

When Dogs Attack

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Well, the songs this evening have certainly done a wonderful job of reminding us of the security that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ and as we come to another Psalm of protection, I'd like to start with a New Testament perspective and then come back to the Old Testament Psalm passage that we're going to look at this morning. If you would turn with me to Romans 8 just to set us in a framework of mind that encourages us with the security that is ours in the Lord Jesus Christ, that in his righteousness and in his shed blood those that have come to him by faith for salvation have an eternal refuge for their souls and a refuge that is sure in this life as well. Surely if he has granted us eternity according to his love and mercy, surely he plans to keep us in this life as well.

Look at what it says in Romans 8:28, "we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." We find that our God in Christ has secured for us a perfect salvation that has declared us righteous now and will secure our glory in heaven forever and ever, amen. So what a place of refuge and strength and comfort for our soul as we look to the things of Scripture and as we look to our Christ.

Well, if those things are true, then what can we say in verse 31 of Romans 8, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" So Scripture repeatedly calls us to remember the work of Christ on our behalf; that when he made that perfect sacrifice at Calvary he was doing so in order to secure us infallibly and forever to be his own. He secured us, he died for us, in order to save us and to be our Lord and our King and, dare we say, our Champion, our Protector, the one who keeps us throughout all of life.

Therefore Paul could say in verse 33, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." Do you know when your position in Christ will be insecure? Do you know when you will be in danger? It is when someone goes into heaven and pulls Christ away from the right

hand of God, and I want to tell you, that's never going to happen. No one has the power to reach Christ where he is interceding for us and representing us before the throne of a holy God. He is there now pleading for us as our brother. He is there now as our Savior who paid all of the debt. He is there now with his righteousness representing us before a holy God.

Beloved, nothing can go wrong in the end for us. We are perfectly secure in Christ and therefore when the trials of life come, when the opposition of humans come to us, we're unflinched, we're unmoved, we flinch not at the challenge. Why would we do that when Christ is in heaven interceding for us? Why would we do that when Christ has secured us for God forever? So even as we sang in "A mighty fortress is our God: though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear."

Verse 35 of Romans 8, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Drop down to verse 37, "in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So here we are on the receiving end of the immense infinite love of God, here we are, here we stand secure in Christ in his righteousness and his shed blood, all of our iniquities washed away, all of our guilt forgiven, a perfect righteousness credited to our account that God accepts graciously for us and the King of the universe welcomes us into his presence. The Lord of all receives you in Christ and names you as his own. So, beloved, it's from that position of strength that we live and that New Testament perspective can just help and strengthen us, our perspective as we look at this Old Testament passage in Psalm 59 this evening.

Go back to it with me. This is another Psalm that is less familiar than some of the others but the inscription gives us a context that we can understand what's going on. It says that David wrote this Psalm when he was under the threat from Saul when Saul had sent men to watch David's house in order to kill him. And so we realize that even an eminent believer like David, one who the New Testament says was a man after God's own heart, could be one under severe earthly attack from someone with great authority. Saul was king and Saul was after him and Saul had ordered him dead and so the potential for fear would be great. And it's comforting, isn't it, to look back at some of the saints, especially in the Old Testament, to realize that they were men of like flesh with us, that they knew what it was like to feel threatened, to feel fear, and then to watch them cry out to a God who was less clearly revealed to them than he is to us now in Christ, and to realize that they found the strength to give them courage and to stand like men unflinching before the danger that was in front of them. Psalm 59 instructs us in this direction and shows us how to think and how to respond in the midst of an attack from dogs, as we'll see in Psalm 59.

The inscription is referring to an event that took place in 1 Samuel 19 and if you would turn back in 1 Samuel 19, we'll just read the passage to set the context. We're reading

some extended passages of Scripture and, you know, that's the one time as a preacher that you know you're not going wrong when you're reading Scripture. You cannot mess up when you are at least reading the text. We have to explain the text, of course, but it's in the text that we find our greatest source of truth.

1 Samuel 19:8 says, "When there was war again, David went out and fought with the Philistines and defeated them with great slaughter, so that they fled before him. Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand. Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. Then Saul," here's the setting for Psalm 59, "Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning." So there's an envoy, there's a group of men commissioned by Saul to set an ambush around David's house, wait for him to come out in the morning and David's life will be over. So there's a very great and imminent threat on David's life as we read this passage.

"But Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, 'If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death.'" She said, "You've got to get out of here now if you're going to live." "So [she] let David down through a window, and he went out and fled and escaped." So he's going off in the cover of night and meanwhile back at home, "Michal took the household idol and laid it on the bed, and put a quilt of goats' hair at its head, and covered it with clothes. When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, 'He is sick.' Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, 'Bring him up to me on his bed, that I may put him to death.' When the messengers entered, behold, the household idol was on the bed with the quilt of goats' hair at its head." I guess they found that the household idol was not all that sick.

"So Saul said to Michal, 'Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?' And Michal said to Saul, 'He said to me, "Let me go! Why should I put you to death?"'" The whole point of this being is that during this episode while David is under threat from Saul and Saul is plotting against his life with very specific instructions and with great men to carry out his orders, David cries out to God and slips out into the night and the ruse that his wife used bought him time in order to make his escape.

Now, if you've been with us, as most of you have been over the past several weeks as we've studied the Psalms from 54 to now 59 in recent weeks, there is certainly a repetitive element to this section of the Psalms. David under attack. David crying out to God. David finding courage. David ending in praise. But these Psalms were written in a period of his life where Saul was a constant threat to him and so there were repeated opportunities for David to feel the weight of an assault and to turn to God in prayer.

Now, even the simplicity of that, beloved, should give a great word of encouragement to your heart. We see David under attack using similar themes to ask God for help and let the sheer repetition of what we're reading be an encouragement to you for this reason:

isn't it true that that pattern reflects what you often find in your own life? Isn't there a personal antagonist that sometimes you've had either now or in the past within your family or at work or in some other realm of relationship, and this person is just a thorn in your side and continually makes it plain that he or she plans to make your life miserable and often they've got the authority to do so? Well, when that happens again and again and again, now we're in a position to remember, "Do you know what? This happened to David again and again and again and David simply took it as an opportunity to write down his Psalms of praise, his Psalms of trust, and to turn to God in the midst of his affliction in order to seek God's help and to seek him repeatedly just like David did.

And here's where we need to come, beloved, I say that without exception to everyone in the room, beloved. Here's what I want you to see and to understand as we look at these things: the fact that God lets you suffer under the hands of someone repeatedly is ultimately designed for your spiritual good, and the fact that you continue to suffer under the hand or the opposition of someone is not a sign of God's displeasure with you. He is satisfied with Christ on your behalf. He has removed your sins as far as the east is from the west. Scripture says your sins and your lawlessness he will remember no more. There is something else that he's doing. It's not that he's punishing you because he's already punished Christ on your behalf. What God is doing in those times, what God is doing under that repeated weight is he's building into your life a sense of humility and a sense of endurance. If we were never tested over time, we wouldn't know what it was like to be able to run the race with strength; we wouldn't know, we wouldn't have the strength to run a marathon because all we had ever run were 60 yard sprints. But when the pressure is on repeatedly, when the weight of the trial or the weight of the personal opposition is ongoing, it is there where your spiritual muscles are built up as you are lifting up against the weight and lifting up, as it were, to God to trust him to realize that God is building endurance in your life that would never come any other way. God is building into your life a sustained and deep trust that is not so dependent upon your external circumstances in order to find your peace, in order to find your sense of security, God uses this to drive you to him.

And don't you know that by personal experience? Isn't it when you're under the weight of trial? Isn't it when you're under the weight of opposition that you find yourself most earnestly crying out to God for his help? Isn't it when the need is greatest that your prayers are the most urgent and sincere and prolonged? Well, beloved, make the connection. Make the connection. God's purpose for you is to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ, to teach you to trust him and to depend upon him and to look to him for your sufficiency and for your protection. If we never felt opposition, every one of us would feel the self-congratulation of self-sufficiency. "Things are good and I can handle this." That's what opposition comes. It's when people rip you off, it's when people lie about you and you can't refute the lies that you find yourself turning to God in this way.

So, beloved, as hard as it is to do, what I encourage you to do, encourage you the way to think about it, this is very challenging but we all have to learn to find room in our heart to embrace these things when they come because we realize that they are the training ground in which God develops us into someone better and it's when we find God's

comfort in the midst of these things as we turn to Scripture, as we turn to him in prayer, as we discipline our minds to think biblically, it's there that we find his comfort, it's there that we find his strength, and do you know what the longer term perspective on that is? It's not simply for you.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 1. We're going places I never dreamt in this message but that's okay. We all need to hear these kinds of things that all flow out of a consideration of the text. When God comforts you in the midst of those deep, prolonged, agonizing conflicts, and he will comfort you, beloved. I know you're all looking down looking for your page in Scripture but did you hear me in what I said? He will comfort you. His comfort is sure because he never abandons his people. His provision is certain for you because he's the shepherd who always provides. God has never once left one of his sheep out in the open field to be subject to attack and torn to shreds and left unattended. God cares for you. God cares for his people. God tends to his people and so we should never lose heart in the midst of those times. And as God is developing Christ-like character in us, teaching us to trust him, teaching us endurance, he's also doing something else, he is preparing you to be a source of strength to someone in the future. Inevitably and always that's what he's doing. It's never just about you. It's about people in some cases that you haven't even met yet that God is preparing you to be an effective vessel of the mercy and ministry of Christ to them.

So that's what we see in 2 Corinthians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." Watch the three letter word "all" in this passage. "Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." God brings affliction into your life and he comforts you in it and you find security and strength in that and you're renewed in hope and then God brings something else into your life, this time not affliction directly but someone who is under a manner of affliction that you can identify with, and God has prepared you with the comfort that you've received to minister effectively to that person in their time of need. Then the cycle continues and they take the comfort that God gave them through you and they carry it on to someone else. It's a very beautiful and blessed thing to be a part of the body of Christ.

And that's what we do with each other here in Truth Community Church, isn't it? Isn't it true that you have found some of your closest and best comfort coming from the words of friends that you've made here? Do you know why they are able to do that? It's because they've walked with God in the past and they know what it's like, they know to reach out to you, they know how to help you. And understand that in the process when you are being encouraged like that, realize that in the background God is preparing you for good works that he appointed for you to walk in down the road. Down the road to you, appointed before the foundation of the world from God's perspective. So that's why it's so important for us to come to these things and to submit to them and to see what Scripture has to say about them.

Now, what's David doing in Psalm 59 with all of that introduction? Let's go back to Psalm 59, right after Psalm 58. Here we start the Psalm in this way: what is David doing? Well, first of all, in the first section: he states the threat from his enemies. He states the threat from his enemies in the first seven verses of Psalm 59 and David opens this Psalm again not with a direct word of praise but a prayer for deliverance.

Look at the first two verses of Psalm 59. He says, "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; Set me securely on high away from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from those who do iniquity And save me from men of bloodshed." As he opens this prayer, he goes immediately into the request for deliverance. Now some of you may have been raised on a model of prayer that follows an acronym called ACTS and they tell you to pray and you pray and when you pray you should go: adoration, then confession of sin, thanksgiving, and then supplication, and then you make your request. Now, that's fine as far as it goes and I'm not up here to pick a fight over a prayer acronym that can be helpful. What I want you to see is that when you go through the Psalms you find a diversity of manner in the way that people pray. Sometimes David does open with lofty statements of prayer and he opens his prayer that way. Sometimes he does something else, sometimes like in Psalm 37, it's kind of a didactic Psalm that's written to men to teach them wisdom from God. Here in Psalm 59, we find David going straight to supplication, going straight to the "S" part of the ACTS acronym saying, "Lord, deliver me." And he does it with a fourfold request for help.

Look at it there in the text with me. He says, "Deliver me, O my God; Set me securely on high." He repeats it, "Deliver me." Then finally for the fourth time he says, "save me." So he opens this up, "Deliver me. Set me on high. Deliver me. Save me." Again, the repetition of his requests for help are showing the urgency that is on his heart. And the reason that I would try to liberate you from a false sense of praying that says you must pray in this one particular manner is that Scripture shows us and teaches us that the range of need and emotion and feelings that are on our heart when we come to prayer is vast and broad and it can't be reduced to a formula, nor should it be reduced to a formula. Sometimes to go through an acronym would be the most artificial form of vain repetition that you could engage in. David here bursts, as it were, into the throne room of God and says, "God, help me now!" because the situation is urgent. And if you remember the setting of the Psalm, that Saul had sent his men after him to kill him that day, then you see the sense of the urgency and the repetition highlights the importance of his request.

Now as David often does, he speaks in a metaphor. David says in Psalm 59:1, "Set me securely on high away from those who rise up against me." David is not asking to be placed on a mountaintop someplace, although that might have provided him with security. The idea is, "God, put me in a place where I am beyond the reach of those who would want to harm me." He's simply saying, "Take me out of the realm of danger. Put me in a place where these men cannot reach me and inflict their evil plans upon me." And as he speaks for a fourfold request, he's simultaneously giving a fourfold description of those who are after him.

Look again at verse 1, "Deliver me from my enemies; Set me on high away from those who rise up against me." Verse 2, "those who do iniquity, men of bloodshed." There is a wonderful symmetry, a wonderful balance to the way that he opens this up, a fourfold request for help that is balanced against the fourfold description of the people who would do him harm. And so these men are violent, they are opposed to him, they are after him and they will shed his blood given the opportunity. These men of sin and hostility have David in their cross-hairs, so to speak, in order to kill him.

Look at verse 3. "For behold." Here it is as we so often see in the Psalms, David makes the request and then he states the reason for the request. Deliver me, "For behold, they have set an ambush for my life." And you get of sense of vivid intensity as he's describing what they are doing and what they want to do. "For behold, they have set an ambush for my life; Fierce men launch an attack against me." "So God, deliver me. These men are after me and they are fierce. They are playing for keeps. They are intent on bringing this harm to me and there is nothing in them that would restrain them. They love the bloodshed, they love the iniquity, and they hate me. God, if you leave me in their hands, I will surely perish."

Now, I venture to say that you're going to identify with David in what he goes on to say in verse 4 as well. Why are these men after him? There is no good reason. They have no justification for their hatred of him. Look at what he says at the end of verse 3 and on into verse 4. He said, "These fierce men have launched an attack against me but, God, it's not for my transgression nor for my sin. It's for no guilt of mine that they run and set themselves against me." He's saying, "God, these men are after me and I've done nothing to them." David's character before Saul was blameless and yet Saul wanted him dead out of a sense of jealousy that David was more accomplished on the battlefield than he was. So out of sheer jealousy through nothing wrong that David had done, Saul wants him dead and isn't that the case, isn't that often what you find? That you find opposition within your family, within circles of relationship and people are speaking with swords against you? People are hacking you with their tongues and saying all kinds of wicked things behind your back and you find out about it and you say, "What is this? I've done nothing to them." Well, find in Scripture your sense of sympathy from Christ and realize that the word of God recognizes that sometimes that's the position that you find yourself in.

And David appeals to God, notice he's not claiming that, "I've never sinned at any time in my life against you, O God." He's simply making the more narrow statement, "I haven't done anything to justify the hostility that these men are bringing against me." So it becomes part of the ground of his appeal saying, "God, I'm blameless in this and therefore you should protect me in it because you are a defender of the blameless, you are one who protects your people, especially when they are innocent in the matter for which they've been accused."

So David, here's what I would have you see, what I would have you remember is that David here is in a great place of intimacy with God. He knows that God knows the truth and he appeals to that. He knows that God loves him, that God cares for him, that God is

a God of loyal love to his people and he says, "God, I know who you are in relationship to your people, and I know that in my situation that this person is opposed to me without any justification whatsoever. Therefore, God, on the vertical basis of who you are and on the horizontal level of my own blamelessness, comparatively speaking, God, I am justified to ask you to protect me and I have an expectation that you'll do exactly what I ask." So he calls on God in his power over angel armies to help him.

Look at the end of verse 4, "Arouse Yourself to help me, and see!" Verse 5, "You, O Yahweh God of hosts, the God of Israel," in other words, "You're a powerful God and you're the God of your people and you're the covenant keeping God." All of that wrapped up in that short machine gun fire appeal to the various names of God. He says, "God, in light of who you are and in light of who you are to your people, wake up!" In other words, "Do something here to help me and to deliver me. Awake to punish all the nations." He says, "Do not be gracious to any who are treacherous in iniquity." You see, it's not just that God is a God of power, he is that. He's also the God of Israel with a special relationship to his people.

And as you read on in this Psalm, you find David describing, better yet, ascribing to God certain aspects of his character in relationship to his people. We'll jump ahead just a moment here. Look at verse 9. He says, "God is my stronghold." Verse 10, "God in His lovingkindness will meet me." Verse 16, "I sing of Your strength. I sing of Your lovingkindness." Verse 17, "God is my stronghold. God is the one who shows me lovingkindness." So, you see, the point here is that he's calling on God as the God of his people and as he calls on God as the God of his people he says, "God, I am appealing to different aspects of who you are. You are the defender of your people and one of the reasons that you defend your people is because of your lovingkindness, your chesed, your loyal love that means that you never let your people down, you never abandon them to their enemies." So he's appealing to God as a God of justice and also as a God of loyal love and he says, "God, you being a God of justice, you could not possibly – watch this – God, you're a God of justice. You could not possibly approve of the treacherous way that these people are dealing with me. There is no way that you find that pleasing. There's no way that that's acceptable to you, O God, therefore act to deliver me," is the course and the spirit of his prayer.

So now as you go on, he asks God to bring to them the fruit of their own sin and he describes his enemies and the picture isn't pretty. It's vivid. Verse 6, he compares them to dogs. He's under attack from dogs. He says, "They return at evening, they howl like a dog, And go around the city." Dogs at that time were not the domesticated animals that we might have as pets. Dogs in this day were scavenger animals. They were ugly. They were vicious and they roamed in packs at night looking for food to eat. So when we think of a dog, we shouldn't think of Fluffy the cocker spaniel, we should be thinking more of something like a wild coyote for those of you that spent time in California and have perhaps seen those in your goings about. Scavenger animals. It's a description of derision that he's making about them. These men who are after David are like aggressive animals that would not be safe to meet in the streets.

And in verse 7 he says, "Behold, they belch forth with their mouth; Swords are in their lips, For, they say, 'Who hears?'" "God, not only are these men wicked, they are mocking your name. They are saying, 'Who hears us when we speak our lies? Who hears us when we threaten God's people? Who does anything about it?'" There was a godless element to their attacks in their seeking after David. They said, "No one is going to hold us accountable. We have the power. We'll kill him and we'll move on and everything will be just fine." David says, "God, that's what they're like. Intervene and do something about this, would you?" These men were uncouth, contemptible belchers, braggarts who had no fear of God. If people had the fear of God they wouldn't treat his people that way.

So what does David do having described his enemies in prayer and seeking deliverance from them? Well, he pivots in the next section, verses 8 through 15, and secondly, you could say he seeks security in his God. He seeks security in his God. He states the threat and having stated the threat now he seeks security in his God. And what is so lovely about this Psalm, what I've just come to love more and more as we go through the Psalms together over a long period of time, is just that you find David's love and knowledge of God bleeding through and you find him resting in the very character of God.

So look at verse 8. He said, "But You, O LORD, laugh at them; You scoff at all the nations." He contrasts. He's just called them dogs and described his enemies but now he pivots over and he describes who God is and what God is to him.

And he says in verse 9, "Because of his strength I will watch for You, For God is my stronghold. My God in His lovingkindness will meet me; God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes." He's described his enemies as dogs and now he pivots to God. In verse 8 he says, "But You, O LORD, laugh at them." As violent as their intentions are, as severe as their threat is to David, he looks to God and he looks at it from God's perspective and says, "God, while this is an imminent threat to me, from your perspective this is laughable. You look at this and you are in no way intimidated by them. In no way are you threatened by the men who threaten me." This is so silly from God's perspective. These men are bringing a toy gun against the multiplied angel army host of God. What do they think the outcome is going to be? How is this possibly going to turn out well for them to oppose God from their human strength when God is the God of angel armies, the Lord of Hosts, who is covenantally faithful to his people? So from God's perspective, this is laughable, that they would try to rise up against God by threatening one of his servants.

This isn't the first time that we've seen God described as laughing in the Psalms. Go back to Psalm 2, if you would. Psalm 2 where in verse 1 the nations are in an uproar, the kings of the earth take their stands against the Lord and against his anointed and what is God's response? Psalm 2:4, "He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." The whole matter is laughable to think that anyone would trifle with this God. This is the epitome of foolishness. This could not be more ridiculous just from a matter of self-preservation to think that you could rise up against God and get away with it. God looks at this and God looks at all of

the ways that we're threatened by those who unrighteously oppose us, God looks at that and says, "This is laughable." Don't you understand that God can deal with this any way, any time he wants without any kind of hindrance whatsoever? That he is utterly free and utterly powerful to do what he wants? And if evil flourishes for a time, it's only so that God will deal with it in the end. It's not from any lack of power or ability or knowledge on God's part that this happens. Men may sneer at him but he reigns and it's so foolish, to God this is a joke.

That's the perspective that we need to develop, beloved. When we are resting under the protection of God, when we are seeking him as our stronghold, when we are trusting in Christ and belonging to that one who said, "I will never ever leave you, nor will I ever ever forsake you," that in that position, there is a covering of protection upon us that no man can penetrate, that the most wicked arrows of the devil can never pierce. And anything that filters through, has been pre-approved and pre-ordained by God for your good and for your blessing. So we're secure when dogs attack us. We have nothing to fear when we come back to our God. David knows the omnipotence and faithfulness of God and that's his refuge.

Look at verses 9 and 10 now. He says, "Because of his strength I will watch for You." I'm looking to you, God for my help here, not trusting in myself. "God is my stronghold." God is the place where I can go and find a sure defense that the enemy cannot penetrate. So I come back to him and I rest in him with the full confidence, verse 10 that, "My God in His lovingkindness will meet me; God will let me look triumphantly upon my foes. God, you're a God of loyal love to me and so I stand, as it were, alone before you and appeal to you for my help." This is the spirit with which David prays and, beloved, it is the spirit to which Scripture calls you to that kind of complete trust and confidence in your God, remembering what framed it earlier was Romans 8, remembering that from a New Testament perspective we are resting in Christ and we know that we have a brother in heaven interceding for us and knowing from that position we're protected, we're safe because of who God is.

And David knows that God will not abandon him to the dogs and with his eyes firmly on God, David prays for a particular kind of defeat and there is a unique contribution, I believe, of Psalm 59 here at this particular verse. David prays, "Do not slay them, or my people will forget; Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield." This is interesting. David is not praying for their immediate destruction. He's not asking God to wipe them out immediately. In fact he says, "God, don't kill them. There's something for my people to learn here. Scatter them and bring them down but don't just wipe them off, don't incinerate them in a moment."

Why would he pray that? Well, David has his eye on the people of God who are looking to him and will look to him in the future and his point is this, "God, if the enemy falls too quickly, the whole lesson of the futility of opposing God will be lost on those who see." David realizes that the best lessons are the ones that we learn over time. Those are the ones that go the deepest, the ones where we're thinking and contemplating and observing and waiting and praying and watching and some steps forward and some steps back. At

the end of a long process like that when you see the deliverance of God, you say, "Oh yea. You know, this has been going on for a good seven years. And now there is complete vindication. Now there is a complete deliverance. Now I see it all clearly in the light of Scripture." Beloved, if you don't know by personal experience, perhaps one day you will. Lessons like that stay with you for a lifetime and God would not be as good to you if he always granted to you the deliverance on your timetable. Sometimes he delays it for the sake, always for the sake of your greater blessing in the end.

So if deliverance seems delayed and slow in coming, take heart in the fact that sometimes God does that in order to drive the lesson home more deeply, in order to accomplish deeper purposes than the mere immediate deliverance that you might prefer initially would bring to you. In the context of Psalm 59 dealing with dogs who attack, we always come back to this fundamental principle, beloved: look, God deals with evil men. God deals with people who treat us sinfully. God protects us in that and therefore we have no cause for fear about the ultimate outcome. That's never a concern and so since we know the outcome, then it turns to us to be patient, to wait, and to just earnestly consistently over time look to God until he brings a final deliverance. You see, that shapes the whole way that you walk with Christ. It shapes the whole way that you approach life. This is a whole worldview that informs the way that you do things. Rather than – watch this – rather than collapsing in panic, rather than being dominated by fear because the deliverance doesn't come immediately, you fall back on broader deeper principles, "The Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish." That is guaranteed. That is the way God runs the universe and if you're in Christ, then that works to your favor and you say, "Okay, Lord, I'll humble myself under the weight of this one more time, I'll humble myself again, I'll look to you again and I'll trust you for how this comes out."

God uses your trials and the opposition as a school of training for your spiritual life. That's not something to despise. What man goes into the military wanting to be an Air Force fighter pilot and resents the training school that equips him for it? What Navy SEAL when he's in the course of battle has resented the fact that his trainers pushed him to the utter limit in basic so that he was prepared for the battle when it came? You see, we just have to think differently and wean ourselves off of that lust for immediate deliverance so that we can be comfortable and instead value the higher aspirations, the higher things that God is doing in your soul and say, "I'm a soldier in the army of Christ. I'm a child in the family of God. And what does God do but he disciplines me and he raises me up and sometimes that comes through opposition to which I say, 'Not my will but thine be done, O God.'" And that's what David is doing here.

So rather than having God remove them from the scene, he asks that their wickedness would return on their own head to their own shame. Look at verse 12. He said, "On account of the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, Let them even be caught in their pride, And on account of curses and lies which they utter." "Lord, they are setting traps about me." Remember they had circled his house setting an ambush. He says, "God, as they are setting traps, let it catch them. Let their own wickedness become that which entraps them and ensnares them and let it be obvious to all." It happened to Haman in the

book of Esther, didn't it? Built a gallows to hang Mordecai on 75 feet high and whose neck was snapped? Haman's not Mordecai. God protected Mordecai and brought Haman's evil schemes to bear upon him himself.

Now, as we're going through this, beloved, as you're getting into the spirit of David's prayer, it's so important to understand that this is not a prayer for personal retribution. This is not David seeking vengeance for his own sake and out of his own sense of hatred. That's not the case. He makes it plain what his great concern is and his great concern is the glory of God.

Look at verse 13, he says, "Destroy them in wrath, destroy them that they may be no more; That," for this purpose, so that this goal would be accomplished, O God, "That men may know that God rules in Jacob To the ends of the earth." "God, I pray this way because I have a goal in mind and my goal is not my own glory but yours. I want the ends of the earth to know, O God, that you rule, that you reign, that you are glorious and that you are faithful to your people. And they will see that, that will be manifested. My present circumstances will be an object lesson in the glory of God to the nations, O God. That's why I pray this way. It might be so that it would be that your name would be lifted up." David's prominence would bring worldwide repercussions. Nations would learn to fear God – watch this – nations would learn to fear God by the way God protects his people. God protected his own Son this way, didn't he? Allowed him to undergo the crucifixion to accomplish our redemption but what was on the other side three days later? A glorious raising from the dead that displayed that God had accepted his sacrifice, that Jesus Christ was his beloved Son never to die again. Completely vindicated by the resurrection even though he walked through the valley of the shadow of death for you and me.

So David repeats the refrain in verse 14, picking up what he said in very similar language in verse 6. He says, "They return at evening, they howl like a dog, And go around the city. They wander about for food And growl if they are not satisfied." "God, these men are dogs that are opposed to you. Deal with them according to what they deserve. Deal with them according to your power, according to your faithfulness so that your name would be glorified and show these shiftless vagrants who reigns."

That's what lies ahead for those dogs. David says, "But there is a better outcome waiting for me." In sharp contrast to the unsatisfied growls of his enemy, David ends in joyful song. This is our third and final point here. In the final two verses he sings praise to his God. He sings praise to his God. As so often happens, Psalm 59 concludes on a note of praise.

Look at verse 16. David says, "But as for me," he says, "God, I've deal with these enemies before your throne and now let's just make it about you and me. Me looking to you vertically. Here's what's going to happen from my heart, O God, 'I shall sing of Your strength; Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning.' God I am going to praise you because I trust you. I know that your deliverance is sure and therefore praise is what lies ahead for me. I am going to honor my God with my uplifted voice."

Why? Look at the end of verse 16, "For You have been my stronghold And a refuge in the day of my distress."

So in verse 17 he closes with this certain hope. He says, "O my strength, I will sing praises to You; For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me lovingkindness." "When the deliverance comes, David says, "I'm going to be singing. I pledge to you my future praise, O God, and my praise will call attention to your attributes which motivated you to deliver me in my distress. God, I've appealed to your lovingkindness, I appealed to your strength as our fortress and our refuge and, God, I know that from that basis you will act to deliver us. You will act to deliver me." Watch this, "Just as I trust you now based on those attributes, when the deliverance comes I will praise you for those selfsame attributes." His hope is certain and we have recorded for us 3,000 years later the praise of David to his God, that which invites you to praise him in like manner and to trust him in like manner. Your God is good, beloved. Christian, your God is faithful. You can trust him and therefore we can praise him even tonight, even before our deliverance comes we can rest in him.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for the immensely practical nature of this Psalm and this instruction. We understand what it's like to have people oppose us. We're bowed, O God, before you. Father, what is there in men that we would fear when we know God and we know that you're faithful and that you're a God of loyal love? So we rest in you, O God. We praise you to the highest heights and we entrust to you all of the trials, all of the sorrows, all of the bitterness that life has brought us in these days and these seasons for some in this room, O God, some finding that the people closest to them are the ones that bring them the most heartache. God, in those circumstances, we appeal to you to show yourself faithful just as you did to David and we praise you now, we trust you on the basis of these revealed attributes and, Lord, we look forward to the day when we will praise you fully when your deliverance comes. You're a great God, a good God, and we love you and we praise you through our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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