

The Lord My Savior

Psalm 7

Introduction: In his excellent work *Christ in the Psalms*, Patrick Reardon correctly says, in my judgment, “The Psalter is not human merely because it speaks for man in general, but because it speaks for Christ. The underlying voice of the Psalms is not simply “man,” but *the* Man. To enter into the prayer of this book is not merely to share the sentiments of King David, or Asaph, or one of the other inspired poets....The foundational voice of the Psalms, the underlying bass line of its harmony is, rather, the voice of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man” (p.13). Reardon is right. Though human persons may claim a provisional or relative “righteousness” (v. 8), our voice is clearly inadequate to claim anything like this in an absolute sense. Ultimately, this “is the prayer of someone whose hands are clean and mind undefiled...The voice of this psalm is His of whom St. Peter wrote that He “committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Pet. 1:22)” [Reardon, 14].

The psalm is a composite of different genres. There is personal lament (vs. 1-2), a solemn oath (vs. 3-5), a psalm of the Lord’s sovereignty and kingship (vs. 6-13) and a thanksgiving hymn (v. 17) [VanGemeren’s structure, *Psalm*, EBC, 128]. The Psalm’s specific occasion is uncertain, but James Boice is helpful in his study:

“The specific details of David’s problem are alluded to in the psalm’s title, which describes it as a lament sung “to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.” We have no other information about Cush, but the fact that he was from the tribe of Benjamin fits well with what we know of the opposition David faced from this tribe. David’s predecessor, King Saul, was a Benjamite. So when Saul was killed by the Philistines and David became king of Israel, a process that spanned nearly eight years, it was natural that the new king’s chief source of opposition was Saul’s tribe” (*Psalms 1-41*, 60).

Our study will examine the psalm in five movements. It will be easy to recognize our Lord’s voice in the psalm. However as we follow in His footsteps, we may rightly pray the psalm as well in personal devotion and corporate worship.

I. Call on the Lord to save you when you are under attack and in danger 7:1-2

David begins the psalm appealing to his covenantal relationship with *Yahweh* (“LORD”) who is his God. Because of this tender relationship he “seeks (*ESV*, “takes”) refuge” in Him. He seeks protection and safety and shelter from the

LORD his God. Specially, he pleads for the LORD to “save me” and “rescue (*ESV*, “deliver”) me.” David is being “pursued” by his “enemies,” his “adversaries” (vv. 4, 5,6) who, if given the chance, will tear him to pieces like a lion ripping apart its prey (v. 2). *The Message* says it like this, “God! God! I am running to you for dear life; the chase is wild. If they catch me, I’m finished: ripped to shreds by foes as fierce as lions, dragged into the forest and left unlooked for, unremembered.”

These enemies had no regard for his life whatsoever. They would take him out in a brutal death if possible. Perhaps his adversary was Saul and his men or Absalom and his warriors. Believers in persecuted countries can easily identify with these words.

When it comes to the Lord Jesus, these words perfectly describe the intent of the religious leaders who persecuted Him (John 5:16), tried to arrest Him (John 7:30) and sought His death (John 7:1). Yet being in the center of God’s will, He was saved and rescued, resting in His Father as a refuge, until his hour had come (John 7:30) to go to the cross as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Call on the Lord when you are under attack and in danger. He is there. He cares. He hears your cry for help.

II. Examine your life and make sure you are not playing the hypocrite 7:3-5

David will reference the “LORD” or “God” 14 times in this psalm. For the second time he calls Him the “LORD my God.” In the form of an oath he declares his innocence, putting his life on the line. Today we might say, ‘if I am not telling the truth may God strike me dead!’”

David’s enemies accuse him of unjust actions (“injustice on my hands”) in verse 3. Specifically he has “harmed his friend” (*CSB*, “one at peace with me”) and taken advantage (“plundered”) of his “adversary without cause.” He is accused of playing the bully, taking advantage of his power and influence, hurting those who did not see it coming (friends) or were incapable of withstanding his assault. David is obviously wounded by these words and so in verse 5 he responds. If I am guilty as charged, then “may an enemy pursue and overtake me; may he trample me to the ground and leave my honor (*ESV*, “glory”) in the dust.” Allen Ross is right when he writes, “His protestation of innocence is compelling because he invokes death by his enemy’s hand if he is guilty (v. 5) [Ross, *Psalms 1-41*, 280]. Check your heart before asking God to deal with other’s on your behalf.

It is easy to see David making this claim in a specific situation and in a relative sense. The three uses of the word “if” in verses 3-4 would support this conclusion. Yet it is true that only one *Man* could claim absolutely the moral innocence expressed here and in what follows (esp. v. 8). This is the One who allowed His life to be “trampled to the ground” and “his honor laid in the dust” (cf.

Gen. 3:19) for sinners who rightly deserved such a fate. The King of glory, our Lord Jesus, allowed his glory to be buried in the dust that ours might not. Though our best intentions struggle to escape hypocrisy and the damning effects of the fall, such was not the case with the sinless Savior of the world!

III. Ask the Lord to act and judge according to the integrity He sees in you 7:6-9

David calls on the Lord to act through the use of three strong imperatives: 1) “rise up,” 2) “lift yourself” and 3) “awake” (v. 6). He calls on “the assembly of people” to gather around the Lord as he takes his seat on high over it” (v. 7). God is called upon to judge the wicked in “His anger” as he opposes what David calls “the fury (*NIV*, “rage”) of my adversaries.” Appealing to the righteous character of God, the psalmist declares “you have ordained (*ESV*, “appointed”) a judgment.” God has declared he is just and will do what is just, and David is confident He will. And, he will do it publicly as he sits enthroned as the sovereign LORD God.

Verse eight is somewhat surprising. David knows “the LORD judges the peoples,” the nations. There clearly is an eschatological note here. But then David gets very personal. He asks the LORD to “vindicate him according to his righteousness and integrity.” Context is crucial to a right understanding. David is convinced, having searched his heart, that he has not wronged either his

friend or his enemy (v. 3-5). He is not claiming to be sinless or morally perfect, but he has acted rightly and with integrity in this instance, as far as he can tell. Still, and this is critically important, he ultimately entrusts the matter to God. Yes, he can pray in verse 9, “Let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous.” But he will also acknowledge in all of this, “the one who examines the thoughts and emotions (*ESV*, “minds and hearts”) is a righteous God.” Spurgeon is correct, “what a solemn and weighty truth is contained in the last sentence of the ninth verse! How deep is the divine knowledge!... How strict, how accurate, how intimate his search!... “All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (*TOD* vol. 1, 69). When we are right before God in how we think and act toward others, we do not have to fear the one whose eyes are “like a fiery flame” (Rev. 19:12), seeing every act, every thought, every emotion. We can confidentially call on him to do what is just and what is right in justice and judgment.

IV. Rest in the confidence that the righteous God will deal justly with the unrepentant and the wicked 7:10-16

Verses 10-16 continue and develop the theme of God as a just and righteous judge. Once again, Davis sings a word of confidence and assurance, “My shield (protection) is with God.” He is the one who saves the upright in heart.” The LORD “protects and delivers the righteous” (Ross, *Psalms* 1-41, 284).

Verse 11 explains why David has this confidence, “God is a righteous judge and a God who shows his wrath every day.” I like how Derek Kidner puts it, “God Himself is far from lukewarm on the matter [of righteousness]: indeed his *indignation every day* (11) is more constant than any human zeal, having no tendency to cool down into either compromise or despair (*Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 64). The apostle Paul provides the expanded New Testament complement to this truth in Romans 1:18-32.

The stark reality of certain and painful judgment unfolds in verses 12-16 for the one who “does not repent” (v. 12). Using a series of descriptive images David says of the LORD:

- 1) “He will sharpen his sword” (v. 12).
- 2) “He has strung his bow and made it ready” (v. 12).
- 3) “He has prepared his deadly weapons” (v. 13).
- 4) “He tips his arrows with fire.” (v. 14).

The righteous God is also a warrior God and He does not wink at sin or fail to judge it in the most severe manner. Unrepentant sins will be dealt with and ultimately it will be destroyed. Of this truth we should have no doubt.

Verses 14-16, in language similar to James 1:14-15, paints a chilling picture of how sin works and how it ends. Two images are used: 1) conception and birth; 2) digging a pit and falling into it. A wicked person is described as being “pregnant with evil” (v. 14). Because evil has filled him up on the inside he eventually “conceives trouble, and gives birth to deceit (*ESV*, “lies”).

VanGemeren notes, “Jesus warned against having a heart from which comes “evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly (Matt. 7:21-22)” [*Psalms*, EBC, 134). Sin works its way from the inside out!

The second image in verses 15-16 is equally vivid in showing us that sin does not produce the desired and intended results that we want. It is like a man who “dug a pit and hollowed it out” only to “fall into the hole he had made.” All his “trouble comes back on his head.” Reinforcing the point and putting it in its proper moral context David writes, “His own violence comes down on top of his head” (v. 16). *The Message* says it well, “mischief backfires; violence boomerangs.” Wilcock provides a helpful Christological insight, “what [God] does is ‘to direct the consequences of evil away from the innocent and turn them back upon their perpetrators.’ The supreme instance is when he raises his Son from death, and his Son’s people with him, and death itself is destroyed” (*The Message of Psalms 1-72*, BST, 37).

V. Praise the name of the Lord for His righteousness and sovereignty 7:17

The psalm ends on a high and celebratory note. It ends with thanksgiving and praise. We should join David in “thanking the LORD for his righteousness.”

The righteousness of God has been acknowledged several times already in verses 8-9. It is a theme that the people of God should continually celebrate. It gives us a certainty and confidence that in His time and in His way that God, “the Judge of the whole earth” will do what is just (Gen. 18:25).

Yes, we “thank the LORD for his righteousness.” And, we also “sing (*ESV*, “sing praise”) about the name of the LORD Most High.” *El Elyon* is who our God is and there is no one like Him. The name first appears in Genesis 14:18-22 and the story of Melchizedek and Abraham. There He is called the “Creator of heaven and earth.” VanGemeren says, “Most High” is descriptive of the universal rule of God, to whom his subjects sing praise (cf. 9:2; 50:14; 92:1)” [*Psalms*, 135]. This is the God we worship. This is the God we praise. This is the God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who “has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19:16).

Conclusion: In his classic work *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer addresses what he calls “the secret of the Psalter.” He then explains what he means: “A psalm that we cannot utter as a prayer, that makes us falter and horrifies us, is a hint to us that

here Someone else is praying, not we; that the One who is here protesting his innocence, who is invoking God's judgment, who has come to such infinite depths of suffering, is none other than Jesus Christ himself. He it is who is praying here, and not only here but in the whole Psalter.

This insight the New Testament and the Church have always recognized and declared....The Psalter is the prayer book of Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word" (45-46).

I believe Bonhoeffer is correct about the Psalter. I am certain he is right in applying this insight to Psalm 7. I can pray verse 8 in Him! But only He can pray it for Himself! The LORD my Savior!! His name is Jesus!!!