



Title: Story and Song – Psalm 7

Text: Psalm 7

Date: July 24, 2022

Main Idea: The innocent can take refuge in God.

Personal Study Guide

READ ENTIRE TEXTS: PSALM 7

Highlight – What stands out?

1. What words or phrases stand out to you as you read through this text?
Any words or ideas that are repeated?

2. The text naturally divides into three sections. Create a phrase or title that summarizes each section of Scripture.

3. In verse 2, David uses a word picture to describe the effect his enemies have upon him. What imagery does he use to describe this? In your own words, how would this same situation affect you?

4. There is some similarity in this passage to the book of Job. What similarities do you find?

5. How does David describe his enemies in vv. 12-16?

Explain – What does this mean?

*Note: These introductory notes to the psalms will help as you study these first 8 psalms this summer.

The psalms can generally be divided into 3 categories:

- Orientation: Telling you what life is supposed to be like
- Disorientation: Telling you what life is like
- Reorientation: Telling you what life will be like after deliverance (future or present)

There are also different genres of psalms:

- Lament – the life that is struggling

- Thanksgiving – the life that is delivered
- Praise/Hymn – the life that is content

1. Based on these explanations above, what kind of psalm is this one?
How would you explain your answer?

2. Psalm 7 was David's response concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite. While this time period is unknown, David has been slandered and mistreated by others before. To understand the context of this psalm, read and consider 1 Samuel 18-19.
 - A. Who is Saul?

 - B. Why is he in pursuit of David?

 - C. Who helps David escape and why?

3. Taking refuge in the Lord appears multiple times within the psalms. Review the following verses and describe what this looks like in the Christian life?
 - Psalm 62:8

 - Psalm 91:4

 - Psalm 26:1-2

 - Psalm 27:5

4. There is a distinct contrast in the tone of Psalm 7 and Psalm 51 written by David. Compare and contrast the two psalms. What differences do you note?

5. In vs. 6-7, David indicated that there is a time appointed for judgment. When is this and what does that mean?

6. What do we learn in verse 9 about the end of the wicked and unrighteous? The following verses may help (Matthew 21:12-13, Romans 1:18, Nahum 1:2-6)

7. What do we learn concerning God in vv. 11-12?

Apply – How does this change me?

1. Though we do not have the same literal scenario of David (chased by enemies, kings trying to kill us and our own sons seeking to destroy the family), we may have enemies or pursuers like David. What does this look like in your life and in what ways is God a refuge for us?

2. David was not sinless as noted in his outpouring cry of Psalm 51, yet he was proclaiming innocence in whatever Cush was accusing him of. How would you contrast Jesus' innocence before his enemies to David's declaration of innocence in this passage?

3. What does it mean that "my shield is with God"? How would you explain this to others going through struggles or adversity at this time?

Respond – What’s my next step?

1. Is there someone in your circle that needs to not take refuge FROM the Lord, but take refuge IN the Lord? What action step will you take with him/her this week?

2. In warning of the need for repentance, David uses imagery of a person digging one’s own pit and falling into the hole made (similar to Proverbs 26:27). What is meant by this illustration? What admonition can we take from this passage to apply to our own life?

3. How can we see Jesus in Psalm 7?

Commentary: Taken from “The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life” by Dale Ralph Davis

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JUST JUSTICE

PSALM 7

A shiggaion of David, which he sang to Yahweh on account of the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.

- 1 Yahweh my God, in you I have taken refuge
—save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,
- 2 lest one tear me up like a lion,
ripping (me) apart—with no one to deliver.
- 3 Yahweh my God, if I have done this,
if there is unrighteousness in my hands,
- 4 if I have paid back my friend with evil
(actually I have delivered the one
who without cause is my adversary),
- 5 let the enemy pursue me,
let him overtake and trample my life to the ground,
and let him lay my glory in the dust. [Selah.]
- 6 Rise, Yahweh, in your anger,
lift yourself up against the fury of my adversaries,
and awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.
- 7 Let the assembly of peoples gather round you,
and over it return on high.
- 8 Yahweh will judge the peoples;
judge me, Yahweh, in line with my righteousness
and in line with the integrity I have.
- 9 Oh, let the evil of the wicked ones come to an end,
but give stability to the righteous,
all the while testing hearts and feelings,
O righteous God!
- 10 My shield is in God's hands,

- Savior of the upright in heart.
- 11 God vindicates the righteous,
and God expresses anger every day.
- 12 If one does not repent, he will sharpen his sword;
he has bent his bow, gotten it ready;
- 13 and for him he has prepared deadly weapons;
he makes his arrows burning shafts.
- 14 Look! He is in birth pains with wickedness,
and he conceives trouble,
and gives birth to falsehood.
- 15 He has dug a pit, and scooped it out,
—then fallen into the shaft he makes.
- 16 His trouble returns on his own head,
and it's on his shoulders that his violence comes down.
- 17 I will give Yahweh thanks in line with his righteousness,
and I will sing psalms to the name of Yahweh Most High.

[Note: the last half of verse 4 is very difficult; I have stolen freely from Alec Motyer, *Treasures of the King*, 19]

James Bradley in *Flags of Our Fathers* remembers how very little his father would ever talk about what happened during the taking of Iwo Jima in World War II. Very close to the chest. And yet for an 'outsider' the very lack of information tweaks one's interest to know more. Take, for example, this allusion to 'Cush the Benjaminite' in the psalm heading. Who was this Cush? And what were the 'words'—apparently the slander—he spoke against David? But, like James Bradley's father, the psalm editors don't slake our curiosity. So we don't have all the background information we'd like, but we do have the prayer that came out of it all. And in this prayer David pleads for mere justice, or, as we might say, for just justice. Let's turn to his instruction.

Take care with your prayer

The first segment of the psalm tells us that we must be taking care with our prayer (vv. 1–5, and including the heading). David so much as says to Yahweh, Let me lay out before you my position [1a], my danger [1b–2], and my conscience [3–5]. 'In you I have taken refuge'—that is his position. His recent crisis has not driven him to this—he has been here all the time. The verb in the past indicates he has placed himself under Yahweh's shelter some time before this latest round of trouble. Yet for all that he stands in great peril—pursuers dog his tracks (1b) with all the finesse of a lion that rips prey and crunches bones (2); he will be helpless, and it will be messy and nasty.

And here's where he brings his conscience into the picture, as a way of maintaining his innocence (vv. 3–5). 'If I have done this' (3a), he begins. The 'this' is probably whatever it was that Cush the Benjaminite accused him of. So David says, 'If the slanders are really true, 'if there is unrighteousness in my hands' (3b), 'if I have paid back my friend with evil' (4a), then, he says, let the enemy pursue, overtake and trample me, and lay my glory in the dust (5). David is using a curse formula (If I have ... then ...) as a way of asserting his innocence of the charges, as a way of emphatically denying that any wrong action or hostility on his part has brought on this enmity. He is not claiming an across-the-board perfection; he is simply claiming to be clear of responsibility for this bit of trouble. But David is on terribly healthy ground in verses 3–5—he realizes that he stands under God's gaze and knows that God will know him truly.

I'm sure spying is becoming an ever-perfected art. But I was interested to find out how detailed it could be even in the 1970s. Jacques Derogy and Hesi Carmel (*The Untold History of Israel*) tell of the surveillance photos the CIA would take in the Middle East in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. They said that the shots are so sharp that a viewer can make out the time on a wristwatch worn by a soldier serving sentry duty in the Sinai. Nothing hidden. So God sees us in clear detail.

David knew he was under the searching scrutiny of Yahweh and submitted himself to it. It's as if David already knew of Hebrews 4:13: *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* (NIV). When we are conscious of that we take immense care with our prayer, since we realize with a holy and healthy trembling that every nook and cranny of our being is exposed to the searching analysis of heaven.

Find hope in God's anger

As David seeks for justice, we find him, secondly, finding hope in God's anger (vv. 6–11). 'Rise, Yahweh, in your anger' (6a). Now there is hope. If Yahweh in his anger pits himself against the 'fury of my adversaries,' well then, David says, I have hope of deliverance.

As David makes plain in verses 6b–8a, there is a doctrine that brings hope to tried and battered servants of God, and it is the doctrine of judgment. 'You have appointed a judgment', he prays in 6c, and in 8a he declares that 'Yahweh will judge the peoples.' He seems (in v. 7) to view the peoples being gathered as Yahweh himself sits as judge over them. The doctrine here nicely anticipates that of Paul's sermon in Athens: *He has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead* (Acts 17:31, ESV). There is a time coming when God will put things right.

If that is not the case, are we not led to despair? In late 1937 the Japanese entered China's capital, Nanking; they marched pregnant Chinese women to

a killing field where the soldiers placed bets on the sex of the fetus about to drop out of a mother's womb when sliced open with a samurai sword. If they face no judgment how is their 'choice' any different from your choosing corn flakes over oatmeal for breakfast? Currently there are several warring factions within the Democratic Republic of Congo. Combatants of all groups, according to *WORLD* magazine, have had a long-standing practice of raping women and girls. Women are brutally gang raped, perhaps in front of their families, then frequently are shot or stabbed in their genital organs. If these thugs never have to face the bar of heaven, can their actions matter any more than attending the opera or changing the oil in one's car? David, however, has hope precisely because of Yahweh's anger, precisely because Yahweh has 'appointed a judgment.'

David seems to pray for a sample of the judgment to come in his current trouble: 'Yahweh will judge the peoples; judge me, Yahweh, in line with my righteousness' (v 8). When he prays 'judge me,' he means 'show me to be in the right.' He means: show me to be in the right in this Cushite-Benjaminite-matter. 'God vindicates [lit., judges] the righteous' (v. 11), and David is asking Yahweh to do that for him in his present situation.

That is David's desire. But it's not all about David, as he makes clear in verse 9: 'Oh, let the evil of the wicked ones come to an end, but give stability to the righteous.' David's bout with unjust suffering, danger, and wrong stirs him up to ask God to suppress the evil of those who seek to crush Yahweh's people. His own trouble stimulated his prayers for the suffering people of God as a whole. And that should be the case with us, whether or not we ourselves are currently battling unjust oppression. Try to keep the trials of the 'persecuted church' before you on a regular basis. Think of the attacks of terrorist groups on the 3,000 Christians left in the Gaza strip; of the 'disappearance' of a North Korean girl and her family because she told her teacher it was 'by God's grace' she had gotten a good grade; of the way the Burmese army uses Karen Christian women and children as human minesweepers; and on it goes. But why? So you will throw up your arms and cry, 'Oh, let the evil of the wicked ones come to an end!' So it would stir us up to prayer for God's anger and justice to rush forth and work deliverance for his people.

'God expresses anger every day' (v. 11b). There are loads of people who will say that is not or cannot be true. But if you say that God is not like that, you take away any hope his wronged and suffering people have.

Watch judgment take place

Third, we find ourselves watching judgment take place in the lively scenario of verses 12–16. And first off David gives us a picture of Yahweh the warrior (vv. 12–13), a picture of God's judgment on the unrepentant. The 'he' refers to Yahweh. So if the enemy of the righteous does not repent and cease and desist, Yahweh

will 'sharpen his sword' or he'll bend back his bow ready to take him out. That is the picture.

But then he takes us on to a process in verses 14–16, a process that Yahweh's judgment can take. The judgment may not be as direct as verses 12–13 seem to imply. In verse 14 he implies that wickedness may take some time to develop and show itself; it has a gestation period. And then judgment may come in a 'boomerang' and seemingly 'natural' manner; for example, the wicked man meticulously prepares his trap—digs and scoops out a pit, then makes a slight misstep and falls down the shaft he had planned for another (v. 15). 'His trouble returns on his own head' (v. 16a). But you must not think his downfall and ruin is simply the result of some natural law or bloodless principle. Behind the process of verses 15–16 stands the God of verses 12–13—his flaming arrows and razor-slicing sword bring the wicked to wreck.

Some years ago *Leadership* magazine carried an item originally from radio commentator Paul Harvey about the way an Eskimo kills a wolf, which is pertinent if grisly. First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. He adds several more layers of frozen blood until the blade is totally concealed. Next, he puts his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his nose and finds the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, with much more gusto, lapping at the blade until the sharp edge is bare. But now he is feverishly licking, harder and harder, his craving so intense that the wolf does not notice the sting of the bare blade on his own tongue—nor does he recognize the moment when his unquenchable thirst is being satisfied with his own warm blood. He craves more and more—until he's found dead in the snow next morning. God's judgment can work like that. The enemies of God's people give way to their passion to persecute, their lust to eliminate his servants. But then they begin to litter the field of history, felled by the Almighty's arrows, cut down by Shaddai's sword.

Remember praise is due

Lastly, David does not leave off his prayer without remembering praise is due (v. 17): 'I will give Yahweh thanks in line with his righteousness, and I will sing psalms to the name of Yahweh Most High.' This is not a bribe but a promise, a statement of obligation. When Yahweh vindicates David, he commits himself to give him the thanks and praise he should have. He agrees with Isaac Watts:

O bless the Lord, my soul, nor let his mercies lie
forgotten in unthankfulness, and without praises die.

My wife has a practice of taping up little scraps of paper to the inside of the window of the back door of our home. They are reminders of obligations or appointments or commitments she has. Something like: 'Tues., 3:30, take food to Mary.' Or maybe a dental appointment. Sometimes that window can get

pretty cluttered, especially if she fails to remove fulfilled obligations. You might think she should use a calendar and write things down there. Well, she does; but she might not look at it! But if it's taped to the back door, it's hard to avoid. Verse 17 is David's back-door note; his personal 'post-it' note to not forget the praise he will owe.

It's all quite a cycle, isn't it? Trouble always leads to more psalms! Trouble drives us to God so that we can place it before him; then when he delivers from trouble we go back to him with praise. Whether in tears or in triumph, we never get away from worship, from having to deal with God.¹

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, [*Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life: Psalms 1–12*](#) (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 85–92.