

## Learning One of Life's Hardest Lessons

Psalm 7

*Studies in the Psalms #7*

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**A**s we turn again to the Psalms, I want you to note how Psalms 1–8 fit together. Go back to Psalms 1–2. These are the introduction to the whole Psalter. Now notice Psalm 8, which closes out this first portion of Psalms. How do I know this? Because Psalms 3–7 deal with the struggles of David, with only Psalms 3 and 7 having any mention of details in the headings.

And so we're dealing again with a lament of David. What's the problem? **David goes to the LORD in song concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite** (title). We actually don't know who this person is; but we don't need to. He was saying hurtful things about David. We've all had to face this. But how? In verses 1–9 we hear David's plea to the Lord, with the word "save" in verse 1. Then verses 10–16 we have his confession of the Lord's justice, again with the word "save" in verse 10. Then verse 17 is the conclusion.

What I want to focus on is how David's example in Psalm 7 helps us in learning one of life's hardest lessons. What lesson is that? How to trust the Lord to be your judge when even your close friends condemn and slander

you. I have to be careful how I say this, but this is a lesson I've had to learn as a pastor. And I pray I can guide you through this Psalm so you too can learn this lesson.

## **Concealing Your Life in the Lord**

First, we learn to trust the Lord to be our judge when our close friends condemn and slander us in verses 1–2: *concealing your life in the Lord*. **O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge** (v. 1). Look at how the theological principle of 2:12—“Blessed are all who take refuge in him”—is now applied practically as he says, **save me from all my pursuers and deliver me** (v. 1). One of the things you do when you practice and train for any sport is to develop what we call “muscle memory.” It’s done a drill over and over again so that when you’re in that situation again you don’t have to think, you just do. We need to develop muscle memory spiritually. You and I need to develop the ability to run to the Lord first thing when we are in trouble.

If you don’t, David says **lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces, with none to deliver** (v. 2). We might put it into our lingo and say, “let like a backstabber they rip my heart out.” Have you faced that? No doubt you have. As C. H. Spurgeon said, “If God was slandered in

Eden, we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Opening Your Conscience Before the Lord**

And when you go to the Lord there is a second thing you need to do as you learn to trust the Lord to be your judge when your close friends condemn and slander you: *opening your conscience before the Lord*. We see this in verses 3–5. Note the series of three “if” statements: **O LORD my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause** (vv. 3–4). I’ve been there. I’ve sat there with men I considered my friends tearing into my heart, accusing me of being a terrible preacher, a terrible pastor, and an all-around terrible human being and if I would just leave everything would be alright. I had to learn by experience what I knew was in the Bible: self-examination. David is not saying he’s sinless; he’s saying that **this** particular thing he’s being accused of is not true. It’s same in verse 8 when David prays, **judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me**. He is not saying he is perfect but in reference to Cush’s accusations he is innocent of the charges.<sup>2</sup> Obviously if God counted

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<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon, 1:76.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin, 84.

our sins, who could stand?

This is why he says **if** and then goes on to invoke a curse upon himself: **let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory<sup>3</sup> in the dust** (v. 5). This is the vow of an clean conscience. In the ancient world there were all kinds of ways to humiliate your enemy. For example, at the battle of Troy, the invincible Achilles dragged the champion Hector's body around the walls as a way of humiliating him. But notice in biblical piety, here David is saying **may my enemies humiliate me!**

### **Turning Judgment Over to the Lord**

So I go to the Lord and open myself up to the Lord; but what about my enemies? This is where it gets hard! The Holy Spirit is teaching us here about *turning judgment over to the Lord* throughout verses 6–16. **Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies; awake for me; you have appointed a judgment** (v. 6). Sometimes God seems to be asleep, doesn't he? And we pray like this: **awake, lift yourself up**. Now, the temptation is when you hear that person's name mentioned, to want to

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<sup>3</sup> 3:3, 4:2

justify yourself and so you start talking. I don't know about you but when certain names are mentioned or certain events my stomach gets that horrible feeling, my heart rate increases, and I get that nervous feeling of having to do something in my favor. Do you get that, too? I'm by no means a perfect practitioner, but the Lord is teaching me that he's my judge, and that person isn't; he's my judge, not me. It's not up to me to clear my name. It's not up to me to be my defense attorney. **Arise, O LORD, in your anger; lift yourself up...Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you; over it return on high. The LORD judges the peoples** (vv. 7-8a).<sup>4</sup>

What if Jesus got tired of the Devil's accusations, slanders, and temptations? "You know what, Devil, I am pretty hungry, so I'll turn some stones into bread. I am the Son of God and I'll test out my angels' obedience by jumping off the temple. And yes, being king now would be better than going to the cross first, so here you go, I bow my knee to you." What if Jesus just got tired of all the unbelief, all the schemes against him, all the slowness to understand of his own disciples and just unveiled his glory, engulfed his enemies in flames, decimated the Roman legions, and set up his throne in Jerusalem? What if? It's always easiest in our wisdom to skip the cross and go

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<sup>4</sup> This could be imagining a trial according to Deuteronomy 17:8-13. Longman, 76 n13.

straight to the crown. But that is not the way of the Lord's wisdom. We are saved because Jesus entrusted himself to God's eternal plan to suffer and die for us. And after we are saved, it is through many tribulations and trials and temptations that we ultimately enter into the kingdom of God.

We still pray, **Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end—** whether the evil of the world around us, the evil of our own sins, or the evil of Satan—**and may you establish the righteous—you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God!** (v. 9) But we recognize that while the Lord may relieve us in this particular instance, we are still going to struggle in this life and ultimate liberation does not come until we die or the Lord returns in glory. And so we give everything over to the Lord as verse 10 says, **My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart.**

Now, let me say that there is another practical benefit to the Lord's seemingly being asleep in our lives when our enemies are accusing us. Think about it. If the Lord doesn't not come down upon them in judgment immediately as we want, why could he be so slow to act, even so patient with them? "But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise was some count slowness, but is patient toward you,

not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:8–9). We just had this conversation yesterday in our home. If God just punished people as we want him to, how could anyone ever be saved? He may be agonizingly slow to help you at the same time he is at work in your enemies’ life, which is a blessed slowness. If you’re here today and you have yet to turn away from yourself and your sins and to turn to Jesus, I say to you that God is showing you patience. Everything verses 11–16 say are true—**God...feels indignation every day (v. 11), if a man does not repent, God will whet his sword; he has bent and readied his bow; he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts (vv. 12–13)—**but now is the time to turn and be saved!

### **Recognizing an Opportunity to Worship the Lord**

Let me close with a fourth and final point. We have lots of enemies, the world outside of us, our sins inside of us, and the Devil who is always against us. And as we are being lied about, slandered, and torn to pieces by words, we are to be concealing ourselves in the Lord, opening our consciences before the Lord, and turning judgment over to the Lord. And in this, we should also be *recognizing an opportunity to worship the Lord*. We

don't just emote to the Lord. We don't just vent to the Lord. We are to worship the Lord: **I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.** You probably heard a candidate for President who confesses to be a Christian pledge that he would make Mexico pay for a wall across our southern border. When the former President of Mexico said "no way"—and that's the polite version—the candidate then said, "The wall just got ten feet higher." Our attitude as Christians against our enemies is not tit for tat, eye for an eye, brothers and sisters. My attitude is that even when my Father allows evil to come into my life, I am to praise him because I know he has a good reason for it—he will work all things for good in my life (Rom. 8:28). And I praise him because as Almighty God he can change that situation in an instant. And I praise him because as a Father who is faithful to his promises to love me, he is willing to remove the accusations, the backbiting, the gossip, the lies, and the slanders to his praise and to his glory. Amen? Let us pray.