

Psalm 7

Blunting the Blade of False Accusations

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” The other day I found myself saying these familiar words to my 5 year old daughter as she lashed out at me in one of her tantrums (probably for me not letting her play with play-dough). My wife was there and she looked at me with a downward grin and said, “Did you really just say that?” And then I thought about those words and realized how absolutely absurd they are. All you have to do is live a little and be the recipient of harsh words and you will probably agree with the former governor of New Jersey:

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but
words can also hurt me.

Sticks and stones break only skin, while words are ghosts that haunt me.

Slant and curved the words-swords fall
to pierce and stick inside me,
Bats and bricks may ache through bones, but
words can mortify me.

Pan from words has left its scar on mind and heart that's tender.
Cuts and bruises now have healed, it's words that
I remember.” (Brendan Byrne, 1994)

Our text today in Psalm 7 greets us with this type of emotion. The sharp words of an enemy are seeking to rip the Psalmist to shreds and it's in the response that we learn to be encouraged even in the difficult time of false accusations and slander. What is his response? What should be our response? Retreat into the strong fortress that is the LORD God. In the midst of chaos we can find refuge in the God who is putting the chaos of the world back into order.

READ TEXT

Has anyone here ever felt the sharp knife of a false accusation? How did you respond? Did you respond like Psalm 7? Athanasius said, When certain people plot against you... sing Psalm 7, and place your trust in God, who will deliver you.” (*On the Interpretation of the Psalms 15*, in ACC, 56)

Two truths this morning to blunt the blade of false accusations.

1. The LORD is a Strong Tower - Run to Him (1, 6-11, 17)

Remember where we are in the Psalms. Psalms 1-2 serve as the foundation for the Psalter. In Psalms 1-2 the foundation for how we should view God and his world. In Psalm 1-2 we learn that God delights in righteousness and is preparing the world for righteousness through the coming King. When we get to Psalm 7 we see the vision for the world of the first two Psalms playing itself out in a common occurrence - the wicked seem to be flourishing while the righteous suffer. The Bible says that God has established the world by wisdom (Prov. 3:19; 8:22; Jer. 10:12; 51:15) and Psalm 7 is an appeal to the way the LORD has ordered the world.

This appeal is in confidence that he will not abandon those distressed by the chaos of the world but will come and set the world back into place. So if Psalms 1-2 serve as the vision of the world, Psalm 7 is an appeal for the vision of Psalms 1-2 to become a reality. Aren't you glad that the Bible gives us such a hope? How many of us want to pray for the vision of righteousness of Psalm 1-2 to be the reality that we experience and the whole world sees? Psalm 7 is for us!

Psalm 7 tells us that in the midst of his desperation (false allegations) we have a confident and sure foundation for our soul - God is at work in the world making the wicked perish and the righteous flourish. The antics of the wicked may be severe but ultimately they are as silly as a man throwing a rock up and not getting out of the way as it returns to the ground!

Look at the first verses of this Psalm. Listen to the certainty. There are still great cares and concerns but as the Psalmist lifts his cares before the LORD he is doing so already sure of the outcome. His refuge is never in question, he is not looking for refuge, he is taking refuge. The specifics may be in question but overall there is absolutely no question as to the place where his soul rests.

He believes Proverbs 18:10: *The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.* Do you? It's not just anyone who runs to this strong tower, The Bible calls these who run to Him righteous. What does righteousness look like? Penitence - coming humbly before God - verses 3-5 (more about this later).

Notice what is happening. Psalm 7 is another lament but it is a lament like few others. Usually in a lament God is called upon to act, but here we see the Psalmist making a move towards God. He is positioning himself under divine providence, crying out to God in the midst of great difficulty. No matter the fierceness of the situation the shelter which he seeks will outlast all others.

Pay close attention to this. David does not trust in his weapons, his horses, his chariots, does not trust in human wisdom or the counsel of men, his trust is in the LORD God and he waits for him to bring his salvation. The enemies of David, mainly Absalom, stole the hearts of the people, but David set his heart to trust in the Lord.

Let's think about something together. Can there be any loss when we place ourselves in the safe harbor of God's refuge? You say sure there can be loss, didn't the disciples say that they had left everything to follow him? Didn't they lose? Did they lose? Jim Elliott, Missionary and Martyr helps us think through these issues when he famously said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Listen close, taking refuge in the LORD is costly. The lofts of his majesty are limitless, but the way to him has been shown to us by his initiative to come to us to show us the way by his own taking on flesh and dwelling amongst us. His coming does not diminish his glory, but reveals his glory. The inaccessible is now accessible and the way we come to God is by total transformation. God has been putting the transformation of all things, conforming the world to his purpose the moment that everything went haywire.

So notice what comes next. Taking refuge in the LORD is costly so in verses 3-5 what do we see the Psalmist doing? Laying himself bare under the holiness of God. As he is asking God for help; he is asking the just judge of the earth to do what is right. He is declaring his own innocence, making his appeal through the cleanliness of his hands and the purity of his heart.

He knows Psalm 24 is true when it says, *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.* (24:3-4)

Let us forever mark this: There is nothing like being confident of guiltlessness especially before the judge of the earth - the tester of minds and hearts (8-9). "God as my witness" is a phrase not to be taken lightly. God will have each man give an account

Because God is a just judge it gives us the confidence to make our appeal to Him. Look at verse 6. After being sure of his guiltlessness he asks the LORD to vindicate him. Within these verses is an appeal for God to put his world filled with chaos back into order. (Think about the level of depraved chaos that exists for there to be one who would blatantly lie about another person just to destroy them!) Don't miss this. David has a need, but his personal need is met by the cosmic plan and purpose of God.

His appeal is not simply personal. Remember verse 1? Where is David? David has moved himself into the safest position possible - into the Strong Tower of the Lord, his refuge. Isn't this what we who have laid hold of Christ have done? Isn't this our story? Listen to Colossians 3:21-23: *Since you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

If we have run unto Him as our refuge then we have no claim on our own lives. We are not our own, we have been bought with a price. Pay close attention here. Our vision of God must be beyond ourselves. We are grateful for personal salvation, but this is not simply our story, this is his story, we get to play a part in his story. He cares for me and you and that is the beauty of it, as Psalm 8 will tell us next - the beauty is that he is mindful of us. We don't have any claim on our own life, we are clinging tightly to him. When we make our personal appeals we do so in light of his plan to fill the earth with his righteousness. We have aligned ourselves, have been aligned, and are being aligned with eternity!

Consider what this means on a day by day basis: We have taken refuge in him - running to him, removing any personal claims on our life - our desires are aligned with his desires. We want justice because he desires justice, we desire his name above all others because he desires his name above all others, etc... If there is failure then it means that he fails. Will God ever fail? Some may say what about all of those who have been martyred? What about them? We haven't reached the end of the story! Why would we not move ourselves into the refuge he offers?

Look at the appeal closely:

- v.6 - ... *you have appointed a judgment*
- All of these requests of the Psalmist fall under God's own plan - v.7 - God will judge all peoples

- Again we see the Psalmist aligning his request with God's plan
- By the way, how does God do so? How does he *return on high* or *take his seat*?
- Though the Son: *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" and *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate*

People one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (John 12:31-32; Matthew 25:31-32)

But what is it that stands at the heart of his appeal? Look at verse 8. Standing in the refuge of the LORD who is ready to defend and quick to save his appeal is on the basis of his righteousness. Now in the immediate context this refers to his own guiltlessness in light of these false allegations. But immediate context is not the whole story. Running into the refuge of the LORD, as this Psalm teaches us, is not to be taken lightly. He may be guiltless but he is not faultless. If he is to stand forever before the presence of God he will need to be not simply guiltless but he needs to be faultless. How does one stand faultless before God? They must have a Savior who can give and guarantee righteousness. Colossians 1:21-22 says this, *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.* Only through Jesus can we be faultless to stand before the throne of God. Jude 24-25 says this, *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

The only way for us to be able to make it through 8-11 and enter the door of the refuge of the LORD is by Christ. Which leads us to our final point this morning. The LORD is a Strong Tower... Run to Him #2:

2. The Wicked Are a Pit of Destruction - Run Away from Them (2-5, 12-16)

The Psalmist has a perfect plea because he has aligned himself with eternity. He then stands on the balcony of the strong tower of the LORD and makes his appeal to the wicked and calls them to repent. Those that have been seeking his life as ferociously as a lion are now told the truth. It's like a western movie where the hero is utterly surrounded and then the enemy comes to him and says, "Do you have any last words?" And the hero looks defiantly and says, "This is your last chance to surrender." And then suddenly the hero who looked like he was defeated is saved!

The wicked are digging their own graves with all of their scheming and because God is who he is he with his sword ready and his bow bent offers the wicked time and time again to repent. But there will come a day when God's patience runs its course and the pit that the wicked has dug becomes his own grave.

Look at the contrast drawn between verse 15, 16, and 17. The attitude that all should be striving towards is in verse 17. This is not simply tacked on the end by simply giving a quick nod to God.

This verse is an acknowledgment that God is in control, despite the chaos that appears, and an assurance that God is making all things right.

The Lord is a strong tower - run to Him

The Wicked are a pit of destruction - run away from them

Which one will you be? Will you run into the strong tower of the Lord or will you be outside those walls opposing him digging your own grave?

Will you be inside singing praise to the LORD with the redeemed or will you be singing the funereal song (death dirge) of the wicked?

Repent, be redeemed, be reconciled, take refuge in God. Only then will your greatest adversary, the one who stands ready to accuse you - Satan have no say over your life. You will be before the throne of God above with a perfect plea because of a Savior who has brought you through the gates to enjoy the safety of the City of God forever!