

SESSION TWO

A God Who Defends (*Psalm 7*)

"If you have been mistreated, cheated or deceived and if your heart has been right all along, be assured that God knows this. God will eventually vindicate you, but in the meantime you should be confidently aware that God knows the truth concerning what has happened to you.
He knows if your heart has been right." ~ T. Epp

I. Overview

The title associates the psalm with a particular event in the life of David concerning the false accusations of a Benjaminite named Cush. While such an event is not specifically mentioned elsewhere in the OT, David did experience opposition from the Benjaminites (cf. 1 Sam 24-26; 2 Sam 16:5; 20:1). The psalm was later associated with the feast of Purim, recalling similar events in the book of Esther.

Psalm 7 is a typical imprecatory psalm. An "imprecation" is an invocation of judgment, calamity, or curse uttered against one's enemies. An imprecatory psalm is one in which the imprecation is a major element or leading feature of the psalm. Most often imprecatory psalms include Pss 7, 35, 58, 69, 83, 109, 137, and 139. The purpose for these type of psalms includes the following: (1) a concern for righteousness, (2) an anticipation in praising God for deliverance, (3) an opportunity to see the righteous rewarded, (4) a declaration of God's attributes (e.g., His character), and (5) a call for all individuals, including the wicked, to seek the Lord.

II. The Content

A. Prayer for Deliverance (vv. 1-2)

Note what concerns the psalmist.

"To miss the prominence of the psalmist's distress in these psalms is to miss their connection with human life. Within these psalms there is no pretense of accepting or approving of this suffering as God's will, intended for the psalmist's own good. Instead, the psalmist cries out to God, voicing his contention that something is terribly amiss." (Pauls, "The Imprecations of the Psalmist," *Direction*, 83).

B. Declaration of Innocence (vv. 3-5)

The content of the false accusations is that the psalmist performs evil actions, breaks oaths, and is treacherous.

v. 5 – "sleep in the dust" could either refer to his death and burial (cf. Dan 12:2) or an act of humiliation (i.e., "lying humiliated in the dust").

C. Call for Judgment (vv. 6-9)

v. 6 – The psalmist rests in knowing that he belongs to the Lord. The writer also reminds the Lord of what the Lord has decreed in the past. Note that the psalmist never prayed that he personally could serve as the avenger.

Note the four imperatives: “Arise . . . lift yourself . . . awake . . . declare.” This urgency in the tone is heightened by the use of military and judicial terminology.

Arise – call for God’s presence in battle in Num 10:35

Awake – the battle cry in Deborah’s war in Judges 5:12

v. 8 - “most high God” occurs 23 times in the Psalms and three times in this particular psalm (vv. 8, 10, 17). The Lord’s exalted, sovereign position in heaven allows the psalmist to rest securely in his deliverance and vindication.

“innocent” - Allen Ross notes in his commentary on the Psalms, “When a psalmist claims to be blameless or perfect, it means that he is in the proper spiritual condition to commune with God in his sanctuary. He is sound, complete, and morally unimpaired. He may have sinned, but he knew how to deal with sin according to the law. On the whole, because he is a faithful believer, he acts with integrity—he is whole” (1:283).

D. Praise of God’s Justice (vv. 10-17)

v. 10 – This call for judgment concludes with a statement of confidence. God is His shield (also stated in v. 1). The psalmist also reiterates the Lord as a deliverer (v. 1).

vv. 12 and 13 – Use of parallelism to restate how the Lord is prepared to act.

vv. 14-16 - God will turn the plans of the wicked back on them (e.g., the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai in the book of Esther became his place of execution).

v. 17 – The psalmist concludes by praising the Lord for his character and His actions.

“In the beginning of his prayer, the enemies overshadowed God in the enormity of their plotting against him. But as the prayer ends with a note of praise (v 18), a proper balance has returned.”

~ P. C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, 103.

III. Intersect

- A. False accusations and injustices never undermine a person's standing in the _____ . Living righteously allows us to pray with confidence to our Righteous Deliverer.

Psalm 139:17 –

- B. Better to walk in _____ before God and suffer injustice than to share in the way of sinners.

Psalm 109:30-31 -

- C. When caught in the agony and emotional upheaval of life's incongruities and injustices, our only true source of security and peace is the _____ .

Psalm 59:5-9 -

The imprecatory psalms assist NT saints by exhorting us to hate sin, encouraging us to be zealous for God, and reminding us to allow God to vindicate. However, a Christian's use of imprecatory psalms must recognize the cross. The death of Christ calls for believers to entrust our pain into the gracious hands of God. In one sense, vindication has occurred. On the other hand, ultimate vindication awaits those who are unwilling to accept the atoning work of Christ (cf. Rev 20:11-15). Thus, Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:19 stands: "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God." Rather, Paul commands believers to "bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not." (Rom 12:14).

"Where does your security lie? Is God your refuge, your hiding place, your stronghold, your shepherd, your counselor, your friend, your redeemer, your savior, your guide? If He is, you don't need to search any further for security." ~ Elisabeth Elliot