

“Falsely Accused”

20 June 2021 - Led by Rev. Sam Mawhinney

Welcome & Call To Worship

Hymn of Preparation: This Is My Father's World

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Reading: Psalm 7

Sermon:

For every crisis there is a psalm and the crisis in Psalm 7 is the experience of false accusation. Have you ever received an email that accuses you of doing something for which you did not think you were responsible? Or read an unfair assessment of your life or work? Perhaps you realised that what has been said could have serious consequences for you in work or personally. Have you been bullied, trolled, or criticised on social media, a nasty comment, a lie spread, a picture circulated? From misunderstanding to deliberate attempts to harm, false accusation affects us all. David, tells us his experience in Psalm 7.

A song: David has written a song about his experience of words spoken against him by Cush, a Benjamite, which have gained traction with others and threatened him with incredibly serious consequences even his death (v.5). Why a song? Well, because it allows us to know what was happening but also how the experience felt. We trace his emotions: despair and depression - “if I have done this, let me die” - indignation and anger - “Lord, arise in your anger” - relief and confidence - “*My shield is God most High who saves the upright in heart*” - happy and thankful in the melody of his song (v.17). This is a deeply personal song and prayer of lament charting a struggle regarding serious issues and strong emotions during a tough period in his life.

Context: There is no specific mention of Cush the Benjamite in scripture. David's life was intertwined with the life of King Saul, whom he replaced as king. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, and 1st Samuel 24-26 and other incidents recorded in 2nd Samuel 16:5; 20:1 tell us of that period of conflict and of subsequent attacks by others who were loyal to Saul. Once during a hockey match, a player from the opposing team came from behind and flattened me to the pitch, triggering a fight between our two teams. Later, he apologised, explaining he'd mistaken me for someone from a family that was in a running feud with his family. So, it is probable that Cush the Benjamite was part of these ongoing attacks, though David never sought to oppose Saul and, despite opportunity to do so, never threatened Saul's life or his rule as king.

Picture: To help remember the psalm, the picture is of David presenting his case (that is, the false accusations) before God the righteous judge in court. God is a righteous judge (v.11), the peoples are summoned as witnesses (v.7), and judgement is asked for (v.8). David has been falsely accused and he asks God to judge him and bring His wrath on whoever is wrong. Let us see what is said and what the outcome is.

I. Hear my case (v.1-5)

David makes his case to God whom he recognises as his personal Lord, in whom he takes refuge. He asks God to save and deliver him from those people who seek to destroy him

(v.1). They are out to get him. It's personal, serious, even vicious; it is lonely and it's beyond him sorting it out (v.2). He then declares his innocence in this matter (whatever it is; v.3). Verse 4a has this phrase "*him who is at peace with me*", which translates a word which means "ally" and the ESV translates "friend". The idea behind this is of covenant. It would be like betrayal by a spouse, the hurt and emotions of divorce, a feud with a close family member, a dispute over a will for example, or conflict with a church member (a covenant family).

The accusation is hurtful. Conflict in relationships hurts particularly when you perceive or know you are innocent. Negative, destructive words of the accuser, and perhaps the destructive thoughts the victim has, are like a lion that seeks to rip us apart.

The accusation is serious. David is being accused of stealing without cause, breaking the eighth commandment.(v.4b). If you are familiar with the story of David and Saul in 1st Samuel 24 when Saul is hounding David seeking to kill him, David has an opportunity in a cave to kill Saul but refuses to do so. Instead, he cuts off a piece of Saul's robe to show how close he was to him and what damage he could have done. David was deeply troubled by his action and no doubt his heart struggled with what he had done. Saul and his allies interpret it as an act of stealing, breaking covenant, treasonable and punishable by death. David knows his conscience is clear in this and he invites God to allow his enemy to take his life if he is guilty. If I am guilty let me die Lord. David prayerfully places himself before God making his case before God. Then he waits! *Selah*.

I read once that the Army could read the number plates of cars from a helicopter in the air. I'm told today that they can tell the time on your wristwatch. God sees everything, "*nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account*" (Hebrews 4:13). In such conflict, there is great need to allow God to search our hearts. "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*" (Psalm 139:23-24). Our case is always presented in light of the work of Jesus on the cross for us and in view of His grace.

II. Convene Your court (v.6-9)

David's request is surprising in the directness of his call on God for action: arise, rise up, awake, be active Lord. Act now, get to work. More surprising is what he calls for in v.6, the anger of God to be awakened and get to work. Such a request is for us quite shocking. How often do we ask for God to act in anger? Yet note the call for God to rise in anger is that justice would prevail. "*Awake, my God, decree justice.*"

We have spoken about this before. A world where we are not angry at what is wrong, do not deal with injustice, or hate evil would be intolerable, leading to anarchy, violence, fear, and despair. It would be hellish. A housing estate controlled by the violence and fear of drug gangs is not a place we want to live. A country where law and order and the justice system is corrupt or non-existent is not our goal. A society where individuals act with impunity, as we might say "get away with murder", is a recipe for disaster. David's deep concern is for God to convene a court and dispense justice. Note as well that this is not just about David and his personal angst (v.8). It includes a wider application to justice and evil in society (v.9). His prayer is for God to act in anger, to bring justice, to do it for himself and for other situations in society.

Last Sunday in Ballycastle, the speaker at church told us about the work of the International Justice Mission, a Christian organisation involved in the worldwide mission of justice. I recommend it to you as a place to start to think through how we might respond to the reality of injustice, and particularly modern slavery (e.g. economic, prostitution). It is right to feel angry, ask God to act in anger and bring about justice. God's word has been urging us to change as we emerge from lockdown, explore our ministries and engage in mission. What part will we play in praying and acting for God's justice to come to the marginalised, to those who experience injustice? What interest and passion will we bring to those affected by unscrupulous landlords, to those marginalised because of lack of education, opportunity, race, or inability to speak English well? What will it mean for ARPC to pray "*Arise O Lord in your anger, Awake my God, decree justice!*"?

III. Confidence in God (v.10-17)

David has been rightly angry; his song expresses his emotion at the injustice he has suffered and the threat it has been to his life. His prayer to God to act brings about tremendous confidence in God. "*My shield (protection) is God Most High who saves the upright in heart*" (v.10); he has absolute confidence in God, he is able to know **security in the sovereign God who saves**. Whatever happens, God saves and protects. He paints two great pictures of God as a Righteous judge and a Ready Soldier.

A. Righteous judge (v.11a)

I have been to the Law Courts once to support someone who had a case against them. I was impressed by the authority and the wisdom of the judge, expressed in a balanced and fair summing up, and what I considered a gracious verdict. I would gladly present my case to that judge. God is a righteous judge! Psalm 7 is a transcript of David's case and his confidence in such a judge. The psalm encourages us to come to the Righteous Judge with every aspect of our lives, look for His wisdom in all matters as determined in His Word, seek His vindication when everything appears to be against us, and of course when we are in the wrong repent and ask for His mercy of which we are assured because the Righteous Judge gave His Son to be punished for us. "*He is righteous and just to forgive us our sins*" (1st John 1:9). God is right and a judge we can trust.

B. Ready soldier (v.11b-13)

Verse 11b (ESV) translates "*a God who feels indignation every day*". As a soldier, He stands on the frontline and views the arrogant injustice perpetrated by humanity each day. He patrols the neighbourhood so to speak, knows what happens in the homes, the businesses, the hearts of everyone and He feels indignation, righteous anger. The injustice moves Him to strong displeasure to act in judgement with the authority of a powerful and well-equipped soldier.

Verse 11b (NIV) translates "*a God who expresses His wrath every day*." Is God perpetually angry? As verse 11b could be interpreted as saying, such a view would confirm our suspicions that God is waiting to punish and is hard to please. However, in context, we read that God is ready as a soldier must be and He will act to deal with the injustice. Verse 12 can be read as "if He (God) does not relent" or and the ESV says "if a man does not repent" and so it is not that He wants to punish - in fact, God

always wants to bless - but He is ready and will do so and does. He is just by nature, and He will act in judgement.

God is a righteous judge and a ready soldier; He punishes the wicked and He saves the repentant.

IV. Observing God's justice unfold (v.12-16)

Being pregnant describes a process: conception, a gestation period (for humans, nine months), and then birth. What David has observed in nature he has observed in how God works. Those who conceive evil after a time find the outcome rebounds on them. God the soldier stands with His shield and all that is thrown simply bounces back. For example, those who live by violence often die violently. We reap what we sow and behind it all stands a righteous judge and ready soldier who brings it about. And as the evil is rebounded so there is protection for the righteous. The recent Church in Chains magazine tells the stories of one Christian unjustly put in prison and released this year. It reads like the story of Joseph in the Bible. Though he was in prison for eleven years, after one year the authorities in prison totally trusted him and knew he was innocent, giving him increasing responsibility.

V. Thank God (v.17)

David is assured at the end of his song that righteousness triumphs and therefore God is to be praised. David's greater Son, Jesus, was falsely accused and wrongly killed, but His righteousness was vindicated and three days later He rose and now sits exalted at the right hand of God in heaven. Placing our trust in God, turning to Him in honest prayer, knowing He is the righteous judge and ready soldier, means our hope is never in vain. We trust completely in God's righteous justice; His anger at sin has been justly poured out on Jesus and there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Application:

Thank God for His protection in the gospel.

- Use this psalm as a guide when we face accusation and times of injustice.

Take issues of injustice seriously.

- Look out for these in our communities, look out for the marginalised.
- Read '**The Good News About Injustice**' by Gary Haugen. A very practical and thorough insight into the reality of injustice today and how we should respond as Christians.
- Church in Chains, International Justice Mission - actively read and pray.

Praise: IPH 301 Tell Out, My Soul

Prayers for Others

Announcements

Closing Hymn: IPH 491 Be Thou My Vision

Benediction

Discussion & Application:

What help might Psalm 7 offer when facing false accusations?

Have you seen evil rebound on the perpetrators? If so, in what way?

Consider an issue of injustice. In what practical ways can you pursue justice in this area?