

Just Justice

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[0:00] Psalm 7 is where we're at in our study of the first twelve psalms, being helped by Dale Ralph Davis in his book, *The Way of the Righteous and the Muck of Life*.

There's still three copies available out on the table, I see, if you'd like to purchase one of those. Now in these opening psalms of the Psalter, we have noted that the righteous have many troubles in this life.

Troubles that make their way right into their prayers to God. And these troubles in our lives often have personal names, like Absalom and Cush or Jack or Jill.

So are some of the troubles in your life such that they have personal names? If so, you're not alone. That's the way it was with David. And in the heading of this psalm, you can see that we have a reference to such a trouble, such a problem in David's life.

He's named Cush, a Benjamite. And you can scour the Bible, and nowhere else in Scripture do we find any other mention about this guy, Cush, the Benjamite.

[1:20] This is it, right here in this little remark at the heading of Psalm 7. So we're not told all that we would like to know about him, but from the psalm itself, we can learn that he was an enemy of David.

And it appears that he had slandered David. He had spoken untruths about David. And though we don't have all the background to the situation that we would like, what we do have is the prayer that was squeezed out of David in this muck of life, this being slandered.

What kind of prayer do we see squeezed out of David when he's slandered against? Well, it's a prayer for just justice.

And it teaches us then how to pray when we're falsely accused. Something that's not all that rare in this fallen world.

It's something that the Lord Jesus himself had to bear much of when he was tempted in all ways like we are. Oh, the things his enemy said about him.

[2:32] None so innocent, yet none so slandered as he. And he tells us that his followers should expect to be slandered in this world that slandered him.

Expect people to falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. And there is a blessing pronounced upon us when that happens. Matthew chapter 5, 10 to 12.

So that's the psalm before us. A psalm of just justice. A cry for justice. How to pray when slandered. There's three major sections to the psalm as Davis breaks it down.

The first is take refuge in God. Verses 1 to 5. Take refuge in God. Notice the first two verses. Oh, Lord, my God. I take refuge in you.

Save and deliver me from all who pursue me. Or they will tear me like a lion and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me. Here's his condition.

[3:37] And we find it's another prayer on the run. David is on the run again. He's running like a man being pursued into a city of refuge. You have that picture in the Old Testament.

If somebody slayed another man, if it was unintentional, he could run to a place of refuge. And the avenger of blood might be right on his heels. But if he got into the city of refuge, he was safe until the trial, proper trial and so on.

Well, David's running like a man being pursued. And he runs into a city of refuge. And that city of refuge has a personal name, too. It's Yahweh, my God.

It's the covenant God of Israel, my God. Oh, Lord, my God, I take refuge in you. We remember that verse in Proverbs 18.10.

The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are safe. So David's in danger. He runs into the Lord as a high tower and finds safety.

[4:45] He's looking to him to save and deliver me from all who pursue me. And as we've said very many times in this series, our troubles have done their work if they have chased us to Jesus.

To take refuge in him. So his refuge is clear. It's the Lord is God. His danger is clear. He's being pursued. Hunted down.

They're out to pay him back for the supposed wrongs that he has done. And he says in verse 2 to God, If you don't save me, then they will tear me like a lion and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me.

That's just how helpless he is in this danger. It seems that David remembers that day when as a young boy he was out tending his father's sheep. And that lion came along and laid hold of one of the sheep and took off.

And had it not been for David going and rescuing and striking the lion and another time the bear, that sheep would have been ripped to pieces and its life gone.

[5:49] And now David says, Lord, that's me. And unless you rescue me, I'll be ripped to pieces by those who pursue me.

It will be the end of me and a messy end at that. I'm helpless. Save me. You know, it's a good thing to be helpless in the arms of Jesus.

That's where David goes. And that's where we need to go. His refuge is clear. His danger is clear. And his conscience is clear. Notice verses 3 to 5.

Oh, Lord, my God, if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands, if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me or without cause have robbed my foe, perhaps those were some of the very charges against him, then let my enemy pursue and overtake me.

Let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. So David is maintaining his innocence against whatever charges that Cush the Benjamite was making against him.

[7:03] And we need to be clear on this. David is not claiming perfection here. He's not claiming an across-the-board innocence. I have no sin in my life, Lord.

I'm perfectly righteous. No, that's not at all what he's saying. And we'll misunderstand many psalms if we don't get this straight because it keeps cropping up throughout the Psalter where David maintains his innocence and David pleads his righteousness before God.

No, it's just in this particular matter that he's being accused of and being blamed for. He is saying, as to this matter of Cush the Benjamite, Oh, Lord, you know that I am innocent.

And it's not that sort of carnal self-defense whereby whenever we're accused of something, we immediately deflect the blame and say, Lord, you know that's not true because we love ourselves too much to detect our own sins.

It's not that at all. Rather, this is the result of some heart-searching that has gone on, as verse 9 tells us, David before the eyes of him who searches minds and hearts.

[8:18] David before the eyes of the one who reads his mind and heart is able to say, Lord, you know I am innocent of what he's charging. And he's so sure of his innocence that he uses a strong curse formula.

He says, If then, if I'm guilty as charged, if what they say is true, then don't interfere and save me. Don't do what I'm crying out for you to do is to rescue me or I'll be like that torn sheep.

Don't do that, Lord. Let my enemy pursue me and overtake me. Let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. So, Lord, I'm in danger and I'm running into you as a strong tower, a refuge, a castle.

But if I'm guilty of what he says I'm guilty of, then let down the drawbridge, welcome my enemies in, and let them trample me in the dust and make an end of me.

I'd say David's pretty sure that he's innocent, wouldn't you? Just by the language, the strong language he uses. This is prayer. He's dealing with God in prayer.

[9:28] Do you ever pray like that? Do I ever pray like that? It's a wonderfully freeing thing to be able to pray with a clear conscience.

And that's what David's doing here. His conscience is clear in this matter. And if no one else in all the world knows or believes me, it's no small comfort to know that God's all seeing eye knows.

And he realizes my innocence against this slander. And so Paul says, I strive always, always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

I never want to come before God with a guilty conscience and let it remain. Now, we come before God often with a guilty conscience, and that's why we plead the blood to wash us and cleanse us

and to cover us.

But we shouldn't live for any period of time at all with a guilty conscience. Keep short accounts with God. That's our aim. And David and Paul made it his aim to strive to keep his conscience clear.

[10:44] So, take refuge in God in prayer when you're falsely accused and slandered. Now, if he was guilty as charged, then this psalm would have read a lot more like Psalm 51, where he confesses his sin and cries out to God for mercy.

I trust we've made much use out of that psalm as well when we are guilty. But here's a psalm for when we're not guilty of what others are saying about us. So, that's the first section.

Take refuge in God. Second section, verses 6 to 11. Find hope in God's anger. Find hope in God's anger. Remember how we're seeing this theme in the Psalms, how David wants to hang his prayer on some attribute of God.

So, there's God and who He is and David doesn't just cry out with a petition, but often at least, he hangs his petition on one of the many attributes of God.

Well, in this prayer, he's appealing to God's anger to act on his behalf against his enemies. As David seeks for justice to be served, he finds hope in God's anger.

[11:55] Verse 6. Arise, O Lord, in your anger. Rise up against the rage of my enemies. Now, that's a response that might seem strange to us.

David, in prayer, is thinking of his enemies, of his innocence, and then he thinks of God's anger and he says, Ah, yes, your anger.

It's a comfort to him. It's a solace, an encouragement. Yes, there is the anger in God to appeal to. And he cries for the Lord to answer him.

If in anger God rises up against the rage of my enemies, then deliverance is sure. So he pleads for God's anger.

Next, we find that the doctrine of judgment brings hope to tried and battered servants of God. It's his anger, his judgment, that's hope-giving.

[12:58] Verses 6b to 8a, David goes on, Awake, my God. Decree justice. And then he paints a picture of judgment day. Let the assembled peoples gather around you.

Rule over them or judge them from on high. Let the Lord judge the people. So, Awake, my God. Decree justice is his prayer. It's almost as if the judge has been sleeping as far as carrying out and executing his justice in this matter.

For in the place of justice, wickedness is there. Part of the Havel of Ecclesiastes. So arise in your anger. Awake and decree justice.

There is a time when God will bring justice to the earth. He'll right every wrong. And David says, Bring it. Bring it. Bring it.

For God has set a day when he'll judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He's given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead. In late 1937, the Japanese entered China's capital of Nanking.

[14:13] They marched pregnant Chinese women to a killing field where the Japanese soldiers placed bets on the sex of a baby about to drop out of the mother's womb when sliced open with a samurai sword.

And such atrocities of war and rape and pillage happen all over the world today. And sometimes against the Lord's own people, Christians are being singled out as sheep for the slaughter.

And if such thugs are never to be brought to justice, are never to be punished for their sins, does it not leave us in despair?

Is it not the reason we have hope in such a world of injustice that we have a God of justice? That's the hope that God held out to his people even as the Babylonians were going to come in and destroy them as a judgment of God and yet, God is a God of justice.

Blessed are all those who wait for him. Yes, he's going to use them to destroy you, Israel, but remember, he's a God of justice and their own desire to destroy you is unjust and so he will deliver you because he's a God of justice.

[15:30] Wait for him. Wait for his discipline. Wait for his judgment. There's hope in an unjust world because God is a God of justice.

And David finds hope in that. That God is a God of anger against injustice. So he looks forward to God holding court in justice on the last day.

That's the picture. Gather the nations before you. Matthew 25. There they are all before the Lord the judge. But here he's praying for a sample of that judgment to come right now in this world in his own current trouble.

And when he calls on God's judgment to fall, he does not exempt himself. Notice he pleads verse 8. Judge me. He wants judgment to come and he's not asking for an exemption here.

He's saying, Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High. And again, we'll misunderstand the passage completely if we're not understanding that what he's pleading is not that he is a righteous man before God with no sin that needs to be covered in the righteousness of Jesus.

[16:46] But he's saying, in this matter, Lord, the thing that gives me comfort is to know that if I were to appeal to you, it's the same comfort Job has. Remember when Job's accusers, his friends, accused him?

What was his comfort? That, oh, if I could just find God and get into his court and be tried there, then it would be seen I'm innocent. And that's what David is saying.

Oh, that you would awaken and bring your judgment and judge me according to my righteousness. Show that I'm innocent. Remove the smear from my name and the name of your kingdom in this Cushite matter.

So it's tied again to the situation where he's being falsely accused and he longs for God to vindicate him. It's right when we're wrongly accused to ask God to judge and to vindicate us and to show us to be in the right.

It's what David does here and it's what the voice of the martyrs do in heaven. In Romans 6, we hear their cry, How long, sovereign Lord? Holy and true until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood.

[18:04] There's not an ounce of sinful revenge in that prayer. These are the spirits of just men made perfect. They're saying, Lord, bring your judgment. Bring your judgment and avenge the wrongs that have been done.

So David finds hope in God's character. He's appealed to God's anger. He's hung his prayer on that hook. Now he appeals to God's righteousness. His righteousness. And we'll see at least twice he appeals to the righteousness of God.

Verses 9 to 11. Oh, righteous God who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure. Remember we saw last time in Psalm 5 that if the one is to happen, the other must happen.

if the righteous are to be made secure, then the violence of the wicked must be brought to an end.

So that's what he wants. You can't have the righteous winning without the unrighteous losing.

And David prays, bring an end to the violence of the wicked so that the righteous might be secure. Verse 10.

[19:13] My shield is God most high who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day. So someone is defying God's righteousness as that uprightness, that upright determination to punish sin wherever it's found.

He is righteous. He must make everything right. The crooked must be made straight. The wrong must be righted. There's that thing in God. Sometimes we may see it in warped way and perfectionist here.

If something is just a little bit off, it's got to be put just right. That's God as far as righteousness.

Anything that is a hair off of righteous does not sit well with God.

He's determined to make it right. That's his righteousness. And God's righteous judgment is a comfort to the righteous but a dread to the wicked. So David is pleading for a righteous judgment.

And notice it's not just all about David. It's not just for himself that he's pleading here, is it? Verse 9b, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure.

[20:30] His concern is for all the righteous here. Not just make me secure, make the righteous secure. So his own little battle with unjust slander anger and suffering makes him more sensitive to the plight of others who are suffering injustice and stirs him to pray for the suffering people of God as a whole.

Make the righteous secure. As I thought about that, I thought, you know, one of the reasons we may not appeal more to the anger of God in prayer is because we're so little persecuted as the psalmist was and as people, as the righteous in the Bible times normally were and as many today

around the world are.

Maybe that's why we don't appeal to the righteous anger of God to bring justice. But as I thought further, I thought, well, if we are not undergoing persecution, which seems to be the norm in scripture for the godly, then we should at least identify with our persecuted brethren, shouldn't we, around the world and plead to God for justice for them.

Turn to these verses, Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 33, because this is the spirit of the godly and Old Testament, New Testament alike, and here we see it in the New Testament believers, these Christians, Hebrew Christians, Hebrews 10 33, the writer says, sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution.

At other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison. You see it?

[22 : 35] not just a concern for when you are persecuted, but you stood side by side with those who were mistreated and you sympathized with them who were in prison.

Look over at chapter 13 and verse 3 where that's turned into a command to do so. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

That's what we see David doing and that's what we're told to do. Let your little bouts with injustice and someone saying something against you that isn't exactly true, let it sensitize you to the greater seeing, the way it is with God's people.

And start praying with more of a heart for those who are being slandered and unjustly treated in ways that make your injustice seem like nothing, a molehill.

Is our heart with God's persecuted flock? The most recent World Magazine reveals how in many Muslim lands it is open season on Christians.

[23 : 54] And so the article pointed out in the Middle East and Northern Africa, Southeast Asia, terrorists are targeting Christians and they're shooting them in their homes, they're dragging them out of their homes, slaughtering them in the streets, burning their houses, they're shooting them down as they worship in their church buildings.

And as it's done and the bloody deed is done, Christians go out onto the street and hear masses pouring out of their mosques with the angry cry of jihad against the infidels.

infidels. And that's your brothers and sisters who are having to live under such unjust treatment.

Or it's a North Korean girl and her family who just disappeared after she told her teacher that it was quote by God's grace unquote that she got a good grade at school.

They're gone. The Burmese army uses Karen Christian women and children as human mine sweepers.

[25 : 06] That's wrong. And there's a God who will make it right. Chinese or Christians beaten and slaughtered in parts of India as I've witnessed happening on the internet.

There was our own dear Arif and Kathy Khan Reformed Baptist pastor in Pakistan. Knock on the door and they're shot dead in their own home.

And very often in those countries authorities just turn a blind eye and the culprit is never brought to justice. Gorban Tori, a 53-year-old Iranian convert to Christianity, pastor of an independent house church, earlier was attacked by a Muslim relative and had received several death threats if he didn't stop sharing his Christian faith.

Tori was kidnapped from his home in northeastern Iran and stabbed to death. His beaten bloodied body was thrown in front of his home for a few hours later. He's the fifth Protestant pastor assassinated in Iran by unidentified killers in the past 11 years.

And under Iranian law, apostasy from Islam subjects you to the death penalty. people. So we've been praying for Pastor Yousef, an Iranian pastor, threatened with execution in Iran for his conversion and preaching of the gospel and standing for Christ.

[26 : 32] The last I heard, the death sentence was pronounced against him and they're waiting for the date of execution, which is often the ploy of these regimes to try to apply pressure to cause them to abandon the faith.

And on and on and on it goes. And it's meant to stir up a cry in the hearts of God's people all around the world. Lord, bring an end to the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure.

Let's pray more often for our persecuted brethren around the world and as we do, let's appeal to God's righteousness and his anger, his hatred of injustice. And I'll seek to highlight it more often

Wednesday nights in our corporate prayer meeting.

Well, God does not wait until final judgment to express all of his wrath. We see that in verse 12.

He's a God who expresses his wrath every day.

Every day. We'll then plead for him to do so on behalf of our persecuted brethren. That's the second section. Find hope in God's anger, in God's righteousness.

[27 : 52] Take refuge in God. Find hope in God's anger and righteousness. And last section, watch judgment take place. Verses 12 to 16.

In these verses, we're given a front row seat to watch God's judgment taking place. First, we'll see God preparing to express his wrath and judgment.

And then we'll see the judged ones falling beneath that judgment. First, God's scene is a warrior preparing for battle. Notice the vivid scene, verse 12 and 13. If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword.

He will bend and string his bow. He has prepared his deadly weapons. He makes ready his flaming arrows. You notice how pompous dictators like to show off their deadly weapons in military parades and you see the whole square just loaded with soldiers and missiles and guns.

Here's Jehovah and his arsenal of deadly weapons are being prepared against the wicked. And there's no shortage of them.

[29 : 03] The global flood took care of all the wicked in Noah's days. Pharaoh's army fell to the divided sea that was divided no longer.

Wicked Ahab was found out by an arrow shot at a venture that was divinely guided like a cruise missile between the chinks and the armor of wicked King Herod.

And his wicked wife Jezebel, well, God used his deadly horses to trample her and the dogs to eat her. And Dathan and Abiram God just caused the earth to yawn and open up and swallow them alive.

And as for the Amorite army fleeing before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Ezekiah, the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

With Herod, King Herod, it was the worms that did his deadly work. Plagues, diseases, have often been his tools, destroying angels.

[30 : 14] Just one in the 185,000 enemy wake up dead. They don't wake up dead, they're found dead in the morning. As the Israelite army woke up, they find them dead.

His bow is bent, his arrow is on the string. And if he does not relent, you'll have a front row seat to the judgment of God.

That's the picture David portrays. But then our attention is turned not just from the Lord preparing his weapons of wrath, but to that actual judgment now falling upon the wicked.

And the particular process of judgment that we notice is one of the strategies that God often uses in bringing the wicked to justice. Verses 14 to 16.

He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment. He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made.

[31 : 19] The trouble he causes recoils on himself. His violence comes down on his own head. did you ever get your finger snapped setting a mousetrap?

That's innocent enough but that's a picture of what happens here. The wicked set their traps and they dig their pits and they put their bamboo spikes under the pit and they just wait for the righteous to fall in.

And then with one disadvantageous slip they fall into the pit themselves and are brought to justice. Their own pit reminds me of wicked Haman who wanted to kill righteous Mordecai and built some gallows to do so.

And it wasn't but about a day before Haman himself was hanging on his own gallows. God has a way of using the very thirst for blood that the wicked have for the righteous to do them in in the end. Davis illustrates this manner of God's judgment with how an Eskimo kills a wolf. He says first the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze.

[32 : 44] He adds several more layers of frozen blood and if you need to verify this story see Larry Martin afterwards but he he first coats it with animal blood and then lets it freeze and then he adds several more layers of frozen blood until the blade is totally concealed.

You can't even see that it's a blade. Next he puts his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his nose and finds the bait he licks it tasting the fresh frozen blood.

He begins to lick faster with much more gusto lapping at the blade until the sharp edge is bare. And now he's feverishly licking harder and harder his craving so intense that the wolf does not notice the sting of the bare blade on his own tongue.

Nor does he recognize the moment when his unquenchable thirst is being satisfied with his own warm blood. He craves more and more until he's found dead in the snow next morning.

God's judgment works like that. Excuse me, God's judgment can work like that. The enemies of God's people give way to their passion to persecute, their lust to eliminate his servants, but when they begin to litter the field of history, but then they begin to litter the field of history, felled by the Almighty's arrows, cut down by Shaddai's sword.

[34 : 17] So, God's judgment, bringing justice to his persecuted ones.

So that's the third section, and then there's the fourth section, just verse 17, one verse standing alone, remember praise is due, remember praise is due.

David will not say amen to this psalm without remembering that praise is due to God, and so he says in verse 17, I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness, that's what he's been pleading for, right?

And I will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High. This isn't a bribe to twist the arm of the Lord to do what he's just prayed, but it's rather more of a promise that David is making, that when the Lord vindicates him, he commits himself to give the thanks and praise back to the Lord.

Davis illustrates this by saying, my wife has a practice of taping up little scrap pieces of paper to the inside of the back door to our home. They're reminders of obligations or appointments that she makes, like Tuesday 3.30, take food to Mary, or dentist's appointment on Wednesday.

[35 : 34] Sometimes the door can get pretty cluttered. You might think she should use a calendar and write things down there. Well, she does, but she might not look at it. But if it's taped to the back door, it's hard to avoid.

Verse 17 is David's back door note, his personal post-it note to not forget to praise the Lord who acts in justice on behalf of his righteous ones.

So we see the full cycle, don't we? Trouble leads to more psalms for us, right? Trouble to David leads to more psalms for us. Trouble drives us to God in prayer.

And then when he delivers us from trouble, we come back to him with thanksgiving and praise. And so that cycle is ever overlapping as we're bringing new petitions and cries for help.

There are old answers to prayer to give thanks for. There are new thanksgivings and praises and the two are ever blending their way all the way to heaven. Whether in tears or in triumph, we worship God as we have dealings with him in prayer.

[36 : 40] prayer. Any comments, questions about this psalm?

Psalm for us when we are being mistreated, slandered, but also a psalm to use as we think of our brothers and sisters around the world. We're really under the gun and that for the sake of righteousness.

You know, we'll see it even as we go on, but have you noticed a certain sameness about the psalms as we've just begun and go right through? I wonder if somebody wrote down all your prayers and we all got to read them, would we notice any sameness to your prayers?

Because the reality is that our needs are pretty much the same most days of our lives, aren't they? And yet, we're being taught something by this sameness. We're getting a feel for David's heart and what it is to commune with God.

Let's learn from this repetition to spread our troubles to the Lord. Just to come out and freely tell Him whatever's bothering us, to cast our cares before Him, take refuge in the Lord.

[37 : 54] And then let's learn to find hope in God's character. Let's adore Him and think of who He is and hang our petitions on something as solid as God's attributes.

And then let's watch for His answers. Laying our petitions before Him and waiting, expecting God to answer all day long and then when He answers, giving thanks and singing His praises.

And we get to do that together this morning. What a wonderful way to prepare for worship than to sit there in your seat and think, how has God answered my prayers this past week? And so when we sing His praise, it will be out of the abundance of a heart, thanking God, praising Him for who He is and what He's done.

Let's be dismissed and come before Him in glad worship this morning. Amen. Amen.