׁמִינִיִּת shemînyîth – means properly "the eighth," and corresponds exactly to our word "octave," the eighth. It appears the psalms began in the minor key on the lower notes on the scale to enhance the gravity of the theme and the triumphant chorus at the end of the psalm (8-10).

This is the first penitential psalm which fits into the family of Penitential Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

Before us is a frail man burdened down with his sins. Frail in body and soul, the psalmist cries out to God for mercy and relief from the rod of His chastisement.

In the first seven verses, we hear the groans of a troubled and grieved heart. In verses 8-10, the psalmist lifts his head with confidence that his penitent prayer has been heard.

The key changes from the minor key to a major key; from a funeral hymn with soft tones and long notes to a military march with in-step sounds of triumph and glory.

In the first seven verses we are attracted to a master violinist drawing us in emotionally to feel the pain of the psalmist's crisis; in verses 8-10, we hear an army marching band, blazing trumpets, and the shouts of soldiers marching off to war.

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### **A Plea for God to Hear his Prayer**

*A Psalm of David.> O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

David cries out to the LORD, the covenant-keeping God, who was pleased to tabernacle among men.

The personal name of God, the Tetragrammaton (LORD), is used seven times in this hymn. The LORD is David's God, and David is His troubled child.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father Who art in heaven . . ." Who disciplines all His children with words and sometimes with a whip (Hebrews 12).

Conscious of his sins, the psalmist feels like he deserves the rod of reproof—not for punishment, but for instruction and sanctification. Pots and pans are cleansed by wool and brush; the soul by the washing of the blood (salvation) and with the water of the Word (sanctification); and, the body by fasting, detoxification, rest, and restoring balance.

The petitioner did not rebel against the rod of God's correction (Micah 6:9); nor does he plead that God should abandon His fatherly duty to discipline His children. He understood the LORD's greatest saints are forged on His anvil by hammer and heat.

Rather, he prays for tenderness — that the rod would not turn into a sword that severs and slays; that God would remember mercy in the mess and misery of His discipline. He wants to be corrected, but not crushed; improved, but not impoverished; better, but not bitter. If God rebukes us because of our sins, this is good; but, if He shames and humiliates us because of our foolishness, we cower in despair.

Thus, we pray that if God's rebukes **cannot** be removed, that at least they would be delivered in tender love and not in terrifying anger.

*"A lark! A spree! It's very clear to see that. A Spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.*

*The medicine go down-wown."* (Mary Poppins lyric)

### **A Portrait of his Suffering**

*2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.*



The psalmist knows he deserves a thrashing, but he prays for a magnanimous measure of mercy. This is the right way to pray. All saints clothe themselves in humility knowing they are less than what they ought to be.

This is a prayer for tender warmth because he feels terribly cold. He describes his crisis as vexed. “vexed” means “feeble,” “alarmed,” and “terrified.”

He needed *rapha* (healing) from *Jehovah-Rapha* because a health challenge chilled him to the bones.

Possibly, the psalmist was old and his frailty reached the skeleton on which the whole of his being depended. He feared being cracked and crippled by the chastisement he deserved.

Spurgeon noted that David did not seek God’s left hand of justice, but his right hand of mercy.

“Oh, Lord, correct me, but crush me not. Help me, but don’t hurt me! Steer this ship away from the rocks and reefs. Trim this tree, but not to a stump; shear this lamb, but carefully; weed this field, but leave the wheat; launder this garment, but not with lye; belt this child if You must, but bruise me not. “

Calvin’s favorite exclamation in Latin was, “*Domine usquequo*” — “*O Lord, how long?*” This is the cry of all the saints under the altar where minutes seem like hours; hours like days; and days like weeks: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10).

Thus, we pray, “O, Lord, how long must I be sick; be poor; or, be on a broken vessel without a mast on a windy sea?”

### *3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?*

The reader should notice the two pressing evils that afflicted the psalmist.

**First**, David was physically ill and spiritually infirm. The weight of his own sins and his physical malady weighed heavy upon him.

**Second**, the spirit of the age and the sins of his contemporaries rubbed his soul raw (6:7).

The psalmist prays for personal healing, not just the removal of the symptoms, but for a total cure of his spirit, soul, and body. His troubled bones affected his soul. Likewise, a health crisis awakens our deepest fears where faith is the only antiseptic.

Quite possibly the seriousness of his sins alarmed his soul, but not only his soul, his spiritual infirmity touched the core of his being—even to the bones. When our bones are shaken, our humanity, our manhood, our total existence is threatened.

A frail body is one concern, a frail soul is quite another. A man can endure shaking bones, but not a shattered soul. There are circumstances that can wear a man down and shred him into bits and pieces. And, this fear that caused the psalmist to cry out, “Oh, LORD, how long?”

When physically ill, people will take off work to see a doctor; but, the somber truth is that when people are soul sick, they will ignore the malady and delay seeking a remedy for their spiritual infirmity. They go weeks and months without prayer, reflection, and soul searching. What we call mental illness is really the failure of men to seek God's remedy for soul-sickness in the early stages of stress.

To the child of God, God's delays chill the soul to the core of one's being. This poor saint waited for the sun to rise and worried that he might not live to see the light of day. He longed for the warm touch of God's tender hand, but the bitter cold of night caused his bones to shiver and shudder.

His prayer reveals a whisper of hope. "Oh, Lord, how long till sunrise, till you heal, till you speak, till you guide and lead?" Though afflicted, the psalmist looks to God alone for help and healing.

#### *4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.*

This saint feels like God's Dove departed from him; that the absence of God's Spirit was the cause of all his problems. The eclipse of the Son painted his life black. Ravens stalked all hope. He knew not where to look. "Return, O, Dove. Roost on my shoulder. Come back and make your home with me again," cries the psalmist.

Why should the LORD heal him and return to him? David gives two reasons: (1) the character of God, and (2) the silence of the grave.

No doubt this psalmist had days of victory and spurts of growth in holiness, but he pleads none of it. The answer is within God and His character. **It is His nature to show mercy to the contrite**: "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy to those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:11).

The name of the LORD is mentioned seven times in this prayer. His hope is not in fickle creatures, but in his faithful Creator, the Master of the Universe. He rests his head on three pillows: (1) the pillow of God's omniscience (He knows his troubles); (2) the pillow of God's omnipotence (He is able to heal); (3) and the pillow of God's love and goodness (God will do what is best for him):

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

#### *5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?*

Hearing the footsteps of the Grim Reaper with sickle in hand searching for its next victim, David trembled in fear of death.

The psalmist offered **a second reason** God should help and heal him — **the silence of the grave**. If he dies, there will be one less singer in God's choir on earth (the church militant) giving praise

to the LORD – one less witness testifying to the jury of the world of the greatness of God. There are no choirs in church graveyards. An eerie silence rules the night as well as the day.

David argues, “LORD, preserve me and I will praise thee. Save me, and I will sing to thee.” He reasoned with the LORD, “that if I perish, my earthly praise will cease with my passing. If I survive, I will “lift up my hands” to thee. If I live, songs of praise will flow out my grateful soul to my precious Savior.

How can God resist an argument like this?

*6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.*

This terrified saint swims in a salty sea of tears due to his troubles. He tried to pray, but out came groans . . . and sobbing. Spurgeon called these “liquid prayers” — rivers of weeping flowing uphill to the throne of grace.

Focused on a God solution, David would not retreat from his dependence on God until He answered his prayer. “I water my couch in tears” is a future tense – a hyperbole — more of an expression of what it might be if God delayed rather than of what actually happened.

God’s people may pray, but not pout; groan, but not grumble; weep, but not whine.

*7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.*

The psalmist describes the results of his long ordeal — “consumed with grief.” Under the chastening hand of God, He was old before his time. Wearied with weeping, his grief cut wrinkles and black circles around his eyes. His hair twisted gray; the stars and moon turned dark; the clouds returned after the rain; the keepers of the house trembled; and his strong men stooped (Ecclesiastes 12 – an allegory of old age).

One of the griefs that weighed down his soul was the work of his enemies – evil men, thieves, liars, defrauders and murderers in high places of government recruiting assassins for their cause and spreading lawlessness among men. Toxic feminists, abortionists, Sodomites, shifty politicians, corrupt judges, bully cops, lying reporters, gender-bender propagandists with tax-and-spend liberals come to mind.

Oh, that more Christians were afflicted with grief because of the sins of the age!

### **A Protest Against the Workers of Iniquity**

*8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.*

The song changes from the minor key to the major key; from a dirge to a battle hymn.

Tears are a universal language. God heard the “eloquence of sorrow” in the psalmist’s liquid prayers. Now, he arises from his knees with a new attitude. Committed to holiness, he marches

to the battlefield with commanding authority warning all his enemies, “Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity!”

Up until this verse, David pined away due to the distance between him and God. There are times to pray, and a time to practice faith; a time to weep, and a time to work. If you must offer to God liquid prayers, let them be in thimbles and not cattle tanks. Get off your bed! Walk out of your tomb! Unravel the grave clothes! Put off the sackcloth! Clean the cellar! Drive out the money changers! Adorn yourself with holy garments! Trust God anew! Face your enemies with sword in hand and chin up.

**Q: How do you know when you are healthy?** Answer: When you are back on the battlefield charging the enemies of the Christian faith with your sword swinging and guns blazing!

The workers of iniquity are lawless men in society encouraging the growth of big government, the capture of men under the umbrella of state control, and the spread of every vice known to man. The obstacles in the path of Christians are liars and deceivers. Know them. Confront them. Expose them. Rebuke them.

Every generation must learn war or accept chains of slavery (Judges 3:1-3). Healthy saints enter the contest to winnow the wicked and to win souls.

You will never be a victim fighting the Lord’s battles. Dr. Bill Bright said he never met a discouraged witnessing Christian. “If you are not fishing, you are not following” (Marion Michaux, personal evangelist). If you are not contending, you are surrendering. If you are not protesting, you are promoting. If you are not fighting, you are retreating.

“If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or your arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen” (Samuel Adams).

*9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.*

Knowing that he’d poured out his heart to the LORD, the psalmist arises from his knees with a confidence that God heard his prayer. If God hears your prayers, you are successful indeed.

*10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.*

Healed and off his sick-bed, David straps on his sword and rides his mount to the battlefield eager to spill blood. Healed, he is now God’s killing machine. When the giant slayer arrived on the killing fields, fear pierced the hearts of Israel’s enemies.

David did not fight the air or joust with windmills. His enemies were not merely phantom spirits and vapors in the distant landscape, but flesh and blood human beings feasting under the Poisonous Tree and spreading lawlessness across the land.

**Notice what health looks like when you see it.** Healthy Christians have steel in their soul and garlic on their breath. They are beacons of light, ministers of mercy, bloodthirsty as vampires, abrasive as sandpaper, unyielding as an anvil, soldiers enduring hardship, warriors for the gospel, combat veterans, front-line marines protecting their families, the church, and their nation with words of truth against the evils of the age: fraud, lies, propaganda, liberalism, Sodomy, lesbianism, toxic feminism, pride, arrogance, slander, gender neutrality, theft in the name of taxation, and the total subjugation of the total man to total government (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Romans 1:21ff).

Notice the **authority** of David. He **commands** his enemies to be ashamed and vexed. His enemies are God's enemies. They are plural in number. Because of their lawlessness and naked deeds, they should be red with blush and crippled with shame.

The word "ashamed" is used twice in this verse. The first time the word "ashamed" is used in Scripture is in relation to the nakedness of Adam and Eve after they ate the fruit from the Poisonous Tree (Genesis 2:25).

Now healthy, David sought to denude his enemies, strip them of their pride, and expose their lawless deeds. Not only did David want to humiliate his enemies, he sought to vex and terrify them with his terrible swift sword (Psalm 149:6).

The words "ashamed" and "vexed" are in the emphatic position in the sentence. The hammer of David's determination sounded doom and defeat to God's enemies.

When Christians confess their sins and are fully healed, promiscuous and lawless men tremble like skeletons on a snowy day. See Psalm 38 where David appears to be on his deathbed.

O, that all Christians were healthy and armed for the gospel. O, that the world might "tremble" when preachers come to town as in the days of David and Samuel (1 Samuel 16:4)!

Arise, and be God's attack lamb. When evil comes your way fight, snort, kick, bite, and show some grit.

# Psalm 11 - Faith in the Fight

## If the Foundations Be Destroyed?



“We’re all going to die!” Ever heard that omen?

Maybe you’ve heard the shout of defeatism from an enemy, or even a friend or a spouse; or perhaps you’ve heard those little voices in your own mind predicting defeat.

How should we respond to the thunder of doom and gloom blasting hopelessness from the canons of doubt in our ears?

In Psalm 11, David listened to the panic and negative reports coming from his own advisors. Late at night he writes this hymn showing us the way to manage fear.

Facing a fierce military foe and surrounded by trembling soldiers, there was one man in the army who expressed trust in God . . . only one man in the fight that had faith in the LORD!

This psalm is *not* a prayer to God, but an exhortation to jittery commanders. The psalm opens with David’s confidence in God.

### Advice from David’s Anxious Advisors

*Psalm 11:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> In the LORD put I my trust: how (dare you) say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?*

Note the singular mixed with a plural, “Flee as a flock of birds to your mountain.”

Psalm 55:6, “Oh that I had wings as a dove!”

“ye” = my friends. “trust” = refuge.

David and his men are near the killing zone. The enemy positioned itself on the high ground and appeared to have a strategic advantage. Ready to attack, shouts of hateur bellowed from the enemy. The smell of death whiffed through the air. Hearts pounded. Knees knocked. Soldiers puked and breath turned foul. Seeking advice from his generals, David respectfully listened to their bleak reports. Each advised David to retreat — to fly away like a little bird, to live and to fight another day.

David’s nostrils flared. His steel eyes of determination starred back at his generals as he countered the advice of his military staff: “in the Lord, put I my trust . . . why do you advise me to flee like a bird to safety on a high mountain?”

Fight or flight? They advised flight . . . but, this was not the time to flee . . . and David knew it. This was a day to trust God and vigorously wield the sword and spear against the enemies of Israel.

*2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.*

The reconnaissance reports revealed the enemy was ready to attack. David acknowledged the keen observations of seasoned generals. Every word fortified fear and increased despair. The enemy moved its archers into position . . . arrows were cocked in the bow . . . and a sky full of deadly darts were about to fall on David's soldiers . . . suddenly, secretly, with surprise in hopes of spilling the most Hebrew blood among David's lesser forces ("the upright in heart").

*3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

The fear among David's generals was not that their army would take some casualties, but that the whole infantry would be slaughtered.

The term "foundation" (hashatot) is translated "seth" nine times, "buttocks" two times (2 Sam. 10:4; Is. 19:10), and the "base of a mountain" in Aramaic -- a reference to the main lines of military troops.

The attack was imminent and the nucleus of David's army appeared extremely vulnerable. If the advancing soldiers defeated David's main force, the battle would be lost.

Possibly, the safety and security of the nation was at risk. It was in lieu of this possibility that David's fearful advisors asked, "What can the righteous do?"

## **David's Answer to His Fearful Advisors**

### **God Rules**

*4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven:*

David assures his generals that though there is confusion on the battlefield, there is no confusion in heaven. The God above rules over the battle, over the threats they faced this day, over the clinking, clanking iron-sounds of death swords.

"In his temple[1]" speaks of God's immanence.

"In heaven" communicates God's transcendence.

"His throne" addresses authority and assured the generals of God's royal sovereignty – His control over the battle. Archers launch their arrows, but God decides where they land.

1 Kings 22:34 But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel (Ahab) between the scale armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to

the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded."

### **God sees**

*his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.*

This is David's way of saying that God knows! God cares! God sees the plight of His army. Though the enemy uses stealth and concealment, God is not surprised by the tactics of the wicked; that is, God is among the troops as a Shield and Sword protecting and empowering them.

### **God Tests**

*5 The LORD trieth the righteous:*

David does not underestimate the enemy forces or the seriousness of the battle. Rather, he adds perspective: God uses these conflicts to test the faith and courage of the righteous.

The word "trieth" means "to examine" or "prove" or "refine" His people like a metallurgist purifies silver and gold (Jer. 6:27-30; 9:7; Psalm 7:9).

There was dross in David's army and impurities among David's counselors. Conflict reveals the fractures and flaws in the faith of the church militant. He uses these political conflicts to perfect His army as well as to humiliate and defeat the anti-god forces threatening Christian soldiers.

### **God hates**

*but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.*

The "wicked" refer to the savage foot-soldiers planning their bloody attack on David's defenses. . . the anti-god forces . . . those thieves and murderers that "cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10).

The "wicked" here are not just sinners, but professional criminals and strategists who plot the demise of the righteous. In our day, the wicked may not be carrying an AK-47 and wearing military uniforms. Enemies may be carrying microphones, standing in front of cameras, and wearing blue suits slanting the news in favor of some Satanic agenda while spitting out hate and slander against good and reasonable patriots.

That God is nothing but a powder-puff sugar bear engaged in a slobbering love affair with every vile human being is denied. All Lives don't Matter. Innocent lives matter, but depraved lives do not.

David announces to His men that God hates the wicked. We fight because we are right!! We fight evil men and we will kill many of them.



*God don't like ugly and He ain't crazy about pretty.* Smart men don't pet rattlesnakes, and a holy God doesn't caress the wicked. He does not love the sinner and just hate the sin. He hates the incorrigible.

While God forbids petty, childish loathing among His people, it is not possible to be a good man without hating evil . . . and hating evil men. God's rancor against the wicked can motivate us to take on a fight we might normally avoid because we know God wants to use us to tear down "strongholds" and humble the proud. God calls us to be salt, not honey-roasted clusters of mango peach passion pecks.

### **God judges**

*6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.*

David assures his generals that they were going to be God's artillery to inflict holy justice on the invaders. God is holy and "He will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7).

"Snares, fire, brimstone, and a horrible tempest" are metaphors for punishment.

"snares" = nooses or bird snare.

David was familiar with animal traps, and he knew what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah. He was familiar with the sirocco winds that sucked every bit of moisture from Levantine fauna. These forces of nature could turn a promising harvest into a dry, parched land overnight. David knew that God appointed judgment upon the wicked . . . and . . . perhaps God might be pleased to use Israel's army to bathe His enemies in blood.

Likewise, He may use some Christians to put an abortion clinic out of business or oppose some law favoring Sodomites. He might use some mission team to win the lost to Christ or oppose godless legislation. He plans to judge the wicked; and perhaps, some believers in civil government might have the privilege of being His instrument to oppose injustice and promote justice.

"But since correction lieth in those hands, Which made the fault that we cannot correct, Put we our quarrel to the will of Heaven, Who, when he sees the hours ripe on earth, Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads." (Shakspeare, Richard II, Act 1, Scene 2).

### **God is virtuous**

*7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.*

David assures his men that God is virtuous and that He sees their predicament. YHWH is righteous—that is, faithful to His covenant. David oozes with confidence that his army and his generals would see the face of God. He is not referring to some theophany, but that they would experience the sunshine of His favor on the hellish battlefield (Psalm 17:15).

## Conclusion

In our pilgrimage on earth, we face many conflicts. At times, we are overwhelmed by the power of the opposition. We may be tempted to flee . . . and in some cases, flight is a righteous response to overwhelming force (Matthew 10:23). But, in other cases, God's wants us to engage the conflict; to stand and fight; and not give an inch.

In the heat of the battle, we may hear many voices calling us to retreat, to "flee," to "run," an to "quit" in our own soul.

Never surrender without a fight!!

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

"When **you have done all** according to the word of God and it seems like nothing is happening, then **stand**. . . **Stand** firm, hold your ground, and defend your territory against the enemy, by submitting to God and hitting the enemy in the name of Jesus," says Peter Rahm.

Somehow, someday, we would do well to imitate David's *confidence* in God and his *courage* on the battlefield. We would do well to rehearse David's orders and instructions to his fellow generals. We would do well to reflect on Paul's words to the Romans: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Let us remember the words of General Patton, "You are here because you are real men and all real men like to fight" (June 5, 1944).

Therefore, let us have faith in the fight.

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[1] The temple is probably a reference to the tabernacle either in Jerusalem or at Shiloh. Solomon's temple was not yet constructed.

# Psalm 12 - Where Have All the Godly Gone?

*“Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth”*



As David looked around at the degradation in his day, he asked, “Where have all the Godly Gone?” Likewise, the God-fearing men of our time are often bewildered by the shrinking population of the pious.

This psalm is a canticle about the frustration David felt about being surrounded by charlatans and hypocrites, and the hope he had of being delivered from their schemes.

It is a psalm for people who can’t see God’s “little flock” and feel like they are surrounded by miscreants. If you are tired of the promotion of depravity by public “servants,” the media, and political organizations, this psalm is for you.

*Psalm 12:1 (To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.)*

“Sheminith” – an eight string guitar, a possible reference to an octave.

“A Psalm of David” -- Either David wrote this psalm or another added it to his library of songs. There are no historical references in this chorale to any events in David’s life where we can say with certainty that David penned these lyrics, but the tenor of the psalm definitely chimes with other songs that David composed. Like all psalms, this lyric addresses a conflict in the heart of the psalmist where he loses sight of the remnant.

## **A Cry for Help**

*1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

The word “help” (yasha) is an intransitive Hithpael verb with no object. It means “save.” In the emphatic position, David looks around and burst into a prayer because of his grief: “Save, LORD. I am surrounded by profane men!”

Feeling like the last sheep in God’s green pastures, David bleats out: “the godly man ceaseth” and “the faithful” (pious) have vanished — probably because wolves eat lambs, and surviving sheep are in hiding.

This statement is a poetic hyperbole — an expression of David’s loneliness . . . of his longing for spiritual companionship. This is not a fact, but it felt like one. Like sheep, David preferred the company of other sheep. Apparently, David experienced an eclipse in his life where he could not see or feel the warmth of Divine life *ad rem* to children of light. Rather, David feels crowded by impious, alpha-males oozing with depravity and debauchery.

## *2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.*

The “they” refers to the wicked (*rasha'im*) void of purity and piety. There are three marks of godless men in this text; that is, they are easily recognized by their talk and tantrums: swaggering speech, smooth discourse, and double-talk.

First, they speak “vanity” (*shawv*) which refers “to deceitfulness, to overly proud, to emptiness or to nothingness.”

The *rasha'im* are narcissistic. They sermonize only about themselves and the advances of their agenda. Vain people seem to have the capacity to talk for ever about trivia and zero capacity to dialogue about important matters. Shakespeare wrote a play titled, “Much ado about nothing” – a mark of boorish people.

**Second**, they speak with “flattering” words; that is, their tones and inflections are smoother than butter.

**Third**, they speak with a double heart. The word “double” is not in the text, but the word heart (*leb*) is used twice: i.e. they speak with *leb leb* or a double heart. Deceivers say one thing and mean another. They have one glossary for church, and another for the tavern; one kind of speech at work and another kind of speech for home. In 1614, Thomas Adams observed, “A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster.”

David was surrounded by monsters.

### **Confidence the LORD Would Help**

## *3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:*

The pious psalmist had no patience for these double-minded, doubled-tongued, sweet-talkin’ drivelers (James 1:8). His theology taught him these tricksters will be severed from society by the sword of the LORD.

## *4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?*

The noun “our tongues” is in the emphatic position; that is, the main weapon of deceivers is their tongue. These people have a way of twisting the language to sell their enslavement programs. Captions like “Social Security Insurance,” “Federal Reserve,” “Patriot Act,” and “Affordable Care Act” come to mind.

“Our lips are our own” means our mouth; our choice; absolute freedom of speech; at our disposal to say what we please.

“Who is lord over us?” Who has any right to control us; or to call us to “shut up”? These people acknowledge no authority over themselves but their own passions (2 Peter 2).

These schmoozers make ugly look pretty, and bitter taste sweeter. These deceivers have the skills to market arsenic soup as magical-cures; the ability to sell sawdust as oatmeal; the talent to make stinkhead salmon smell like fried shrimp; the means to cook ten day old bread and make it taste like fresh baked pancakes.

In our time, the airwaves are filled with pretense and monkeyshines. Having mastered the art of newspeak and propaganda, the depraved media puts a spin on everything. Sport heroes are covered criminals; news anchors are paid CIA agents; and, entertainment is colored with anti-Christ prostitution.

*5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.*

The LORD speaks this ancient oracle affirming the theology of the psalmist. Seeing the exploitation of oppressors and the sighing of the poor, the LORD arises from his silence to rescue the oppressed.

The word “needy” refers to the poor man with few resources to recover from fraudulent promotions of charlatans. There is no mention of formal prayer here. The needy sigh in secret. But, God hears the pain and inner groaning of the poor (Hagar; Moses at the Red Sea).

“will arise” is a moment of military-like action. The voice is first person — the voice of the LORD. Our God is a God of War who promises the sons of Abraham they will possess the gates of their enemies (Genesis 22:17).

“Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel” – Numbers 10:35-36

The construction “I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him” is a figure of speech that can be construed to mean, “I will set him in safety for the one who pants for it:” “in safety for which he yearns (breathes),” or “I will set him safely from the one who blows upon him.” Ellicott promotes the former, Barnes and Benson advocate the latter.

When promises are broken by smooth talkers, the poor are the ones most likely to suffer. The rich, having many resources, are less likely to feel the pain of broken promises or malice aforethought. “In like manner, the poor would be most likely to “be taken in by the acts of unprincipled men, and to be deceived in their small dealings with them.” (Barnes)

Both positions are true. God delivers those who thirst for salvation, and he sends the north wind against defrauders who huff and puff at the poor.

*6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*

Unlike the promises of shysters, God’s Word can be relied upon. The words of double-minded politicians and government officials are worthless, but the words of the Lord are like refined

silver that have been refined seven times. The doubled-hearted (leb, leb) are filled with deceit, but there is no falsehood with the LORD. His Word is infallible and reliable.

Silver addresses the value of God's Word. Profane men consider the Bible as worthless. Nominal Christians measure its value in pennies. Holy men consider it their greatest treasure.

*7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.*

"Them" refers to the "godly" in verse one and the poor and needy in verse five.

"Thou shalt keep them" is a direct promise of the LORD — a reference to "I will set them in safety" in verse five.

What God promises, He shall perform! Thou shall keep them from corrupt politicians; from the palm-greasing salesman; from double dealers; from degenerate and depraved schemers with covetousness in their hearts. Thou shall keep them and guard (preserve) them in this generation and in generations to follow.

### **Confusion Caused by the Wicked**

*8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.*

This verse should be linked to verse seven, "Thou shall preserve them" even though "the wicked walk on every side, "when the vilest (zuvleth = worthless) men are exalted" to positions of power.

The wicked (rasha'im) are everywhere filling every branch of government, every corporation where money can be made, and every political office where power can be obtained. No wonder David complained about the "foundations" being destroyed in Psalm 11:5 – a reference to the breaking down of the front lines in the infantry.

This psalm ends with a promise of protection for the humble. God's lambs will be kept and guarded even though surrounded by wolves. The promise is not that God will purge the wicked from the earth, but that He will preserve the Godly man who looks to the Lord as his Protector. The season of separating the chaff from the wheat awaits the end of history.

# Psalm 35 - A Prayer Against Enemies

## Traitors in the Church



This imprecatory prayer is ascribed to David.

Because it has the feel of war and betrayal in it, many assume this psalm was written during the Absalom revolt.

This psalm could be titled, “A Pleading Against False Accusers,” but the title, “Traitors in the Church” was chosen because treachery and division is so common today.

What a terrible thing it is to trust someone and to feel the hot breath of falsehood and the sword of betrayal stalking your soul (11, 14).

If you are a faithful minister of God’s Word and has a Judas in your ministry . . . or have ever been unrighteous betrayed by men of power in the church . . . or falsely accused by government officers, this prayer is for you.

The foundation of this psalm and all psalms is the law of the LORD God. Law and order are the duties of all men. No society can happily exist when every man is doing what is right in his own eyes. The law is not for me to obey and for others to ignore. The Lord calls every man to exercise police power against slander and defamation.

Because David’s defectors did not follow the law of love, David’s life and throne were threatened. The whole nation was divided because no one had the bark or the bite to stop political slander and rebellion. The prohibition against killing requires spiritual energy to confront backbiting and tale-bearing. Instead of protecting their king and his reputation, the rebels turned the discontented into a lion-pack eager to devour David.

The coup was such a mess; David had to flee his throne, pray like a beggar at heaven’s gates, and later to send his special forces to wage war against Absalom. Thus, this psalm is a pleading by David for God to intervene, save his life, and the lives of the faithful.

### A Pleading for the LORD to Go to War in His Defense

*Psalm 35:1 <A Psalm of David.> Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.*

There are three references to intense conflict in this text: “strive,” “fight,” and “fight.” The word “strive” means “to contend,” and the word “fight” is the word for battle or war.

This striving was due to those who rebelled against God’s law-order, and who refused to do their duty to protect their king.

“Plead” (riyb ‘ h) is a paralogic imperative (an extra hey inserted at the end of the verb for emphasis) wherein David pleads with the LORD to take his case and defend him against powerful rebels who took matters into their own hands to remove him from power and to execute their king.

Like a man sued by big government or chased by a bully, David prays that the LORD would be his Advocate. Thus, David fulfilled the essence of religion by worshipping God when alone and rejected by men. David remained committed to the rule of law and order when all those around had lost their bearings.

*2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*

David is on the defensive. He is not the aggressor. He pleads that God would defend Him against his assailants.

A “shield” is a small armor to protect one from blows by a sword, and a “buckler” is a large shield to protect one from arrows and rocks thrown by an up-close combatant. A spear can be used to defend or to thrust a blow.

“say unto my soul, I am thy salvation” exposes the fragile, lily-like condition of David’s heart. This is not David “the confident giant slayer,” but a veteran soldier vulnerable to the aggressive swings and blows by an advancing soldier. Feeling attackable, exposed, and insecure in his relationship to the LORD, he prays he might know for certain that God will be his Savior, Defender, and Buckler.

David was no cherub. He knew he was a sinner. Thus, this is not the prayer of a confident saint secure in the LORD. Possibly, the guilt of committing adultery with Bathsheba was pounding the bass drum of condemnation in his soul making him feel vulnerable to the judgment of God — difficult circumstances possibly sent by God to ruin him. On the other hand, David knew that he had done nothing lewd to deserve the assault of his enemies. Thus, he prays that God would assure Him that He is on David’s side as frail and weak as He was.

Moreover, it is not long into the ministry that a pure, minister of the gospel finds himself the target of attack in a church by bossy women or proud deacons. Beware! No good man is immune from gossip, lies, and underhanded attacks by unsanctified church members. More ministers are attacked because of their allegiance to God’s Word than for any other reason.

*4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.*

The “them” might be Absalom and Ahithophel.

“confounded,” “shame,” “turned back,” and “confusion” are terms for political defeat.

“confounded” (buwsh) means “to be disappointed.” “shame” means “to be confused and humiliated.”



Feeling like he was more righteous than unrighteous, David prays that his adversaries and critics would be defeated, shamed, and disgraced.

“devising hurt” is a violation of the 6th and 10th Commandment — do your neighbor no harm; that is, David’s adversaries were overtly breaking God’s law, not David! Vilification and defamation precede an all-out war against an innocent king. Slander is the weapon of choice of unscrupulous politicians. David, though far from a perfect king, did not deserve these assaults. He was clearly on the side of righteousness . . . but, the people are easily duped in these media wars. Therefore, David prays that his opponents would be exposed and confused.

*5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.*

David employs the metaphor of chaff being sifted by an evening wind as the preferred means of his opponents defeat. He employs “the angel of the LORD” as the driving force of separating the chaff from the wheat, the false from the true, the righteous from the unrighteous, and the innocent from the guilty.

“dark” and “slippery” are metaphors for treacherous places like a dark, rain-drenched, mossy slope.

*7 For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.*

In order to make a formal complaint, you must have probable cause. The great question to ask any plaintiff is the following: “Was anyone harmed by what I did?” or, “Did I violate a known contract signed by both parties?” If the answer is “No!” the complaining party has no probable cause and the case has grounds for dismissal.

“they hid for me their net in a pit” informs us that David’s adversaries not only lacked probable cause to charge him, but that they were the ones with a malicious, rancorous, duplicitous plans to injure, trap, and destroy him. Betrayers use the politics of destruction (false accusations) to turn the people against their opponent while hiding under “color of law” and “color of process.”

*8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.*

David prays that his betrayers would fall into their own pit . . . that they would be exposed for the very crimes of which they were accusing him. Political assassination by one party against an opposing party is often rhetorical violence by deranged lunatics guilty of the very things they are smearing their opponent.

*9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.*

A man has a right and a duty to defend his own reputation, but sometimes the controversy gets so twisted and convoluted only the LORD can save the innocent man. In this case, David saw the LORD as his only means of escaping the coup d'état.

“rejoice in his salvation” — Joy surfaces when the innocent are justified and false accusers are charged with the crime of malicious defamation.

*10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?*

“all my bones” is a metaphor for wholeheartedness.

“too strong for him” — what poor sap citizen has the power to fight corporate lawyers or the copious financial resources of a government agency? Sometimes a man is forced to trust the LORD to be his defender from powerful men hell bent on destroying him for no more than having an opinion on a third rail issue or defending himself against political triggermen intent on plundering his private property.

### **A Pleading that His Adversaries Would Fail**

*11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.*

A “false witness” gives false testimony. In so doing, he violates the 3rd, 6th, 8th, and 10th Commandment.

“Laid to my charge” are non-facts against the defendant that favor the plaintiff’s bogus claim.

Witnesses are necessary to convict anyone of a crime. When there is no crime, there are no witnesses. However, revolutionaries seem to have no trouble finding gritty characters willing to perjure themselves by providing false testimony against the innocent to persuade the jury that the charges of the Plaintiff are true.

Lesson: charges are required to have proof of claim with strict proof of claim. No proof; no claim. No proof of claim; no protection from the penalty of law-breaking; that is, the false accuser ought to be punished concomitant with the penalty associated with crime allegedly committed by the defendant. Punishment must fit the crime and if the crime is perjury leaving the accused vulnerable to the death penalty, then the false witness must be executed.

See Deuteronomy 19:18-21 King James Version (KJV)

and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil (perjury) away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Note: Both Absalom and Ahithophel received the death penalty they both deserved. They both sought the death of David and both died in the revolt. Absalom was killed in battle; and, Ahithophel murdered himself.

Because modernism is at war with God's law-order, slandering a political opponent has become acceptable "free" speech. To change the climate of political slander by using the courts to punish adversaries, the nation must return to the Biblical order of purging out evil by employing appropriate punishment for perjury.

When "woke" becomes normal, and slander becomes ordinary, no one is safe from defamation.

### *12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.*

The principle of justice "an eye for an eye" requires rewarding evil with evil and good with good — a law flagrantly violated by the rebels.

"the spoiling of my soul" refers to the murderous plot to kill David, a man who had not wronged his betrayers — an assassination scheme in violation of the 1st, 6th, and 10th Commandment.

"rewarded me evil for good" — David informs us that he is righteous, and that his accusers are unrighteous; that he is innocent, and that they are guilty of the very thing of which they are accusing him. Having a clear conscience may be the most important weapon in the arsenal of those falsely accused of some vice.

Every faithful minister of God's Word has been falsely accused by jealous, ambitious opponents. Careless men cannot help themselves. They are driven to charge the righteous of what they themselves are doing in secret — "neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:16-18).

More men lose their pastorates because they are faithful to the Word of God than for any other reason. People are trained in a liberal environment, and they simply cannot tolerate black and white instruction from the Holy Scriptures. Church members cuddle their idols. Expose one of them and you may be the object of gossip or slander.

### *13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*

David takes a journey into the past. He contrasts his behavior with the conduct of his accusers. When they were sick, he put on sackcloth and prayed for their wellbeing. This may be literal or David may be using "sackcloth" as a metaphor for going out of the way to minister to their physical and emotional needs.

"humbled my soul" refers to fasting, prayer, and acts of kindness he showed his adversaries before they became traitors to his administration. Though David was gracious to them in the past, he notes their present state as one of being filled with hate and ingratitude. Whatever he

did for them was marked by deep kindness and humiliation. Their repayment to him with vicious insults was without merit — a result of bitter selfishness and unthankfulness.

*14 I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.*

“as” means David treated his present accusers like a friend or brother when they experienced troubles before their present conflict.

The second “as” compares his grief for their troubles as to a son who has just lost his beloved mother.

*15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not:*

“they” refers to David’s betrayers. “rejoiced” can be translated “to stand still” or “be motionless” — something necessary before uniting together.

The word “abjects” (nekeh) means “to smite” or “to strike.” They gathered together, not to help their king, but to destroy their king — an act of treachery. Beware of “snipers” in the church who take pot shots at the pastor while hiding in choir robes. See [1 Corinthians 5](#).

The meeting of the conspirators took David by surprise. He had no knowledge of their deep hatred and plans to remove him from the throne and to murder him. Traitors are not interested in helping their king. They do not personally come and share their grief with their shepherd. Cowards need the support of the congregation so they organize secret meetings to share their gripes in a one-sided diatribe and to secure their loyalty. After gaining the support of major players, they organize a coup leaving ordinary citizens confused and divided. Beware of wealthy church members who have nothing to lose by splitting a church.

David contrasts their present response to his trials to the kindness he showed them when they were experiencing affliction. David showed mercy and love; and, they repaid him with slander and hate.

*16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.*

David compares their recrimination to mockers and drunk hecklers scorning the righteous on their way to worship festivals.

“gnashing of teeth” demonstrates the vigorous intensity of their hate; that is, they emptied their gall of bitterness against God’s lamb without restraint or reservation — something that shocked David much like a lion stuns his victim with a paralyzing roar before he goes for the jugular.

Some railers are willing to divide the church, burn down the chapel, and set fires all over town to crush a simple pastor doing his best to shepherd the flock. To make matters worse, God’s little preacher doesn’t understand the pride and deep hatred of his accusers. Not only are they

beating him, God's servant may take out his own beat stick and flog himself for his many weaknesses.

First lesson: If you are a man of integrity, don't tolerate the treachery and carping by malicious critics who don't have your interests or the interests of the church in mind. Some deacons are professional accusers very skilled at destroying men of God and they ought to be resisted and confronted. Hopefully, they repent. If not, the people ought to remove them from the church.

Second lesson: If you are conducting your ministry with integrity you are probably aware of your weaknesses. Weaknesses are not sins. Don't beat yourself. Identify the sins of your accusers, and demand they repent or leave the church.

### **A Pleadings for God to Act Quickly**

*17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.*

David did not question God's existence or his presence, but he did question why the LORD was taking so long to rescue him? God does not move. He saw it all, but He did not interpose Himself. Things went from bad to worse, from worse to desperate; from intense to fierce.

"God's delays are not necessarily His denials. Just because He hasn't, doesn't mean He won't. His timing is perfect" (Craig Goreschel).

"God is seldom early; never late; and always on time — His time" (Unknown).

The pronoun "their" and the metaphor "from the lions" refers to the character of David's conspirators and traitors — probably Absalom, Ahithophel, and other revolutionaries seeking to overthrow David's throne by killing him.

"My darling" refers to David's precious soul — his life.

*18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.*

David makes a promise that when God's delivers him, that he will become a thankful, praising worshiper of the LORD — a witness of the faithfulness of God to the people of God.

*19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.*

David is committed to praise and worship. What a tragedy it would be for these conspirators to succeed in their plans to kill David and to rejoice in their own success. Therefore, David prays against the false accusers that they wouldn't even be able to wink or squint with laughter over any success.

*20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.*

David reminds us that he is not dealing with personality conflicts or misunderstanding, but conflict with malicious, treacherous, lubricious transgressors of fundamental law — transgressors of the 4th, 6th, 8th, 9th, and 10th Commandments.

“speak not peace” reminds us that the deserters did not de-escalate the conflict, seek reconciliation, or speak peace — that their tongues clashed like swords in pursuit of blood.

“devise deceitful manners” refers to their undercover violations of the 10th Commandment.

“quiet in the land” refers to God’s sheep, the innocent ones in Israel.

*21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.*

“Open mouth wide against me” refers to vicious, reckless denunciation and castigation. Before people joust with swords, “tongues are a waggin’.”

“Aha, aha” is an objection by a censorious dissenter claiming he has detected a defect in David. When people are held up to standards of perfection all fail. Measuring David by perfect creeds of idealism . . . of utopian dreams, the faultfinders claimed that David was corrupt, negligent, and debased. All of this verbal bantering turned out to be malicious prosecution of the man.

### **A Pleading for God to Wake Up**

*22 This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.*

David knows that God’s eye is on the dissenters just as their eyes were upon him nitpicking every move.

Denigration by his enemies was one matter, but God’s repose was another. Troubled by the LORD’s quietude, David pounded on heaven’s gate, “Wake up!” “Be not far from me.” He is the ultimate judge in these matters, and silence from the Court confused David just like God’s silence confuses all of us.

“Stir up thyself” — My enemies appear to be winning. They are laughing at me. Let them not have the victory or the joy of triumph!

*23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.*

David cries to heaven calling for God to wake up a second time. David’s Lord appeared to be a “do nothing” type God. Therefore, he shouts again, “Stir up thyself!” Wake up! Rise and shine! Get up! Come alive to my predicament, my God and my Lord. “Judge them! Save me! Don’t let the wicked triumph or succeed in any of their plans to wreck my life.

God could have acted in the beginning of this revolt to stop it, but instead, walking the gauntlet made David a better and stronger man. Moreover, the Spirit penned his ordeal in Scripture as a lesson for future generations.

*25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. 26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.*

Let them not congratulate themselves for apparent progress in this coup; don't let them feel safe or like they have succeeded. May they feel like things are not going as planned. May doubt and fear choke their confidence. May they look as gloom as a wet Sunday. Instead of pride, may they feel naked and afraid.

### **A Plea for His Supporters**

*27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.*

By the grace of God, David managed to offer a prayer for his supporters. Though loyal to David, they too were plagued with doubt and confusion by David's sudden political reversals. Fortunately, these were not fair-weather friends or fickle followers. He wants them to be convinced his cause is righteous, and to focus on glorifying God in their terrible predicament.

David manages to maintain an infectious confidence that God is pleased with him even though the whole nation was divided.

*28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.*

Banished from his throne and fleeing the traitors, David commits himself to trust God, to speak well of Him, and to praise Him even in the midst of his political crisis. David understood that though He had lost his throne, God had not lost His.

May our lives emanate confidence in the Lord all the days of our lives.

# Psalm 37 - Stop Fretting

## Stop Fretting Over Wicked Rulers in Positions of Power



Are you burdened by the calamitous legislation of higher functioning psychopaths and sociopaths working at the seat of power in governmental institutions? Then this psalm is for you.

Because of the mass media, we are in touch with more political corruption than our little minds and hearts can manage. If your heart is righteous, you are probably angry at the injustice of our time.

This psalm is the voice of grey-haired wisdom. Consider the following Spirit-inspired promises about the wicked — those planners and schemers who introduce corruption into society in the name of freedom and fairness.

Addressed to the godly men, this psalm is about the temporal prosperity of the wicked and God's permanent protection of the righteous.

You can be at rest by considering the destiny of the wicked in your time.

God orders His people to cease fretting over the temporary success of *the wicked (rasha – singular; rasha'm plural)*.

*1 (A Psalm of David.) Fret not thyself (tit'har) because of evildoers (ra'im), neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*

'Fret not thyself' is a reflexive verb which prohibits God's man from fueling his anger by stoking the fire with reports about what "evildoers" (pl.) *ra'im* is doing.

The word "fret" (*charah*) is translated by the word "hot" ten times; "angry" nine times, "fret" four times, and "burn" once in Scripture. The word "fret" is the same word used in Genesis 4:5: "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell;" that is, he was angry enough to kill. *Selah*.

The word "wroth" is our word "fret" in Psalm 37:1. "Fret" is a Hithpael verb (reflexive, future) which means the one fretting is causing himself to suffer emotional strain by burning with anger. The one who feeds the furnace of anger injures himself.

Some reports about the success of the *ra'im* are disturbing. Consequently, some men are tempted to "envy" (*qana*) and be jealous of their financial and social success.



The “evildoers” (ra’im) are the movers and shakers in society promoting transgression of God’s law-order. . . . people in blue suits and red ties in the Municipal Corporation in the District of Columbia.

“workers of iniquity” (asah-evil) is contrasted with those who do good in verse 3. These are the people that sow tares in the wheat field with malice aforethought. The *rasha’m’m* are more than sinners. They are committed to evil as a means of advancement in society.

The opposite of fretting is trusting (3), delighting (4), committing (5), and resting (7).

The grounds of this “rest” are twofold: (1) God knows and protects the righteous; (2) God knows and punishes the wicked.

## Reasons Not to Fret

### God slashes the hope of the wicked.

*2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.*

“cut down” (namal) is the verb that also introduces the act of circumcision. “soon” is an adverb.

The psalmist addresses the *ra’im* as a group (“they”) or in the plural. This metaphor pictures the wicked prospering, then perishing.

*3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*

There two imperatives in this text: “trust” and “do-good.” The word “trust” means to “rest on,” “lean on,” “put your confidence in” the LORD. It is the opposite of being your own counselor and going your own way.

“Thou shalt pasture on *faithfulness*, i.e., be supported by God’s truth and righteousness as by a rich pasture. (Comp. Psalm 23:1, and, for the expression, Proverbs 15:14, “feedeth on foolishness.”). The faithfulness of God is the security of man” (Ellicott).

*4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*

“Delight” (anag) is a Hithpael imperative. Cause yourself to “delight” in the Lord. Develop a taste for His Word. Consider this autumn wisdom by a seasoned saint. Life with its many reversals did not sour or disquiet him.

*5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.*

“Commit” (galal) is another imperative meaning “to roll down;” that is, roll all your concerns on to the LORD.

“Trust” (batach) is an imperative repeated a second time in these first few verses.

The Hebrew word “the way” (der’ke’kah) contains a Kafh ( כ ). Rabbinical mystics say the Kafh represents a palm as it look like a backward C or a cupped palm; that is, trust in the Lord and he will hold you in the palm of his hand.

*6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.*

Expensive things like gold, silver, and rubies come from the dark caverns of the earth. Likewise, the righteous man is hidden, but the LORD has a way of bringing that righteousness into the light as a shining in the darkness.

*7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*

There are three imperatives in this verse.

The command “rest” (damam) means “to be silent, dumb, and be still” — an action that calls for us to restrain impulses to be nervous and anxious . . . to talk . . . to complain . . . and to nervously do things. When we are anxious our tongues seem to be tied in the middle and flappin’ at both ends. “Rest, soul, rest!” “Restrain yourself!”

The command “wait patiently” (chuw1 with a Hith-polel suffix) is verb requiring intense, vigorous action on one’s self to fulfill the command “to wait.” It means “to dance,” “writhe,” or “twist.” The opposite of waiting are acts of the flesh. That is “waiting patiently” requires all the energy a man can muster from within himself to “rest” and chain down his soul to the stake of contentment.

The command “fret not” (charah) means “to be hot with anger.” It is a repeat of the command in verse one. Saying it twice confirms the divine will to not fuel the furnace of anger with the deadwood of evil reports.

*8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.*

The command “cease” (raphah) means “to relax, to sink down, and to deflate.”

The imperative “forsake” (azab) means “to leave, abandon, or divorce” one’s self from “wrath” (chema) or the heat and fever caused by anger.

So important are the commands in Psalm 37 the Spirit commands us NOT to “fret” a third time. Repeating a command three times is like adding three exclamation points to an English sentence!!!

But, the Spirit adds a warning about “giving up,” “resigning or giving into the evil trying to shackle us in its chains. No man is authorized to fight sin with sin.

**God thwarts the expectations of the wicked and limits their influence.**

*9 For evildoers (ra’im) shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*

Now the author provides the grounds of rest: God will deal with the *ra'im* in His time and His way. Selah! The verbal action "cut off" is terminal. It means "to cut" and "to kill." It refers to circumcision, cutting off the boughs of a tree, cutting a covenant in blood, and cutting off a man's head.

Before us is a big promise with a big condition. "Wait" is a tough command for ambitious men as it requires one to quietly "trust and obey." Earth, not heaven, is the destiny of the righteous.

Those that wait upon the LORD are the righteous, the meek, and the humble. The term "wait" refers to one Source of hope and protection. Some trust government to deliver them; the meek trust the LORD.

*10 For yet a little while, and the wicked (rasha) shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.*

We like the guarantee the wicked shall be cut off. It's the in a "little while" that tests the souls of the *tzadikkim*.

In the second stanza of the couplet we have the promise, "thou shall diligently consider his place," but this is a poor translation. The verb "diligently see" (biyn with Hith-Polel prefixes) implies an intense seeing — that believers will see (perceive) the ruination of the *rasha'm*. The Hebrew word "place" (me'kow'mo) refers to one's status, post in life, or abode. The wicked will fall, and the righteous will see it.

The text does **not** say "thou" shall see ALL the *ra'im* disappear or even see the downfall of particular *rasha'm*. But, the text does declare the Christian man who has his eyes open will see the ceiling collapse on the *rasha'm*. How many careers of politicians and Hollywood perverts have we seen crumble like a house of cards or suffer a sudden death in our lifetime? The verb "diligently consider" requires acute observation on our part. We must look for it.

*11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

This is another strong promise.

The "meek" (*anah'vim*) are the opposite of the *ra'im* (the wicked); that is, the "meek" are the poor, righteous souls who have placed their trust in the Lord and His promises; and, the *ra'im* are the antinomian Christ-rejecters. Shalom awaits the *anah'vim* and the horrors of judgment await the *ra'im*.

The earth belongs to those who submit to the dominion mandate, the *anah'vim*, and not the *ra'im*.

**God ordains an end for the wicked.**

*12 The wicked (rasha'm) plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.*

For literary, communication purposes the terms “wicked” (*rasha’im*) and the just (*tzaddik*) are in the singular but we can generally apply the principle propounded to apply to more than one *rasha’im*; that is, the schemes and legislation of the *ra’im* stem from secret motivations to crush the righteous. They are motivated by hate and they take out their animus on the *tzadikkim*.

*13 The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.*

“his day” is the Day of Trouble . . . the Day of Judgment.

The language of “laugh” does not refer to God jumping up and down with joy, but an attitude of One who knows that all the plans of the *ra’im* are vain – as not worthy of serious thought, or worry, or care; that all plans to thwart the will of God will crash on the roadway of life. Each individual *rasha’im* will have his “bad day!” This fact provides more reasons to rest and be at peace while the *ra’im* initiate their plots against the *tzadikkim*.

**God destroys the wicked by using their own schemes against them.**

*14 The wicked (rasha’im) have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.*

The reports of wicked schemes are often true. They have drawn out their sword and have pointed their bows at the poor and needy with the intent of slyly the upright. The phrase “upright conversation” (*yasar derek*) refers to a “straight road” – a metaphor describing the honorable ambitions of the *tzadikkim*.

*15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.*

The psalmist switches back to the plural. Another strong promise that evil plans of the *ra’im* will boomerang back on them.

*16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked (rasha’im).*

This text addresses the insecurities of the *tzadikkim*. Great riches involve many cares. This text assures the reader the few assets that the righteous (*tzaddik*) possess is a better status than the status of the *ra’im* with all their treasures.

**God crushes the strength of the wicked.**

*17 For the arms of the wicked (rasha’im) shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.*

Another powerful promise that God will break the power of the *ra’im* and sustain the *tzadikkim*.

“Arms” is a metaphor for strength and power. God will break the “arms” (power) of the *ra’im* but He is a sling for the *tzadikkim*.

*18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.*

As the *ra'im* prospers and the *tzadikim* anguish over their troubles, the godly man is tempted to think his trials are evidence the LORD has forgotten him. However, this text assures us that God knows all the troubles in all the days of the *tzadikim*.

*19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

Here is another powerful promise. Evil times come upon all men in every generation, but the *tzadikim* have divine assurance of His provision and protection. For insight on the word “ashamed” (*buwsh*) see Genesis 2:25; Ezra 8:22; 9:6; and Psalm 25:2.

“Jesus wept!” And, the reason for His grief may have been because Mary and Martha were not taking sufficient comfort in His presence or His promises — an exhortation to believe more and doubt less. Oh, how the Lord must be grieved by the pain caused by our skepticism.

**God consumes the wicked and diminishes their power.**

*20 But the wicked (rasha'm) shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.*

Two metaphors shore up the confidence of the *tzadikim* — “fat of lambs” refers to the sacrificial part of lambs; like “smoke” blown away for the wicked (*ra'im*). Smoke is a symbol of temporary prosperity.

*21 The wicked (rasha'm) borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.*

The Spirit provides a mark of the *ra'im* — they do not pay their debts; and, a mark of the *tzadikim* — they show mercy and pay their debts. By debt, we mean a contract that involves an exchange of tangible assets — and, not fake debt due to fake loans base on intangible money of account.

We learn from this text the wicked are takers, and the righteous are givers.

*22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.*

The Spirit repeats the promise in verse 11 — double assurance that His promise is true, correct, and not misleading.

*23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.*

The word “good” (*tov*) is not in the text, but it can be assumed that the man God delights is the *ish tov*, the *ish anav* (meek man of v. 11), and the *ish tzaddik* of verse 16.

*24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.*

The Spirit addresses a troubling concern of the *tzadikkim* — many are often shadowed by their own particular spiritual failures on the road to the Celestial City. The righteous may stumble and fall, but the LORD enables the humiliated to rise and be restored. Solomon informs us the righteous fall seven times and arise, but the wicked fall down and stay down (Proverbs 24:16).

*25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*

The psalmist now confirms the promises of God with his own experience. In his entire life, he cannot recall seeing a truly pious man destitute as if he had been forsaken by the Lord and constrained to beg at the back door of the *ra'im*.

*26 He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.*

The “He” in this text refers to the *ish tzaddik* who is characterized as merciful and generous — a family man who not only cares for his children, but shows concerns for the plight of his neighbors.

Again, the *tzadikkim* are givers and not takers. Society is made better by holy men.

*27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.*

The lesson is clear: since the above text shows the provision and protection of God upon the righteous, let us too depart from evil and to do good. Let us be generous, pay our debts, and shun covetous practices.

“dwell for evermore” is a general promise of not only life in heaven, but for a long life on earth.

God uses the wicked to exterminate the offspring of the wicked.

*28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked (rasha'm) shall be cut off.*

God loves to do what is right (*misphat*) toward the *tzadikkim* and towards the *ra'im* (evildoers). He preserves His saints (*ha'se'dim*) and punishes the seed of the *ra'im*.

The word “forsaketh” (*azab*) means “to leave, abandon, or neglect.” The “not” negates the verb. The *tzadikkim* may feel forsaken, but those feelings are a lie. The LORD forsaketh not His holy ones.

In contrast to the *tzadikkim* this text informs us that the seed (children, offspring) of the *rasha'm* “shall be cut off.”

Application: Stop fretting about abortion. God uses baby killers to fulfill his promise to exterminate the offspring of wicked people who want to kill their babies.

Psalm 21:10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

Proverbs 24:20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

*29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.*

The promise that the meek shall inherit the earth is now extended to the righteous; that is, the “meek” (anah’vim) are the *tzadikkim*. The terms “poor” and “humble” are synonyms for the righteous (tzaddik).

*30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.*

The psalmist continues to identify the marks of the *tzadikkim*. Not only do they do good, they speak with wisdom. The word “speak” (haga) refers to a lion’s roar or to the *ish* (man) that moans and groans out thoughts on wisdom (chokmah) and justice (misphat).

*31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.*

Another mark of the *ish tzaddik* is that the Law of the LORD God rules his heart. He thinks, speaks, moans, does, and talks about *misphat* (justice) and *amet* (truth).

The Hebrew word “truth” ( אמת ) (Psalm 31:5) begins with the letter Aleph and ends with letter Tav, the first and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet; that is, truth is about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Aleph and Tav, the A and the Z, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

God frustrates the plans of the wicked to ravage the righteous.

*32 The wicked (rasha’m) watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.*

The distinguishing marks of the *ra’im* and the *tzadikkim* are clear. While the *tzadikkim* think about *mishpat* (justice and goodness); the *ra’im* cast an evil eye on the righteous man with the intent to ruin him. Evildoers look for the right time to cast aspersions at the righteous in order to crush their careers and families.

*33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.*

The *ra’im* devise schemes to attack and destroy the *tzadikkim*, but the Lord restrains their power and provides a way of escape. There are seasons where the *tzaddik* comes under the evil influence of the *ra’im* but the LORD will preserve His own; that is, we are not to interpret troublesome times as God’s abandonment of the *tzaddik*.

*34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked (rasha’m) are cut off, thou shalt see it.*

Two more ordinances are issued to the *tzadikkim*: wait and keep. The imperative “wait” (qavah) is a Piel verb requiring intense vigor to trust God and to fulfill one’s duty . . . even when troubled by the *rasha’m*.

His way is the way of righteousness and love as defined in His law.

The *tzadikim* have the promise that God will “exalt” them and pull them out of trouble to experience goodness in the land of the living whereas the *ra'im* are ruined in this life and the life to come.

Duty is ours and the righteous embrace it.

We have a promise: “thou shall see it;” that is, the observant man will see with his own eyes the fall of the wicked. What have you observed in the last month on how God is using the wicked to destroy the wicked? Wars, shootings, political reversals, abortion, and falls from power are evidence that God is fulfilling His promise to “cut off” the wicked in verse 28.

God impairs the prosperity of the wicked and tempers their influence

*35 I have seen the wicked (rasha'm) in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.*

Now the author affirms the promises supra from his own experience. In his experience, he marveled at the prosperity of the *rasha'm*.

*36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.*

In time, the psalmist saw not only the rise of the *ra'im* (evildoers) to positions of power, but their complete fall from power.

*37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*

But, the *ish tzaddik* has a different set of circumstances than the individual *rasha'm*.

The author exhorts us to carefully observe the course of the righteous. The word “perfect” (*tam*) adds to the list of synonyms for a righteous man: meek, poor, humble, and now the word “complete.” A righteous man has many troubles, but at the finish line there is peace.

Ellicott reads this text as “Mark the honest man, and behold the upright; for a posterity (shall be) to the man of peace.” Benson interprets this text as the righteous man moving from trouble to triumph.

God counters the ambitions of the wicked and scourges their future.

*38 But the transgressors (pasha) shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked (rasha'm) shall be cut off.*

“Transgressors” (*pasha*) is another name for the wicked. It refers to lawbreakers and rebels against God’s law-order. Just as the term “poor” (37:4), “meek” (37:22), “humble” (34:2) and “perfect” (37:37) are synonyms for the righteous man (37:16), the term *pash'im* (37:38) is a synonym for the *ra'im* (evildoers; transgressors) and the *rasha'm* or wicked (37:1).

*39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.*



Duty is ours and we must do it; but, the results belong to the LORD. Though a saint may experience deep troubles in this life, his future is everlasting peace. Two powers of God are at work: His power to save the *tzadikkim*; and, His power to affect the ruin of the *ra'im*.

The *tzadikkim* are secure. They know power is not their own, but solely due to the salvation of God working on their behalf.

*40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked (rasha'm), and save them, because they trust in him.*

This psalm begins with a command to the meek not to be angry over the fleeting prosperity of the wicked and ends with a golden promise that God will deliver the *tzadikkim* from the snares of the *ra'im*. Because they trust God (ha'saw) and not themselves, the LORD will help them (azar), deliver them (palat), and save them (yasha).

The general thought in this psalm is that any prosperity the *ra'im* experience is temporary, and that the righteous are eternally safe and secure in the palm of His hand (37:24); that the troubles of the meek are temporary and the troubles of the wicked are permanent.

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### Note

“yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be,” and, “thou shalt see it.”

Consider the untimely fall of the following: Elvis Presley, Playmate Marilyn Monroe, River Phoenix, Kurt Cobain, Gary Hart, O. J. Simpson, Anna Nicole Smith, Al Franken, Robin Williams, Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Harvey Weinstein, Jeffery Epstein, David Cameron, Jacinda Ardern,

### Notes on Psalm 37:28

Stop Fretting About Abortion

*Psalm 37:1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers*

Righteous people are concerned about the spread of evil in their lifetime. Christians are trained by the media to do something . . . anything: listen, learn, vote, write, protest, jump up and down and scream, etc.

In fact, it is a mark of a good Christian to be burdened down by abortion, homosexuality, gun violence, sex change surgeries, and other degradations. But, this chapter tells us to STOP FRETTING ABOUT ABORTION . . . WARS . . . and GUN VIOLENCE.

### The Imperative

*Psalm 37:1 Fret not thyself (tit'har) because of evildoers (ra'im), neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.*

'Fret not thyself' is a reflexive verb which prohibits God's man from fueling his anger by stoking the fire with reports about what the ra'im are doing.

Believers know they should not fret, but they do. They fret because they do not rest very well on the bed of God's promises; that is, they have not found the grounds on which to live a worry free, fret free life.

You can stop fretting by growing in the knowledge of God.

First, know that it is God's job to judge the wicked; that is, to separate the husks from the corn, the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the wicked from among the righteous. We have a duty to remove the leaven from our own lives, but we have NO duty or power to remove malice and evil in society.

Second, know that God has promised to judge the wicked.

*2 For the wicked shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. . . . 9 For evildoers shall be cut off. . . . 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow . . . 5 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. . . . 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: . . . 20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: 28 . . . but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*

Third, know that God is removing the wicked from society NOW!

*28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*

The "seed" here refers to the babies, children, and families of the wicked.

Psalm 21:10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

Fourth, know that God uses the wicked to cut off the seed of the wicked.

—Stop fretting about abortion. God is using wicked abortion "doctors" to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed (babies, children, offspring) of the wicked — promiscuous fornicators and adulterers in Hollywood, NYC, Chicago, London, Berlin, Paris, and the inner cities.

-Stop fretting about war and the casualties of war. God is using war to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about gun violence in Chicago. God is using gun violence to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about vaccine injuries and deaths. God is using the vax jabs to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about child sex-change operations. God is using these monstrous procedures to sterilize the children of the wicked in order to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about the elite's plan to reduce the world population by billions. God is using these wicked schemers to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

Open your eyes and see. God is using the wicked to cut off the seed of the wicked.

Fret not!

Rest, soul, rest!

Disclaimer: Reasoning from the general to the specific is generally faulty reasoning. A faulty generalization is a true statement wherein a faulty conclusion is drawn from specifics of the major premise that is not mentioned in the statement.

It is true all dogs have four legs, but it is not true that Zebras are dogs because they have four legs.

It is true the wicked die, but not everyone who dies is wicked.

It is true that God shall cut off the seed of the wicked, but it does not mean every mother that has had a miscarriage is wicked. Some distresses, said Jesus, are for the glory of God (John 9:3).

*Psalm 37:28 should not be used to label grieving parents who have lost children children and to judge them as wicked. Psalm 37:28 is a general promise that should encourage us, but not empower us to sit as judges on specific persons and their trying circumstances and then to conclude they must be evil. God forbid!*

# Psalm 40 – Mine Ears Hast Thou Digged



The inscription indicates David to be the writer of the psalm. It is addressed to the chief Musician” to whom David entrusted to create a composition fit for public worship.

We don’t know the occasion for this psalm, but it was written after some trial. Great trials, lead us to great lessons in life; and great thoughts drive the sensitive to compose great songs such as the one we have here. David was in the “pits.” Like the woman who spent all her money on physicians and then found the Great Physician, David found Christ at the bottom of his purse.

This is a messianic psalm. The suffering that happened to David in part was totally fulfilled in Christ — a suffering that led to our Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair.

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

In reading this psalm, look for the wonders of the Son.

## David Speaks

**Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair!**

*“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit”*

## **Waiting Patiently**

### Calamity Described

*Psalm 40:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*

“I waited patiently” (qavan) is perhaps the most difficult discipline to master. It is a Piel verb meaning “to endure” or “to be still with expectation” during one of life’s afflictions. And, to endure in godly silence with virtue is the great triumph.

*2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*

Is there anything worse than being stuck in a dark, wet, muddy abandoned well alone without a rope? The word “horrible” hardly does justice to such dire circumstances.

*3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*

Being delivered from certain death in an abandoned mine shaft and sitting on a rock in broad daylight would create new songs for sure. But, this new song is not just about deliverance, but about the One who delivered Him. David wants all men to know that he prayed; that the God of the Covenant heard him, and the LORD liberated him from his dark, wet prison.

### **Confidence in the LORD**

*4 Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.*

In David's mind, there are only two courses in life: to trust the proud, or to trust the LORD; to listen to God's Word in the quiet hours of the night or to listen to arrogant personalities spitting out lies and deceit about fake science, fake medicine, fake religion, and seductive politics.

In an age of lies finding the truth is rigorous, and speaking the truth is dangerous.

*5 Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.*

What a positive, healthy attitude David has about the LORD! His trials did not make him bitter; they made him better. Without weary troubles he would have never learned the wonders of God's tenderness.

Words like "many" "wonderful" "cannot be reckoned" and "more than can be numbered" describe a God Who thinks about us all the time. Who can conceive of such a caring Father . . . and, who among us really believes it? David did!

The noun "thoughts" (machashebeth) refers to thoughts, intentions, plans, or good purposes.

"many" (rab) means "great," "abounding," "more numerous than," and "exceedingly great."

"wonderful" (pala) refers to something extraordinary, surpassing in number or excellence or beyond one's power to calculate.

The infinitive "reckoned" (arak) means to arrange in a row, to calculate, number, or recount. It is negated by the adverb "not" (en) meaning all of humanity cannot count or number God's tender affections toward us.

"more than can be numbered" (caphar) is a Piel verb implying the impossibility of counting God's good plans for His own; that is, it would be easier to count the grains of sand on the beaches of the world than to count God's thoughts toward us. Shallow words like "unfathomable," "incalculable," and "infinite" come to mind.

This text can be claimed by every man lowered into a dark, wet, miry grave. God will not abandon us. He will resurrect us and set our feet on a rock. Thus, we get the title of this commentary: "Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair!"

Moreover, this text applies to His Beloved Son.

## **The Messiah Speaks**

### **Diving into the Deep, Deep Well of Christ's Devotion to the Father**

A Look at the One Who Delivers Us from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair!

#### **Captivated by God's Will**

The Spirit of God moves David to describe the heart of Christ. The Person captivated with the will of God is the Messiah, David's Greater Son.

*6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.*

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire" expresses pure truth — that God desires devotion, not donations; subordination to His will, not contributions to His work; dedication, and not displays of emotion.

"mine ears" is the voice of Messiah. The ear is the instrument of hearing . . . of learning . . . of respect and submission. The word "ear" is used 25 times in Psalms; the word "ears" 9 times; and the word "hear" 57 times.

The word "ears" is plural and the word "opened" means "digged" like a well.

"mine ears has thou opened" refers to the fact that God gave His Son the capacity to hear the Father's will . . . that His ears were opened wide like a well dug into the earth to find the water of His Word, to hear it, and to do it. Most people's ears are clammed shut to His Word, but both ears of Christ were wide open to Hear the Father. (Pray for big ears!)

Moreover, "mine ears has thou opened" (pierced or bored) may refer to the tradition requiring voluntary slaves who loved their master to be singled out from the crowd and to have their ear pierced with an awl as a public sign they were devoted servants . . . as a public symbol that their master was a man of integrity and worthy of total dedication (Exodus 21). In the case of Christ, we should view Him as a man with both ears open, with both ears pierced, with both ears dedicated to hear and to do the Father's will.

In the Book of Hebrews the quote was changed to "You did not desire sacrifice and offering, but you prepared a body for me" (Hebrews 10:7). The term "body" expands the "open ear" analogy to include the fact that every organ . . . every cell in our Lord's body was devoted to and sacrificed to the will of God.

Most men are all tongue and no ears; all talk and no walk; and, a windbag with all motor and no sail. Many try to power their boat through the waters of life with their tongue tied in the middle and flapin' at both ends. Unlike many sinners plagued with "cerumen impaction" our Lord did not suffer from earwax blockage.

Our Lord's ears were not only opened to hear the Father, a metaphor of pierced ears inform us that our precious Savior was the true "Servant (doulos) of the LORD" with double-devotion to our Heavenly Father.

All burnt offerings and sacrifices in the Levitical system were merely a type of Christ's actual obedience to the will of God. Think of it! One man on earth totally, utterly, completely, fully dedicated to the will of God even unto death. What an interest to Heaven! Jesus was truly the joy of the LORD . . . the fulfillment of the voluntary offerings . . . the Bread of Heaven, "My Bread" according to the Father – (Nehemiah 8:10; Numbers 28-29).

Most men listen to the news and are in tune with world events, but our Savior's ears were in tune with Heaven. He was Heaven's crowned Prince assigned the cardinal task of redeeming the world through Calvary. Our Savior did not contribute to the plan of God, He completed every detail of the will of the Father even till His last breath on the cross; He not only found the will of God, He fulfilled it; He did not subsidize it. He totally satisfied His law. He not only did the will of God, he doubled down on obedience with both ears open and both hands on the plow. No wonder the Father announced, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye Him!"

Though there was a complete sacrificial system in the Old Testament dispensation, every sacrifice typified the supreme devotion of our Lord to the Father's will. While it is our privilege to lend our talents, voices, and wealth to the gospel, let us remember Christ gave His precious all. What a Savior! What a Son!

An American pastor was visiting a Scottish sheep rancher with a friend when the shepherd whistled to his dog. His companion stated, "Your dog is all ears." Immediately, the pastor understood the meaning of obedience — obedient Christians are all ears.

*7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,*

Again, we hear the voice of the Savior. See Hebrews 10:7. Every law and every command in the Holy Scripture is an expression of His will; that is, every law and every command represents the heart and character of our Lord Jesus; that is, He is the fulfillment of Old Testament dreams, expectations, and hope.

*8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*

Many seek the will of God. Some do it partially; but, our Lord took pleasure in pleasing the Father and fulfilling every aspect of "thy will." Only one man can say this — the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

What is His will? His will is expressed in His law. Christ obeyed the law, not to go to heaven; but, because the law is from Heaven. His law is the objective expression of the will of Heaven; Christ is the subjective expression of His will on earth. One man on earth totally, completely dedicated to the will of God. What an Interest to Heaven!

*9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.*

This text can only apply to the Lord Jesus Christ who was a preacher of righteousness . . . who came to fulfill the law and not to abolish it . . . Who had both ears “digged” to hear His Father than to faithfully teach the masses who “were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority” (Mark 1:22).

*10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.*

The adverb “not” negates the verb “hid.”

It is a crime to be silent when one has a duty to speak, and to speak when one has a duty to be silent. He did not speak too much or too little. He spoke just enough. It is difficult to speak truth to those who believe lies, and to speak truth to those who have power to crush you. But, Jesus did it. He did not kowtow to the Pharisees to be safe or humble the weak with his knowledge and power. He never said a swear word or complained to men about men.

“I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation” – Christ taught us that the Father counts the hairs of our head, attends the funeral of every sparrow, and loves us personally. Our Lord taught us to see God as our “heavenly Father” “Who so loved the world that He gave us his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.”

“I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”

Our precious Lord showed the whole world the Father’s love . . . a love that led His One and only Son to the terrors of Calvary.

1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.



1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Lamentations 3:22–23 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness

## David Speaks

### **Claiming Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair**

*11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*

The Spirit shifts from His Messianic theme back to prayers relevant to David. Having been lifted up into the heavenlies to behold Christ, he seems to come back to earth where he renews his concerns about his need for deliverance.

The verb “withhold” (kala) means “to end” or “to finish.” It is negated by the adverb “no”; that is; do not shut off your mercy to me!

The word “mercy” (racham) refers to feelings of compassion; and, the word “lovingkindness” (he’sed) means “love” or “mercy.” Possibly, David feels like he’s exhausted God’s mercy with his sins and wearied Him with his failures. Knowing he has no strength on his own, David prays that God’s mercies might preserve and sustain him . . . that the LORD would be faithful and true to His mercy.

*12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.*

Now we see why David pleaded with the Lord to be merciful. This text explains his prayer of desperation in verse 11.

“evil” (ra’ot) is plural. David faced multifarious evils on numerous fronts — inside and out; up and down and all around. Possibly, He’s thinking about his adultery with Bathsheba and His order to have Uriah murdered on the battlefield as a cover up for pregnant Bathsheba.

“Innumerable” (micpar) means “too many to count.”

The analogy of “more than the hairs of his head” express the magnitude of his sins. According the “Scientific American” the average person has between 90,000 to 150,000 hairs on their head . . . and, this is not counting one’s eyebrows or beard.

“compassed me” (aphaph) means to surround or encircle. David was so ashamed of his iniquities (depravity) he couldn’t even look up. With chin down, he groaned over his wrongs. He had more sins than the hairs of his head, and the stress effected his heart — the kind of stress that causes a heart attack, high blood pressure, and strokes.

What an encouragement for sensitive souls who bite their lip because of guilt. . . for pastors with a hypersensitivity to peccadilloes — for distressed souls ferrying around a bucket of guilt — kind of like carrying a dead chicken around the neck.

“The best saints see themselves undone, unless continually preserved by the grace of God” – Matthew Henry.

David was not better or worse than other men. He faced the same challenges all men face. Likewise, our sin-problems and shadows of guilt are not unique to us. Psychologists are wrong when they teach every person’s bugbears are unique to them . . . to their circumstances . . . to their upbringing. Men have more in common than they have differences. And, this is why Scripture speaks to all men everywhere. It is the only work that addresses man’s struggle with sin.

If this sin-burdened king with more moral failures than feathers on a chicken could plead the mercy of God, SO CAN WE! His need and claim on mercy ought to give all men hope.

*13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.*

Matthew Poole seems to have the sense of this text correct: “deliver me from my sins, and the punishments due to them.”

New Testament Christians need to claim the word “all” in 1 John 1:7 and then rest by faith; “and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

### **Confound My Enemies**

*14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.*

David feared that he might be put to shame by his sins, but his prayer is, let my enemies, who have not repented, be ashamed (disappointed) and “confounded” (surprised and distressed) — jussive in meaning; that is, this is not a wish. David testifies of their destiny: “They will be ashamed and confounded.”

“driven backward” means “turned back” due to frustration and driven to the rear of the column.

“be put to shame” (kalam) means to be “insulted” and “humiliated” like a braggadocios boxer knocked out in the first round.

*15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.*

“desolate” (shamem) = “to be stupified, stunned, and shocked.”

“shame” (bosheth) refers to some kind of public, painful humiliation.

“aha, aha” is the voice of frivolous exaltation by enemies who express triumph and satisfaction for suddenly finding a pedantic fault with what another says or does.

### **The Devotion of Those Delivered from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair**

#### **Console the Righteous**

*16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.*

David could not serve God alone. Turning from prayers of punishment for his enemies, he prays for the prosperity of the pious in pursuit of God.

“Let” is a jussive . . . a mild command and not a wish. While God’s enemies wanted the worst for His people, David wanted the best for them . . . “joy” and “gladness” in the Lord. “Let them find Thee and the joy they seek.”

*17 But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.*

The pronoun “I” is either a personal pronoun referring to David or the literary “I” referring to the people of God as “poor” . . . and “needy” of grace and mercy . . . of ones with their only resource in God . . . of those delivered, from the dark, deep, dank well of despair. David calls Him “my help” and “my deliverer”; Haggai calls Him “the joy of all nations” (2:7) Luke records Him as “the glory and consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25); Christians call Him “My Lord and Savior.”

Hurry to help is the cry of the pious. Hurry to make us holy . . . to open our ears to the will of God . . . to save us from our sins.

# Psalm 52 - The Wicked Tongue

## The Goodness of the Lord Endureth Forever



The background of this story is found in 1 Samuel 22 and Saul's slaughter of the priests at Nob.

The value of the psalm is that it is the only commentary on the tragic killings that took place in 1 Samuel 22; that is, this psalm explains the terrible slaughter of innocent priests and their households.

No doubt the HEADLINES for the liberal Gibeon Post would read:

"The King Orders the Execution of Rebel Priests and their Families."

The HEADLINES from the conservative Hebron Times would read quite differently:

"A Holocaust to Remember: The Government Goes on a Killing Rampage Murdering 85 Innocent Priests, 200 Helpless Women, Children and Babies . . . and 1000 Harmless Baby Lambs and Goats!"

The "wicked tongue" refers to the blabbermouth tongue of Doeg the Edomite, descendent of Esau. a duplicitous, money-hungry, power-seeking man among the servants of Saul.

*Psalm 52:1 <To the chief Musician, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.>*

In fleeing from Saul, David came to the tabernacle where Ahimelech served as high priest. Pretending to be on a military mission, David requested bread to eat, and Ahimelech gave David's men sacramental loaves from off the holy table — a lesson demonstrating that necessity takes priority over ceremony.

Doeg, according to the Talmud, was one of the most learned men of his time — "the greatest rabbinist" (Ellicott).

Calling Doeg an Edomite associated him with Esau who sought the destruction of Jacob, the Israel of God; that is, the one who persecuted David, the one destined to be king of Judah.

Doeg, "who stood with Saul's servants," saw Ahimelech show kindness to David. During the early days of Saul's pursuit of David, Doeg reported to Saul Ahimelech's mercy to the young general — not for the love of truth, but for political gain . . . as proof of loyalty to Saul who was beginning to show signs of delirium.

Saul ordered Ahimelech and the priests to appear before him to give account of their kindness to David. Saul represents the de facto government. More killing is done in the name of government than any other name. Governments killed over 160 million people in 20th century.

Thus, the government of Saul charged the priests with criminal conspiracy. Without due process, the Supreme Court Judge (Saul) issued a summary judgment for his military to execute the priests for high treason. But, his officers protested with silence refusing to carry out the groundless order. The king-judge of Israel's government, operating on the principle "guilty until proven innocent," barked out the execution order to Doeg, the government sycophant.

Eager to please Saul, he vigorously murdered Ahimelech along with 85 other priests. Moreover, Doeg rushed to the city of Nob and lifted up his sword against helpless wives, children, babies and livestock belonging to the dead, innocent priests — a Jewish holocaust against a Levite priestly family. Only Abiathar escaped.

During WWII the navy posted signs, "Loose lips sink ships" And this psalm is about Doeg's wicked tongue that censored the truth resulting in the tragic, inexcusable genocide of Abimelech's family.

Doeg the Edomite, in order to secure the favor of Saul, gladly obeyed the king's twisted order.

One of the main lessons of this psalm is that no man has the duty to tell the truth to men of power who will abuse the truth. Wisely, Saul's other officers remained silent. Doeg's legalistic dedication to a "tell all" policy and his perverted devotion to his rebellious boss was the cause of hundreds of deaths. Because he put devotion to the government above devotion to God, innocent people died.

### **The Damnable Character of the Informer**

*Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.*

"mischief" (ra) means "evil."

The word "boastest" (halal) means "to shine." It is at the root of "hallelu-jah" except in this case Doeg shined for evil; that is, he thought of pleasing the king and being an executioner of priests made this man's face to light up with Devilish delight.

"Those that glory in sin, glory in their shame" (Matthew Henry).

"O mighty man" is sarcasm and not a compliment. Doeg was mighty in evil, in wickedness, and in depravity. More like a powerful thug, gang leader, or mafia figure, he lacked all the virtues of an *el gibbor*. Rejecting the omnipotent power of Almighty God, Doeg sought political power from the king of Israel.

"Clearly, if man will not worship God he will worship that which he believes will give him power" — Rushdoony.

“the goodness of God endureth continually” is the main lesson of the psalm. Literally it means “all day long” — the idea here is that Doeg’s blow to the priesthood appeared to be a substantial victory by the powers of darkness. However, David assures us the goodness of God endures and prevails over evil; that Doeg’s genocide did not diminish or damage the goodness of God; that there is nothing that evil men like Doeg can do to derail the purposes of God . . . the mercy of God . . . or the power of God.

“All things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Let us learn a lesson here. The media seems to possess a subtle joy in reporting negative news around the globe, but there is nothing the rich and powerful can do to frustrate the eternal purposes of the LORD God and His goodness toward men. History is headed toward the kingdom of God and there is nothing that deceivers can do to spoil God’s plan.

- The King Saul’s order to kill the priests of Nob did not diminish the goodness of God.
- The slaughter of men, women, children, and babies did not abate the goodness of God.
- The sudden death of a beloved family member does not arrest the goodness of God.
- The slaughter of innocents by governments does not frustrate the goodness of God.
- The senseless killing of Christians in church by an insane terrorist does not fetter the goodness of God.
- My death or your death will not disrupt the goodness of God.

God is good and always good. Even in bad times, rest under the cedar tree of God’s goodness. It “endures all day long.”

“Perhaps a clear sign of Christian maturity is the willingness to worship God when He has determined to be God hidden” – Rushdoony.

## *2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.*

“Thy tongue” is a metonym for Doeg . . . and his twisted ambitions. A sophisticated man, his words could not be trusted.

“deviseth” means “to plan, scheme, calculate, or invent.”

“mischiefs” (hav’vah) is a feminine, plural absolute in the emphatic position in the sentence; that is, this man’s mind was filled with devilment, Machiavellian motives, and venom.

“the tongue of man creates nearly all the mischief of the world” (writer Edwin Paxton Hood).

“like a sharp razor” is a metaphor for treachery, malice, and unrestrained recklessness. Doeg’s tongue was as sharp as a razor and it resulted in the bloody deaths of over 200 innocent people.

“Doeg, pretending only to vindicate himself from the imputation of disloyalty, 1 Samuel 22:8, really intended to expose the priests, who were friends to David, to the king’s fury and cruelty” (Benson).

### *3 Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.*

Doeg’s feigned political devotion to King Saul could easily be misinterpreted as loyalty and patriotism. David, however, takes us to the core of truth on this matter. Doeg murdered these innocent priests not for love of country but because he loved evil (Isaiah 5:20).

“Thou lovest . . . lying rather than to speak righteousness.” For the undiscerning legalist, it might appear Doeg did what he did because he loved the truth. However, this mess had nothing to do with truth and everything to do with fraud and financial gain.

His account was a lie about David being a disloyal servant . . . a lie about the motives of Ahimelech who exercised love and kindness toward hungry men; that is, helping David was not an act of disloyalty to Saul but an act of kindness acceptable to God. Saul concluded from Doeg’s report that David hated him; that Ahimelech had taken a political position against King Saul, and Doeg did nothing to defend David, Ahimelech, the innocent priests, or the truth. Doeg was a man willing to countenance the lie that this whole affair was a conspiracy against Saul. True men protest when their superiors jump to the wrong conclusion based on a distortion of facts.

“to speak righteousness” refers to the standard of speech — that is, God calls men to guard their tongues, to do what is right, and to speak what is right. In a sinful world where men are hell bent on doing evil, you do not owe the truth to men who will abuse the truth. Abraham did not share the absolute truth to Pharaoh (Genesis 12); the midwives did not share the truth to Pharaoh (Exodus 1); and, Daniel did not share the whole truth to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2). And, Doeg, instead of telling the whole truth only told the facts that fed Saul’s prejudice.

### *4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.*

Again the “tongue” is a metonym for Doeg . . . his thinking processes and the instrument of lies.

The phrase “devouring words” refers to chosen words that “swallow up” . . . that trap and immediately persuade crowds . . . that appeal to one’s biases . . . that stir the emotions to support a political perspective. In the instant case, Doeg’s report about the alleged treason of David and Abimelech seemed plausible and credible . . . words that caused Saul to jump to conclusions with no need for investigation.

“devouring words” that if believed would result in death and destruction . . . like whales swallowing men whole . . . like lions tearing a man to shreds and then eating them.

“deceitful tongue” refers to the intent to defraud and to destroy — to malice aforethought.

Modernists call this fake news, rumor, hearsay, scandal, prejudicial reporting, propaganda, and brainwashing.

## The Destruction of the Informer

*5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.*

“destroy” means “to tear down” or “beat down” as demolishing a building.

“take thee away” — means to seize and carry away like cold coals from a fireplace. Barnes sees this as a man carrying a pan of hot coals out the house so they don’t burn the house down. James’ metaphor for the tongue as fire and venom comes into focus here (James 3).

Changing metaphors from fires to gardening. David uses terms like “pluck up” and “root thee out” of the land to define how God is going to deal with weedy tongues. Liars and murderers are not welcome in God’s house . . . and choking weeds of malice are not welcome in His garden. Tares will be gathered and burned.

*6 The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:*

Here we have the reaction of the pious to God’s judgment on liars and murderers. When the righteous see the collapse of deceivers, they experience mingled feelings of solace in the overthrow of the wicked and fear due to the power of God.

*7 Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.*

The particle of interjection “Lo” means to “stop and study this.”

Gill says, the Targum renders it, “that made not the Word of the Lord his strength.” Literally, however, it should be translated, “Behold, the man does not set (or make) God his means of safety and protection.”

“this man” refers directly to Doeg the liar-murderer and all that follow in his footsteps. This is a man who trusted in his riches . . . in his wicked king . . . in political power instead of the God of power.

Here is a man “willing to purchase Saul’s favor at the expense of God’s displeasure” (Matthew Poole).

“Right or wrong, he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and ruin any one that stood in his way” (Matthew Henry).

“but trusted in his riches” -- Gill calls Doeg an anti-Christian whore boasting of his riches and trusting them. In actuality, he was a government sycophant. Merriam-Webster defines sycophant as “a servile self-seeking flatterer.” In layman’s terms, a sycophant is a brownnoser, a flunky, or a suck-up.



“and strengthened himself in his wickedness” -- Doeg not only invested his soul in money . . . he increasingly shed his interest in the Almighty while adding more stock in shekels to his portfolio.

### **The Destiny of David**

*8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.*

“green olive tree” is a metaphor for prosperity. “green” represents the color of the tree and not its age.

While Doeg was investing his hope in money, David invested his precious all in the kingdom of God . . . “in the mercy of God.”

“for ever and ever” teaches us that David believed trusting God was not only a benefit in this life, but had eternal consequences. David was a green olive tree in the house of God because the power of love overcame the love of power.

**9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.**

David has no praise for the rich man who gained the favor of Saul by obeying his wicked orders.

“I will praise thee because thou hast done it” — The “it” refers to the destruction of David’s unrelenting enemies and his exaltation as King in Judah.

“done it” seems to mean that David saw the destruction of Doeg, and David saw the establishment of his throne in the divided nation.

As a prince, David’s trust in God was on display. The establishment of his kingship justified his trust in God — a key event in the history of the nation — a major reversal that was good for the saints. Not only did David rejoice in his new found success, but the whole nation reaped the benefits of his election to power.

# Psalm 54 - God is My Helper

*“For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul”*



The background of this psalm is the double betrayal of David by the Ziphites who twice reported the whereabouts of David to Saul (1 Samuel 23:19; 1 Samuel 26:1.). See Addendum Notes.

One of the values of this psalm is the pure, unfettered confidence that David possessed about the Lord being his Helper. It is one thing to say God is our Helper, but it quite another to believe it and to rest in it.

## David’s Prayer for Deliverance

*Psalm 54:1 <To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?> Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.*

David lifts up a sincere prayer to God His only refuge. Because David represented a man after God’s own heart, God’s honor is tied to the fate of David.

“Save me by thy strength” implies David had no other strength but the power which God provided.

*2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.*

God, you hear many prayers, but hear my prayer . . . my words . . . my groans.

## The Occasion for David’s Prayer

*3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.*

“strangers” (zuwr) refers to the Ziphites, degenerate Israelites, who did not know God.

The men of Ziph did not seek God or discern His will during this national division. David labels them “oppressors” (ariyts) which means violent, terrifying, or ruthless. Supporting Saul’s de facto power, David feared for his life among these people.

“Selah” = a musical term not related to the sense of the passage (Barnes, Ellicott).

Application: Political issues divide people and the man of God discerns who can be trusted and who can’t. The Ziphites could not be trusted.

## David’s Confidence

#### *4 Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.*

“Behold” (hegey) is an article of interjection commanding the reader’s attention.

“helper” (ezer) means “support.” In these particular circumstances, God was his only supporter. David not only believed the Lord was his Helper, but that He was the Helper of all who supported him.

There is no self-doubt here. David’s confidence booms like thundering canons. He believed if you are with me, God is with you! If you are against me, God is against you! David knew with certainty that God was on his side because He was on God’s side.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:32ff)

Doubt is the mother of all evils and doubt does not plague David at this time in his life.

One cause of self-doubt is being “double minded” (James 1). Another cause of self-doubt is attributing more power to our opponents than they actually possess. Furthermore, focusing on one’s weaknesses or past sins attracts the vultures of doubt to circle overhead.

The one in pursuit of God confronts self-doubt and silence the inner critic. A pure God deserves pure faith from a pure man. Confidence comes when our faith is unsullied. Therefore, let us beware of overthinking, double thinking, and self-sabotage.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Ephesians 6:10 ).

Let us be sure our cause is just, for God stands with the righteous.

#### *5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.*

David is not only confident that God will save him and those who support him; he expresses confidence that God will resist and frustrate the wicked plans of his enemies.

#### **David’s Resolve**

#### *6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good.*

The reason for our existence is to glorify God, and David pledged himself to this purpose.

The “LORD” is His name. His name is good, powerful, and merciful. And, all that is good is derived from Him.

#### *7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.*

David “delivered” is in the perfect tense indicating that David’s trust in God was justified — that David trusted God not only to deliver him but to frustrate his enemies.

The context of this text is that Saul received news that the Philistines had invaded Israel (1 Samuel 23:37-28); and, therefore, Saul had to forgo pursuing David's company in order to defend his nation against the border raids of the Philistines. David saw Saul's forces approaching . . . and then . . . he saw them depart. What a relief!

Coincidences happen to those who trust God.

But, what if He doesn't deliver us from a particular negative circumstance? We pursue God not for His power, but because He is more than power. He is justice, love, and grace and so much more. If He withholds His power from us, it must be for a higher reason than deliverance from some difficulty . . . and, therefore, we still worship Him: "I will praise His name!"

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### **Addendum**

Ziph: A town in the Negeb (q.v.) area of Judah ([Josh 15:24](#); [1 Chron 2:42](#); [4:16](#)) where Ziph is a clan or family affiliated with Caleb. No doubt the family gave its name to the town. Probably modern Khirbet ez-Zeifeh SW of Kurnub near the old Edomite border.

A town in the hill country of Judah ([Josh 15:55](#)). David hid from Saul in the open country near Ziph ([1 Sam 23:14](#), [15](#); [Ps 54](#) superscription). In the same region David later took Saul's spear and water jar and spared his life ([1 Sam 26](#), note [vv. 1, 2, 7, 12](#)). The same town was fortified by Rehoboam after the secession of the northern kingdom ([2 Chron 11:5, 8](#)). It is prob. at the site of the modern Tell Zif, four m. SE of Hebron on a hill some 2,890 ft. above sea level commanding the open country around, about level with En-gedi (q.v.) on the Dead Sea. (Bible Gateway Encyclopedia).

# Psalm 55 - Know Your Enemies

## Cast Your Burden on the Lord



The Christian is at war with enemies within and without.

Sun Tzu taught:

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

Ellicott says this psalm “is one of the most passionate odes of the whole collection—bursts of fiery invective alternating with the most plaintive and melancholy reflections: it has supplied to Christianity and the world at least two expressions of intense religious feeling, the one ([Psalm 55:6-7](#)) breathing despair, the other ([Psalm 55:22](#)) the most restful hope.”

### **The Troubled Soul**

*Psalm 55:1 (To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil,*

Since David penned this psalm after the Absalom revolt, we would do well to learn the major lesson that came out of David’s conflicts.

Great conflicts inspire great thoughts, and great thoughts require great songs.

The term “Neginoth” refers to a vigorous tempo to express villainy as well as conquest.

*A Psalm of David.) Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.*

Forced to flee Jerusalem during the Absalom revolt, David was unsure if God was pleased with him. Fearing that God might ignore his pleas and turn away from him in his troubles, he pleads with the LORD to not shut His eyes nor close His ears to the frailty of his person or to the fractures in his prayers.

Pounded by critics, David prays that God would hear his prayer. O God, you hear many prayers, but hear my prayer. May my moans be sweetened by the Spirit and ascend to heaven sprinkled with the incense of Christ.

That God “hides himself” is a fact all men face; but, let it never enter our mind that God has abandoned His children. Hiding maybe, but forsaken? May it never be (Hebrews 13:5–6; Deuteronomy 31:6–8 ).

David prays that God would come out of his chambers, appear in court, and make a ruling in his favor. When the pilgrim feels like God is hiding Himself, let him remember there was only one man in history from whom God hid his face and that was when our Lord became sin for us upon that old rugged cross. As long as we are alive, there is hope God will hear our prayers and bless them.

### *2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;*

A “complaint” is a formal charge before a competent judge against an adversary that caused substantial harm.

“Attend” is an imperative, the mood of prayer in God’s Courtroom. David motions the Court to hear his verifiable complaint. He realizes that his imperfect pleading is like a loud noise that disturbs the peace of the Court. Nevertheless, he pleads that the Most High would patiently consider the facts of his case.

Linearly thinking, David’s enemies were Ahithophel and co-conspirators in the Absalom revolt.

Geometrically thinking, the Christian would do well to consider that his enemies are those in rebellion against God’s law-order. These would include tyrants in foreign countries, government officers, corporations, neighbors in society, and even wives, husbands, children, who are hostile to God (John 7:7). King Ahab (the government) called Elijah his enemy (1 Kings 20). Jesus warned the disciples that in choosing to follow Christ, enemies would arise from their own household (Matthew 10:36). Eve enticed Adam. Miriam was struck with leprosy because she had the arrogance to criticize Moses (Numbers 12). Jewish leaders prosecuted the apostles (Acts 3, 5-7, 12).

### *3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.*

In referring to the “voice of the enemy,” David may be thinking of Ahithopel, Absalom, Shemei, and loyalists to Saul who plotted David’s downfall.

Geometrically speaking, godly men and women are surrounded by government agents, news broadcasters, and members of their family that launch missiles of slanderous commentary against them. Contentious women can drive a man out of the house. Adulterous husbands make themselves an enemy of faithful women. Rebellious children can blame and castigate responsible parents making themselves an enemy of the family.

### *4 My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.*

The political criticism, much of which was untrue, plagued this lamb-king. The mutiny shook the foundation of David’s throne. And, then, there was the matter relating to Uriah — an arrow of bitter-truth that pierced his own soul.

### *5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.*

Like thieves breaking into one's house at midnight, these pirates of peace stirred up fear and caused David to respond with sweaty palms, shortness of breath, and knocking knees. One can tolerate an open belligerent, but who can manage covert conventions and whispers of revolt by secret conspirators? Many a good man has been the victim of a conspiracy taking place around the office water-fountain. More pastors have lost their pastorate for following Christ than for any other reason.

*6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.*

"dove" -- At this moment in the king's life, David felt like the last leaf on a winter's limb. If he could not stomp his enemies like an elephant, he would escape like a dove. Lonely, afraid, and surrounded by political adversaries, this monarch wanted to disappear into the evening sky to escape the steel traps set for his slaughter.

*7 Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.*

Deserts are death for large armies, but David saw the wilderness as a place of safety. Israel in its flight from Egypt was sustained by God in the desert. Like Israel, David wanted to flee, be alone, and experience the calm of a Bedouin life. Wise men always seek peace and quiet so they can escape the hustle and bustle of city life to commune with God and gain perspective.

*8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.*

A storm was brewing, and David wanted to flee his post like a little dove. Indecision meant certain death. Unable to bear a direct confrontation with the rebels, this little bird-king fled Jerusalem to reach the calm in the Jordan Valley . . . and to avoid a massacre of the innocent.

But, dear reader, you are not a bird and you have no wings. But, you can "take refuge in the shadow of His wings until the disaster has passed" (Psalm 57:1).

*9-11 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.*

In his flight from Absalom, David whispered a quick prayer.

The word "destroy" means "to swallow up."

David saw the political parties convening and plotting for power in Jerusalem. He knew Jerusalem was divided in their loyalties. Because "divide and conquer" is a well-known strategy for conquest, David prays that God would divide their counsel . . . their unity . . . and ambitions; that He would turn their words into babel and divide the gang of mutineers. And, He did (1 Samuel 15, 16).

Forget trying to manipulate rebels. Pray and trust! Pray and rest! Pray and do not resort to covert manipulation.

Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

The very heart of the capital city was rotten to the core. Where noble statesmen should meet, corruption poisoned justice. Crime abounded. Treason seized motives. Bribes captured hearts. Proud psychopaths coveted the throne. Trustees became treacherous. Commoners became commanders. Thieves prospered. Law and order vanished. Despair set in like a London fog.

*12-14 For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: 13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*

The most troubling aspect of the Absalom revolt was not that loyalist to Saul cheered the rebellion, but that Ahithophel, his trusted counselor, joined the revolt and counseled Absalom on how to destroy David's company.

When chatter through the grapevine reached David that Ahithophel betrayed him, the report crushed his confidence in man. David could endure invectives from sworn enemies, but betrayal from a trusted friend? A turncoat by a brother in the faith was more than his heart could endure. A friend becoming a foe? It was easier to face Goliath than it was to grasp the fact that Ahithophel had turned into a Judas. The dagger of treachery thrust deep into his soul. "Et tu Brute?"

There was nothing in this political rebellion that discouraged David, except that his trusted friend and counselor had joined the coup. Likewise, Christians in pursuit of holiness are not rattled by the malice of anti-Christ, but nothing shakes a godly man more than to learn close friends have joined a conspiracy to end his career, or ministry, or life. It is even worse when these traitors turn out to be a wife, son, or "brother" in Christ.

If you have a Judas in your ministry, you know that you are in the will of God. If you are a Judas, repent deeply!

*15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.*

The king orders a death sentence. With his sense of justice provoked, David erupts with disgust spewing out fire and fumes in every direction. Like a good soldier, he wished for conquest over his enemies. His enemies driven by madness sought to kill him, and the king determined to defeat them. When you can't live with your enemies, they must die. Love is the answer for some troubles, but death is the answer for rebels. Those who seek peace with God will find the olive branch of salvation, but those who war against God will only hear the gavel pounding condemnation.

"wickedness in their dwellings" addresses the nature and character of the wicked. Covetousness controls their conversations. They live in a den of iniquity with hatred, violence, and fraud. Their hearts are fountains of pride and lusts. These swine love the pigsty and must be rooted out by the justice of good men and the judgment of Almighty God.



“hell” or hades: There is justice in this age. Some sinners are judged now in this life, and others will fry like bacon when they are cast into hell.

*16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.*

The word “cry aloud” (hamah) means “to murmur, groan, or growl.” That is, David would find a way to give expression to the roaring taking place in his soul. Generals rely upon planning and counter plots; but, David relied upon prayer. His confidence is astounding.

David made his stand: Let others drown themselves in a sea of selfish ambition, but for me and my house, we will trust the Lord. I know not what course others may take to secure their future, but as for me, I will pray “evening, and morning, and at noon.”

“He shall hear my voice” expresses faith. Faith speaks positively of the LORD . . . but not necessarily about the riffraff on stage in this political theater. While determined to pray, David knew that deliverance was not far away.

*18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.*

The verb “delivered” (padah) is a perfect tense meaning “to ransom;” that is, even though the revolutionaries outnumbered David’s forces, he views God as already having redeemed him from defeat and death. Though Absalom had military muscle, God blessed David with tactical superiority. In this civil war, Absalom was killed and David lived.

“For there were many with” should be translated, “For there were many fighting against me.” Many or few, great or small, strong or weak, God has the power to deliver those trusting in Him.

*19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.*

“Afflict” (anah) means “to answer.” That is, when the enemy complains, God has an answer; when the enemy strikes a blow, God delivers a counterblow; when enemies lie, the Lord speaks truth and slays them.

“he that abideth of old” refers to unrepentant adversaries settled in their crusty habits of corruption.

“they have no changes” refers to the relentless pursuit of enemies. Because these political adversaries did not fear God, they could not turn back, change their course, or retreat from their evil intent to murder David.

*20-21 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.*

“He” is a poetic device used to express the character of the whole.

“put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him” refers to the treachery of these actors who outwardly speak peace but inwardly love death and criminally assault peaceful men who have not injured them (Proverbs 8:36).

Broken covenant: Faithless people break contracts, treaties, promises, rules, and the restraints of law.

Benson: I speak especially of “that perfidious person, who hath not only violated all the laws of friendship, but profanely broken his promise and oath of fidelity, wherein he was engaged to me.” — Bishop Patrick.”

The phrase “smoother than butter” and “softer than oil” expresses the charming deceitfulness of traitors. There is a difference between what the wicked say and what they do; between how they talk and how they walk. That speaks peace, but practice war; they promise change, but promote revolution; they have the smile of a panda, but a sting of a cobra: they offer an olive branch in one hand, but have a sword in the other.

The phrase “smoother than butter” literally means “curd mouth,” “milk mouth,” or smooth mouth. “Smooth are the butterings of his mouth” (Benson quoting Alexander). Using modern expressions we label these snake oil salesmen self-appointed cheerleaders, traders of lies, slickster tricksters, and charlatans. These grumblecakes offer you dessert, but feed you arsenic.

### **The Remedy for a Troubled Soul**

Now the Psalmist applies the lesson he learned during the Absalom Revolt to us.

*Psalm 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD (the protasis), and he will sustain you (apodasis); he will never permit the righteous to be moved (the apodasis).*

The Hebrew word for “burden” is *yehab*, and it means “lot” or “what is given.”

God handed a grievous burden for king David to bear. The background of Psalm 55 is the Absalom Revolt including the treason of Ahithophel, and David’s flight from Jerusalem during the coup d’etat — a wretched revolt against his administration that led to a ghastly civil war.

Here the sweet psalmist of Israel shares a valuable lesson learned during the uncertainty of the chaos: trials are a gift of God!

Barnes says, “This may be regarded as an address of the psalmist to his own soul – an exhortation to himself to roll all his care upon the Lord and to be calm.” But, the lesson of the psalm applies to us.

The Hebrew word for “cast” is *shalak* — a Hiphil imperative calling for intense, deliberate action of the will: “Stir yourself and cast” your burdens on the LORD.

The Hebrew verb *shalak* means “to cast,” “to put,” “to throw,” or “to hurl.” It is translated

“put (shalak) under one of the bushes” in Genesis 21:15;

“throw (shalak) him into one of the pits” in Genesis 37:20;

“cast (shalak) into the Nile” in Exodus 1:22;

“throw (shalak) it on the ground” in Exodus 4:22;

“they spread a cloak, and every man threw (shalak) in it the earrings of his spoil” in Judges 8:25; that is, just as the men of Israel threw (shalak) in their gold trinkets on to the cloak as a gift, we are to throw (shalak) our lot in life on to the LORD.

The word “**burden**” (yehab) is a noun which refers to one’s lot or what is given. It is translated

“give” (yehab) in Genesis 29:21; 30:1; 47:15; Joshua 18:4; Judges 1:15; 20:7;

“take or choose” (yehab) in Deuteronomy 1:13; “ascribe” in Deuteronomy 32:3; Psalm 29:2;

“make me a gift” (yehab) in Job 6:22;

“grant” (yehab) in Psalm 60:11; “give” and “give” in Proverbs 20:15;

“give (yehab) me my wages” in Zechariah 11:12;

and “burden” (yehab) in Psalm 55:22.

It could easily be translated throw your ‘lot,’ or throw “what is given to you’,” or throw “the gift of your trial” upon the LORD.

In the New Testament, the word “**burden**” is translated “cares of this life” (1 Peter 5:7; Luke 21:34), and the word “cast” is translated, “throwing their cloaks on the colt” (Luke 19:35).

The first promise is that the one who “cast what is given to him” upon the LORD will be “**sustained**” (apodosis).

The condition is “cast your burden on the Lord” (the protasis) “and he will **sustain** you” (apodosis)

The Hebrew word for “sustain” is *kul* — a rare Piphel (Piel) verb form which implies intense action. It means “to contain,” “to sustain,” and “to maintain.”

The Hebrew word *kul* (“sustain” in English) translated:

“There I will provide (*kul*) for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come,” in Genesis 45:11;

“and Joseph provided (kul) his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with food” in Genesis 47:12;

“do not fear; I will provide (kul) for you and your little ones” in Genesis 50:21;

“He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher (kul) of your old age . . . ” in Ruth 4:15;

“those officers supplied provision (kul) for King Solomon” in 1 Kings 4:27;

“I have commanded the ravens to feed (kul) you there” in 1 Kings 17:4;

“I have commanded a widow there to feed (kul) you” in 1 Kings 17:9;

“Forty years you sustained (kul) them in the wilderness” in Nehemiah 9:21; and,

“he will guide (kul) his affairs with discretion” in Psalm 112:5.

**The second, or complementary part of the apodosis** (the conclusive part of the promise) is that “He will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

The noun **“moved”** (mote) means “to totter, shake, or slip.”

The verb **“permit”** means “to give, bestow, grant, ascribe, employ, devote, deliver, stretch out, extend, or designate.” It is preceded by a negation **“never”**; that is, our God will never permit us to “be moved.”

There is a testing that could destroy our faith and demolish our God-confidence. The promise here is that God will never let that happen. He will not permit the “righteous” (Romans 5:1) to totter and fall, but He may permit storms to enter their lives that cause them to tether themselves tighter to the promises.

Barnes puts it this way,

“He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved – literally, “He will not give moving forever to the righteous.” That is, he will not so appoint, arrange, or permit things to occur, that the righteous shall be “ultimately” and “permanently” removed from their steadfastness and their hope; he will not suffer them to fall away and perish.”

*23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.*

*In contrast to the protection of the righteous, David informs us of the fate of bloody and deceitful men – a short life. In contrast to the wicked, David trusts the Lord.*

Need protection, provision, or navigation? “Throw what has been given to you” on to the LORD. Roll your lot upon your Creator.

# Psalm 56 - When Afraid

**“ I will Trust in Thee.”**



Before us is a rock-hard lesson to learn — a lesson taught in the darkness and not the light: to walk by faith and not by fear during the stormy seasons of life.

*Psalm 56:1 To the chief Musician upon Jonathalemrechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.*

In the title “upon Jonath-elem-rechokim,” the first word – “Jonath” – means a “dove,” a favorite emblem of suffering innocence (Ellicott).

In fleeing from the wrath and jealousy of King Saul, David found himself at the gates of the Philistines (Gath) acting like a madman (1 Samuel 21:10-22:1). Ashamed of his behavior, David sought the Lord. During this low point in his life, he learned his greatest lesson. See Psalm 34.

Somewhere in this act of desperation, David came to his senses and shifted his trust from man to God. Later, he penned this prayer that we might learn the lessons of dependence on God.

*Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me*

Instead of mentioning Saul or the Philistines, David refers to man individually or to fallen man collectively. The Hebrew word for “man” is *enosh* – a reference to the frailty of mortal man.

In this fight, David depends upon God’s mercy, not upon his own merit; upon the mercy of God, not upon the mercy of man (*enosh*). The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel (Proverbs 12:10); but, the endless mercies of the Lord are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). The man who receives the mercy of God obtains all that he needs to be safe and happy.

Merit gives a man what he deserves (judgment); mercy does not give a man what he deserves. Mercy gives a man what he needs (relief).

The Hebrew word “oppresseth” (*lachats*) means “to press or squeeze.”

The reason for this shift in trust is David suddenly realized that not only does Saul want to kill him, but the heartless Philistines feeding on their own bitterness would swallow him up like starving wolves; that is, these callous brutes (*enosh*) would find pleasure in seeing him suffer.

*2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.*

So, anxious is young David about his predicament at the Gates of Gath, he mentions their intent a second time: “mine enemies would daily swallow me up.”

The word “swallow” can also mean “to pant after,” “trample on,” or “bruise” as dogs panting after a rabbit in a chase eager to devour the helpless animal. This event is not just a chase, but a passion driven hunt for David’s life.

David impresses us with his plight by using the term “many” (rab) which means “abounding.” His friends were few; his enemies were many. Alone, he felt chased after by a pack of panting, slurping wolves eager to devour him.

The term “O most high” is one Hebrew word (mar’om) and not a phrase. It means “elevated” referring either to the elevated attitude of his enemies or to God Who is in heaven. There are many gods in this world, but Melchizedek, Abraham, and David raised their hand to the LORD, the Most High God (Genesis 14:22).

Some expositors note that the Hebrew word *mar’om* translated “O thou most high” (elevation) is not in the vocative, and therefore, does not refer to God. Rather, they believe the “most high” refers to the attitude of his pursuers. His enemies were not only passionate, but proud and arrogant acting as if they were archers shooting arrows at him from a high tower. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown recognize the possibility of this meaning.

Other expositors such as Barnes believe “O thou most High” is an appeal to the God of Heaven to look down and see his plight. Likewise, Gill adopts this view. The term “High” (mar’om) is used of God in Psalm 92:8. Whether this is how we should interpret this word, the next verse definitely shows David looking upward and not around at his enemies.

“trust” -- As far as we can tell, David was the first to give the word “trust” (batash) a religious meaning.

The word “trust” is used in the Bible is in reference to the corrupt leadership of Abimelech where he is alleged to say, “put your trust in my shadows;” that is, trust my government (Judges 9:15). Boaz observed that David’s grandmother (Ruth) trusted in the shadow of His wings (Ruth 2:12); and, it was David, Ruth’s grandson, who advanced the principle of trusting God as a rock, shield, horn, and tower (2 Samuel 22:3).

David did not begin his flight from Saul with raging confidence in God. This is the lesson he learned and the commitment he made **after** he played the madman at Gath — an essential discipline to learn on the pilgrim path to the Celestial City.

David announced, “When I am afraid,” I will trust. This is no fair-weather trust; that is, I will trust God in the darkness, not just in the light; in difficult times, and not just easy times; in rough seas as well as smooth seas; at midnight and not just at high noon; during cloudy days and not just in the sunshine; during the cold winters of life and not just in the warm summers of this pilgrimage. As a man bundles up under his winter coat during a blizzard, so I will cluster my precious all under His protection during the bitters of life.

**This is the lesson:** This is the principle David learned to apply the rest of his life: Faith, not fear, will be my guide. When I am afraid, I will trust!

Some men learn this sooner than others. May the Lord help us all to apply this during periods of darkness.

Lamentably, this lesson can't be learned in the sunshine. It is learned after midnight . . . after an unwanted trial . . . after a spiritual failure. But, better learned in the darkness than never learned at all.

*4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*

This verse contains a textual challenge: The KJV says, "I will praise his word." The LXX says, "I will praise God with my word."

"The obvious treatment of the verse is to take the construction as in Psalm 44:8, "I praise God with my word," i.e. in spite of all my enemies I find words to praise God" (Ellicott). But, other scholars believe David trusted God's Word and not the words of his enemies.

Both positions are true: We have respect for His Word, and we praise Him with our words.

"I will not" should be translated: "I fear not" What can flesh do? The text is not so much a promise or commitment as it is a settled position of reliance on the LORD.

*5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.*

David returns to the tactics of his enemies.

The "wrest" (atsab) means 'to twist and to distort' his words to the injury of the man. Personal enemies are incapable of speaking the truth in a fair and balanced way. All the reports about David to Saul were designed to incense Saul's anger against David. Likewise, today. The media twists, distorts, and perverts what good men say in order to ruin them politically. Slander is a form of murder and it is the favorite weapon of hidden hands.

*6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.*

What David experienced from his enemies is true in our time. The enemies of the righteous are like snipers hiding in the bushes looking for the right time to launch their invectives against God's attack-lambs.

The lesson for us is to be wise and avoid naivety. Beware of wire-pullers and kingmakers. When government is god in the minds of men you cannot expect men not to betray soldiers for Christ.

*7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.*

The meaning of this text is obscure. Ellicott says the meaning here is “for iniquity thou wilt requite them;” that is, since there is a God in heaven who umpires the threats of men, how can they escape?

The psalmist asks with earnestness and amazement whether, under the divine administration, people “can” find safety in mere wickedness (Barnes).

*8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*

The word “tellest” means “to count, recount, or number.”

From David’s conquest over Goliath to the death of Saul, David lived the life of a fugitive wandering from hide-out to hide-out.

Barnes recounts David’s wanderings:

“My wanderings,” to Gath, 1 Samuel 21:10; to the cave of Adullam, 1 Samuel 22:1; to Mizpeh, in Moab, 1 Samuel 22:3; to the forest of Hareth, 1 Samuel 22:5; to Keilah, 1 Samuel 23:5; to the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Samuel 23:14; to the wilderness of Maon, 1 Samuel 23:25; to En-gedi, 1 Samuel 24:1-2.”

According to the rule of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, the term “wandering” is coextensive with the word “tears.” “Wandering” (singular) is a metaphor for “mental anguish;” “tossing’s to and fro of the mind;” confusion and the feelings of distress caused by the slander of his enemies.

“tears into thy bottle” is not literal, but a metaphor claiming that God knows all David’s pain, anguish, and depression caused by the malicious criticism of his adversaries. What a comfort to learn that God knows and treasures all our sorrows.

*9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.*

Cries occur when people are hurt.

“Cry” is a synonym for liquid prayers by those carrying crosses. The first two verbs (Imperfect) indicate that David has confidence that his enemies will be defeated the next time he prays instead of flees.

The wandering shepherd could say, “this I know; for God is for me.” David knew God was on his side because he was on God’s side.

*10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.*

Because faith banished fear, David praised the LORD for His promises and acts of tolerance. David was not a forgetting pouter, but a grateful praiser.

The presence of praise means the absence of fear; and, the presence of fear means the absence of faith.



*11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.*

David repeats the main lesson of the psalm and the hardest lesson to learn for pilgrims awakened by the cries at midnight.

The sentiment in this verse is the same as in verse six except that the word “man” is used here instead of “flesh.” Since God was his friend, the young prince adopted a position that he would not fear what mortal man could do to him.

Faith in Heaven defeats foes on Earth.

*12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.*

Deliverances cause thankful men to go deeper into the Divine will. Vows imply commitment. Freedom from fear and foes ripens resolve and acceptance of responsibilities. Freedom from future failures appears to be grounded on present promises. David determined to trust God and to never again let his fears dictate his destiny.

*13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

The sentiment in this verse is the same as in Psalm 56:6, except that the word “man” is used here instead of “flesh.”

“Wilt thou not deliver . . .” is better translated “Hast Thou not delivered . . .?”

We have here a greater to lesser argument. Since God delivered him from death, David believed he could trust the LORD to deliver him from lesser difficulties. The fact that God rescued him in the past gave him confidence to trust God for the future; salvation from yesterday’s difficulties gave David confidence that God would deliver him from today’s adversities.

“that I may walk before God in the light of the living?” shows the purpose of God’s salvation in our lives. He delivers us not for our pleasure, but for His Divine plan — that we might walk with Him every minute of every day.

Having been delivered from darkness, let us walk in the light. If He is in the light let us walk in the light. If Christ took the high road, let us take the high road. Since He is holy, let us be holy. If he delivered us in our weakness, let us walk in His strength by faith that we might enjoy freedom from fear and savor the favor of God.

# Psalm 57 - Praising God in the Midst of Trouble

## “my soul is among lions”



This psalm rings with certainty that the author is David. This is a prayer muttered in darkness while pursued by Saul — a prayer for mercy. How do you hide? What do you do? Where do you go when pursued by an army of thousands? David endured and trusted.

The value of the psalm is that it shows us the character of this powerful prince and his determination to believe the best about God with death and doom lurking behind every rock.

Warning: because we are so familiar with the life story of David, readers must stop to feel the life-threatening pressures on young David and understand the profound trust He deposited with the Almighty. Feel these pressures and you can enter into the main lesson of this psalm — the determination to praise . . . speak well of . . . and to trust God in the midst of trouble.

### David’s Confident Prayer for Mercy

*Psalm 57:1 <To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.>*

“Al-taschith” means “destroy not” – a tune appropriate for the profound theme of the psalm.

“Fled” implies intense fear. The context of this prayer is that David’s small band of men were being pursued by Saul’s massive army on a “search and destroy” mission — a mission “to kill on sight;” that is, David was fleeing for his life from Saul’s elite assassination team.

“from Saul in the cave” is possibly the Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1ff).

*Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.*

“mercy” and “trusteth” informs us David had nowhere else to go . . . that God was his only source of protection. What military could rescue this young general from the force and power of Saul’s troops? David could stand and fight . . . but, if he did, he and his men would be slaughtered. They were no match for the superior Benjamite forces of Saul.

“in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge” -- Using the metaphor of chicks and a mother hen, David flees for protection under His wings. It is easy to be a sunshine Christian, but to trust God in the darkness with canons blaring and men screaming with pain is quite another matter. David’s trust in God was not from the pew, but from the trenches surrounded with barbed wire and the whistling sounds of shells flying past . . . sort of speak.

To put it another way, David was not trusting God in a “safety zone,” but from a “killing zone”; not while sitting on a perch above the fray, but while slogging through a bloody battlefield; not while walking home from school, but running from an armed, irate, killing mob hell bent on snuffing him out.

“until these calamities are overpast” informs us David lived with a certainty that God called him for a special purpose and that his terrifying troubles were only temporary.

*2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.*

Like Abraham (Genesis 14), David served the Most High God — the one, absolute, sovereign God of the universe. Because the worlds are subject to Him, David stood under His authority and power.

The word “performeth” (gamar) means “to complete” or “to perfect.” The idea here is that God completes his work and links it to His ultimate purposes.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

*3 He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.*

The young prince’s troubles were deathly real — “save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.”

“from heaven” implies that God is everywhere. He does not move or occupy a particular place; that is, David’s source of deliverance was not on earth, but from the omnipotent, omnipresent God who ruled the heavens.

David did not know when or how God would deliver him, but he possessed a stunning confidence God would issue His order from His throne and show him the mercy he long-craved . . . and to affirm the truth he believed. He knew the “what” but he did not know the “how” — a storm, a miracle, an angel? He knew God would deliver him, but he did not know the “when” — in a minute, an hour, or the next day? — a question that tests the faith of every man.

### **David’s Commentary on His Enemies**

*4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.*

David employs a “lions” metaphor to describe the fierce, ferocious, feverous madness of king Saul’s manhunt for David.

“fire” refers to the inflamed passion of the government’s men to assassinate David.

“teeth” and “tongue” and “spears” and “swords” describe the deadly intent and armed capacity of Saul’s army to eliminate David; that is, this is not a mild disagreement, but deadly, hate driven chase.

*5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.*

Not only was David’s life at stake here, but God’s glory would be won or lost depending on what happened in this encounter with Saul’s henchmen.

*6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.*

The use of the word “net” and “digget a pit” implies a preplanned hunt to murder David. His predicament was no accident. It was a well-organized, engineered, orchestrated scheme to lure him into the trap.

### **David’s Confidence in God**

David was a man like all of us, but here he bears his soul . . . its conflicts . . . and his decision to belief the best about God even though terrible troubles tested him — mainly Saul’s manhunt for his life.

*7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.*

The word “fixed” (kuwn) is used twice for emphasis. It means “prepared,” or “established” — the opposite of doubt, wavering, and indecision. Doubt and indecision were not at work here.

The verb “praise” (zamar) is in the mood of the Piel Imperative stating David’s intense commitment to praise God. Use of a Piel verb expresses the speaker’s vigorous desire, intention, self-encouragement, or determination to speak well of the Lord despite the troubles he was experiencing.

Thus, we come to **the main lesson of the psalm.**

“I will sing and give praise” means David’s lips would not doubt, gripe, grumble or complain about Providence. Rather, his words express confidence in God — not an easy task when the stakes are high and when the soul is on life-support. Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and David chose life . . . faith . . . and words of light.

*8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.*

“my glory” refers to the noblest powers of the soul; that is, employing the lips to speak positively of God in the midst of this deadly conflict required total concentration and total commitment of the total man to the total task of believing God for a positive outcome.

### **David’s Commitment to Glorify God**

*9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.*

Being chased and hunted down brings out fear and doubt in most men . . . but, not David. He was truly committed to express trust in God for deliverance — to speak only of God’s faithfulness during this troublesome period in his life.

*10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.*

David was in narrow straits with sabers rattling all around him, but his hope was in the endless supply of mercy that is higher than the heavens.

*11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.*

The crowning theme and goal of David’s life was to see the Lord exalted in the affairs of men. Consequently, in the midnight darkness, he spoke words of light to his men; when things seemed out of control, David praised the sovereignty of God; when his men questioned the wisdom of God, David praised the goodness of the Lord.

Let us learn a lesson on leadership. Never complain! Be real . . . but speak well of the Lord.

# Psalm 58 - Break Their Teeth, O God

*"break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD."*



Burdened with the maladministration of government officials, the Psalmist sends this imprecatory prayer to Heaven petitioning the Lord to pour out His crushing justice on the psychopaths of his time — an appropriate prayer as we see wicked officials promoting infanticide, Sodomy, gender confusion, and oppressive taxes upon the people.

## A Query of the Wicked

*1 (To the chief Musician, Altschith, Michtam of David.) Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?*

The word “congregation” is the Hebrew word *elim* which can be translated “silence” or “gods” (Psalm 82:1). It appears to be a metonym for corrupt judges who ignored righteousness and ruled wickedly.

Luther renders this, “Are you then dumb (silent), that you will not speak what is right, and judge what is proper, ye children of men?”

Gesenius (Lexicon) renders it here, “Do ye indeed decree dumb justice?”

Professor Alexander renders it, “Are ye indeed dumb when ye should speak righteousness?” The allusion is clearly to some public act of judging; to a judicial sentence; to magistrates and rulers; to people who “should” give a righteous sentence; to those in authority who “ought” to pronounce a just opinion on the conduct of others (Barnes).

In the American system of law, officials are not required to answer the Citizen; that is, silence is the preferred means of communication; and in law, silence is form of speech that can convey agreement or be an admission of guilt:

“Silence can be understood as acceptance when both parties had a preexisting relationship before the current contract” (Findlaw).

The psalmist reminds these potentates who sit in the seat of power that they are but men — men who themselves will be judged by Almighty God.

*2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.*

“in the heart ye work wickedness” is translated “in the heart you work lawlessness” (anomia) in the LXX. Juridical decisions which were supposed to promote justice resulted in further injury to the people.

“weigh” is a judicial term referring to scales and balances and the powers of office.

The term “violence” refers to personal injury. The Bible is a book of common law, “Do your neighbor no harm.” But, these administrators acted in a way that violated the rights of man.

### **A Description of the Wicked**

*3 The wicked are estranged (ta’ah) from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*

The word “wicked” or “anomias” in the LXX does not refer to the whole of the human race but to judicial officers. His cause is not personal, but general outrage against the forces of evil at work through wicked men that acted lawlessly.

The word “estranged” (zuwr) means “strange;” that is, these Jewish officials were strangers (foreigners; aliens) to the household of God and His law-order.

The word “astray” (ta’ah) means “wander,” “go astray,” “be intoxicated,” or “stagger around like a drunk man” who has lost his way.

Genesis 20:13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander (ta’ah) from my father’s house,

2 Chronicles 33:9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err (ta’ah)

Job 12:25 They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man (ta’ah).

Isaiah 28:7 But they also have erred (ta’ah) through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way (ta’ah); the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way (ta’ah) through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

How do you explain the maniacal decisions of judges? The psalmist concludes their maladjustment began in their youth; that they were born sinners, and early childhood -raining failed to correct these miscreants. Lies, fictions, distortion, and deceit became a normal course of conduct in the halls of power.

*4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; 5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.*

Their lies are compared to the venom of a snake (na’hash) that stops the heart.

“Deaf” refers to various kinds of serpents that “will not be charmed.” A deaf adder (pe’then; Egyptian cobra) “suddenly darts forth its fangs, and shows itself not only untamed, but untameable” (Ellicott).

These antinomian judges were deaf to all of the Lord's counsels, to the dictates of their own consciences, and to the authority of God's law. Like the deaf cobra, they could not be charmed; that is, they were unresponsive to the dictates of God's law and to reason.

### **An Imprecatory Prayer Against the Wicked**

*6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.*

The wicked judges are compared to snakes and lions. To neutralize a serpent, you defang it. “Break out the great teeth” of a lion is the psalmist's way of asking the Lord to subdue the wicked; to prevent injustice; and, to remove these traitors from office. Having no capacity to do good, these lawless judges ought to be removed from power – “break their teeth, O God.”

Our culture bends toward permissiveness. Beware of being too nice and having more sugar than the fairy godmother. Let us learn to be meaner than an anvil.

*7 Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. 8 As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.*

Continuing his theme regarding the ruination of the wicked, he wishes their collapse to be like four undoing's in nature:

- Like the melting waters of snow and ice . . .
- Like the tragedy of broken bows and arrows of an archer . . .
- Like the crushing of a vulnerable little snail that tries to defend itself with its pronged horns as it melts away under the heat of the day and moves along its slimy path losing its own precious moisture.
- Like the tragedy of a still birth by an expectant mother whose child never sees the light of day.

*9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.*

The psalmist expresses confidence that God's justice will be swift and sure . . . like the quick-burning fires of a bramble bush used to heat broth in a clay pot over an open fire . . . like the short-lived, angry whirlwind or dust devil so common in the desert regions of the world.

### **The Sweetness of Victory Over the Wicked**



*10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*

The pompous buffoonery and the prosperity of the wicked grieve the righteous. The odious presence and dastardly deeds of these political monsters cause many a man to question the wisdom and power of Divine Providence.

As the imagery shifts from city gate to that of victory in a bloody battlefield, there is great cause for rejoicing when the righteous see the sudden removal of these madmen from the citadels of power. It like bloody soldiers marching over the corpses of their foes. The downfall of wicked politicians fuels joy and increases faith in the wonder of Providence.

*11 So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

The imagery in this text expresses the inner joy of an ancient marine as he marches back from the slaughter of his enemies. Imagine a soldier stepping over carcasses with his feet stained in the blood of his enemies. As he quietly meditates on the miracle of victory, he shines with new confidence: There is “a God that judgeth in the earth.”

“Whoever duly considers these things, will diligently seek the reward of righteousness, and adore the Providence which orders all things aright in heaven and in earth” — Matthew Henry.

# Psalm 59 - The Steel Beam Confidence of David

## “But I will sing of thy power”



David authored this psalm.

The background of this psalm is found in 1 Samuel 19:11: “Saul also sent messengers (spies) unto David’s house to watch him, and to slay him in the morning.”

The fear of being hunted and assassinated left an indelible impression of David. So much so, he penned his struggles in a poem to commemorate the near-death experience.

This is a teaching psalm encouraging all of God’s children to seek Him in times of trouble.

### A Prayer for Deliverance

*Psalm 59:1 <To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.>*

This prayer was offered, and later written down, when Saul’s staked out David’s house with a plan to kill him in the morning.

*Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.*

The word “Deliver” is mentioned twice. It expresses the intense, immediate need for the young general.

David’s enemies were government assassins — “bloody men” and “workers of iniquity”; that is, lawless men under the command of a king at war with God’s law-order.

### A Description of His Enemies

*3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD. 4 They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me, and behold.*

“lie in wait for my soul” suggest covert operations of Saul’s corrupt police force with the intent of murdering David.

“mighty” suggest these were strong, healthy, killing machines. David was not fighting shadows on a wall or an unseen evil spirit, but – EKO Cobra Commandos made of flesh and blood that traumatized David.

“not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD” informs us not only of David’s innocence, but that these “mighty” men had no scruples . . . no conscience . . . and no morals – that is, they had no probable cause to hunt David. He had done nothing wrong. He broke no law, and he had done no wrong. The order was issued by his faithless king who was fast approaching the state of a psychopath.

“They run and prepare themselves without my fault “shows us these men did not question the unlawfulness of Saul’s command; that they were eager to obey orders handed down to them by the government; that David was innocent and didn’t deserve any of this malicious treatment; that he was a victim of petty jealousies and party politics.

“awake” is David’s call for God to show His power to protect him in these unwanted circumstances.

*5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.*

“O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel” -- David’s lifted his prayer to the Captain of Heaven’s armies, the Commander of the sun, moon, and stars; the Captain of the angels; and the Protector of the nation of Israel.

“be not merciful to any wicked transgressors” is David’s cry for God to arrest these men, summon them to Court, and to punish them for their wicked deeds and malicious intent.

*6 They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.*

David describes the SWAT operations of these assassins . . . under the cover of darkness . . . like scavenger dogs sniffing for scraps of food. Barking out war-whoops, they were packed together eager to carry out the king’s kill-on-sight orders.

*7. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?*

The word “belch out” means “to boil ” or “to gush out” like a water fall or an artesian well. Like trolls they irrupt obscene, profane, or scurrilous language common to assassination squads.

### **A Description of His Defender**

*8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. 9 Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.*

“laugh” (sachaq) means “to mock” and “to deride.”

David derives confidence based on the character of God. He knows. He sees. He laughs at these mercenaries with contempt knowing this death squad could bark but not bite under his restraining hand.

This text expresses the steel-beam confidence of David that all the pompous tactics of these cutthroats would be crushed by His all-seeing, all-powerful, ever-present Protector and Defender.

This appears to be the main lesson of the psalm. O, to have pure unbridled confidence that God will provide a way of escape in times of deadly-trouble.

*10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.*

The word “prevent” means “to come to the front,” or “to go before the troops.”

Though David faced the “king of terrors” (death), he possessed a precious and rare confidence that the God of mercy would come from behind to the front of the battle to confront these covert attackers.

*11 Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield.*

“Slay them not, lest my people forget” seems to imply that David wanted protection but not the immediate destruction of these attackers. He saw in this attack an opportunity for God to teach the people about the wickedness of Saul and the corruptness of his administration.

The meaning of this seems to be, do not destroy them at once, lest, being removed out of the way, the people should forget what was done, or should lose the impression which it is desirable should be produced by their punishment. Let them live, and let them wander about, as exiles under the divine displeasure, that they may be permanent and enduring proofs of the justice of God; of the evil of sin; of the danger of violating the divine law

### **Praying for the Destruction of His Enemies**

*12 For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak.*

David charges these hostile forces with four transgressions: pernicious speech, pride (self-law), cursing, and lying (libel or false charges).

“cursing” refers to taking oaths and breaking them – a violation of the Third Commandment.

*13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.*

“Consume” does not mean “to burn” but to bring this horrid affair to an end. Such vicious contempt ought not to exist among decent men.

“them” refers to Saul’s hit men.

“let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth” is the remedy for lawlessness, blasphemy, and cut throat politics. Where men do not acknowledge the sovereignty of God and their duty to him, no man is safe.

*14 And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15 Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.*

This is the voice of triumph. Let these armed spies come like barking dogs, but when they come they will find no prey. Let them make their plans for blood and dream of death, but they will be greatly disappointed because God will save me.

### **Praise to His Defender**

*16 But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.*

When the spies grieved over their disappointment, David was singing praise to God for the exercise of His power to save him.

“morning” is when the assassination “hit” was planned, but God frustrated their deadly schemes. Instead of rejoicing in the death of David, they groaned over their defeat. David sang of God’s mercy and protection.

*17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.*

David did not boast about his skills to avoid capture or credit himself for his escape and evade tactics, but to the intervention of God to save him. Whatever the means of rescue, David traced his getaway to the agency of the LORD.

# Psalm 79 - A Lament Over the Destruction of Jerusalem



This psalm was written by Asaph or one of his Levitical family members.

The time of the composition is uncertain. Some scholars think it was written during the time of Antiochus Epiphanies, but it was most likely written after the Babylonian Invasion and ruin of Jerusalem under

Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.).

This is not a comfortable psalm. It behaves more like a funeral march than a victory parade. It is a groaning-prayer that comes out of the darkness of the death and destruction of Jerusalem. Asaph's prayer is a cry from a broken heart . . . a conquered Jew bearing a flicker of hope that God would intervene in the hour of the death to save the nation.

Little did Asaph know that God was using the Chaldeans to judge the nation for their profound sins; that the Jews would be in well-treated slaves in Babylon; that Babylon would fall to the Persians; that God would use the exile to purge the nation of idolatry forever; and, that the Jews would experience the greatest comeback in history.

How do you correct a nation infected with idolatry . . . a nation that worships idols on every hill and under every green tree (Jeremiah 2:20)? A nation where every man has his own god and his own law-order (Jeremiah 10:14)? A nation where every man lusts after his neighbor's wife (Jeremiah 5:8)? A nation governed by odious women (Isaiah 3:10-12)?

God has a way to resolve the fruits of idolatry. It is called Babylonians, death of the idolaters, deportation, and enslavement by foreign powers. Before the exile, the Jews were the most idolatrous people on earth; after the exile they became the most monotheistic people on the planet.

Therefore, we give thanks for the chilling disciplines of the Lord as well as for the charming delights of God.

## A Review of the Terrible Destruction of Jerusalem

### The Heathen Have Come

*Psalm 79:1 <A Psalm of Asp.> O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.*

Asaph describes the invasion of the Chaldeans and their demolition of the temple (589-586) – a profound mystery and stunning experience for every surviving Hebrew.

## **Dead Bodies Everywhere**

*2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.*

Asaph describes the carnage of unburied bodies all around Jerusalem. What a terrible sight – rotting corpses, broken limes, severed heads, and vultures pecking at body parts! Who could forget?

## **A Bloody Slaughter**

*3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them.*

Though death is not uncommon in war, the ease at which the Babylonians slaughtered the people and the lack of help by the Lord bewildered the Jewish mind. Where was God?

## **Ridicule and Derision**

*4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.*

Not only were the Jews stunned by the ruination of the nation, the surrounding nations were solemnly amused by the leveling of the nation's capital.

## **A Prayer for A Reversal of Circumstances**

*5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.*

That God was angry with the Jews, all knew! The question was, “for how long?”

Asaph reflects the mindset of all surviving Jews. It's one thing to experience a defeat, but total annihilation? In the mind of the Jew, God was supposed to protect His people and to crush their enemies. But, it appeared God protected the Babylonians only to ravage Judah. Why? How long would God's anger boil against the people?

## **Reasons for the Prayer**

### **Jacob Devoured**

*7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.*

The Babylonians not only attacked Jerusalem, they devoured God's lambs like ravenous wolves. No Jew could understand this or believe that good would come out of this slaughter and the dismantling of the nation.

## **Jacob Humbled**

*8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.*

The exiles were quick to conclude God ravished the nation because of their sins. What they could not understand why their appeared to be no mercy in the conquest. No people left in the land, no temple, no priesthood, no capital city baffled all the Jews. Where was the tender mercy of God?

## **Divine Glory at Stake**

*9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.*

People can boast of God's power and goodness in times of plenty, but how could the survivors boast about God having the foundations of the nations demolished? Somehow, someday, Asaph prayed for deliverance from exile and that God scrub the nation clean of its sins.

*10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.*

Restoration was not only important so Israel could continue in the faith, but God's glory and reputation among the nations was at stake. How could the ravishing of the nation cause the heathen to be impressed with Israel's God?

## **Prisoners in Danger of Dying**

*11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;*

This is a prayer that God would see the tears and hear the cries, groaning, and sorrows of the exiles . . . that they might still find hope in God – that God would be moved by the suffering of His people to act on their behalf.

## **Justice Demands Retribution**

*12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.*

Disturbed by the victory dances of the pagan nations over Jerusalem's downfall, Asaph prays that those rejoicing in their defeat as proof that God was unable to protect them and that their faith was false felt like plagues in their bosom – kind of like having to wear a dead chicken around their neck.

## **A Flicker of Light**



*13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.*

This psalm has melancholy written all over it; but, there is a flicker of light.

The “we” is the remnant or “thy people.”

How do you respond to the death of your loved ones and the destruction of your beloved city? Asaph lights a candle and shows us the way: praise God and give thanks.

How could anyone give thanks seeing dead corpses in the city, blood in the streets, and Babylonian soldiers stabbing men, women, and children with grins on their faces? But, God’s white sheep did.

The righteous give thanks in all things: in the good times and the bad times for the Scripture says, “In everything give thanks.” God’s sheep do not flee to the comforts of the world but into the comforting arms of the Shepherd. Asaph is not seeking the Creator as much as he is encouraging his people to seek their Chastiser.

Surrounded by war whoops, blood, and groans from the dying, His sheep found safety in patterns of thankfulness. And, not one of those bearing the mark of the Tav (t) on their forehead died in this slaughter (Ezekiel 9:4ff). All were preserved. Idolaters died. Praise and thanks being expressions of trust and faith, those that gave thanks and praised God survived.

There are two ways to improve a nation: (1) Conversion by the cross; and, (2) the death of the wicked. In this case, God destroyed the tares and preserved the wheat. There is no other way.

Give thanks and live, or complain and die with the idolaters.

“But since correction lieth in those hands, Which made the fault that we cannot correct, Put we our quarrel to the will of Heaven, Who, when he sees the hours ripe on earth, Will rain hot vengeance on offenders’ heads.” (Shakespeare, Richard II, Act 1, Scene 2).

# Psalm 83 – Be Not Still, O God



This is the last of the thirteen psalms of Asaph.

It is a priestly prayer by Asaph who intervenes on Israel's behalf.

The beauty of this psalm is Asaph's respectful approach to the Lord, his accurate intercession for the nation, and his evangelical spirit towards the nation's enemies.

## A Prayer for God to Wake Up and to Provide Emergency Relief

*Psalm 83:1 <A Song or Psalm of Asaph.> Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.*

This prayer is directed to Elohim. His designated covenant name "LORD" (YHWH) is not used until verse 16 and 19. This is a basic prayer. However, Asaph is not praying to an unknown "god." He is praying to a particular God Whose name is the LORD.

There are three verbs in this sentence: "Keep," "hold," and "be still." Each is negated by the adverb "not."

The verb "keep" (demiy) means "to pause, be quiet, or to rest."

The verb "hold peace" (charash) means "to cut, engrave, or to plow." It is negated by adverb "not."

The verb "be still" means "to be undisturbed, quiet, or at rest." It too is negated by adverb "not." All these verbs are gentle jussives and not loud commands.

The nation is an emergency and God seemed to be indifferent to their crisis. Asaph gently knocks on God's chamber doors and calls Him to wake up out of His slumber and to intervene in this emergency.

"Plead for us, not by words, but by thy actions; hold not thy peace" (Benson).

### The National Emergency

*2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.*

"For lo" (hegey) means "to wake up and take notice." It explains the reason for the prayer. Thy enemies of the Lord roar like the sea.

“thine enemies” — “Wicked men wish that there might be no religion among mankind” (Matthew Henry).

“tumult” (hamah) means “roar, growl, rage, disquieted, murmur, noise, and clamorous” — a serious political conflict motivated by “hate” and its brothers, “anger,” “rage,” and “reckless.”

The main idea in this text is that the heathen have been aroused like a lion pacing back and forth in a wild and restless manner eager for the kill. “tumult” is also analogous to the restless roaring of the raging, untamable sea.

“lifted up the head” is a metaphor for the body language of pride, insolence, boldness, confidence, and defiance. The heathen sharpened their tongues as well as their swords. Bells sounded. Cries for war ran through the streets.

“hate thee” — Nothing unites people more than the possibility of a holy war against an opposing religion — especially against a religious people that believe there is only one God and one way of salvation; against a people who will not socialize or eat with you; against a people who are intolerant of religious pluralism, feminism, relativism, humanism, polytheism, and omnism.

“Wicked men are commonly noisy, roaring out their blasphemies against God, belching out oaths and curses, and breathing threatenings and slaughter against the saints” (Gill).

### *3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.*

“crafty counsel” refers to a conspiracy to trap and devour the innocent in Israel. Caravans reported to the Jews the blasphemies, curses, and threats of their neighboring nations.

“Whereby they have showed both their implacable rage and malice, and their great assurance of success . . . They have laid aside all their private quarrels and animosities, and agreed together against thee” (Benson).

“hidden ones” refer to a well-protected people that are not easily routed (Psalm 17:18; 27:5; 31:20).

### *4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.*

“Come” refers to a call to the nations to join the coalition to smash and desolate Israel’s foundations.

“cut off” refers to slaughter, extermination, and genocide of an entire nation.

“That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance” — refers to extinction . . . the death of a race . . . of a religion . . . of the Messianic nation . . . of the light of the world -- a plan not to plunder their wealth and to make them slaves, but to make them dead.

Pious Christians would do well to remember the world will tolerate impotent religion but they will not tolerate a faith that claims to be the only way to God (John 14:6).

*5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:*

The terms “consulted,” “one consent,” and “confederate” refers to international solidarity of these diverse states.

“confederate” literally means “to cut a covenant.” A reference to an international agreement or contract with nothing but death and killing on their minds — an anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Christian, antinomian, anti-humanity agenda.

So much of what the world does is to humiliate, abase, humble, and even stifle, choke, and smother the gospel. Think legislation like separation of church and state, censorship of hate speech; of morals even confusion regarding genders, marriage, and sexuality.

### **A Description of the Invaders**

Asaph mentions enemies from the south, east, west, and north: Edomites, Ishmaelites in the south; Moabites, Hagarenes (Arabs), Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek in the east; Philistines in the West; Tyre and Assyria in the north. The children of Lot, Ammon and Moab, appear to be the driving force of this conspiracy.

*6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; 8 Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.*

### **A Prayer for God to Intervene**

*9 Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10 Which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth.*

This prayer builds on the victories of Barak and Gideon.

Let them be overthrown like the Midianites (Numbers 31); and like Sisera the general of Hatzor, and Jabin the king of Hatzor (Judges 4-5) — Canaanites that perished near Mt. Tabor.

“dung for the earth” is a metaphor describing a massacre — a field of dead, rotting, mangled corpses that ended up being fertilizer to enrich the soil.

“All who oppose the kingdom of Christ may here read their doom. God is the same still that ever he was; the same to his people, and the same against his and their enemies” (Matthew Henry).

*11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:*

Oreb and Zeeb were princes of Midian slain by Gideon.

Judges 7:25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

*12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.*

"houses" is better translated "pastures" or "meadows" or "sheep fields."

Asaph prays that God would overthrow their present enemies as He did past enemies -- powerful ancient enemies that marshaled all their military powers to conquer the "holy land." The land was "holy" because God's house was literally and physically in Jerusalem; but, the land is no longer holy because Christ is not there. He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. The aim of the wicked is to neuter the church militant on earth.

## **A Prayer that the Enemy Might Be Overthrown**

### **As a Wheel, as Stubble**

*13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.*

"like a wheel" refers to a "rolling thing" (galgal) like a chariot wheel.

"as the stubble" may refer to a tumble weed that is easily blown away by the wind.

The word "wheel" is used in Scripture to "refer to a chariot wheel that is easily moved. Ezekiel 10:2, Ezekiel 10:6; or a wheel for drawing water from a well, Ecclesiastes 12:6; then, a whirlwind, Psalm 77:19; and then, anything driven before a whirlwind, as chaff, or stubble, Isaiah 17:13." (Barnes).

The idea is that God would easily and quickly remove these thistles as a mechanic changes chariot wheels.

### **As Fire**

*14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;*

Asaph beseeches the Lord to release His flaming arrows and to rain down fire on Israel's enemies. Few things arouse more fear in men than mountains on fire.

### **As a Storm**

*15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.*

"persecute" means "to pursue" in the sense of unyielding self-defense . . . to scare them away — a wish that God would send a powerful message to these enemies with an inescapable, raging storm that pelts the land with hailstones decimating fields and striking fear into man and beast.

### **Disappointment**

*16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.*

“shame” (galown) refers “to regret, embarrassment, and disgrace” and not the pale face of death — that they would be filled with awe at the power of God and His love for His people.

“they may seek thy name, O Lord” shows the intent of this prayer. Asaph prays, not that the enemy would be annihilated and obliterated, but that the nations would be eternally impressed with the power of God.

This is not a malicious, hostile prayer for God to marshal his forces and to crush these nations. But, that God would deal with them in such a way as to impress them with the power, truth, and mercy of the LORD — to strike fear in their hearts that they might seek the Lord and discover His graces.

Here we see the beginning of prophecy . . . the dawn of the Messianic hope . . . the unfolding of the evangelical spirit to win men to Christ . . . the ambition to convert the nations . . . the merciful unfolding of the kingdom of God into history.

### **Confused and Alarmed**

*17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:*

“confounded,” “troubled,” “shame,” and “perish” are terms of disappointment and humiliating defeat.

“confounded” (buwsh) refers “to shame, confusion, and disappointment.” Resist them . . . may they be baffled by the obstacles you place in front of them. May they be confused like chirping birds . . . like a flight of dark shadows . . . like rabbits in a thunderstorm.

“troubled” (bahal) refers to being disturbed with “alarm and terror.”

“yes, let them be put to shame” by utter failure in their schemes . . . by their inability to activate their plots . . . by the roadblocks you put in their in their path to victory.

### **The Intent of the Prayer**

*18 That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.*

The spirit of Asaph shines with evangelical goodness. In this prayer, mercy and truth meet together (Psalm 85:10). May they know that you are truly God . . . the true God . . . the “Most High God over all the earth.” See Genesis 14:19 where Abraham lifted up his hand to “the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”

Asaph prays for the defeat of Israel’s enemies, but in a manner that would cause Israel’s enemies to come to know, admire, and respect the God of Israel. He wants the neighboring nations to know there is a difference between the LORD that exists and their gods that don’t

exist; between truth and fiction; that there would be such a manifestation of power that the nation's victory could only be traced to the intervention of the LORD God. He wants the nations to know there is only one, true God . . . and, that He dwells in Israel.

# Psalm 94 - Why do the Wicked Prosper?

*“Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?”*



The author looks around only to see the proud prospering, and it pricked his soul.

He knows that God is sovereign, but he is baffled by the LORD's lethargy and lack of action—the trial of the saints.

What should a good man do when the Sovereign LORD God seems so dilatory in performing His duty to judge the wicked?

The psalmist cries out in prayer, charges his adversaries with crimes before the Court, and publishes the truth about the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

Growing in perspective on God's chastisements, the author becomes convinced the LORD will judge evildoers. God not only condemns the wicked, He corrects the righteous. As important as confronting the wicked is, the psalmist realizes that the LORD is intensely devoted to improving His people. He concludes a man who endures His corrections as blessed.

Thus, we have another psalm dealing with dilemma of the thinking man, “Why do the wicked prosper?” This is another instance of a good man perplexed by the rapid success of godless men, and who comforts his own heart by remembering that God is sovereign.

We have a kingdom of God theme presented: The LORD who vigorously corrects His own, will in His own good time, with the assistance of the imprecatory prayers of His people, crush rebels in positions of power.

## **The Psalmist Cries out to the LORD to Take Action**

*Psalm 94:1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.*

*“vengeance” (neqamah) refers to punishment or retribution for a wrong done.*

The psalmist can see the wicked prosper in their lawlessness, but he struggles to see God's hand at work. Therefore, he prays God would come out of hiding and "shew thyself."

The Hebrew word for "shew" is *yapha* which means "to shine forth" as sunbeams. God seems to be masking Himself in the clouds. "Shine, God, shine" is the psalmist's prayer. This is a prayer for vengeance; that is, for God to deliver a counter blow against the proud who use political power for their own personal agenda.



Recited as a liturgical appeal, the Orthodox church says: "It is time for the Lord to act."

*2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.*

The author knows that God is the Judge of all men and that it is His duty to administer justice. What he doesn't understand is why the wheels of Divine justice grind so slowly. Here he sees the Chief Justice asleep. "Rise up, get up, stand up" shouts the psalmist in agonizing prayer. "Do your duty" and try the proud traitor who forces his anarchy on society.

### **The Psalmist's Conundrum About the Prosperity of the Wicked**

*3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?*

"Usquequo Domine" (Latin) – "How Long, O Lord" is the great question of the righteous stressed by the shadowy success of the wicked.

The term "wicked" (ra'sha) refers to those eating fruit from the Poisonous Tree: lawbreakers, criminals, thugs, rioters, warlords, lawmakers, rulers, and evil aristocrats intoxicated with power. He is not thinking of blue collar crime, but white collar criminals who use the power of their office to break the bones of God's lambs. Quite possibly, he refers to gloating politicians and public officials of his time.

*4 How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?*

"Usquequo Domine" is asked a second time in order to emphasize the soul-stress of the righteous.

"hard things" refers to the yoke, the whip and chains, the profane place on citizens – violations of God's law that abrogate the rights of man.

"They" is plural. The wicked run in packs and God's lambs are frazzled by the administration of arrogant rulers.

The author has long endured the blasphemy, cursing, ignorance, boasting, spin, lies, slander, deception, censorship, and the arrogant commentary of the pompous against the righteous. He has had enough! Tired of the twisted propagandists and haughty officials, he wonders how long he has to endure these know-it-all, full-of-themselves psychopaths.

The psalmist had to learn what Henry Wadsworth Longfellow so eloquently wrote, "Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all."

### **The Psalmist's Complaint Against the Wicked**

Like a prosecutor, the author presents his case against the sin-stained, elitist criminals.

*5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.*

"Break" and "afflict" are Piel verbs expressing intense action – a charge against civil officials.

He charges these tyrants with breaking the legs of God's lambs. Somehow, these monsters seem to enjoy spreading pain and misery among humanity. They seem to feel it is their duty to attack, assault, insult, denigrate, disparage, deny, twist, hammer, and crush the hard-working innocent in order to prove how important and powerful they are. They are guilty of crimes against humanity . . . of malfeasance . . . of violating the common law by injuring others and their property.

*6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.*

The psalmist charges these wolves with violating the 6th Commandment, "Thou shall not kill."

Great societies protect all people, but especially the most vulnerable: the widow, old people, the alien, and children. Degenerate societies adopt State policies that plunder and slaughter the most vulnerable among them: the unborn, the aged, youth, and the legal immigrant.

*7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*

Particularly egregious to the writer was the disbelieving, willful ignorance of the autocratic man. Moreover, this theological callousness on the part of the arrogant was not directed toward general religion, but specifically toward the sovereign LORD God of the Bible, the God of all grace, the God of Jacob.

**The Psalmist Condemns the Fools**

*8 Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?*

The author describes the political behemoths as "brutish" which means "hot, kindled, fired up, or burning." Politicians never lack something to say. They have a utopian answer for all of man's problems.

Vigorously lobbying for "freedom from God's law," the proud man's energy and zeal for lawlessness appears boundless. The psalmist wonders how long it will take for them to learn the truth about God and be wise. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom," but the despots seem unable to grasp the simplest truths about God. Thus, he calls them "fools."

Fools are proud and unreasonable men. Because fools are subjective and follow their feelings, they have the amazing ability to arrive at wrong conclusions about the great issues facing mankind 100% of the time.

*9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?*

The psalmist challenges the theology of the wicked with penetrating questions. Does not the One who made the ear hear, and the One who made the human eye see?

Cast in the sea of ontology (nature of being), they must swim against the current where they are forced to wrestled with questions about the origins of man and the cause of their own existence.

Such questions overwhelm the skeptic smothering him with confusion. Inquiries like this overload the circuits of his unused grey cells. Flooded by emotion, he is unable to think.

Remember, liberals are dreamers not thinkers; talkers, not problem solvers; idealists, not realists; egocentric, not lovers of God; and, feelers fretting about world problems while possessing delusions about their personal importance.

*10 He that chastiseth (yacar) the heathen, shall not he correct (yakach: rebuke) ? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?*

Again, the Psalmist overwhelms the heathen with questions. This time he throws them into the sea of epistemology to ponder the theory of knowledge.

The term epistemology comes from Greek word ἐπιστήμη, *epistēmē*, meaning 'knowledge'; and, λόγος, *logos*, meaning 'logical discourse'.

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. Here the skeptic must wrestle with (1) the nature of knowledge and beliefs; (2) the reasons for skepticism; (3) the sources of knowledge and the justifiable reasons for belief claims; (4) proof of claim and the basis for knowledge and belief. Unless one lays hold of the Creator, the doubter will face a shoreless epistemological sea tossed to and fro by waves of conflict and contradiction.

True knowledge comes through the investigation of claims seeking proof of claim. Plato called knowledge "justified true belief;" that is, reasonable belief based on proof of claim (the foundation of conservatism) as distinguished from possibilities and utopian ideology (the foundation of liberalism).

In Christian epistemology, God is the Source of knowledge: In the beginning, God created the world and everything in it, including knowledge.

However, the idea that God knows everything may seem to be a simple concept, but the more we contemplate it, the more we come to understand what an amazing truth this is. The psalmist informs us, "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit" (Psalm 147:4-5). Imagine, God not only knows how many stars are in the universe, He knows each of them by name. That God is omniscient means that He has never learned anything. Surely, the One who knows the names of stars, knows what the infidel does, says, and thinks.

History is inexplicable without the Christian God. All men know instinctively there are forces at work behind the scenes of history that cannot be explained by chance. History is a series of judgments, conflicts, wars, and mighty deliverances that can only be explained by the hand of God. Surely, He who judges nations knows the deeds of individual men and holds them accountable.

Thus, the Psalmist asserts the LORD knows the hidden secrets of men; that He is "the Chastiser of the Heathen" and the One Who charges and chastens the wicked.

*11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.*

God know the thoughts of man, but man does not know the thoughts of God unless He reveals them to men. And, He has through His Inspired Word.

The word "man" is *adam* in Hebrew and *anthropos* in Greek.

The psalmist proclaims a truth that God knows not only the words and actions of a man, He reads his thoughts. He deciphers them all, and summarizes their content as "vanity." In the Lord's estimation, no matter what cellophane man thinks, God regards the brainwork of the rebel as good-for-nothing.

### **The Psalmist's Confidence about God's Correction of the Righteous**

*12 Blessed is the man (giber; gibbor) whom thou chastenest (yacar), O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;*

Having laid out his charges against the wicked, the prosecutor rests.

The word "man" here is not *adam* or *anthropos* but *giber* – a mighty man in they eyes of God; that is, a strong Christian man.

Changing roles, the psalmist's soul contemplates the sweet melodies plying on the harps in the orchestra of afflicted saints. They are portrayed as being chastened and instructed by the LORD; that is, the righteous voluntarily seek the correction of God. Consequently, they are strong. Though often in pain and bewildered by their difficulties, they are blessed -- blessed because God knows them, loves them, and corrects them out of His Word – blessed because they are morally and spiritually stout.

The word "man" (*geber*) refers to a strong, military male that is instructed out of God's law. This "man" is not a sugar-addicted wussy suckin' on lollipops and caramel-glazed donuts. A soldier in God's boot camp, he trains for war. A student of law, under the One and Only Lawgiver, he becomes a powerful, discerning lawyer-advocate in the good sense of the term. He is blessed because he is being instructed out of the "perfect law of liberty" and prepared to enter the contest between good and evil.

*13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit (grave) be digged for the wicked.*

The Hiphil infinitive "give him rest" (*hashakit*) expresses causative action; that is, there is rest from the LORD to those agitated by the proliferation of evil. Trained under the chastening hand of God and instructed out of His law, the believer must learn to rest in his position in Christ, to rest in service to humanity, and to rest in the long, drawn out battle against proud fools. The man of God is not permitted to wear anything that causes him to sweat in his service to Christ.

Nothing of the flesh can assist the Spirit. There is a grave prepared for the proud, but until this judgment, the Christian man must not fret (be hot) because of evildoers (Ezekiel 44:18; Psalm 37:1).

“until the pit (grave) be digged for the wicked” means that the wicked live as if they will not be punished . . . but even as they think this way, God is digging their grave. Thus, the righteous have to exercise patience.

*14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.*

The author learned that no matter how hot the fire, how painful the switch, how hard the hammer, how scarce the rations, how uphill the path, how lonely the journey, the LORD will not forsake His people!

To express the certainty that the Lord will not "cast off" or "forsake" His inheritance, the psalmist employs the Hebrew negative "not" or "neither" (lo) before the two verbs. “not” is in the emphatic position to the verb and is used twice in this statement.

In Hebrews 13:5, the Spirit uses five negatives in Greek to express the impossibility of the righteous being forsaken by God: "He will never, never, no never, never forsake thee." Rest, soul, rest!

*15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.*

The Judge will not delay justice forever. His gavel will be heard on the day of sentencing. The pirate ship of the wicked will be forced to dock in God’s judicial harbor, and when it does, the godly will rejoice. The kingdom of God will come, the righteous will be saved, and the wicked will be punished.

A ticker tape parade is coming to the joy of the righteous and to the grief of dignitaries, heads of state, and bully bureaucrats. God’s edelweiss, white flowers hidden in the crags of the rocks, who humbly served Him without recognition, will be showered with rewards along the "Walk of Heroes" near the Celestial City.

*16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?*

Having laid out the fate of the wicked and the blessedness of the righteous, the psalmist can’t imagine who would not want to join the battle against entrenched lawlessness. He calls for champions to come forth and join His army to fight for the gospel of Christ against the citadels of wickedness.

The governments of this world have been in the hands of proud politicians way too long —in the hands of corrupt officials who use the powers of their office to crush the rights of men. Thus, the author blows the trumpet calling for the righteous to join him on the battlefield to lay siege to the fortress of government to reclaim civil offices reserved for the righteous.

## **The Psalmist's Comfort in Providence**

*17 Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.*

*18 When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.*

*19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.*

Here slumps a soldier: exhausted, alone, and overwhelmed by the strength of his enemies who are as active as hinges on the gates of hell.

The author is no idealist. The mountains were high, the rivers wide, the clouds dark, the nights long, and enemies as numerous as maggots on a corpse. He admits exhaustion and loneliness. Resignation robbed him of strength. Yet, he remained in the fight by the strength of the LORD God and His sweet consolations.

## **The Psalmist's Conclusion About the Fate of the Wicked**

*20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?*

The “throne of iniquity” refers to government offices, legislatures, politicians, and statutory courts; presidents, governors, police officers, congressmen, legislators, bureaucrats, judges, magistrates, and administrators. Like in David's day, the political institutions of our time are a den of iniquity staffed with bottom-feeding scavengers.

“Mischief by a law” means these public officials use man-made statutes and executive mandates to control men, to tax their wealth, and to promote their totalitarian agenda. They do not believe in the rule of law; they believed in rule by law! Tyrants always exempt themselves from their own statutes. Further, they seek to use the force of government to achieve their ambitions. In a police state no one can breathe . . . or be safe from neck-breaking police tactics . . . from false arrests . . . from kangaroo prosecutions under color of law . . . and harsh imprisonment. Under despotism no one is safe from relaxation of constitutional restrictions of government by government.

Law is good if it is limited. While God's law serves mankind, the multiplication of man-made statutes cannot save humanity or regenerate society. Tyrants use legislative bills to force their will on the people. Such tactics destroy liberty and make the people slaves of the State.

*21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.*

What unites this army of power mongers (misotheistic government officers and their goon squad) is their hatred of God, their love of death, and their determination to ravage the righteous.

In their world view money matters, government matters, Black lives matter, blue lives matter, politicians matter, powers matter, political philosophies matter . . . but innocent lives don't matter! Their king is money, ledgers, and profit.

Likewise, the power players on the gridiron of politics today see Christians as the ones blocking their global agenda. For it is Christians that are anti-utopianism, anti-fascism, anti-globalism, anti-feminism, anti-abortion, anti-pornography, and anti-Sodomy. In order for the infidels to achieve world domination, they must trick Christians into joining them . . . censor them in public debate . . . or kill them.

*22 But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge.*

*23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.*

The Psalm does not close with a sigh, but with a song. Having prayed through issues and renewed his mind with truth, he grows in confidence that God will be his rock. Though he is a chastened man, he is a blessed man.

While he feels better about his lot in life, he expresses solemn assurance the lawless man will be arrested by the Judge, indicted, and sentenced to a prison in darkness.

The phrase "shall cut them off" (tsamath) is repeated twice. The English word "yea" is not in the text. It is supplied by the translators to emphasize the certainty of the destruction of the wicked.

The psalm begins with a man drowning in grief over the prosperity of the wicked, but ends with the man buoyed up by promises. The psalm begins with a frustrated, imprecatory plea for the LORD God to rain down judgment on the wicked, and it ends with a double assurance: God will "cut off" . . . God will exterminate the wicked like a nest of termites. He will, He will, He will!!!

# Psalm 137 - By the Rivers of Babylon

## The Triumph of Hope

### A Lesson for Those Disappointed with God



Before us is a backslider, a true believer under severe discipline who has been marked with a Tav (Ezekiel 9). With his dreams crushed, he faces a choice between leaving the faith or clinging to the hope of his Hebrew religion.

Most psalms involve a conflict and a resolution. This Post Exilic Psalm does the same.

Crushed by despair, this Hebrew leaves us with a poetic record of his struggle and the triumph of his faith — **arguably one of the greatest spiritual victories in the Inspired Hymnal.**

*Psalm 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*

Babylon? What are God's people doing in Mesopotamia by the muddy Euphrates and Tigris Rivers? Isn't this the birth place of Abraham? Jeremiah answers the question: "all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon" (40:1).

The term "remember" (zakar) is a pivotal word used three times in this psalm. In one sense, it is the psalmist's key response to his suffering — the singular duty of this saint — his invitation term for salvation — the prescription for backsliding — the remedy for a broken heart.

Weeping? Why are rivers of tears running down the sun-burned cheeks of God's people? The psalmist answers, "we remembered Zion." These liquid sorrows are caused (1) by remembering the joy of having God in the capital city, and (2) by remembering the fall of Jerusalem, and (3) by remembering the sins of the people that led to the fall of Zion.

Tears about beautiful Zion? Shouldn't the sweet thoughts about Jerusalem and its beloved temple fuel the fires of joy in the hearts of these Hebrews? Wet cheeks are good when the sweet thoughts of Zion cause us to remember Christ and motivate us to repent of our sins.

Oh, the daggers that pierced the souls of the remnant: prisoners suffering; comforts stripped; Israel devastated; Jerusalem broken; the temple demolished; ceremonies halted; the land ravished; homes destroyed; crops burned; friends killed; parents dead; hope buried; love frustrated; happiness poisoned; faith doubted; hope lifeless; body exhausted; and, a thousand miles from home surrounded by Chaldeans speaking gibberish in a foreign language.



Oh, the pain of remembering the sweetness of Zion and her yearly festivals: pilgrims camping; men praying; women dancing; children laughing; Levites singing; priests serving; kings ruling; teachers instructing; people trusting; venders bartering; friends hugging — Oh, the joyful sounds! Silent forever? Sing? How could they sing? Impossible!

### *2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*

“Harps upon the willows” informs us that musical instruments were unemployed; that the captives had stopped singing, stopped composing, stopped hoping, stopped celebrating, and even stopped praising the LORD God.

Everyone loves a festival with bands, guitars, violins, base fiddles, drums, pianos, and coronets, but the laws surrounding human nature instruct us that hearts filled with sorrow and doubt cannot sing.

### *3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.*

Can anything be more cruel than for tormentors to require “mirth” and songs from the acidic hearts of prisoners who lost their families, land, and religion?

How can you sing a song in a vacuum where you can’t hear the sweet sounds of His presence moving in your heart?

### *4 How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land?*

“In a strange land” – The feeling expressed in this question is too natural to need any such explanation (Ellicott). “The Lord’s song(s)” are for redeemed, freed sinners. It is totally contrary to human nature to sing a sacred song in a strange land, among strange people, amidst a strange language with a future in custody of pagans.

### *5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.*

*Forget Jerusalem:* Forgetting Zion is a mark of unbelief and rebellion that causes all men to spiral downward. Forgetting starves the soul of life (Romans 12:1-3).

Jeremiah 2:32 Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

Though Jerusalem was the City of the Living God, it was now in ruins having been reduced to rubble by the Babylonians. Though destroyed, Jeremiah commanded the survivors to remember Zion and what took place there . . . for their good . . . for their spiritual survival.

Jeremiah 51:50 Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

Though remembering her former glory and her present gloom depressed the remnant, they had to remember Zion. An archeological ruin, the holy city becomes a metonym for the LORD, the throne, the presence of God, the priesthood, the Levitical sacrifices, and reconciliation.

*What a paradox!* Every thought about Zion inflamed sorrow, yet; at the same time, the psalmist couldn't bring himself to forget Jerusalem, the temple, the Lord, or His promises. Pulled in two different directions, the dove of peace found no rest in his conflicted heart.

What a place to be! He couldn't go forward, nor backward; looking behind crushed him, and looking ahead smashed him; forgetting Zion hurt, and remembering Zion pained his soul; leaving the LORD was too painful to contemplate, and loving the LORD became complex and confusing.

*Decision time:* Both forgetfulness and remembrance of the LORD were clashing swords in his soul. At a crossroad in his faith, he had to make a decision. He had to choose between looking at his distressing circumstances or looking at the foggy mirage of God's promises; to doubt God's love or to believe God's love; to walk by sight or to walk by faith; to look at his cold chains in Babylon and embrace the frosty presumption of being abandoned by the LORD, or to embrace the chilly pledges frozen to icy texts in Holy Writ.

He couldn't control his captors, his circumstances, or his future, but he could control his beliefs. Therefore, this man chose the path of faith, the path of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He chose to cling to the hope found in the Holy Scriptures — a frosty belief that seemed frozen in an ice age of the past — a belief so contrary to his conflicted feeling due to his captivity.

He decides to error on the side of hope; to never forget Jerusalem or his Lord. Better to have a stroke that paralyzes the right hand, than forget Him Who sits at the right hand of the Father.

Psalm 27: 13 I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

Thus, remembering the LORD and the Levitical practices is a holy exercise. The term "remember" (zakar) is used three times in this psalm as the key response required of the remnant. "Remember" is a work of faith. The word "forget" is the product of doubt.

Psalm 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

Psalm 77:10-11 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

Luke 22:19-20 "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'"

Those staring at crushed hopes and feeling the chill of cold circumstances would do well to learn the lesson conferred in this psalm. If presented with a choice to give up your beliefs, or to go deeper into the faith, choose the struggle associated with believing “that all things work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

*6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

The chastised psalmist pounds in the stakes of his commitment. He chose to go deeper into the faith and to make Jerusalem (the LORD) his chief joy. Better to never speak another word than to have a mind void of hope in Christ; better to be alone sitting on the iceberg of His promises than in the chains of unbelief by a sparkling fire; better to remember Christ than forget his love at the cross.

The diamond-triumph of this psalmist must be romanced against the black fact that these captives were beaten down, bewildered, and befuddled by their dark circumstances. Their feelings were all wrapped up in their suffering; and, they could not escape the pounding drums of their defeat to acknowledge, must less rejoice in, the love of the LORD their God.

This may be one of the greatest comebacks in history. Like base drums, everything about his circumstances pounded home the message: God has forsaken you! But, this man ignores the cadence of abandonment, and stakes down his claim found in the pledges of Holy Scripture. In remembering Zion, he was healed.

Psalm 42:6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar (Mt Hermon).

There will be a day when the cold circumstances of a Christian shout, “God has forsaken you!” And, when that happens, you will need to follow the model of this chastened saint; to invest all that you have in the promises of the gospel: “the Lord reigns!” And, he “will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Psalm 97:1; Hebrews 13:5).

*7 Remember (zakar), O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.*

Having done his duty in remembering Zion, the psalmist prays that God would do his duty and judge the enemies of Zion.

When the Babylonians seized Jerusalem and began their campaign of destruction, the Edomites cheered the Chaldeans.

Knowing and identifying your true enemies is almost as important as knowing the Lord.

Having identified the black flag of the Edomites, the psalmist continues to sail his cargo-ship through the storm toward the harbor of holiness. In his tossing on the waves of faith and doubt, this stricken Hebrew was forced to identify the real pirates of faith. The marauders were not

only the Babylonians, but those with an Edomite spirit who cheered on the Chaldeans as they ravaged the Holy City.

These descendants of Esau hated God; and, God hated them (Malachi 1:3ff). Like Esau, the Edomites were sensual, fleshly, worldly men with an ambition to kill the descendants of Jacob. They represent the battle between the lost and the saved; between Amalek and Joshua; between Haman and Esther; between the un-regenerated man and the regenerated believer, between the flesh and Spirit in Galatian 5.

This is a battle to the death, and this psalmist chose to “to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Babylon: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” (Hebrews 11:25-26).

Now, this psalmist transitions out of spiritual neutrality to become a hated man because he testified that the works of the world (Edomites) thereof are evil (John 7:7).

*8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.*

With the eye of faith, the psalmist joins hands with the prophets and announces the doom of Babylon — a nation destined to be destroyed by the Persian Messiah, Cyrus the Great (Isaiah 45:1); — a judgment on Babylon that was fast approaching (Isaiah 13:1, 16).

Here is a chastised saint that returns to the LORD standing on the pledges of Holy Scripture. Choosing to believe rather than doubt, he rises above the clangs and gongs of Babylonians challenging his faith. Though he could not feel the presence of God, he believed the sure Word of God. Eventually his feelings followed his faith. That the Christian must find his hope in something other than Scripture is denied.

*9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.*

This psalmist was forced to see the dashing of Israelite infants against a stone in the Babylon raid on Jerusalem. Having returned to the LORD, he envisions a time when the Judge of Mankind would execute His perfect justice against the Babylonians and all enemies of restored Israel.

Remembering the mercy upon the remnant, he also reflects on the destiny of the wicked. Their seed shall be destroyed in judgment – Psalm 37:28.

Let us remember His mercy on us . . . and, the Day of Judgment coming upon all men (Hebrews 9:27).

“Far be it from us to avenge ourselves; we will leave it to Him who has said, Vengeance is mine. Those that are glad at calamities, especially at the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished.” – Matthew Henry.

The songwriter predicts that “Happy” will be the man who conquers Babylon. And, indeed he was. Isaiah informs us that God went before Cyrus, His servant, to reward his campaign and to make him the most successful monarch in history — a Persian “messiah” who was given “the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that he might know that I am the LORD” (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-3ff).

No discipline is pleasant (Hebrews 12). But, here we see a man under chastisement who strengthens his faith and not his doubts; who became a better man instead of a bitter man; a lawful man instead of a lawless man; a hoper in Scripture, rather than a doubter of God’s Word; a recovered backslider, rather than a wretched apostate.

With his dreams crushed, this psalmist faced a choice between leaving the faith or clinging to the hope of his faith. He chose hope, and his faith triumphed over his despairing circumstances.

1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh (nike) the world: and this is the victory (nike) that overcometh (nike) the world (Edomites a type), even our faith (the nike).

“Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men!” – President John F. Kennedy

Oh, that backsliding Christians would respond so well.

Moreover, God is calling sinners around the world to remember Zion, Christ, and the cross as his remedy for transgressors of His law.

# Psalm 139 - The Crown Jewel of Theological Hymns

*"For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether."*



This is the crown jewel in the Divine Library of Theological Hymns because it addresses the attributes of the infinite, personal God Who created us.

It turns the dark, cold winters of life into bright warm summer days, and acts like an ice pack for the bruises we receive on the journey through life.

In this sacred hymn, we learn that the LORD God is not only infinite — omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, but that He is a touchingly personal — a God who knows us and guides us.

When men speak of "God," to which God are they referring? All roads do not lead to Rome. All religions do not worship the same God. When men speak of "God" we need to know of which God they are referring. All gods are not the same.

When Christians discuss God, they are talking about a specific Deity whose name is "the LORD" (YHWH). God is not just an idea or concept. He is not merely a force or a power. He is not the Ying and the Yang or summation of material energy in the universe.

First and foremost, the God of the Bible exists; that is, He is an actual Being. All other "gods" are fictions of men's imaginations.

"God" is not His name. His name is YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah) or "LORD" in most English Bibles. His name comes from four Hebrew letters called the Tetragrammaton. YHWH is translated "I Am" and it means "the One Who exists" or "I will be what I will be."

Because YHWH revealed Himself to mankind, He can be defined.

Notice how David distinguishes the God of the Bible in the rest of this psalm from the gods of his day.

In this chapter, we can see this emerging definition of the one true God — an infinite (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent), personal, virtuous Spirit Being who is the Creator and Judge of all men.

## **The Omniscience of God**

*1 (To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.)*

So wonderful is this psalm it was delivered to the Chief Musician to create a melody appropriate for its lofty truth.

According to Keil and Delitzsch this psalm was a post-exilic psalm composed after the Davidic model and dedicated “to David.”

### *O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known (me).*

There is no “me” after the word “known.” It is supplied by the translators because of the context, but the omission is deliberate: God searches and knows “all things.”

The word “search” (hachartani) is a Qal perfect, 2nd singular verb indicating completed action. It should be translated, “You have examined me.” The word “searched” (examined) originally meant “to dig” (Job 28:3). The visual picture of “dig” informs us that before we searched for God, the All Seeing Eye digs into our inner man to examine our development.

The most fundamental truth of this psalm is not that we are seeking God, but that He is seeking us. He knows us physically and spiritually, the seen and the unseen, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the flowers and the thorns — not to shame us, but to be a Companion and Guide for us. Since He seeks us, shouldn’t we seek Him?

The phrase “and known me” is an imperfect, vaw consecutive meaning “you have known me.” The idea is that God searches us, and he knows all about us. Using the pronoun “me” shows us that the psalmist applied this personally. We should do the same. He knows me!

### *2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.*

The psalmist now discusses the particulars of God’s knowledge. He knows our movements.

The psalmist wants us to know that God sees the specific actions of every man as if that man were the only living creature on earth. He knows when we sit down and rise up; when we walk and when we stand still; when we work and when we play.

### *3 Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.*

The Hebrew word “compasseth” (zarah) means “to scatter, cast away, or to winnow”. Its noun form is “pitchfork.”

Zarah is a Piel verb expressing intense action. God goes before us vigorously clearing the path of tripping stones and piercing thorns that might injure us. Everything remaining on this journey is for His glory and our good . . . the discipline of a wise father . . . a lesson for growth and maturity.

### *4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.*

The word “altogether” means “perfectly.” Before we own a word, our word is known to Him. He knows our thoughts before we think them; our words before we speak them; our knowledge before we learn it. His perception reaches to the fountain of our thinking. Before our sentences

are fully formed out of the whirlpool of consonants and vowels, God knows them perfectly– the good and the bad, those private and those public. Our thoughts are His thoughts before they become our thoughts. Who can grasp the amazing knowledge of our Creator?

*5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.*

The word “beset” (tsarnani) means “to dig a trench” or “to build a battle ramp.” Picture an ancient mote. God builds a battle ramp, a mote, around us to protect us. Our camp is surrounded by the LORD.

The phrase “laid thine hand upon me” could be translated “laid me in your hand.” The idea is that God cupped his hand and covered his servant. The perfect implies completed action. God has already placed a wall around us to protect us.

Why should we fear invaders? His grace and power is above us, below us, beside us, behind us, and before us. There is no escape from Him. We cannot turn back. Not only can we not escape Him, our enemies cannot advance toward us without His consent.

*6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

The Hebrew word “wonderful” is *pali* – This word has a marginal note called a *qere* -- a scribal note on what the scribes thought the word should be. So it is translated “wonderful.” Like a little puppy is inspired by the new smells of his world, contemplation of the knowledge of God arouses fresh raspberry wonders in the poet.

The word “too” means to number or apportion. The word “high” means just that: it is a high figure! The psalmist is saying this wonderful knowledge out numbers me! This mountain is too high to climb; an ocean too large to swim; a sky so full of stars we cannot count them. God is not in the process of knowing. He always knows! Think about it! God has never learned anything in all eternity. Such knowledge is incomprehensible. Such a theme overwhelms us! We cannot grasp it!

### **The Omnipresence of God**

*7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

Now this composer introduces us to a second aspect of His infinite character — the LORD’s omnipresence.

The psalmist asks, “Where can I go from your Spirit?”



In using the term “Spirit” (ruah), David informs us that YHWH is composed of spirit or wind; that is, He is not composed of flesh and blood. He is not a material substance. Rather, He is an unseen but existent Spirit. Whatever “spirit” is, He is composed of spirit (John 4:24).

The psalmist now makes a series of proposals: “If I ascend,” “If I take,” “If I dwell,” and “If I say.”

The psalmist contemplates the presence of God by using a series of contrasts. Heaven and Sheol represent two extreme spheres of possible existence, the super terrestrial and the sub terrestrial.

Wings of the morning and remotest part of the sea represent light and darkness, east and west, sunrise and sunset.

Twice the psalmist exclaims, “God is there!”

There is no island, no sea, no land, no country, no sphere, and no cave where the poet can go to escape the presence of God. “The eyes of the LORD are in every place watching the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3).

Omnipresence means that He is at the center of everything and the circumference of nothing. He has no limitations and knows no boundaries. While the psalmist is teaching that God is everywhere, he is not saying that God is in everything (pantheism). The Creator remains distinct from his creation.

Notice the two verbs in verse ten: “lead” and “lay hold.” East or west, morning or evening, God leads His people. He guides them in “paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:3) . . . and also into times of testing (Psalm 11:5; Matthew 4:1).

The word “lay hold” (achaz) means either “to hold” or “to snatch” with the hand. The psalmist seems assured that God will protect him and deliver him wherever he may go.

Finally, the psalmist contemplates a possibility by using an “If, then” argument.

By darkness, the poet is either referring to physical darkness or to darkness as a symbol of terrible evil. “If darkness over takes me,” reasons the scribe, “then darkness shall be light to Thee.” Because I cannot see my way in the dark does not mean that God cannot see. Nothing can hide the child of God from the All-Seeing Eye. Even darkness is light to Him. He is superior to all created things, and He is unhindered by natural forces.

Having contemplated the divine presence, the psalmist appears to come to a place of rest and peace in his life.

### **The Omnipotence of God**

*13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. 15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in*

*secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.*

The word “possessed” means “to create.” We are **not** a product of Time + Chance. We are **not** a product or an intelligent microbe that evolved from some primeval swamp. God created us.

The word “reins” refers to the kidneys. To the Hebrew, the kidneys were the seat of thoughts. That may seem strange to us, but it should not. We often refer to the thoughts of the heart when we know quite well the heart organ only pumps blood.

For example, consider this humorous story: There was a young lad who couldn’t learn his body parts very well. Hip, elbow, knee, thigh, chest, belly, always got mixed up. Frustrated, the teacher made him stay after school to study biology. On test day, he got 100% of his answers correct. Shocked, the teacher asked how he managed to make such a turn around. Pointing to his head, the boy said, “Kidneys, teacher. Kidneys!”

The poet burst into praise saying, “I will give thanks (praise) to Thee.”

The term for “thanks” comes from the word “hands” (yad) and it means “to throw up the hands.” Lifting the hands was a sign of respect, of surrender, and of worship. The reason for this outbreak of thanksgiving is the poet’s contemplation of God’s creation of man. There is no high like the most High.

The two verbs are Niphal stems meaning the poet is the recipient of God’s powerful construction. The term “fearfully” can be translated “awesomely made,” and the verb “wonderfully made” literally means “distinctly made” or “uniquely created.” Because man is the crown and prince of God’s creation, the poet is compelled to lift his hands in thanksgiving and praise.

The word “substance” (KJV) or “frame” (NASB) is the word for “embryo.” The poet is contemplating the work of God in his own prenatal development. As the egg in a mother’s womb is penetrated by a single spermatozoa the ovum immediately creates a chemical, electrical fence around itself. Within 2 hours the egg and the sperm fuse into a 46 chromosome HUMAN cells. Within 18 hours of conception, the single cell divides into two cells, then four, eight, sixteen, and so on. Within 18 days, the heart begins to beat. Within 4 weeks the baby has fingerprints. By seven weeks, the baby begins to suck its thumb. This little being can make noises and feel pain. Life begins at conception, not birth. At birth the little baby has 26 billion cells with a billion biochemical reactions occur per second. When grown the average person has around 37 billion trillion biochemical reactions taking place in his body every single second (chemicals.co.UK).

What we call the “chromosomes” or “genetic code” or “DNA” is called “Thy book” by the psalmist. The psalmist, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says all his days were “ordained” or “fashioned” before one of them existed. As a tiny embryo growing in the “secret

place" or "earth" of his mother's womb, this little one was **not** hidden from the sight and touch of his Creator.

What a concept! The poet did not see himself as an "it" or "a fetus" or "a blob" or "non-person" or some kind of "animal life." He was the product of design—a genuine human being formed by His Heavenly Creator with "certain unalienable rights." We must always keep in mind that pregnancy involves the development of a HUMAN BABY and that "the thing" growing in the womb is HUMAN LIFE!! "Believest thou this?"

*17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.*

As the poet contemplates his existence, he realizes that he is the product of a divine plan—a detailed plan. The divine plan for his existence was "precious." The word "precious" means "esteemed," "prized," or "valuable."

The word "sum" is the term for "head" meaning "total." The fact that he was not an accident, but the result of a well-thought-out, total PLAN was precious to this child of God.

On 9/11 in NYC three thousand Americans were killed in a terrorist act.. But everyday in America four thousand little ones are murdered by Americans. We must remember that in our present homicidal culture, every attempt to "terminate" a pregnancy by the powerful towards the powerless by stabbing or burning or cutting is an assault on God's Sovereignty. Killing of innocent babies are acts of pre-meditated murder (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The "fetus" is HUMAN LIFE and if left alone will go through the stages of HUMAN LIFE including birth, growing, crawling, walking, learning, speaking, loving, working, marrying, and parenting. The right to life is an unalienable right that is not given by government, but by God. And, the only one who can lawfully take away that right is the One Who created it!!

YHWH is the infinite (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent) Spirit Being Who is the Creator of all men.

### **A Prayer to God**

*19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. 20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. 21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? 22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.*

This student of YHWH suddenly switches themes. He pleads with God to "slay the wicked." The term "wicked" means "sinner" or "criminal" or "breaker of God's law." What crime is to society; sin is to God. The principle of common law applies to all: "Do your neighbor no harm." If you do not injure people by what you say and do, there is no crime . . . no sin.

In praying such a prayer, David reveals to us that YHWH has moral sensitivities (virtues). He is not only the Creator of all men, but the Judge of all men. God is a virtuous Being. There are

things He loves and things He hates. And, the follower of Christ must learn to love what He loves and hate what He hates (Psalm 5:5; 2:12; Proverbs 6:16).

David is angered by the thoughts and words of the ungodly toward the God he loved. He says, "I hate them." In light of Christ's teaching on love, and in light of the cry for tolerance, hating people seems out of the question for Christians. But, hating evildoers is a biblical mandate. Hate is an attribute of God. A heart that cannot hate, cannot love.

Love is often a choice. Hate is a choice. Both should have adequate cause and appropriate expression. God hates. The psalmists hated. And we have a duty to hate evil men because hate is a virtue of the living God.

You have heard it said, "We should love the sinner, and hate the sin." But, is that cliché completely Biblical in light of Psalm 5:4-5? Further, note who/what David hated! It was not his wife, or neighbor. No names are mentioned. It was "bloody" men; i.e. murderers or lawbreakers sold out to evil. It was not just the actions he hated, but the godless people who manufacture evil. We too, must learn to love what God loves and hate who/what God hates.

*23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Next, David completes an attribute of God that he has alluded to all through this psalm. The God of the Bible is a personal God. He knows and is known. He is not distant and uninvolved in the affairs of men, but personally engaged in the lives of the each of us.

As the psalmist contemplates the character of God and remembers that God hates evil, he blurts out a prayer asking God to search him to see if there be any wickedness in his own heart that displeases Him. He begins this psalm with a statement that God has examined him. Realizing God hates the wicked; he wants to be sure there is nothing in him that God hates. The psalmist is aware that he has "anxious thoughts;" i.e. imperfect thoughts. He knows he has all the potential to do evil and asks God to reveal any energy that might be a "hurt way" to others. Whenever a man is ready to uncover his sins, he will discover that God is always ready to cover them with the blood of Christ (1 John 1:5-7).

Interestingly, the psalmist targets his own thought life for reconstruction. We are a culture that is swept off its feet by feelings. We evaluate things by asking, "Does it feel good and does it work?" Feeling good has become our highest good. Not so with the psalmist! He wanted to think well. He needed reformation, not revival. Truth, not feelings, was his ultimate concern. The poet knew that if he lacked truth about theology, anthropology, and morality, then the poet had "a hurtful way" in him. Without truth, he could not live accurately.

### **Application**

Going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Rest your head on three pillows:

the omniscience of God- He knows all your difficulties.

the omnipresence of God – He is near to you

the omnipotence of God – He can do anything.

After coming home from Sunday school, a mother asked her little girl, “What did you learn in Sunday school?” She replied, “A song!” “What song” asked the mother? The girl began to sing:

“Jesus knows me this I love . . . ”

“Jesus loves me this I know . . .” Either way, both are true!!

God knows all about us. Every detail of our existence is ordained in His book. He goes before us and removes the stones over which we might stumble. What remains is for our good and His glory. The One Who attends the funeral of every sparrow takes a fresh count of the hairs on our head every day. Nothing escapes His notice. God has a unique plan for each of our lives. Even what we deem as weakness or calamity can glorify our Creator.

Great men have great deficiencies. Moses was slow of speech. St. Augustine was a moral degenerate until he came to know Christ. Beethoven was deaf at age 30. Napoleon was only 5'2" tall. Abraham Lincoln was an illegitimate child. He was so ugly he was called the “original gorilla.” Thomas Edison who was almost deaf was asked if this ever bothered him. He responded by saying, “No. It enables me to concentrate.” We must, therefore, come to place of thanksgiving and say with the poet, “I too am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

While God knows us, we know little about Him. If we want to live accurately, we must possess a true knowledge about the Creator and learn to trust Him.

It is an error to think that when men speak of “God” that they are speaking of the Biblical God. David has revealed to us that the God of the Bible is YHWH and that He is the infinite (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent), personal, virtuous Spirit Being who is the Creator and Judge of all men.

How can we live accurately when our theology is weak and incomplete? ALL EVIL stems from ignorance and neglect of God (Psalm 14:1)!!

We are at our best when we contemplate the One greater than ourselves. We will never rise higher than when we are on our knees seeking Him. Since there is no greater occupation than preoccupation with His glory, let us determine to pursue God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. For this is the whole duty of man (Deuteronomy 6:4-6).

# Psalm 143 - Smitten to the Ground

*"He hath smitten my life down to the ground."*



Thirsty for God?

Before us is another prayer for deliverance by David. We don't know when it was written. It could have been composed after the persecutions of Saul or after the rebellion of Absalom.

Written in a time of trouble, it provides comfort for those traveling a hundred miles of bad road.

To touch the great lessons of this psalm, one has to feel his way through David's desolation and his jumbled emotions of fear for his life and love for his God.

While David was hiding from Saul, God was hiding from David. Saul is trying to find David, and David is trying to find God . . . and a way of escape. What a predicament! All men of God face it.

While his trials terrified him, they also produced a hunger to know God. Only by thirsting for God can a man find Him!

## **Pleading from a state of destitution**

*Psalm 143:1 <A Psalm of David.> Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.*

David entered into a covenant with God and now he claims the benefits of that agreement: hear me; answer me based on your faithfulness.

God is not only good and righteous, He is faithful.

*2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*

"enter not into judgment" — Do not deal with me on the grounds of justice; do not mark my wrongs or count my sins when I pray for justice against my adversaries. I plead the gentle hand of mercy and grace and not the gavel of justice.

"in thy sight shall no man living be justified" — no man, black or white, male or female, rich or poor, righteous or unrighteous, religious or non-religious can make a claim on Thee based on justice. All would be condemned. Therefore, Thy servant pleads mercy from Your throne.

## **Pleading from a State of Defeat**

*3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.*

David pleads his case from a position of defeat: “persecuted,” “smitten down,” “in darkness” as one who is “long dead.”

“my soul” refers to David, but the reader can assume that it includes the souls of all his soldiers. David speaks in the first person as a literary device to avoid the confusion that plural pronouns like “we,” “us,” “they,” and “them” can convey in a literary work.

Chased, smitten, in darkness, groveling among the dead, what should a man do?

### **Pleading from a State of Desolation**

The English word “desolation” means “deserted,” “barren,” or “lifeless” ; that is, this prayer does not come from a victorious, hyper-positive saint, but from one who has been beaten to the ground by his circumstances.

*4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.*

The word “overwhelmed” means “turned upside down,” “weak,” or “feeble.”

The word “desolate” means “abandoned” or “alone.”

This trial lasted years, not months.

*5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.*

In contrast to his present condition, David reflects on better days — on the sweet days of fellowship with his Lord; on the days of grace and mercy; on days when he ate the meat and not the bone; days of wine and not vinegar; days of plenty and not poverty; days of honor and not shame; of safety and not stress; of strength and not weakness.

*6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.*

“I stretch forth my hands unto thee” — David reached out for God but couldn’t find Him. Saul was a few steps behind him, and God was nowhere to be found.

He compares his state to one of a draught. The land was weary for want of water from a lack of rain, and David’s soul was weary for want of blessing from Heaven. In fleeing from Saul in the wilderness of Ziph, David was not only parched and in need of water, he longed to feel the presence of the Lord. In his state of desolation and dehydration, David did not thirst for wine, money, or pleasure, but for fellowship with the living God.

While David was hiding from Saul, God was hiding from David. Saul is trying to find David, and David is trying to find God . . . and a way of escape. Ever been there? You may be in better shape than you think!

Be careful for what you hunger, for you will surely find it! You will become the sum total of your desires.

Even in desperate times, a healthy soul thirst for God. Whether in good times or bad times, a sick soul does not have an appetite for the Savior or His Word.

### **Pleading from a State of Desperation**

*7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.*

David was not being impatient. He needed relief now – “speedily.” Like a man dying of thirst, David felt his soul growing weaker and weaker for a lack of communion with God.

“my spirit faileth” show us that David’s strength declined; Surely, he felt like a man hanging on to a cliff by his tippy-fingers losing strength by the second. How could he hold on?

“hide not thy face” – in his desperate circumstance David could not see God, feel God, or hear God – a plight worse than his fight with Saul.

“that go down into the pit” is the last stop on the highway of life – a state of desperation for sure!

While David was being chased by Saul he was not only in danger of being caught and killed, the eclipse of God cast his soul into a cloud of despair even to the point of going “down into the pit” of hopelessness. Where was God?

*8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.*

“Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness” reveals the spiritual healthiness of David’s soul. Even at the gates of death, his priority was to hear the love of God. He placed his trust in God as a young man, and now that trust was put to the test. David could hear and feel the foul breath of Saul’s hunt for his life, but he could not see the face of God or feel his presence – the most terrifying trial a God-seeker can go through.

*9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.*

In praying, “Deliver me . . . from my enemies,” David returns to the pragmatic problem of Saul’s hot pursuit for his life. In need of physical relief and spiritual reassurance, David prays for deliverance.

“I flee unto thee to hide me” – David not only fled from Saul, he fled to God. Because the LORD was his sanctuary, he expected some kind of miraculous deliverance during this deadly manhunt.

Death, poverty, and isolation stalk us all. Flee to the Lord.



## Pleading the Disposition of God

*10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.*

“Teach me to do thy will”; i.e. teach me to do what is right in the present crisis and provide me a way of escape — a way that you approve — a way that will best secure my deliverance. Consider God’s marvelous deliverance at the Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22).

“thy spirit is good” — Since your Spirit is good, holy, righteous, prudent, and reasonable, guide me to do what is good and right.

“Lead me into the land of uprightness” — “uprightness” refers to level ground. David fled on rocky ground in wilderness. He expresses hope that God will deliver him and place him on even ground so that he would not stumble in his flight from Saul.

*11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name’s sake: for thy righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble.*

“Quicken me” — Strengthen me for the task . . . don’t let me faint or give up. I need help. Because of the stand I have taken for you, bring me out of this trouble so men will speak well of you.

*12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.*

Out of “mercy” to me and the world, cut them off. Display justice toward them and mercy towards me.

“I am thy servant” — Destroy my enemies, not for personal vengeance, but for Thy honor and the progress of your kingdom.

David’s enemies are God’s enemies. Because the world is better off without criminals vexing men, cut them off. Improve the world by purging society of these reprobates. Lord, I am not asking this for my pleasure, but because “I am Thy servant.” Free me that I might pursue the work you have given me to do.

There are two ways to improve the world: (1) convert men to Christ; and, (2) to purge the wicked from society by enforcing penalties. Here David prays for swift and effective justice on lawbreakers knowing that society would be improved by their absence.

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