

The Song of a Slandered Saint

Text: Psalm 7:1-17

Introduction:

1. The Title: The heading of the Psalm gives us a couple of details:
 - "Shiggaion of David" = the word 'shiggaion' means 'variable' or 'meandering'. Spurgeon comments, "This Psalm is composed of variable verses; one stanza rolls along with the sublime metre of triumph, but another limps with the broken rhythm of complaint." Flanigan adds, "There is a certain variable, almost erratic, movement in the poetry, alternating between comfort and joy, between sorrow and solace, between trial and trust, as changing as are the life experiences of the saints themselves."
 - "which he sang unto the LORD" = a song David composed to sing to the Lord about the difficult situation he was facing. Never underestimate the power of godly music to minister to you in a time of deep trial!
 - "concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite" = the only reference to "Cush the Benjamite" we have in the Bible. From this brief reference it is revealed that he was of the same tribe as king Saul. It seems from the internal evidence of the Psalm that this Psalm was composed during that time in David's life when he was being hunted by the deranged king Saul (See 1 Sam. 22:8, 24:9, 26:19). The fact Cush was from the same tribe as Saul likely gave him leverage with the king to make life more difficult to David. The substance of his slanderous accusations are found in Vs. 3-4. This Psalm therefore contains the plea of a saint who has been unjustly slandered. The name 'Cush' means black and this man certainly had a black heart!
2. Expository idea: "The people of God who walk in their integrity may pray with confidence for the LORD to vindicate them by turning the malicious schemes of the wicked back on the wicked themselves." (Allen P. Ross) It is a Psalm for which the question "will not the judge of all the earth do right?" could serve as its title.
3. We will divide the Psalm into four parts for our expository study.

I. THE SAINTS APPROACH TO GOD (VS. 1-2)

"David appears before God to plead with him against the Accuser, who had charged him with treason and treachery." (Spurgeon) Three words summarize the saint's approach to God in these verses:

A. Relationship (Vs. 1a)

1. "LORD my God" = this is the first time in the Psalms where David addresses the Almighty by the united names of Jehovah and my God. "These names show the ground of the confidence afterwards expressed. They denote at once supreme reverence and the most endearing confidence. They convey a recognition of God's infinite perfections, and of his covenanted and gracious relations." (Plumer)
2. "my God" = the language of personal relationship. This is the foundation of any appeal to God. David could appeal to God for help because he was God's son.

B. Refuge (Vs. 1b)

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1. "put my trust" = to take refuge, hide; "in thee I have taken refuge". "He will take refuge, as it were, in a rock, safe in that refuge while the enemy crouches outside like a lion lying in wait to devour him." (Flanigan)
2. The truth of God being the believer's refuge is a reoccurring theme in Psalms. For example:
 - a. Psalm 9:9 "The LORD also will be a **refuge** for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble."
 - b. Psalm 46:7, 11 "The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our **refuge**. Selah."
 - c. Psalm 59:16 "But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my **defence and refuge** in the day of my trouble."
 - d. Psalm 91:2 "I will say of the LORD, *He is* my **refuge** and my **fortress**: my God; in him will I trust."

C. Request (Vs. 1c-2)

1. The Saints Fervent Petition (Vs. 1c)
 - a. Save me – means "deliver me". He asks to be rescued from "all them that persecute me". The word 'persecute' means "to run after with hostile intent." Persecution comes in different forms. In this Psalm it is the tongue! "A universal weapon against the friends of truth is the tongue. By scorn, by railing, by mocking, by misrepresentation, by slander the people of God are wronged, distressed, cast down." (Plumer)
 - b. Deliver me – means to be snatched or plucked from danger.
2. The Slanderers Malevolent Plan (Vs. 2)
 - a. The Metaphor of the Attack (Vs. 2a)
 - i. The picture is that of a lion, tearing a lamb or a sheep in pieces with diabolical ferocity. David was familiar with this scene as one who had personally encountered and fought with a lion and a bear during his days as a shepherd of his father's sheep (1 Sam. 17:34-36). A reminder how vicious a slanderer can be against the one who is the object of their lies.
 - ii. This picture reminds of Satan who is likened to "a roaring lion" who "walketh about, seeking whom (not what!) he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8).
 - iii. The lion's blow is one of the most powerful forces in nature. "The leg, or forearm, as it is called, measures 19 inches around, and is made up of the hardest of hard bone, with muscle and tendons as strong as the strongest wire. The foot measures 8 inches across. When this foot strikes an animal, the lion shoots out its terrible claws, which are hidden, when it walks, inside the joints of the toes. These claws are like great hooks made of yellow horn. They tear the flesh off an animal as we would strip the peel from an orange. The force with which these claws are driven is almost more than we can believe... The forearm of the lion is worked by great muscles at the shoulder, and the blow which it makes is really like the blow from a steam hammer. No wonder that it can kill a man or a big animal with ease" (The

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Three Strongest Things in the Animal World, *The Human Interest Library*).¹

- b. The Moment of the Attack (Vs. 2b)
 - i. “while there is none to deliver” = the enemy was looking to strike at a time of weakness. The devil looks for a moment of vulnerability that he can exploit to his destructive ends.
 - ii. David is praying that God would step in and be his deliverer against the enemy.
 - iii. C.H. Spurgeon: “It will be well for us here to remember that this is a description of the danger to which the Psalmist was exposed from slanderous tongues. Verily this is not an overdrawn picture, for the wounds of a sword will heal, but the wounds of the tongue cut deeper than the flesh, and are not soon cured...Oh, tis a meanness most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation, but diabolical hatred observes no nobility in its mode of warfare. We must be ready for this trial, for it will surely come upon us. If God was slandered in Eden, we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, ye children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all...It is only at the tree laden with fruit that men throw stones. If we would live without being slandered, we must wait till we get to heaven. Let us be very heedful not to believe the flying rumours which are always harassing gracious men. If there are no believers in lies there will be but a dull market in falsehood, and good men's characters will be safe.”

II. THE SAINTS ARGUMENT BEFORE GOD (VS. 3-5)

In these verses, David pleads his innocence before the throne of God. So sure is he of his innocence that he is willing to stake his life upon it. Consider...

A. The Defamations against David (Vs. 3-4a)

- 1. Accused of Iniquity (Vs. 3)
 - a. ‘iniquity’ = perverseness.
 - b. “in my hands” = David was being accused of misconduct.
 - c. Note: In reality, at this time in his life, David was a man who was above reproach.
- 2. Accused of Injustice (Vs. 4a)
 - a. “rewarded evil” = reveals the central point of the slander against David. He had been accused of repaying evil for good.
 - b. “him that was at peace with me” = this is a serious charge that David had acted unjustly and viciously towards someone innocent and peaceful with David.
 - c. John Phillips writes, “Slander is one of the most difficult things to fight. A man's good name and reputation can be destroyed by a lying, jealous tongue and his whole life laid in ruins. Slander is one of Satan's favourite weapons. It is done in secret and usually behind the back of the victim. The more a slanderous charge is denied the more it seems to be true in the minds of those who have been poisoned by it. David realized that, so he took the slander to the Lord.”

¹ D Cloud, *God's Amazing Creatures*; Way of Life Literature, p. 65.

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B. The Defence of David (Vs. 4b-5)

1. He pleads his Integrity (Vs. 4b)
 - a. "yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy" = At this point he inserts a point of evidence to the contrary. David's life and track record spoke the truth and dispelled the slanderous lies against his character. In reality, David had done the exact opposite to what he had been accused of. Not only had he NOT mistreated a friend, he had actually shown grace to an enemy. The integrity of one's life has a way of exposing the slanderous lies with the passing of time.
 - b. It is likely that David is alluding to the two occasions where he had an opportunity to take Saul's life but spared him. The first was in a cave (1 Sam. 24:1-7) and the second was while Saul was asleep in the camp with his army (1 Sam. 26:5-12). On both occasions, Saul was in pursuit of David to destroy him. David clearly did not have a bitter heart or no doubt he would have acted differently.
 - c. Note: This is the nature of slander. It is a false report. Webster defines slander as "A false tale or report maliciously uttered. and tending to injure the reputation of another by lessening him in the esteem of his fellow citizens, by exposing him to impeachment and punishment, or by impairing his means of living; defamation."
2. He pleads in Sincerity (Vs. 5)
 - a. So confident is David of his innocence that he is willing to stake his very life upon it. "The petitioner is so sure of his innocence that he puts it in an oath, that if he is guilty of the charge his enemies should kill him." (Ross)
 - b. This is the value of a clear conscience. It gives you strong praying ground when the slanderous attack comes.
 - c. David says that if what Cush was accusing him of was true, he would be willing for the enemy to:
 - i. Persecute his soul.
 - ii. Tread down his life upon the earth.
 - iii. Lay his honour in the dust.
 - iv. The picture is based on ancient warfare where the defeated would be trampled on the ground by horses.
 - d. 'Selah' = "David enhances the solemnity of this appeal to the dread tribunal of God by the use of the usual pause." (C.H. Spurgeon)

III. THE SAINTS APPEAL TO GOD (VS. 6-9)

David now appeals for the setting up of a great tribunal that God might sit in Divine judgment over his case and that of others. He appeals to God for:

A. The Condemnation of the Wicked (Vs. 6)

1. He prays for God's holy anger to be Aroused (Vs. 6a)
 - a. David asks for God's righteous anger to oppose man's ungodly rage. Man's unholy wrath may seem like a fearful thing but it is nothing compared to the pure, undiluted wrath of Almighty God. The word for 'anger' literally refers to the nose or nostrils; from the rapid breathing in passion; ire, anger. (Strong's)
 - b. Heb. 10:31 "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*"
2. He prays for God's holy justice to be Accomplished (Vs. 6b)

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- a. 'awake' = God does not sleep but from the human side it can sometimes seem as if God is inactive in the face of injustice. The plea is for God to move in the situation to execute justice.
- b. God's timetable is different to ours but we can be sure of one thing, the Judge of all the earth **shall** do right (Gen. 18:25) and evil will not escape His Divine justice.
- c. Illustration: The story is told of an Agnostic farmer who wrote to the editor of the local paper of an experiment he had made. "In defiance of your God I ploughed my fields this year on a Sunday, I harrowed and fertilized them on a Sunday, I planted them on a Sunday, I cultivated them on Sundays, and I reaped them on Sunday. This October I had the biggest crop I ever had. How do you explain that?" The editor wisely replied: "God does not always make a full reckoning in October." (Phillips)

B. The Clearing of the Righteous (Vs. 7-8)

1. The collective cause of the saints (Vs. 7)
 - a. "So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about" = David anticipates that in the event God executes judgment on his behalf, it will have the effect of gathering the saints around Him. Seeing God deal justly with David would renew their confidence in the Lord and cause them to seek Him. David is therefore pleading not just for himself but for the saints.
 - b. "return thou on high" = a call for God to resume his activity of judging which it seemed for a while he had abandoned. (Ross) "The Psalmist prays that the righteous Judge would ascend His exalted tribunal, exert His Omnipotent authority, check the progress of impiety and give encouragement to his servants that they might be again collected in his courts, and unite in his holy worship." (Plumer)
2. The personal cause of David (Vs. 8)
 - a. The Psalmist desires that God would judge his case and thereby reveal his integrity in the situation. He can ask for this with confidence being assured of his innocence.
 - b. David uses the words 'righteousness' and 'integrity' to describe his own character.

C. The Cessation of Wickedness (Vs. 9a)

1. "wickedness of the wicked" = a plea for God to make an end of evil. This is the true heart cry of every genuine child of God. In the words of the model prayer, "deliver us from evil". The exclamation 'oh' reveals the fervency of the Psalmist's heart.
2. What a comfort to know that evil will not always reign on this earth. There is coming a day when Christ will reign and "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isaiah 11:4) and "a sceptre of righteousness" will be the sceptre of His kingdom (Heb. 1:8). Christ will rule the nations with a "rod of iron" (Rev. 2:27, 12:5, 19:5). In that day the earth will not be run by the ever-shifting standards of man but the unbendable and unbreakable standard of God's truth.

D. The Confirmation of the Just (Vs. 9b)

1. "establish the just" = the saint cries not only for an end to the reign of wickedness but for the establishment of the reign of righteousness. Sadly, in a wicked world, it seems that on the whole evil is established in power

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and godliness is sidelined. But we should pray nonetheless that God will intervene! Ultimately again we look forward to the day when everlasting righteousness will be our experience in the eternal state.

2. "the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins" = the righteous God is able to judge the unseen things, that which man cannot judge with accuracy. Both the 'hearts and 'reins' refer to the inward part of man. The word 'reins' literally means "the kidneys". "Among the Hebrews it came to mean the seat of pain and pleasure, joy and grief, knowledge and thought." (Plumer)

IV. THE SAINTS ASSURANCE IN GOD (VS. 10-17)

A. The Pattern of God's Ways (Vs. 10-16)

1. God Defends the Believer (Vs. 10)
 - a. 'defence' = frequently translated 'shield' in the O.T. and a number of times as 'buckler'. The nature of slander is such that it is only really God who can defend you. Often when you try to defend yourself, it just furthers the slanderers cause. They point to your defence as evidence that you are guilty of the charges!
 - b. "saveth the upright" = the word 'upright' means straight. The word is made up of 'up' and 'right'. In a literal sense it speaks of an erect and straight position. It is translated 'upright' or 'right' in the Psalms. Elsewhere in the O.T. it is sometimes rendered 'righteous' and several times as 'straight'. Spiritually it describes those who live right in accordance with God's truth. God promises special blessings for the upright (Ps. 84:11).
 - c. Spurgeon: "Filth will not long abide on the pure white garments of the saints, but shall be brushed off by Divine providence, to the vexation of the men by whose hands it was thrown upon the godly."
2. God Judges the Wicked (Vs. 11-13)
 - a. God's anger is stirred toward the wicked (Vs. 11)
 - i. "angry with the wicked every day" = God not only hates sin but is righteously angered with those who continue to indulge in it each day.
 - ii. God loves the sinner but hates the sin.
 - b. God's judgment is prepared for the wicked (Vs. 12-13)
 - i. "If he turn not" = the word is translated 'convert' in Psalm 19:7 & 51:13. If the sinner will not turn from his evil ways, God's anger will find terrifying expression in definite acts of judgment against him. Turn or burn is the message of the Bible!
 - ii. 'whet' = to sharpen. "God's sword has been sharpening upon the revolving stone of our daily wickedness.
 - iii. "ordaineth his arrows" = God does not shoot his arrows at random. They are justly aimed at those who deserve judgment.
 - iv. The picture is of a warrior who prepares his deadly weapons. Sword, bow, instruments of death and arrows. "The figure, which represents Jehovah as having bent his bow and made it ready, is awfully descriptive of the exposed situation of every sinner until he returns to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. The whole system of nature and providence is ready, at the bidding of the Almighty to inflict the blow that shall hurl him to perdition. The

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archer of Divine vengeance stands, as it were, with bended bow, and the next arrow that he discharges may pierce, with everlasting anguish, the soul that now glides on securely in the career of thoughtlessness and crime." (Morison)

- v. Note: The picture is of God's judgment poised and ready to be unleashed on the sinner. The sinner needs to avail himself of God's mercy while he is given "space" to repent (Rev. 2:21). The reason for the delay in God's judgment being released is the merciful longsuffering of God who is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). If the sinner does not repent, God's wrath dams up, awaiting the day of judgment. Romans 2:4-5 "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? **But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath** against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" The phrase "treasurest up" means to lay up in store (as treasure), to heap up. The idea is gradual accumulation. Usually this word is used in a positive sense. Here it is used in a shocking and startling way. The treasure being stored away is God's wrath!

3. God Repays the Unrepentant (Vs. 14-16)

In these verses we see that God turns the plans of the wicked back on them. It is the law of sowing and reaping. This is discussed with the use of three illustrations (outline by John Phillips):

a. Sin in its Process: Like a Birth (Vs. 14)

- i. He travails with iniquity. "He is full of it, pained until he can carry it out, he longs to work his will, he is full of pangs until his evil intent is executed." (Spurgeon) The verse commences with the word 'behold' as the Psalmist calls on us to see the end of the wicked.
- ii. He conceives mischief. This is the origin of his evil plan. He has conceived this wicked plan in his heart with the help of the devil who is the "father of lies". The word 'mischief' in the Bible means hurt. Webster defines it as "Intentional injury; harm or damage done by design." "The father of sin is Satan; the mother of sin is self. Satan knows how to impregnate the innate perverseness of fallen nature with his own diabolical spirit." (Phillips)
- iii. He births falsehood.

b. Sin in its Plan: Like a Bait (Vs. 15)

- i. "These pits are dug so deep that either man or beast falling into them cannot leap out. The mouth of the pit is covered over with boughs of trees, or straw so that it is not perceived." (Plumer) What is described is a premediated, calculated plan to cause the godly damage. "The picture here is of a man who thinks through the best way to ruin, rob, or revile somebody and who then deliberately executes his plan." (Phillips)
- ii. Note: It is amazing the lengths some will go to in order to try and slander and trip up a godly individual!

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- iii. The law of sowing and reaping is clearly seen in these verses. "The law of the soil is also the law of the soul." (Phillips)
- c. Sin in Its Punishment: Like a Boomerang (Vs. 16)
 - i. "A person can throw his wickedness at other people but he had better watch out! It will eventually come back like a boomerang." (Phillips)
 - ii. Illustration: The dogs lick Ahab's blood in the midst of the vineyard of Naboth whom he had murdered; Haman hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai; Absalom attempts to murder David and ends up swinging from a tree by his rebellious hair.
 - iii. Note: Leave justice in God's hands. Don't try and help God out with the execution of His justice!

B. The Praise for God's Ways (Vs. 17)

The slandered one is now a singer! This is the response of the believer's heart in light of the knowledge of God's Divine justice.

1. The Perfection of God – "his righteousness"
2. The Person of God – "the name of the LORD most high". This is the first time in the Psalms that Jehovah is called "the most high".
3. Principle: Praise God in the darkest hours. Job, Paul & Silas are other examples of this principle.

Conclusion:

1. Theological lessons (what we learn about God)

- God is moved in righteous wrath towards the sinner's sin and will judge if he fails to repent.
- God is a shield to His people and defends them in times of spiritual attack. He is a refuge in times of persecution.

2. Practical lessons (what we learn about the Christian life)

- Take injustices to the throne of grace and leave them there. The Judge of all the earth will do right! Appealing to God in prayer is our best course of action against slander.
- Personal integrity and a clear conscience are precious things in the Christian life which give us a strong basis for such a plea. "Though innocence cannot exempt a man from being unjustly slandered, yet it will furnish him with a good conscience, and much boldness in the particular before God."
- Sin never pays. At the last it brings destruction, misery and pain. The law of sowing and reaping needs to be remembered.
- Remember to praise God in the dark hours of spiritual attack.

3. Soteriological lessons (what we learn about salvation)

- The delay in God's judgment is not because God will not judge. Rather it is on account of the longsuffering and mercy of God. God is giving the sinner an opportunity to repent. Repent and receive Christ while you have the chance!
- In order to escape the judgment of God, the sinner must turn (repent).