

Psalm 58 is a Psalm written for the choir director which means it is to be publicly communicated. It is the second “Al-tashheth” (do not destroy) Psalm (57, 58, 59, 75). It is a “Mikhtam” Psalm, meaning that it has special emphasis on what is inscribed or written. So David wrote this Psalm specifically to focus one’s attention on the written Word of God.

Now this specific Psalm is aimed at people in authority, who are not making righteous decisions, but are coloring their judgments. **The real irony of a “do not destroy” (Al-tashheth) Psalm is that this is a prayer for destruction.**

What we may conclude from this is that David does not want himself to be destroyed by enemies, so He prays that God will destroy his enemies. The obvious assumption is that if God does not destroy his enemies, he will be destroyed. The point is this:

THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD WARNS LEADERS THAT JUDGMENTS MUST BE JUST AND RIGHT AND IF THEY ARE NOT, GOD WILL EVENTUALLY DESTROY THE WICKED LEADERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRAYERS FOR DESTRUCTION FROM THOSE FAITHFUL TO HIM.

If you check the historical records of persecution against Christianity, you will discover that the persecution came from those in high places. Persecution did not begin with the common people, although the common people may have gotten caught up with it. It began with powerful leadership that was corrupt.

For example, when the Roman Empire tried to destroy Christianity, it did so because an evil Roman Emperor such as Nero or Diocletian wanted it destroyed. In fact, it is said of Diocletian, who hated the Bible and hated Christianity that he killed so many Christians and destroyed so many Christian writings that the Christians themselves hid themselves and their writings to the extent that he (Diocletian) produced a medal which read “The Christian religion is destroyed, and the worship of the (Roman) gods is restored.”

If you love God and if you love the Word of God, the greatest problems you will face will not come to you from the average person; the greatest problems and pressures will come from those who are powerful and from those who rule. Now, of course this presents a real problem for the people of God. How do we deal with the pressure and deceit of those who are in high places? How do we cope with a leader who is not just unfair, but actually tries to turn things against us? What is our recourse? The answer is found in Psalm 58.

The powers that turned against David had no Biblical justification for their action. They invented things about David that were not true and they swayed many people into believing lies. David knew his only way out of that was God. So he specifically prayed and asked God to destroy those who had done and said such terrible things.

One question that this Psalm raises is do we dare to make this prayer today? J. Vernon McGee said sometimes you will hear Christians say, "I don't think you should pray this kind of prayer because it is not Christian." Dr. McGee said I do not consider this prayer to be unchristian at all. This is a Biblical prayer and since "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable," there are times when this is a prayer that we need to make. When you are under attack from powerful people, who have falsely and arrogantly tried to destroy you, who else can you expect to help if not God? God is the one Person who can overrule the powers and dominions and authorities.

This passage breaks down nicely into three main segments:

SEGMENT #1 – David describes those who need God's vengeance. **58:1-5**

David gives a description of the kind of person against whom he was making this prayer:

Description #1 - Those who need God's vengeance are powerful. **58:1**

Now the people about whom David is praying were judges and were in a position to make judicial decisions. They elevated themselves to a position of being "gods." These were not the common people of society; these were the powerful leaders of the world. They had turned against David, who truly was a man of God. They were leading a revolt against him.

More than likely when you are being attacked by the evil one, it may come from one who appears to be over you in power. There are those above you who may be against you simply because you are right with God and they are not.

Description #2 - Those who need God's vengeance do not promote true righteousness. **58:1a**

Now these kinds of people talk about righteousness, but they have their own agenda and their agenda is not to accurately understand the righteous Word of God so they may apply it. If that were true, they would not be speaking against David, who was God's anointed servant.

Often times your enemies are religious people who try to use the Bible, but not in a way that cuts it straight. Spurgeon said don't believe something simply because a large number of people believe it; always check the Word of God to see whether or not it is true.

Description #3 - Those who need God's vengeance do not give upright judgments. **58:1b**

Someone once said if you do not defend what is right you are an accomplice to what is wrong. It is clear that these evil leaders were twisting judicial decisions to make them fit with their own evil plots and plans.

Psalm 98:9 says that judgments that are God-like will be judgments that are righteous and equitable. They are truthful and fair. Evil people do not judge according to God's Word or according to truth. They twist facts and will not accept truth.

Description #4 - Those who need God's vengeance have unrighteous hearts. **58:2a**

Remember, these were the leaders in Israel. These were people who did go to worship services, but their hearts were not right with God. What proves the integrity of the person is not just external, it is internal! External decisions come from an internal heart. Real righteousness and real wickedness is a matter of the heart.

Description #5 - Those who need God's vengeance do violent things. **58:2b**

Those who are not right with God are easy to spot because they are always trying to destroy those who are right with God. Track the record of one whose heart is not right with God and you will discover a legacy of hatred against those who are right with God.

Description #6 - Those who need God's vengeance remain wicked from birth. **58:3**

There is tremendous theology in this one verse. We are all born sinners right out of our mother's womb and if something does not change in our status, we deserve and will receive the vengeance and wrath of God. Those who deserve the vengeance of God have never responded to God. They have stayed in their sin state and sin cursed condition and they continue to live a lie even when they go to church. Their heart is not right with God. The tragic reality is a person sins shortly after he is born, but most people don't repent soon before they die.

Description #7 - Those who need God's vengeance poison other people. **58:4a**

There are three steps to the poison of sin:

(Step #1) - First, the sin is privately secret.

(Step #2) - Second, the sin is personally practiced.

(Step #3) - Third, the sin is publicly promoted.

People who need God to intervene and destroy them are those who are poisoning others with their lies and religion. It is not that these people are just sinful; it is that they are hurting others with their lies and distortions.

Description #8 - Those who need God's vengeance do not listen to God's Word. **58:4b-5**

There are certain deadly snakes that have no ability to hear whatsoever. No matter what the sound or shrill, they do not have the ability to hear sound. It could be the most skillful snake charmer on earth; some serpents cannot hear anything. It is just like Paul said; the natural man cannot hear the things of God. It is not a question of inability; it is a question of no capability.

So it is with those who need God's vengeance. They will not and cannot hear the Word of God. Their hearts are so corrupt that even if one skillfully opens up God's Word to them, they will not listen. In fact, they cannot hear it.

SEGMENT #2 – David's prayer for God's vengeance. **58:6-9**

David prayed for God's vengeance and there were three requests he made. Each request increases in intensity:

Request #1 - David asked God to destroy their ability to devour anything. **58:6**

Take out their fangs so they can no longer spread their poison.

Request #2 - David asked God to cause them to harmlessly disappear. **58:7**

David asks that God let the evil people go away like water that runs off something and become those who are as harmless as an arrow with a headless shaft. That kind of arrow cannot accomplish anything.

Request #3 - David asks God to destroy their lives. **58:8**

David asks God to so destroy the wicked that it is like they never existed. In eastern lands there are many snails that quickly shrivel and perish during seasons of drought. David wanted God to make these people totally ineffective and totally gone.

Verse 9 informs us that David was confident that God would do this and He would do this quickly. David believed that they would be gone before they could do anymore damage.

SEGMENT #3 – David gives his response to God's vengeance. **58:10-11**

We may notice that when people see God pour out His vengeance there are two responses:

(Response #1) - The righteous rejoice at God's vengeance. **58:10**

When we are where we should be in our relationship with God, we do not question God, we worship and praise God. God is a just righteous God. When He does something that appears to be negative, He has His reasons and righteous people rejoice at this reality.

(Response #2) - The world acknowledges truth about God and His vengeance. **58:11**

When God judges, even the world knows you do reap what you sow.