

Psalm 7

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Date: 25 January 2015

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[0 : 00] If you have a copy of the Scriptures, I want you to open up to the book of Psalms, to Psalm 7.

If you're using one of the Bibles, it's in the chairs scattered around out there. It's on page 450 in those Bibles. We're going to be in Psalm 7 this morning. So as you turn there, I want to ask you guys to stand up in reverence for God's Word.

We're going to read the entire Psalm all the way down through verse 17. It begins, A shagion of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.

O Lord my God, in you do I take refuge. Save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces with none to deliver.

O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust.

[1 : 23] Arise, O Lord, in your anger. Lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies. Awake for me. You have appointed a judgment. Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you.

Over it, return on high. The Lord judges the peoples. Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me. O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may you establish the righteous who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God.

My shield is with God who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous God. A God who feels indignation every day. If a man does not repent, God will wet his sword.

He has bent and readied his bow. He has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts. Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.

He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole that he has made. His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends. I will give the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness.

[2 : 37] And I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High. Father, thank you for this word. Speak to us now through it, we ask in Christ's name.

Amen. You guys take a seat. This is a prayer lifted up by David as he is in the midst of persecution.

Now when I say the word persecution, though, I feel like most of us probably have an image in our minds of someone being thrown to the lions, for instance.

Or perhaps later on in history we have the image of somebody being hanged, or perhaps being taken before the firing squad, or even in our own day in certain parts of the world being beheaded.

We have in our minds, when we think of persecution, we usually think of severe persecution. The kind of persecution that leads to the deaths of God's people.

[3 : 35] Sometimes in mass, sometimes one by one. And we have stories preserved for us from throughout Christian history of those who have given their lives for the sake of Christ and for the cause of the gospel.

And yet, persecution is not limited to those types of events and those types of actions. Persecution is much broader than that. And as we approach this psalm, we see David falling under a kind of persecution that I think is probably far more common, and that we would probably relate to far more easily.

Because at this point in time, at least, David is not fearing for his life. David is not suffering because he's being chased and pursued by his enemies who are trying to strike him down and take his life.

In fact, David is facing persecution that comes primarily in the form of words and accusations. Those are the kinds of things that we ourselves should expect to experience.

If we take a stand for the gospel, if we stand for Christ, if we dare to actually proclaim the gospel in the world around us, we should at times expect to experience the same kind of suffering that David experiences here.

[4 : 48] I mean, after all, it was Jesus himself who tells us that if they persecuted me, they will persecute you. The apostle Peter tells us, do not be surprised at the fiery trial which is coming upon you.

The New Testament writers are very clear that we are going to be persecuted. We are going to face persecution if we stand for Christ. And most often, we're going to experience the kind of persecution that David experiences here.

In fact, if you'll recall at the beginning of what's called the Sermon on the Mount, in the gospel of Matthew chapter 5, you can turn there if you want. In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus, in the midst of what are called the Beatitudes, as he gives these blessings to his disciples, he says in Matthew chapter 5 verse 10, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Jesus has in mind the kind of persecution that normally takes the form of being reviled, having all kinds of things uttered against you on account of him.

[6 : 05] That's exactly what David is experiencing here in Psalm 7. Take a look in Psalm 7 at what's sometimes called the title, sometimes called a superscription.

In front of many of the Psalms, even before verse 1 in your English translations, we'll often have a little bit of information about what kind of Psalm we're reading or when the Psalm was written or what the circumstances were.

And in this one, we're told that we're reading a shigion of David. We don't know what a shigion is. Nobody really knows what that word means. But the circumstances are this. He's saying it to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite.

Concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite. Now, we don't know who Cush is, but we know what a Benjamite is. A Benjamite is one who is from the tribe of Benjamin, one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

And of course, the tribe of Benjamin was the very same tribe from which King Saul came. King Saul, who was David's predecessor. And so most likely, now we don't know this for certain, but most likely the context of this particular Psalm is at the point in David's life before David has assumed the throne of Israel.

[7 : 13] David does not yet wear the crown upon his head, but he has been anointed as king by Samuel the prophet. Yet Saul remains king upon the throne.

And you have an interesting period of David's life in which technically he's anointed as king by the prophet and designated as the rightful king by God himself. And yet here David is throughout this period of his life, oftentimes in the service of the current king on the throne who's been rejected by God.

In fact, Saul has been told by Samuel the prophet, the Lord himself has rejected you as being king over Israel. And yet Saul's reign would continue for a few more years.

And throughout those years, David spent much of his time in the service of King Saul. And David was a loyal servant to King Saul. We are told in 1 Samuel that David would often bring the lyre, a stringed instrument, and he would sing to King Saul in order to calm him because since the time of Saul's rejection by God, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, had been removed from Saul and God had allowed evil spirits to come and torment Saul.

Spirits, in fact, sent from God himself to cause Saul great torment because of Saul's disobedience. And Saul, throughout this period of his reign, oftentimes if we saw him, we would look at him and say, that guy's nuts.

[8 : 35] That guy's insane. He's out of his mind because that's how he behaved. That's how he acted many times. And he had a weird relationship with David. I don't know. We don't know from the text of 1 Samuel itself whether or not Saul was knowledgeable of David and having been anointed as king.

But we know that he was very jealous of David because David became a great and powerful warrior. And we're told that at one time after David slew Goliath and then David went on to more military conquests that as David and Saul rode back into town together that the women of the city were singing a song as they came in which would have been customary except that the words of their song were Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten thousands.

That didn't set well with the crazy king Saul as he came into town. He became angry and jealous. And from that point on you have this weird relationship between David and Saul. David, the rightful king of Israel, in service of Saul, the mad king of Israel, who's now jealous of David.

So in one minute Saul is trying to kill David by throwing spears at him. The next minute David is back in his good graces playing the liar again and calming him down as he's struggling with these spirits that seem to be just bothering him in his mind and in his heart.

It's a weird relationship. David marries Saul's daughter and Saul gives a blessing for that and yet at the same time Saul wishes David was dead. It's very strange.

[10 : 03] And so at different points in time during this period of David's life, sometimes David was in favor with the king and sometimes he was out of favor with the king. And I think that that's probably when this psalm was written.

It makes sense to envision a time in which David is experiencing these extremes of his relationship with Saul when an accusation by someone from Saul's own tribe, probably a member of Saul's court, when someone makes an accusation against David coming from someone like that who perhaps had a relationship with Saul or perhaps at least had access to Saul's court and then makes some sort of accusation against David.

We don't know what. We have no idea. We don't even know who Cush is. We don't know the nature of his accusation. But we know that it put David in a precarious position.

It brought danger to David. Take a look at exactly what David says in verse 1. He prays to God, Save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, lest like a lion they tear my soul apart.

Now this is interesting because in the English Standard Version, which I'm reading from here, as well as in the New International Version and a handful of other translations, you have lest they tear my soul apart like a lion.

[11 : 24] Plural. You get that? They is more than one person. Yet in the King James Version and in the New American Standard Version and a couple of other English translations, it reads, Lest like a lion he tear my soul apart.

And it's actually the King James Version and the New American Standard that get this right here because this is singular. It is lest he. But that's on first reading seems strange because it's plural at the first part of verse 1.

He's praying to be saved and delivered from all of his pursuers. Deliver me from them. Rescue me from my pursuers. Plural. But then it switches, Lest he, like a lion, tear my soul apart.

Which is one of the reasons that I think this takes place during the reign of Saul. Because I think this Benjamite named Cush is leading in accusations against David, which is causing many of the men of Saul's court to arise against David and oppose David.

And David's fear is not necessarily simply what they are going to do. He's afraid of how Saul's going to react. Lest he arise like a lion and tear my soul to pieces.

[12 : 32] Lest Saul himself come after me once again. That's David's fear. So these accusations against David, whatever they are, whatever the nature of them happens to be, they bring real danger for David.

Not danger merely because of the words themselves, but because of what they might cause the sitting king to do who already has a tendency to come after David on occasion.

And so David finds himself in the position of having to defend himself. Having to answer to these accusations against him. And it's in the midst of this kind of verbal persecution.

Lies being told about him. Things being said. Accusations being made. It's in the midst of that that David cries out to God. And David's prayer, at least as I read through it the first few times, just struck me as strange.

It just, it did not sit easily with me. Because after all, we spent six months out of last year, I don't know if you guys were counting, but I was.

[13 : 38] We spent six months in Romans 1 through Romans 4, in which we learned two major things. Number one, there's nobody righteous in God's sight.

Paul says, no, not even one. We are all utterly, totally, we are depraved people. That's what we are as descendants of Adam, as sinners in the world. Point number one, we're sinners.

And then point number two, the only way to be righteous in God's sight is to have Christ's righteousness credited to you by faith.

Now for six months we've been talking about that, that we don't have a righteousness of our own, and that our standing before God is based upon Christ's righteousness counting in our place.

And yet I come to Psalm 7, and it just sounds odd to me. Listen to some of the things that David says.

[14 : 35] Verse 8, the Lord judges the people. Well, that sounds right, that fits perfectly well with what Paul says in Romans. God is a judge. The Lord judges the people. But then, judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to the integrity that is in me.

Wait a minute. David? Have you lost it as well? Is Saul not the only one who's a little bit off here?

Or is your, I mean, you are King David, the anointed one, the one from whom the Messiah will come. Is your theology a little bit off here? I mean, what's happening here?

How can David proclaim himself to be righteous and appeal to his own righteousness for God to rescue and deliver him if we know that there is no one who is righteous?

How can we, more importantly, how can we in the midst of our own persecution, when people come against us and say things against us, how can we take this psalm and make any use of it if we know that we don't have a righteousness of our own?

[15 : 47] How can we do that? How can we relate to this? How can David utter such a prayer? And I think that you have to pay very close attention to the context in which that statement about his own righteousness is made.

So let me just highlight a few things about this prayer of David and the state of David, the state of David's mind and heart as he utters this prayer, because it will help us to see what sort of position do we need to be in in order for us to be able to pray the way that David prays.

Because the psalms, if nothing else, are a book that lead us in knowing how to pray and how to sing and worship God. That's what they do. So how can we learn from this?

How can we take this as an example? The first thing that you need to understand is that everything that David says in this psalm, everything takes place within the context of a relationship that David has with the Lord.

This isn't coming out of nowhere. David isn't approaching God for the first time and proclaiming himself to be righteous in God's sight. David has an established, existing, intimate relationship with God.

[16 : 56] You can see that just in the way that the psalm begins. O Lord my God, he says in verse 1. And then he repeats it in verse 3. O Lord my God.

He identifies Yahweh, Jehovah, as his very own God. The word Lord in all capital letters, I've said many, many times as I've stood up here, when it's in all capital letters, it's God's personal name, Yahweh, or sometimes spelled and pronounced as Jehovah.

It's God's covenant name that he gave to Moses as he appeared to Moses in the burning bush. I am Yahweh. I am the God of your fathers. That's who I am, Moses.

And David calls upon him not only by his covenant name, but identifies this Lord, this God is my God. David has an established relationship with God.

And the basis of that relationship, we can say this secondly, that the basis of that relationship exists, I think, at least in two parts that are really closely connected and you can't separate them. Number one, the basis of David's relationship is his faith in God, his trust in God.

[18 : 04] Again, look at verse 1. O Lord my God, it says, in you do I take refuge. The King James says, in you do I trust. I take refuge in you.

God is David's only place of comfort and salvation from the world. David recognizes that. David at the very beginning expresses his faith and trust in God so that later on in the psalm he goes on to call God his shield, the one who guards him, the one who protects him, the one who keeps him from harm.

And so the context of this close, intimate relationship is one of David's faith in God himself. But not only faith, but I believe that David is a man who came to God in repentance.

We, of course, saw last week in Psalm 6 that David came to the Lord confessing his sin. Now, I think that that psalm was probably written later in David's life. But we have a number of psalms that come from the hand of David in which David comes to the Lord confessing his sins.

In fact, that's one of the biggest differences between Psalm 6 and Psalm 7. Both of them call upon God to deliver David from his enemies. But in Psalm 6, David recognizes that my enemies are coming against me because I've sinned and this is discipline from the Lord.

[19 : 21] Whereas here in Psalm 7, David says, No, my enemies are coming against me and I've done nothing wrong. But as a whole, David is a man who comes before God as repentant.

David has not merely come before God flaunting a righteousness of his own. David understands the necessary place of repentance. Take a look at verse 12. This is David's general confession about God and how a person might survive God's judgment.

Verse 12, If a man does not repent, God will wet his sword. He has bent and readied his bow. If a man fails to repent, if a man does not turn from his sins, then God's judgment will come upon him.

So David understands that. So I think the kind of relationship that David has with God and that informs our reading of this psalm is one that is close, that is personal, in which he can call the covenant God of Israel his own God, and which is characterized by his trust in God and his having turned away from his sins.

That sounds familiar, right? I mean, when Peter is asked in the book of Acts, what must I do to be saved? His answer is, repent and believe.

[20 : 37] That's always the answer. What must I do to be in a right relationship with God? What must I do to have God as my God, my covenant God? The answer is clear.

Trust in him, trust in his promises, and turn from your sin. And I think that that, first of all, is what we need to see is true about David. So that when we come to David's confession of his righteousness, David is not confessing a righteousness by which he will escape God's final judgment on judgment day.

David is saying that in this matter, in the thing of which I have been accused by Cush the Benjamite, I am innocent.

I am righteous in regard to these things. That's what David is saying. That's David's point. And so certain is David of his innocence in these matters that he's willing to risk his life for it.

Notice what he says in verse 3. Oh Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, then let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it.

[21 : 52] Let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. Now you're supposed to pause right there and think about that. There's a pause.

You see the word *selah* there in your text and most of your translations. We don't know precisely what that means. But we know it indicates some sort of pause, whether a musical pause or just a pause of time, we don't know.

But it's some sort of halting in order to give you time to think about what's been said. David is so certain of his innocence in this matter that he says, God, if I am guilty, if I have done what Cush accuses me of, then fine.

Judge me. Let the enemy overtake me. Let the enemy take me down. Let the enemy lay my glory down in the dust. Let him have me. Let him pursue me.

David knows that he's innocent in this matter. David knows that he hasn't done this. And there will be times in your walk with Christ that you will be accused of things that simply are not true about you.

[23 : 01] We read the Beatitudes a second ago from the Beatitudes where Jesus says, Blessed are you when you are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Blessed are you when you're persecuted because you do the right things.

Because you're living the way that I'm instructing you to live in the midst of this sermon. And if you are persecuted because you're living in those ways, then I will come on and I will bless you in the midst of that.

But don't miss the point. At times, persecution will come because of your own obedience to God and His Word.

Or, for instance, in 1 Peter chapter 3, Peter says, It is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

So, Peter conceives of two different types of suffering that might come upon us as followers of Christ. There might be a kind of suffering that comes upon us because we have sinned.

[24 : 10] That's entirely possible. And when God allows that kind of suffering to come into our lives, we saw last week, that was the kind of suffering that David was experiencing in Psalm 6.

That's the fatherly, disciplining hand of God upon His children when we err, when we go astray. That happens. But Peter also conceives of a kind of suffering that comes upon you because you do what is right.

And Peter says, It's better. You're going to suffer. That's going to happen. I mean, he says just a few verses later, or quoted earlier, Don't be surprised at the fiery trial coming upon you. Jesus, if they persecuted me, they'll persecute you.

That's going to happen. Peter takes that for granted. Suffering's going to come. But Peter says, It's coming anyway. It's better if it come upon you for doing good than for doing evil.

There will be suffering, particularly the kind that David experiences, of slander, or of people just insinuating things about you, or making claims about you that just aren't quite true, or aren't accurate.

[25 : 15] Those things will happen, and they'll happen precisely because of your obedience to Christ and of your faithfulness to the gospel. They will come into your life because of those things.

We see it sort of on a larger scale right now in the culture around us just because it's sort of where our culture is. So that evangelical Christians, those who believe the gospel, those who follow Christ, we're constantly accused of being all sorts of things that we simply aren't.

We just aren't. So, for instance, last night, Allie found this documentary on Netflix that she was watching. It was obviously not written from a Christian perspective, but it was about evangelicals in the United States.

And at one point in time, there's a clip of a talk show, a radio host, and he's accusing all, just all, all evangelical Christians as being people who hate the environment.

We just want to destroy the world that we live in. We hate the environment. We might as well just go empty oil cans out in the front yard or something. I mean, he talked about it. It's like, that's what we want to do. That's just, that's what evangelical Christians are. They destroy the world.

[26 : 28] They hate the environment. That's just the way they are. And then he made a number of other just sort of ridiculous accusations, kind of on the whole. I'm sure you could find plenty of people out there who claim to follow Christ, who do the kinds of things that he said, or lead the kind of hypocritical lives that he was accusing all of us of living.

But there will be times when it happens sort of in mass like that. But there will be probably more times when those broad stereotypes are going to be projected upon you as an individual, whether you're at school, or whether you're at work, or whether you have family members who don't know Christ.

Lots of assumptions are going to be made about you because of your trust in Christ. And accusations will at times be made. Things will be said.

Whispers will happen. You're going to face it. You're going to deal with it. And in that moment, the question becomes, will you be able, like David, to call upon God and say, God, in this matter, judge me according to my righteousness.

I haven't done this. I'm innocent of these things. Because the frightening thing about stereotypes is they don't just fall out of the clear blue sky.

[27 : 46] All stereotypes, be they good or bad, have some sort of basis in reality. Someone, somewhere, and some number of people, somewhere, that fall within the group being talked about actually fit the stereotype.

And if it's a negative stereotype about Christians, you can bet there are people somewhere who name the name of Christ who fit the stereotype. And so the question becomes, do we fit the stereotype? Or can we, like David, say, in this matter, I've not done it.

If I've done it, God, then let them take me down. Let them win over me. But judge me in this matter according to my righteousness. You see, it matters how you live your life.

It does matter what kind of life you live. Yes, we are justified by faith alone in Christ. Yes, when we stand before God, our acceptance into His kingdom will not be based upon any of the things that we do.

It will be based upon all that Christ has done in our behalf. But it still matters the kind of life that we live once we have been made right with God through faith in Jesus.

[28 : 57] It matters. It matters so much that the apostles are willing to say that those who do not live according to God's standards have not really, really believed.

So read through the letter of 1 John. Where over and over John says, well, you know, if you continue in sin, then the love of the Father is not in you.

If you hate your brother, the love of the Father is not in you. Over and over throughout 1 John, John tells us, if you do this, you don't know. He says, for instance, some people had left the church.

Well, they went out for us because they were never really of us. For John, a person's life demonstrates whether or not their faith in Jesus was ever legitimate in the first place.

It matters greatly how we live our lives. Not because it's the basis of our standing before God, but because it confirms or denies our confession of faith in Christ, and because it affects the way that Christ is viewed in the world.

[30 : 06] David can stand knowing that he's innocent. He knows it. He knows he hasn't done the things of which he is accused. And so he can come before God with boldness in the context of the relationship that he has with God and he can say, judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me.

I pray that we would be a kind of people who can say those words, uncomfortable as they might be at times with our proper theological knowledge.

Nevertheless, in a given situation, I hope, I pray that we as a church and as followers of Jesus will be faithful to him and be able to say when we are slandered, I am fully innocent.

God, you who judge the hearts and minds of men and can see within me, judge me according to the righteousness I have regarding this. So, David's prayer comes in the context of a relationship that comes by faith in God's promises and turning from his sins and the righteousness that he claims is not the righteousness by which he comes and stands before God, but it's the righteousness in this matter that he clings to and that he appeals to.

If you would pray the way that David prays, you must first have the kind of relationship that David has with God. If you have not trusted in Christ, if you are still primarily leaning upon your own goodness and the things that you have done, you don't have the relationship necessary to pray like this.

[31 : 43] You must turn from sin and trust in Jesus. But, having done that, you must live a life that is consistent with the word of God so that when the fiery trial comes, when they persecute you the way they persecuted Jesus, they said all kinds of things about Jesus.

I mean, that doesn't just mean, Jesus doesn't simply mean when they persecute me, they're going to persecute you. He doesn't mean that they're going to kill us all because he is killed. He doesn't mean that because the vast majority of the persecution that Jesus faced were false accusations.

Well, he's the son of the devil. That's why he casts out demons. Wow, anybody ever been called the son of the devil? Alright. That's a pretty, that's pretty harsh. That's a pretty mean thing to say about somebody. Jesus had those kinds of things said about him.

Oh, he's just, he's a drunkard. That's who he is. Hangs out with those tax collectors. He hangs out with those sinners. Oh, he hangs out with those kinds of women. He's a drunkard. He's a sinner himself. Terrible things said about Jesus.

There's a, there's a Facebook group that I'm a part of. I honestly know like two other people that are in this Facebook group but somebody added, a friend of mine added me to it and it's fun, it's really funny.

[32 : 56] It's called FLOP. That's what it's called. The FLOP group. The fellowship, let's see, let's see, the fellowship, or no, the Fraternal League of Ordinary Pastors. I had to really think about it for a second there.

Fraternal League, and it's just a group of guys, pastors, and kind of share encouraging things on there or ask for advice on there. I don't know how many are in it, maybe a dozen, maybe 20. I really don't even know.

I've never looked at how many people are in there. But one of the pastors in the group posted this week that a lady who goes to another church in his community ran into him in the grocery store and he introduced himself to him and she says, oh, you're that guy who hangs out at the strip clubs.

That's how she thought of him because in his church there was a ladies ministry which would go and minister to the ladies who worked there and because he was the pastor, he would at times go as their protector.

He would drive and he would just stay in the car. That's all he ever did. He just sat in the car just to make sure that they made it back out safely and there were a few men who would do that. But in the community that's how he'd kind of become known.

[33 : 58] What a terrible thing for people to think about you. He's trying to do ministry to people that nobody else will reach out to. He's trying to help ladies in his church do ministry and yet because of the very ministry that he's doing he gains this reputation in his own town where he's a pastor.

Probably hard to get people to visit your church if you're known that way in the area. He was laughing about it and he was joking about it but that will happen at times.

There will be things said about you just as there were about Jesus just as there are about David that simply are not true and they're said because of your commitment to Christ and doing the things that he has called you to do.

And if you would pray the way that David prays you must have the kind of righteousness that David has in practical everyday living.

Oh we know that David was a sinner. We know that David messes up. We know that David does things. We know that David makes major mistakes. We just read last week's psalm which David begins by confessing his sin before God.

[35 : 05] We know that. But when we are accused when we are brought before the tribunal of public opinion will we be able to say I didn't do that.

I didn't say that. I don't believe that. I didn't act like that. I wouldn't ever treat anyone like that. Will we be able to do that? David says that if we if we have that kind of practical righteousness lived out in life then we can call upon the Lord and we can trust upon the Lord to deal with those who make those kinds of accusations against us.

Notice how David goes on and he talks about God's judgment. He calls upon God in verse 6. Arise O Lord in your anger. Lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies.

Awake for me. You have appointed a judgment. He calls upon God to execute judgment upon those who are making these kinds of accusations.

Verse 9 Let the evil of the wicked one come to an end and may you establish the righteous. Verse 12 If a man does not repent God will wet his sword. He has bent and readied his bow.

[36 : 22] He has prepared for him his daily weapons making his arrows fiery shafts. Behold the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.

You notice that sort of step those three steps that he takes? First the wicked man conceives evil thinks of what he's going to do thinks of how to get at David and he becomes pregnant with mischief then he's just he's ready to do it and then he gives birth to in this instance lies about David.

That's the path that sin takes among the wicked. First they think of it then they get excited about doing it and then all of a sudden the lies come forth.

But David says even as they do that something else is happening. Something else is taking place. Notice verse 6 also neatly divides into three steps that I think counter the three steps not verse 6 I'm sorry verse 15 that counter the three steps of verse 14.

he says he this wicked person he makes a pit okay gonna make a pit digs it out okay get all the dirt out of it make sure it's nice and ready and then what happens he falls into the hole that he has made and he says his mischief returns upon his own head and on his own skull his violence descends.

[37 : 49] Now this begins to sound familiar. You see as I read David saying oh God judge them I think huh Jesus said to bless those who persecute you pray for your enemies he says even to turn the other cheek when they do attack you so David praying for God's judgment to fall on them sounds I don't know not quite right but do you recall what Jesus also says Jesus says that in so doing in doing these things in responding in these ways to those who come against you you heap burning coals upon their heads what's Jesus point here Jesus is not making a point about pacifism in general Jesus is making the point that you you don't need to return evil for evil you don't need to respond somebody comes against you you bless them somebody persecutes you you pray for them somebody comes and slaps you you just turn the other cheek they come and they steal your coat you give them your shirt as well it's not your job to set it right

David's not trying to set things right either David's not trying to get back at his enemies I mean at this point in David's life if we've identified it at the right point David is already a mighty warrior I mean this is David a guy who can fight lions and defend his sheep I think he can handle Cush the Benjamite he doesn't sound David could take the fight to them if he wanted to that's not what David does David trusts that God himself will execute judgment and Jesus tells us we don't need to execute judgment on our own that's not our role you do this you heap burning coals upon their heads well that sounds like David his mischief returns upon his own head and on his own skull his violence descends this is not this is not karma at work this is God's justice meted out in the real world which means you don't have to defend yourself the righteousness that you have practically in your everyday life in obedience to God's word is a righteousness before

God that you cry out to him to recognize your innocence and your job your goal is not to make sure everybody else knows it no your task is to do the very thing that would put you in a position to cry out to God in this way in the first place to take refuge in him to trust in him Paul says in Romans that we don't seek vengeance we don't seek revenge we don't try to set things right why because he says vengeance belongs to the Lord yes we will be persecuted yes people will lie about us if we remain faithful to Christ yes things will be said that are not true false stereotypes!

will be placed upon you and sometimes you won't even be aware of the whispers around you things like that will happen if you're faithful to Christ and yet it is never your job to set all things right it is never your task to make sure everybody fully understands you didn't do it and you're innocent it's your job to continue trusting in God to continue to trust that he so that the guilty receive the punishment they deserve not for the sake of your name not for the vindication of your reputation oh no so that at the end you are brought to the praise of his name all the more verse 17 I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness and

I will sing praise to the name of the Lord the most high that's the end goal that's that's where it's headed that's why God allows these things to take place that's why the will of God includes your suffering so that it might end in the praise of his great name the Lord the most high so I wonder how many of us have ever experienced this I know the varying degrees amongst us the more that you are out in the world the more likely you to experience this if you're!

[42 : 56] you spend the vast majority of your time at home with your children you're not in a workplace or you're not in school or anything you're less likely to experience these things as often just because you're not exposed to those who would do these kinds of things as often although you may have family members who do these kinds of things but I wonder although to varying degrees how many of us have experienced these things because Jesus says if they persecuted me they will persecute you I wonder if we have been faithful enough to the word of God and to the lives that he calls us to lead that it would lead those on the outside to look at us and wonder and then at times slander I pray I hope that we are a kind of people and a kind of church who are faithful enough to be slandered let's pray