

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

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Psalm 7 at first reading appears to be a very dry psalm and doesn't seem to relate to anything I'm going through. That's one of the difficulties with the Psalms that in any particular given moment it may not relate to anything you're going through. One of the values of teaching is to sort of file things away. If something isn't of particular use right now there will be a moment when it is of use. That's a virtue of going through the Psalms and taking it a chapter at a time.

For some this evening this psalm is going to be right on the money. Right where you are. For others there's going to be notes and you'll know where to look when you're in this situation.

We'll call it "A Psalm for One Falsely Accused."

Psalm 7:1–17 (NIV)

"O LORD my God, I take refuge in you; save and deliver me from all who pursue me, or they will tear me like a lion and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me. O LORD, my God, if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands—if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me or without cause have robbed my foe—then let my enemy pursue and overtake me; let him trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. *Selah*. Arise, O LORD, in Your anger; rise up against the rage of my enemies. Awake, my God; decree justice. Let the assembled peoples gather around you. Rule over them from on high; let the Lord judge the peoples. Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High. O Righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure. My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day. If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword;

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

he will bend and string his bow. He has prepared his deadly weapons; he makes ready his flaming arrows. He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment. He who digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit he has made. The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head. I will give thanks to the LORD because of His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.”

A psalm of one falsely accused. Let's look at the background and setting of this psalm. David is identified as the author and he is in a situation where first of all, verse 1, he says he is being pursued. He is also in dread of being ripped apart as a lion would rip apart its prey, verse 2. The specific accusation against him and why he is in mortal danger appears to be that it is alleged that he has violated some pact of friendship or some treaty obligation, verse 4. He had done evil to someone who was at peace with him, so the charge was made. And part of that charge includes the idea that in the process of violating the treaty of peace he had defrauded, robbed, or stolen from whoever it is that's pursuing him.

It's extremely difficult to defend yourself when it's only your word against another person. That's a problem David is having in this psalm. It is what he knows in his own heart against the allegations that are against him. When an accusation is made and a person is innocent and it's one person's word against another those are the most difficult of all things to moderate. How do you prove you're innocent if you're innocent? The lie detector test has been invented to try to do that. But even that has been demonstrated to not be that reputable. A lot of people won't trust themselves to that because they're so easy to have them misread.

What do we say about accusations that are made against us? Sometimes an accusation made against us is true. If we are the victim of an accusation or think somebody is treating us unjustly we need to ask, “Is there any element of truth in what they're saying?” For David there were

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

plenty of times in his life that charges were made right on, like when Nathan the prophet came to David and told him the little story of the guy who had all the cattle but when his guest came he took the lamb from the poor man that used to eat from the poor man's table. David said "We'll get the dirty turkey who did this. Let's string him up." Nathan said, "You're the man." David didn't go on some string of protestations saying, "I'm innocent." This is not a psalm for that period of David's life. Whatever David is involved in now it was not Bathsheba and Uriah. He was dead wrong on that issue.

There are times when we're wrong. The Holy Spirit is very faithful to point that out. Unless we so block our soul that we become insensitive. I found it's possible to be insensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Then there are occasions in our life where the enemy, the accuser of the brethren where he accuses us, brings an accusation against us. If that accusation has been brought to Christ for forgiveness and we have repented of it then we need to use this psalm to defend ourselves from the accusations of the enemy of our soul. This is an appropriate use of Psalm 7.

Where an accusation is wholly false it does not mean that the accusation will not hurt us. It's obvious from reading Psalm 7 that David is really stung by the accusation that he had violated a pact of friendship and that he had either defrauded or pilfered assets of someone else. It's often the case that we are hurt most when the accusation against us is untrue. We're stung that anyone would think that about us.

The superscription in this psalm—the superscription is what comes after the title—is "of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite" (NIV). We don't have any experience from Samuel, which contains the story of David, a historical part of God's Word, which corresponds with a guy named Cush making this charge against him.

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

We do know from the Old Testament, especially 2 Samuel 16 and 19 and 20, that David had fierce enemies in the tribe of Benjamin. In fact when he was fleeing from Absalom's revolt one of the Benjamite's was cursing him and throwing dirt on him as he was going down the road. Throwing rocks at him. David's generals who were rather hotheaded said, "Shall we get rid of the guy?" David very humbly said, "He may be telling the truth. Let him alone." When David comes back to Jerusalem in triumph 2 Samuel 20, the guy shows up and they're saying again, "Do away with him. When you were down he threw dirt on you." David lets the guy be repentant and he apologizes profusely for what he has done. But his name isn't Cush so he's not related to this psalm. But it's a suggestion that this tribe had it in for David. Saul was a Benjamite and it did not help David with the Benjamites that he had taken over the dynasty that belonged to Saul. *Shiggaion*. This is a reference to the type of music employed. It's the first time it's used in the psalms but it will be used a number of other times. Some see it as a Hebrew word from an Assyrian word. It could mean "ode" or "poem." But there is also in the Hebrew a root that can mean something that would suggest that this is a wild and passionate psalm with rapid changes of rhythm. It's sung by someone that is really anxious and distraught and bordering at times on the edge of hysteria. I think that's given the tenor of the psalm as you move through it. It probably has that kind of a spirit.

That sets the stage literally for the psalm.

The psalm divides into six stanzas. You can see this easily when we use a modern translation like the NIV.

I. The first stanza, verses 1–2, is an opening prayer and a plea for help.

We already know what his situation is. How does he approach his situation? Like the other psalms which reflect people who are in trouble he does not begin with his trouble but begins by

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

concentrating on who God is. If he's to get out of his trouble he's to magnify God over the magnification of his trouble. He starts "O Lord my God." Unfortunately those words do not translate the Hebrew that was employed. When you're using a modern translation like the NIV or RSV, when you find the word "Lord" in all capital letters that always means that the Hebrew word that stands behind it is the word *Yahweh*, the sacred covenant name of God given to Moses in Exodus 3 which has a meaning something like this: "I will be who I will be." Or a name that escapes a definition. "I alone gave the right to define what I will be and you will find what I am as you serve me. You will find who I am. And I will always be to you what you need Me to be. I will be."

Yahweh. The sacred covenant name of God which is so sacred to this day to the Jewish people that when this psalm is being read in a synagogue service "Yahweh" will not be said, "Adonai" will be substituted because that's a lesser name for God. Immediately therefore as he was praying he is emphasizing his covenantal relationship with God. "God, we're not strangers from one another. We've been through things before. You are my God. You are the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You are the God who revealed Himself to Moses. You are the God who through my life has revealed Yourself to me. It is to You, that same one that I have always called upon that I come now to in this particular day of trouble."

His first instinct is to run to God with his problem. If we have any problem—it may be the problem of being false accused or any kind of problem—the first and most trusted instinct is to go to God with it. David will find God is a far greater source than anyone else can be. Nobody can provide the kind of help that God can provide.

"I take refuge in you" (7:1). "Refuge" was a common word in the Old Testament. One thinks of the Old Testament as cities of refuge when one had been falsely accused. He could run and be

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

protected. In our day the concept of refuge is coming back. “City of refuge” meant a place where you were safe, where you could not be prosecuted. David right away is saying, “Although people think they have a case against me, God, I know You don’t. I can run to You. You know my true intentions. You know my heart. I find my refuge in You.” God is where we are safe.

When we have actually done wrong we don’t feel safe going to God. What happens when we’re in trouble and it’s our own fault? We want to stay away from God. We don’t sense God as our refuge. We say I am safe everywhere but God. David will say in one of his other psalms, “If I have regarded iniquity in my heart You will hide Your face from me” (66:18). There are times when God’s Word addresses in our ethics and our choices in our morals and says, “Don’t feel comfortable with Me when there is sin in your life. When you’re not dealing with wrong. I will not be a refuge to you. But if you will come and deal with a known wrong in your life and repent of it I will be a refuge to you. Or if you are falsely accused and in that matter there is no wrong in your life, you can bank on the fact that I am your refuge. You can hide in Me.” It’s not escapism to sing psalms when we’re going through troubles. God can be clung to in a time of adversity. God is going to need to act for him. David recognizes. He’s simply going to have to stay in God’s refuge and let God do the fighting for him. He is overwhelmed by the power of his adversary.

The alternative, David says, “God if you don’t act I’m done for. This whole thing is going to rip me up” (see verse 2). I like the way he puts everything out on the table at the very beginning. God, give us the wisdom when we’re in a jam to surface what the ultimate issues are. That’s where we so often run into problems. We consider all the side kind of things and don’t get right where it’s at. There is this time in David’s life where his life is at stake. The way he lives is at stake. So he starts off: “God, if You don’t come through it’s all over.”

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

II. This leads us to the second part of the psalm, which is a plea of innocence. Verses 3–5.

I've indicated that there were times in David's life when he was guilty. But this is not one of those occasions. So he is simply putting it to God. "God, if I have done this and there is guilt on my hands; if I have done evil to him who was at peace with me, then let him pursue me and overtake me." The reason why he is saying "if" is as he searches his mind there is nothing there that he can remember that has been wrong. So it's not a false repentance. We're all aware that you cannot really get another person's forgiveness if you come to them and say, "If I've done anything to offend you please forgive me." Don't apologize to somebody that way. That makes them identify what you have done wrong. If they say, "As a matter of fact I do remember what you did to me," then you'd say there's something wrong with them spiritually that they haven't forgiven that already. We force them to identify it.

David's ransacking his mind to say "I haven't done anything wrong. But God I'm so innocent on this case if I have done anything wrong I'm willing to take my just desserts. Let them rip me up."

How this would be used is an interesting situation, 1 Kings 8:31–32. You'll find that this Scripture contains words from Solomon's prayer on the dedication of the temple. Great day in Israel's history. The temple built by Solomon, so fabulously adorned with gold and precious jewels. Solomon goes through this long prayer which is the focus of 1 Kings 8. He comes to a moment in verses 31–32 that he's anticipating the various times of a person's life when they will use the temple. Verses 31–32 isolates one of those moments when a person would come and use the temple. "When a man wrongs his neighbor and is required to take an oath and he comes and swears the oath before your altar in this temple, then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty, and so establish his innocence" (NIV). The situation is someone

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

is being charged with something and they say “I’m innocent.” They come and bring an offering. They’re saying as they bring the offering, “I bring this offering because I attest to my innocence.” What they’re really saying is “God, strike me dead if I’m telling a lie.” That’s the spirit of 1 Kings 8 and that’s the spirit of this psalm. And probably these words would have been used when someone came into the temple under a charge. They’d say, “If I’ve done this then let judgment come upon me.” So he protests his innocence.

We need to protest our own spiritual innocence when the enemy likes to play the old movie reels in our life. Sins that have been covered by the blood and repented of and dealt with and the enemy wants to rehearse them to us and say to us, “That’s who you are.” We need to take covering in this psalm and say, “No, you’re not going to get away with that when you accuse my conscience or soul of that. Because of Christ’s righteousness I am righteous. I have been acquitted by the Lord.” A plea of innocence.

III. The third part of the psalm is a plea for judgment, verses 6–9.

So often God appears asleep. Where is God when I need Him? Why is God so slow to act? There are times when I’ve read the story of Elijah I’ve identified more with the prophets of Baal: “God, I prayed and I haven’t seen the fire!” He’s asking God to wake up in verse 6. But quickly after he does this we see some growth in his character and personality. You’ll see the growth in his spirituality as the psalm progresses. That’s the great thing about prayer. If we will just not stumble through prayer but consciously think about what we’re praying as we’re praying we’ll have a dynamic interaction between the Spirit and our soul. And we will grow in our time of prayer. That’s why it’s so important to pray when we’re in trouble. Because God gives us perspective on what we’re going through.

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

David begins to now get some perspective. The hotness of his soul is getting worked out of him and all of his emotions are sort of emptied out. So he's getting in a frame he can begin to consider what is God doing about evil.

Verse 7 he switches gears. He's called for God to decree justice and then he says, "Let the assembled peoples gather around you. Rule over them from on high." Let the Lord judge the peoples. David knows enough in his walk with God to know that God is King. In fact, in some of the psalms he calls God King. When is the King going to have that day when he assembles all the people? It's not going to be this particular moment. David is leaping ahead to that moment when God judges all. When everything is laid before Him. All of a sudden after saying "arise and wake up" he's backing off and saying "God, if You don't quite get up when I'm telling You to get up, nevertheless I know that that day will come when that which is true will come out. And everything will be gathered before You and You will see everything as it really is."

Paul picks up on this theme by the way in Romans 2:16 when he says the day is coming when God is going to judge the world by the gospel of Jesus Christ. So David backs off. After asking God to decree justice then David leaps ahead to that day when God will judge all. He then in anticipating that day says, "Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity, O Most High" (Psalm 7:8, NIV). That seems like an awful frightful prayer for any mortal to pray. We would really have to be clean to pray that one. "Judge me, O God, according to my righteousness, according to my integrity." I think this prayer can only be prayed by a person who is inside Jesus Christ. I wouldn't dare pray that prayer without the covering of God's righteousness.

There may be specific times in my life where I can pray that and say I'm not guilty. We can pinpoint specific areas where we are indeed guiltless. But totally obeying God and being in the

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

inner life without fault all my life, no that's not the case. I need the righteousness of Christ. This can be a prayer only prayed in Him. Then he goes on to say, "O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure" (7:9, NIV).

Sometimes we get uncomfortable with these phrases in the psalms where David is calling God to act against injustice. Maybe that's because we live in the kind of culture where we have a soft and easy view of life.

He starts out with a cry for help, verses 1–2. He pleads innocence, verse 3–5. He pleads for judgment in verses 6–9.

IV. Then the fourth part of this psalm is assurance of protection, verses 10–13.

This assurance of protection falls into three divisions.

A. One is verse 10. Because God is our shield. He saves the upright in heart. "My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart." A shield you hold to keep the arrows from hitting you to defend yourself. The bigger the shield obviously the better protection you had. The idea of God as a shield about me—I think the closest analogy we have in the modern way is when we see a president surrounded by Secret Service agents. People guaranteeing protection on all sides. This is what David sees of God. "God, You're my shield and I know that. I'm not unprotected in this moment in my life." Of course that's one of the things the devil wants to make us feel when we're in a moment of danger—unprotected, vulnerable, exposed, the worst is going to happen. We have to decide in tragedy how we are going to face the adversity. "God is our help, there is nothing that can destroy us, God is on our side, who can be against us?" (see Romans 8:31). Those are nice words to say when everything is in good shape. But when things are in bad shape is when we need Him most. Part of going through adversity and struggle is asking God to guard

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

our attitude and saying “God, You’re around me,” instead of thinking all these things like “This is the worst that has ever happened to me. I’m really done for this time.” Instead of thinking that way, David is concentrating on assurance. He’s been through the storm. He’s felt abandonment. He’s felt the heat of his oppressor and accuser. But now he’s saying “God, all around me You’ve got Your strong position.”

We need to call upon this shield when we’re going through a time of danger. “God, You have to be my shield. If everyone leaves me and abandons me, You will not.”

B. Then in verse 11 David also takes refuge in the righteousness of God. He not only says God is his shield but “Because You’re righteous, You are unchanged in your disposition towards evil.” “God is a righteous judge. A God who expresses His wrath every day.” We look at the phrase “wrath of God” and we need to keep what that means. That isn’t the wrath that we get when we get ticked off. It isn’t as though God is saying, “I get ticked off and I zap whoever I want to zap.” God’s wrath is judicial. It’s sort of like the law of the land. The law of the land is a fixed body of law. It says when you violate it you bear the consequences. God’s wrath is like that.

What this is saying is God’s views of right and wrong don’t change from day to day. We all like to think in our case it’s different. An exception for me. But God’s view of right and wrong does not change. One of the things we need to get a hold of in the underpinning of our Christian life is God’s righteousness, God’s justice, God’s integrity and that we need to stay within what God has appointed in terms of the boundaries of life.

If we violate God’s law we are playing with exposed electricity. His wrath is there. It’s not as if God is teed off. It’s just that’s the way His moral law is and we will bear that judgment. David is saying if we don’t bear it in this life we’ll bear it in the life to come because there is a day in

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

which God is going to judge. That's not a popular theme. We're in a me-first generation. An ego-fulfillment generation.

C. Verses 12–13 we're protected in God because He is our shield. He is righteous. Because He is the judge. Because He's judge He must act. So David is saying if the person who brought these accusations against me doesn't relent God's going to sharpen His sword, He's going to bend and string His bow, He's prepared His deadly weapons, He makes ready His flaming arrows. Notice he started out by saying, "Wake up, O God." Now he's saying God's getting ready. He's sharpening His instruments of judgment and action. Which gives us all hope.

There's this tremendous sense of trust that David has in God. He says, "God, I'm realizing that maybe You won't settle the score all in a day. Maybe not even the score on this side of eternity." But He will. He will act. Trust is what David learns.

V. The fifth part of the psalm is a reminder of how God's judgment works, verses 14–16.

There is such an interesting comparison of these verses with verses 6–13. When we start out in verse 6 David is saying, "God, act right away." But by the time he's calmed down and worked through what we have in 11–13 he's coming to realize that while God is going to act in the future the way His judgments act in the present is often clocked within the human phenomenon of cause and effect. Therefore the person who is pregnant with evil, conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment. He who digs a hole, scoops it out and falls into the pit he has made. The trouble he causes recoils on him. None of that appears to be a direct judgment of God. God hasn't sent a bolt of electricity down but he's beginning to realize that God's judgment in the present time works consistently with the moral law of God. It's the boomerang effect. It says that if you act evilly in this life chances are it's going to come back on you. Haman had that experience in the Book of Esther. The gallows that he planned for others fell on himself.

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

If we choose to be slipshod and short circuit our way through things it's going to cost us. We've got to live with our choices. If we've dug a hole to entrap somebody else we're going to fall into it ourselves. So God's judgment is a lightning bolt after all. It works within the moral law.

VI. This then brings us to the sixth part of the psalm, which is a word of praise and thanksgiving, verse 17.

David has come past this aspect of crying for the day of judgment. He realized there may be a long time waiting. God may never act in his lifetime directly. The evil person may unwind on their own. He's at rest with that explanation. "I will give thanks to the LORD because of His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High."

Striking thing about this psalm in the minute it took to pray the psalm there has not been any change in David's external circumstances. He began the psalm with his enemy pursuing him.

When he ends the psalm his enemy is still pursuing him. Not a thing had changed in his external circumstances. But he had changed. His mood had changed. The tenor of his life had changed.

That's what prayer, a psalm like this does to us. Change needs to take place in us because prayer refocuses our understanding of who God is and how God acts.

A psalm that began in sheer terror and David was in terror. Then look how the psalm ends. "Give thanks to the Lord because of His righteousness"! What has happened? Through the psalm the balance has returned in David's heart and soul which had been out of balance. It wasn't the circumstances out of balance. It was his responses to the circumstance that was out of balance. The balance has come back. The note of praise has come. God's righteousness now has appeared to be greater than the wickedness of his enemy. God is greater than his problem. Therefore he can rest.

A PSALM FOR ONE FALSELY ACCUSED

Psalm 7

A psalm for the one falsely accused. When you're alone with the psalms don't treat them as dead words on a page. Put a song to it. Make up your own. Music has a power to it that simple words don't. Paul says I will sing with my understanding, I will sing in the spirit. I believe part of his prayer life involved coming to God with song.