

Falsely Accused

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Bible Verse: Psalm 109
Preached on: Tuesday, November 10, 2020

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Our text tonight comes from Psalm 109 and I'm going to be severely tempted to stray far from it but we'll start there and we'll see how this unfolds.

Psalm 109, and I invite you to turn there, "A Psalm of David," and I'm going to read it to begin our time.

1 O God of my praise, Do not be silent! 2 For they have opened the wicked and deceitful mouth against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3 They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without cause. 4 In return for my love they act as my accusers; But I am in prayer. 5 Thus they have repaid me evil for good And hatred for my love. 6 Appoint a wicked man over him, And let an accuser stand at his right hand. 7 When he is judged, let him come forth guilty, And let his prayer become sin. 8 Let his days be few; Let another take his office. 9 Let his children be fatherless And his wife a widow. 10 Let his children wander about and beg; And let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes. 11 Let the creditor seize all that he has, And let strangers plunder the product of his labor. 12 Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him, Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children. 13 Let his posterity be cut off; In a following generation let their name be blotted out. 14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15 Let them be before the LORD continually, That He may cut off their memory from the earth; 16 Because he did not remember to show lovingkindness, But persecuted the afflicted and needy man, And the despondent in heart, to put them to death. 17 He also loved cursing, so it came to him; And he did not delight in blessing, so it was far from him. 18 But he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, And it entered into his body like water And like oil into his bones. 19 Let it be to him as a garment with which he covers himself, And for a belt with which he constantly girds himself. 20 Let this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD, And of those who speak evil against my soul. 21 But You, O GOD, the Lord, deal kindly with me for Your name's sake; Because Your lovingkindness is good, deliver me; 22 For I am afflicted and needy, And

my heart is wounded within me. 23 I am passing like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like the locust. 24 My knees are weak from fasting, And my flesh has grown lean, without fatness. 25 I also have become a reproach to them; When they see me, they wag their head. 26 Help me, O LORD my God; Save me according to Your lovingkindness. 27 And let them know that this is Your hand; You, LORD, have done it. 28 Let them curse, but You bless; When they arise, they shall be ashamed, But Your servant shall be glad. 29 Let my accusers be clothed with dishonor, And let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe. 30 With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD; And in the midst of many I will praise Him. 31 For He stands at the right hand of the needy, To save him from those who judge his soul.

Psalm 109 is a very strong Psalm, as you can see. Psalm 109 is an imprecatory Psalm, a Psalm in which David calls on God to judge his false accusers and we're not often, we're not really used to, and speaking broadly about the church, not so much here at Truth Community, we're not used to the sharp language of the imprecatory Psalms and we forget the emphasis that Scripture places on the holiness of God and the consequences of sin and the black darkness of sin. And so when generally speaking when Christians come to an imprecatory Psalm like this, it strikes their ears very hard and even someone like C. S. Lewis has criticized the imprecatory Psalms thinking that they were unfit for the word of God, showing that C. S. Lewis has a reputation that exceeds his reliability, as I've said in the past.

As we enter this text, there are some things that we need to do to set the context. How are we to think about the fact that in this Psalm David prays this way and gives such harsh, calls for such a harsh denunciation by God upon his accusers. Well, we're going to set some context here and I want to remind you of some things that even play into, you know, our perspective on the whole matter of church discipline and things like that.

To introduce the Psalm, I invite you to turn over to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy 19. Deuteronomy 19 is a section of the law that provides for judgment on those who bring false accusations in a court of law, and there is protection that is given and as well as consequences that are given that are designed to protect the integrity of the process. In Deuteronomy 19:15 it says this,

15 A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

Which is the same thing that Jesus required in Matthew 18, isn't it? Verse 16,

16 If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, 17 then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days. 18 The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a

false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

Pay close attention here.

20 The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. 21 Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Here in this passage God's law very wisely establishes protection for the judicial process. The law protects people from false accusations and if someone was found to have made a false accusation against another man, the false accuser receives the penalty that he sought on another. Our law system doesn't work this way. You can kind of get away with an awful lot in the legal system and there's not a very high standard that a plaintiff has to meet in order to bring a lawsuit and the consequences of false lawsuits is not that great. Here in the word of God, God's law applies for the penalty that was being sought to be rendered upon the head of him who brought false accusations against another. And so that forms the background of Psalm 109 in a way that we need to keep in mind. David is on the receiving end of false accusations and as he prays against them and asks God to judge them, it's important for us to realize that there is a foundation in the law of God for him to pray in that way.

Now so hold that thought, keep that thought in mind. Here's a little bit of a tangent that I want to go on. It's a planned tangent, you might say, and I want to, I feel the need to emphasize some of these things, if not make an entire message out of it. I pointed out there in Deuteronomy 19:20 that there is this sanctifying effect that this portion of God's word had and was intended to have on those who would hear. Look at it there in verse 20, "The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you." So the fact that there was punishment brought on the false accuser made those who saw what happened afraid and it made them afraid to repeat his sins because they see the consequence that sin brought on him and therefore they're afraid of sinning in like manner lest they suffer the same consequence themselves. Very important principle to understand and one that is repeated often in the New Testament as well. We see it both in the narrative portions of Scripture and also in the didactic portions of the Scripture.

Turn over to the book of Acts 5:5. There's ultimately a pastoral point that I want to make for us as a congregation at Truth Community Church. You remember the story of Ananias and Sapphira, they falsely claimed that they were giving the full purchase price of their home to the apostles when actually they kept some back. They were deceitful. They wanted praise for having given the full price without having actually done so and keeping some of the profit for themselves and you remember what happened. In verse 3,

3 ... Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under

your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart?
You have not lied to men but to God."

And so there was this false pretense that he was making and God being a God of truth, lying is a violation of his very character and among the people of God, falsehood is a great threat, it is a great cancer, it is a great plague waiting to be unleashed if it is not dealt with rightly and therefore it is a mortal threat to the people of God. And so, you know what happened, look at it there in verse 5.

5 ...as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; [and notice what the effect of that was] and great fear came over all who heard of it.

Just like in Deuteronomy 19, the punishment of a false accuser was meant to bring fear upon those who saw and heard lest they repeat his sins as well. And there's more as the passage goes on. Verse 7,

7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

John MacArthur jokes that she came to the second service and, I know, whatever. Verse 8,

8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." [So she lied too.] 9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well."
10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

And verse 12 as you continue on, you see the fear that came over the church. It spread beyond the walls of the church as well. Verse 12,

12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.
13 But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.

And so this had an effect upon the surrounding population as they heard about what had happened, as they saw the power and the holiness being displayed, they did not want to associate with them because of the reality of the holiness that was being manifested in the way that sin, God was dealing with sin.

Now that's church discipline to an extreme, isn't it, what happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Great great fear fell upon them and at the core of this, what is being revealed in these situations is the great holiness of God, the holiness of God and the consequences of sin are being revealed in a way that frightened people, and we're not used to speaking about these things this way, especially in the American Evangelical church but the holiness of God has consequences. It is a reality and it is a reality that when it is manifest strikes fear in the hearts of those who see. You think of Isaiah in Isaiah 6, you know, he saw the glory of God revealed and he said, "Woe is me for I am undone! I'm a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips." And he was frightened by what was taking place.

Well, these aren't the only places where you see this in Scripture. Look over at 1 Timothy 5. As Paul gives instruction for dealing with sin in church leadership, there is this same protection that we read about in Deuteronomy 19, there is this same protection that is given to church leadership. It is a close verbal parallel to what we read in Deuteronomy 19.

19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

And so, you know, an accusation against an elder has a high standard to be met and it is something not to be lightly done and there needs to be very well-founded evidence before an accusation is brought against a duly established elder in a church. And Paul goes on and he says in verse 20,

20 Those who continue in sin [in other words, if the charges are borne out], rebuke [them] in the presence of all [make a public issue of it, and he gives the reason for that], so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.

And so we see that part of the purpose of this is that it would provoke a sense of reverence and fear in the hearts of the congregation so that they would not follow in the footsteps of the sinning elder. And so we see this concept of fear and the discipline of sin producing fear in the hearts of those that observe how things are being dealt with.

Now would I focus on that? A couple of things like this past Sunday, you know, it's a matter of public record, isn't it, that we had a four step discipline issue where someone was put out of the church, and based on past experience, I know that that has for some of the more timid in the midst maybe, that frightens people, and sometimes people leave over such things because they don't understand that this is actually the way that Scripture calls for things to be done. We need to understand that the matter of sin in the church is a serious matter and when we as a congregation see something like this playing out in the life of our church, there should be a sobering impact on us, a sobering impact that causes us to humbly examine ourselves, to look at ourselves for sin in our own lives, to be repentant and to humble ourselves before God lest, you know, we would find ourselves walking in the same steps and, you know, being in that position later on ourselves. Sin is a very deceitful foe and we are all prone to justify ourselves in our rebellion and in our

sin and in our wickedness, we're prone to justify ourselves and matters of church discipline serve as a wake-up call to remind us that things are serious, God is holy, and that sin is not to be tolerated among the people of God.

So I say all of this by way of instruction and encouragement, really, to help us grasp the significance of what Scripture says on this. There is to be among the people of God a sense of holy reverence about the things of God and a holy fear of sin and its consequences and that is not to be something that is to be marginalized in the life of the church when it comes up. And so, so yeah, and it's a sobering matter and we embrace what Scripture says about this and to realize that we're not always supposed to be entertained when we come together as a body of believers, it's not always going to be, you know, I mean, there are different aspects of spiritual life that play out in the life of the church and God takes sin seriously. That's the point.

And what can we say about this? What's the way forward in it, is to understand that Scripture tells us that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. To have a right perception of the holiness of God, a right reverence, a right fear of sin, a right reverence of God, this is the beginning point of wisdom. And church life and holiness and sin are not things that are to be taken casually and treated as if they were the latest sale item in the junk bin at Target or whatever. No. You know, we take these things earnestly, we take them seriously, and these matters refresh our sense of the holiness of God and how we are to respond to him. Very important matters in my judgment and, you know, I'm grateful for the Lord to be able to emphasize these things for us.

So with that said, let's turn back to Psalm 109 and go through the text in our remaining time here this evening. I guess the point is, is the fact that something is sobering. Here's my bottom line: the fact that something is sobering in Scripture, something that's sobering in church life does not mean that it's wrong, it does not mean that something has gone astray. Sometimes Scripture sobers us so that we would take God seriously and that we would take our own sin seriously and that it would provoke us to repentance, and that it would therefore have a sanctifying impact on us. The man who takes sin seriously will grow spiritually. If you have a casual or hardened attitude toward you sin, you know, that's not good. And so let him who has ears to hear, as Jesus said, hear.

Okay, so in Psalm 109 with all of these things said, David here in Psalm 109, he is not being personally vindictive. In light of what we've seen, we understand that David is crying out to God for justice according to God's own law. "God, You have a section in Your revealed word that deals with false accusers. I'm appealing to the spirit of that for You to help me in this situation where I, myself, am on the receiving end of false accusations." And it's important to remember that David as he's writing this Psalm, David was more than just an individual believer. David was the king of Israel personally appointed by God and therefore David was a national representative of all the people of God at that time and he was God's own anointed man for the position. And so David here is responsible to protect the people and to keep justice in the land, and so for false accusations to come against the king was a matter of elevated importance in the life of the people because if the throne itself was undermined, then the stability and the security of

the people were being undermined. This is not like you and me facing false accusations in our private individual lives, David's position put him in a different situation that elevated the significance of the attack and therefore the significance of his prayer in response.

So what we see in Psalm 109 is this, we see a zealous prayer of a man, a zealous prayer of the king who is standing for God's cause. And watch this and keep this, this all helps frame the swift exposition that we'll do. The attitude of Psalm 109 is severe. Yes, it is. There's no getting around that but you'll understand the severity of the attitude when you understand that it was a severe threat against the stability of God's people, and so David rises to a severe threat with a prayer that is grounded in the word of God itself.

So let's go and let's just walk through this quickly. This Psalm gives perspective on false accusations and gives us a sense of the refuge that we can take in God when we do. First of all, we're going to see David's plea to God. That's the first point for tonight, David's plea to God, and the title of tonight's message is "Falsely Accused." Falsely accused from Psalm 109.

As the Psalm opens, David praises God and asks him to respond. He verbalizes a quick word of prayer and then he gets right to the point. I love the directness of it. In verse 1 there he says,

1 O God of my praise, Do not be silent!

"God, I honor You, I praise You. Don't be silent." In other words, "Hear my prayer and respond to it. This is urgent." And so he comes right into the heart of his prayer right from the beginning and he explains why he's asking God to be swift to respond.

Look at it in verse 2. He says,

2 For they have opened the wicked and deceitful mouth against me; They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. 3 They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without cause.

Guilty people, lying accusers were accusing David of crimes that would have undermined his throne. James Montgomery Boice says this, he says, "Words have probably done more serious and lasting damage to other people than any amount of specifically evil acts or violence. David knew this danger and so he asked God for protection from lies, innuendo, slander and false accusations." It cuts deeply. Those of you that have been on the receiving end of false accusations that have harmed you in family life or harmed you in your vocation, in your reputation, you understand this and you feel the sense of defenselessness that comes when people are doing this and then you're shocked even more as people are willing to believe things that they ought to know better than to hear. It's just, you know, lies have a way of pandering toward the fallen human nature and so we see this and David is responding against it. His former friends were betraying him.

Look at it there in verse 4. This is poignant and it's painful to read. He says,

4 In return for my love they act as my accusers; But I am in prayer. 5 Thus they have repaid me evil for good And hatred for my love.

David says, "God, I have been a friend to these people. I have loved them. I have cared for them and look at what is happening in response. In response to all that I have done for them, this is coming against me." And so David here is feeling the weight of it and you see his sensitive spirit in this. You know, there's an aspect of godliness, there's an aspect of a godly man, that there's a certain sensitivity and a tenderness to him where these things, these things weigh on his mind and weigh on his heart, and as loved ones undermine him and loved ones start to reject him and accuse him and all of that, it weighs. It weighs on him and David is expressing this in prayer.

Now I want to point out something for you here. In verse 4, notice that word "accusers," these people bringing accusation against him. It's a repeated word in the Psalm and obviously a theme of it. Verse 6, you see the word "accuser" there, "let an accuser stand at his right hand." Verse 20, "Let this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD." Verse 29, "Let my accusers be clothed with dishonor." It's a word, "accusers" is from the word which identifies Satan. Here it is referring to David's human accusers as though they were in a courtroom making accusations and bringing charges against him.

Now let's call a little bit of a time-out and remember that this is what our Lord Jesus faced himself on the prelude to his crucifixion. Judas, the priest, the Jews brought false accusations against him in order to persuade Pilate to convict him so that they might be able to see him crucified and to bring him out of the way. It was all false. It was all trumped up. And even in that, even in that, my friends, you and I should learn from something, that the mere fact that an accusation is made against someone does not necessarily mean that it is true. All kinds of accusations were brought against Christ and you know that they were false because he never sinned. He was completely righteous, completely innocent but his innocence and his righteousness did not prevent people from making accusations against him. And so you and I in our lives and in the church, you and I need to mature and to be able to sift through accusations. Sometimes accusations are well-grounded but sometimes they're not, and the mere fact that an accusation is made does not mean that you should automatically believe it and think badly of the person who's being spoken about. We have to have more discernment than that. We have to have more love for each other than that.

Proverbs 18 is just profoundly clear on this, that the first to state his case seems just until another comes in and examines him, and it warns us against making hasty conclusions based on the testimony of one person. This happens in ministry all the time and there's nothing in church leadership that you can do to stop it. People will just believe the first thing that they hear. They won't go to an elder to ask for clarification or for things like this, and they just run with an accusation that a friend has made to them in private. Well, we've got to understand that there are two sides to stories and when things come up in the church, it's very important for you if you have questions, it's very important for you to come to elders and ask and get clarification about a matter and not simply believe the first

word that's spoken to you about a situation that may come up because false accusations and misunderstandings happen, and so it's incumbent upon you to not be so swift to believe the worst things and the first things that you hear. This will guard us from a lot of heartache and sorrow in the days and months and years to come if we would just embrace this.

And so we see these things stated for us in Scripture and what I want to just say, coming back to the personal application of it and looking again at David's words there, look at them again in verses 4 and 5 with me. He says, "In return for my love they act as my accusers; But I am in prayer. Thus they have repaid me evil for good And hatred for my love." And I just want to say for those of you that have been or are now in this situation, God's word understands the bitterness that you feel in your heart when a friend or family member turns against you. Scripture understands this. God understands it. Christ understands the weight of false accusations. Christ bore the consequences of false accusations being made against him. And because it's like that, we realize that we can go to our Lord in the midst of those times, we can pour out our heart to him as David does here, and we can know that our Lord will receive us sympathetically because he's been there and he understands the weight and the bitterness of such times.

So David pleads to God to help him in the midst of this situation. Now going on to point 2, the larger section of the Psalm. David now makes a plea for justice. He makes a plea for justice. He's made a plea to God and set forth his case and asked God to respond, now he gets specific and he's pleading for justice and what we see beginning in verse 6 down through verse 25 is a long imprecation, meaning that he's asking God to punish his false accusers. Psalm 109, beginning in verse 6. He says,

6 Appoint a wicked man over him, And let an accuser stand at his right hand.

In other words, let him feel the weight of what he's doing to me. Verse 7,

7 When he is judged, let him come forth guilty, And let his prayer become sin. 8 Let his days be few; Let another take his office.

In other words, "God, if You will shorten this, if You will deal with him in a way that cuts him off soon and the corruption is relatively brief, there will be greater hope that there won't be such long-lasting consequences on Your people if You will act now and not be silent in response to my prayer." And he goes on and he extends beyond the accuser to speak of his family. It's really striking. It says,

9 Let his children be fatherless And his wife a widow. 10 Let his children wander about and beg; And let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes. 11 Let the creditor seize all that he has, And let strangers plunder the product of his labor. 12 Let there be none to extend lovingkindness to him, Nor any to be gracious to his fatherless children. 13 Let his posterity be cut off; In a following generation let their name be blotted out.

Wow. This language is admittedly severe, isn't it? And some commentators even treat these words as though they were coming from the mouth of David's adversaries rather than David himself in order to excuse the writer of Scripture from having said such things. At this point, let me just remind you those of you that are new to our church or to our ministry, I did a couple of messages on the imprecatory Psalms that you can look up and find where we dealt with a lot of these issues. I'm not going to repeat these matters. Here why do we think that these are actually David's words? Well, in the book of Acts Peter uses these very words to refer to Judas who made accusations against Christ, and so they were not the words that Judas was saying against Christ, it's what Peter used to refer to Judas. And so the good guy was saying these words, not the bad guy, so to speak.

So what are we to do with the intensity of this language? How are we to understand and process this and think about what David has said here in his prayer? Let me give you a few things of perspective. First of all, this prayer, as we've seen, is based on the principles of Deuteronomy. He's asking for God to deal with a false accuser. He is not being personally vindictive, he is asking for legal justice. He is asking that the accuser would reap what he sows, okay? It's not personal vindictiveness that he is expressing here.

Secondly, David is speaking against the unrepentant foes of God. To oppose David the king was to oppose God himself because God is the one who installed David as king. And so this is a prayer seeking the vindication of the name of God against accusations that would undermine the very kingdom and righteousness that God himself had established.

Thirdly, something that's often lost as people talk loosely about these imprecatory Psalms. David here does not take justice into his own hands. David is praying. He is not grasping his own hands around the throat of his foes. David is praying and asking God to deal with matters.

One last thing, fourthly, about, you know, how we are to grasp the intensity of this. Notice that he's speaking about the children and the families of these accusers and talking about that, and this is just so totally foreign to the way that we think in our modern day even within the church. Let me remind you of something really important that even has implications for our own salvation as we will get to that in a moment. There is a very clear principle of representative justice in Scripture. In other words, a man represents others and when the man sins, the others that he represents as a head of a household, for example, they suffer the consequences as well. And so family members died in Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16. In Joshua 7, Achan's family was executed along with him. And in Esther 9, Haman's sons were executed along with him.

Now maybe that offends our American ears but, beloved, here's where we've got to be really careful and we need to think really biblically and we need to think really theologically in what we are talking about here as we think about this principle of representative justice because when Christ was crucified on the cross, he was acting as

our substitute, he was acting as our representative. Christ represented us and fulfilled justice on behalf of others as he suffered on the cross on our behalf. He was executed as a representative for us. And going back to the garden of Eden, Adam was a representative for the entire human race so that when Adam fell, the whole race fell. There were representative consequences that followed.

And so as we think about these sophisticated matters from Scripture, we need to understand that we need to think carefully and we need to realize that God has appointed representatives to act on behalf of others and if we are glad to have Christ represent us so that we don't have to stand before the law of God and the judgment of God alone, then we're grateful for this principle of representative justice that underlies what David is saying here. And so there are vast consequences to these things. You and I would not be saved if God did not somehow act on a principle of representative justice. You could not be saved unless God accepted a representative on your behalf because you have no means to pay for your sin and guilt on your own, and so we need someone to represent us and Christ has done that for us in his life, in his death, in his resurrection. Christ acted on our behalf and we are the beneficiaries of that in the positive sense. In the negative sense, we're seeing it play out here in the imprecation in Psalm 109.

Well, David now explains why justice is due to his accusers. We left it off in verse 13, "Let his posterity be cut off; In a following generation let their name be blotted out." Now he goes on and explains why justice is due to his accusers. Verse 14,

14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD, And do not let the sin of his mother be blotted out. 15 Let them be before the LORD continually, That He may cut off their memory from the earth; 16 Because

There you go, "Because." When you're reading Scripture, when you're looking to understand Scripture, to interpret Scripture, to get into the heart of what's being said, you want to look for those kinds of causal, those causal words: because, for, so that, the things that express purpose and reason that behind what is being said in the Scripture. Here we see it being set forth. David says, "I'm praying all of these things," verse 16,

16 Because he did not remember to show lovingkindness, But persecuted the afflicted and needy man, And the despondent in heart, to put them to death. 17 He also loved cursing, so it came to him; And he did not delight in blessing, so it was far from him. 18 But he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment, And it entered into his body like water And like oil into his bones.

What he's saying here is, "My false accusers should rightfully receive Your judgment because look at what they are like, they are completely opposed to the nature of Your character. Rather than helping the poor and needy, they persecute them. Rather than being true and loving and forthright in their hearts," verse 17, "they love cursing. They do not delight in blessing like You do, O God, they are thoroughly opposed to the very

nature of who You are." David is consumed with a concern for the glory of God and he says, "My accusers act in malice and they act without mercy and, God, they are a threat to the kingdom and they are a threat to Your rule. And on that basis, O God, in light of these principles of false accusers from Deuteronomy 19, in light of the principles of representative justice, in light of the principles of their own evil wicked character, O God," he says, "look down and see it and judge as the one who loves His people."

You see, part of the purpose of the imprecations, as I said in one of those earlier messages that I talked about, let me just remind you... Let me back up. Let me back up and say this. Modern day readers get so caught up in the strong language of the imprecation that they overlook the reasons that David is praying this way. Why is David praying this way, this so strongly? Well, let me just remind you, David here is concerned for the glory of God. David is concerned for the people of God. David is opposed to sin and so these great lofty motives undergird his concern that prompts him to pray in this way. "God, Your glory is being violated by these men who are acting in this manner and by their character. It is an offense to everything that You have revealed, and it is having adverse consequences on the people of God. And so God, I'm asking You to rise up and defend Your people, I'm asking You to rise up and defend Your own character and defend Your own glory with what I'm saying here."

You see, the reason... You know, look, I may be in a bit of a minority in the sympathy that I have for the imprecatory Psalms but I want to state plainly why I feel this way. I really believe that the people who are critical of the writers of the imprecatory Psalms are more influenced than they realize by the false tolerance of our age. People consumed with the glory of God, a people consumed with concern for the people of God are not going to look lightly on the false teachers or the wicked men who would rise up to undermine all of that and there's going to be an urgency of prayer that is expressed in response to it, not out for personal vindication but for these more lofty themes that motivate the way that things are done, and I just think that we in the 21st century are not the ones to sit in judgment of the writers of Scripture who were writing under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Maybe, just maybe we should learn from them rather than critique them. That's the way I see it.

So David now summarizes his prayer in verse 20. He says,

20 Let this be the reward of my accusers from the LORD, And of those who speak evil against my soul.

"God, I've laid it all out here." In a sense he's saying, "God, answer my prayer and deal with them in the manner of which I am speaking."

Now he goes on in verse 21 and we come to our third point tonight: David's plea for compassion. His plea for compassion. David now pivots away from his accusers and he asks God to have mercy on him and the personal nature of this appeal is quite touching. Verse 21,

21 But You, O GOD, the Lord, deal kindly with me for Your name's sake;
Because Your lovingkindness is good, deliver me;

And you can see here that he has the glory of God in view because he's appealing to the nature of God, he's appealing to the attributes of God saying, "God, because You are a God of loyal love and of steadfast mercy toward Your people and because that is good, I'm asking You to deliver me." He appeals to justice to have God deal with his enemies. He appeals to mercy for God to deal with him. "God, You are a God of mercy toward Your people and so as I pray, I'm appealing to Your mercy as the ground that would motivate You to answer this prayer as I pray to You now." And he also appeals to God's compassion for the suffering.

Look at verse 22,

22 For I am afflicted and needy, And my heart is wounded within me. 23 I am passing like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like the locust. 24 My knees are weak from fasting, And my flesh has grown lean, without fatness. 25 I also have become a reproach to them; When they see me, they wag their head.

This is the language that is used in Matthew 27 to describe those who observed Christ in his crucifixion, they wagged their heads at him. And so you see that David was a prefiguring of Christ himself in this Psalm, and in this place of vulnerability, in this place of sorrow and a broken heart as friends that he once loved turned against him, David asks for God to help him and to deliver him when he says, "Help me," verse 26,

26 Help me, O LORD my God; Save me according to Your lovingkindness.

And if God would only act to help him and save him and deliver him, there would be an effect on his accusers, they would be exposed and they would understand that God had acted on David's behalf and they would feel the shame of that in response.

Verse 27,

27 ... let them know that this is Your hand; You, LORD, have done it. 28 Let them curse, but You bless; When they arise, they shall be ashamed, But Your servant shall be glad.

He's saying, "God, turn their cursing against me into a blessing and let it produce shame in them. Your deliverance will be that which produces gladness in my heart."

Verse 29,

29 Let my accusers be clothed with dishonor, And let them cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe.

And so he's made his case for God to answer and reverse the situation. Notice what he's done as we've gone through it, oh, so quickly. He said, "God, look at their wickedness and let Your holiness and justice motivate You to deal with them and to restrain and remove their influence among Your people. God, consider Your mercy, consider Your love for Your own. Look at Your love and Your grace and have mercy on us in our weak and despised condition and reverse the situation and show us Your blessing. The result of this, O God, if You would answer my prayer in this way, here's what would happen: Your name would be vindicated. Your holiness would be upheld. The needy among Your people will be helped and the wicked foes of God will be judged. God, this is a righteous prayer that I have made to You," he says.

And it brings us to our fourth and final point: David's praise for the Judge. David's praise for the Judge. He now concludes with a commitment to praise. He anticipates God answering his prayer and therefore he commits himself in advance before he receives the answer to honor God with his mouth. Verse 30,

30 With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD; And in the midst of many I will praise Him.

God deserves praise because he shows kindness to his people, and as a result of that, the people of God are to be committed to praising him.

You know, there's just, you know, there's a lot of new people in our church and I'm really grateful for that, and one of the things that we try to do as a church is we try to keep our focus from service to service, we try to keep our focus vertical, that we gather together to praise God and to honor him and that is our first responsibility when we gather together is to remember the glory of God and to praise and honor him and to give thanks to him. This is what the people of God do. There is a horizontal dimension to our fellowship, we enjoy that, we're grateful for it, that's what should happen, but the horizontal nature of fellowship is rooted in a prior vertical reality that is found in our commitment to worship the God who has saved us, to be committed to the honor of Jesus Christ and everything else flows from that. And that's why we don't joke a lot from the platform. It's why we're careful and discreet about what we do with prayer requests and things like that and the very things that we pray for from the platform. We're trying to keep the focus vertical and we believe and understand that if we do that, God will bless his people and mediate his blessing to his people. As you honor God first of all, God will be sure to take care of his people and I think our church reflects that. I think the joyful spirits that so many of you show, your love for Christ, your love for the word, some of you, you just never stop smiling. It's great and it's a reflection of that prior vertical commitment to Christ that's in your heart that these things flow out. This is the way that God intends it to be and as a result of that, he gets all of the glory for it.

And God deserves this praise. Look at the end of the Psalm here, verse 30, David had said at the end of verse 30, "I will praise Him." Why will David praise him? "For," because, "This is the reason that I will praise Him."

31 [Because God] stands at the right hand of the needy, To save him from those who judge his soul.

So when the Psalm started, David had a false accuser at his right hand accusing him of wickedness in a false way. When the Psalm ends, that accuser has been set aside and God stands at his right side to protect him, to vindicate him, and to help him. And if you think about it, my friends, this is what the nature of Christian salvation is. We had an accuser against us, we had the devil against us, aligned against us and accusing us of all of our sins. What has Christ done? Christ has interceded and intervened. He has removed Satan from our right hand and now we have a brother at our right hand who loves us, who keeps us, who protects us, who cares for us, a brother who has borne our sins and paid the punishment for our sins at the cross. We have a brother who defends us and we have the one closest to us as a believer in Christ, the one closest to us is there to protect us from all sin and harm. And so we see afresh how fully Christ has gone before us. He suffered reproach and suffered false accusation in order to redeem us from our sins.

And so, my friends, look to God, look to Christ in your struggles with men. Look to Christ when people have turned against you and know that Christ, having been betrayed by his own friend in his earthly life, Christ will sympathize and Christ will strengthen you with his grace. It's a certain result because his love toward us never ends.

Let's pray together.

Father, such weighty matters from Your word this evening. We thank You for them. We pray that You would help us process them rightly. Father, we're mindful as our Lord taught us, that we are to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us and, Father, we keep that in mind even as we contemplate these imprecatory Psalms. Help us to find the proper balance of it.

For those that have sinned against us, we pray for them, Father, we pray for their repentance, we pray that You would be merciful to their souls, that You would show mercy to them just as you did to us. But in the cosmic sense, Father, we're mindful that there is an evil realm that is arrayed against You and against Your people, and against that evil realm we pray with the same fierce intensity that David did, Father, we pray that You would turn back the devil, that You would turn back the forces of wickedness in heavenly places that would undermine Your people that are ultimately at work in those things that would undermine the church of God. We pray against all of that, Father, in an Ephesians 6 type of sense, and we ask that by Your grace You would deliver us from the wicked influence of Satan and his demons, deliver us from that and secure us in the blessing of Your Holy Spirit.

Father, we're mindful that there must be some if not many in our midst who are in the midst of difficulties of false accusations and those who have turned against them in a way that David certainly understood and that Christ understands and, Father, those that in even long-term difficulties, we pray for each situation and we pray for each one suffering

under the weight of that, Father. What a burden it is to carry and so we ask You, Father, we're mindful of Your greatness as we speak to You and yet we know that You are one who condescends to help the needy. You condescend and come near to help those who are in such situations to give them grace, to alter situations, to strengthen them in heart and, Lord, we just pray that for each one that might be in that situation here tonight.

Father, we ask that You would turn hearts toward Christ, that You would bring and produce in all of us a spirit of repentance, Father, earnestly seeing Your holiness, earnestly responding to it from our hearts, humbling ourselves before You and before each other so that the bounty of Your mercy and lovingkindness would be manifest and extended to each one here in the fullest extent. Bless us, Father. Help us, Father. We pray in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

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