

PSALM 7

It appears by the title that this psalm was penned with a particular reference to the malicious imputations that David was unjustly laid under by some of his enemies. Being thus wronged,

I. He applies to God for favour (v. 1, 2).

II. He appeals to God concerning his innocency as to those things whereof he was accused (v. 3-5).

III. He prays to God to plead his cause and judge for him against his persecutors (v. 6-9).

IV. He expresses his confidence in God that he would do so, and would return the mischief upon the head of those that designed it against him (v. 10-16).

V. He promises to give God the glory of his deliverance (v. 17). In this David was a type of Christ, who was himself, and still is in his members, thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.

~~III~~ PSALM 7:1-9

PRAYER FOR SINNERS AND SAINTS

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

Shiggaion is a *song* or *psalm* (the word is used so only here and ~~III~~ Habakkuk 3:1) — a *wandering* song (so some), the matter and composition of the several parts being different, but artificially put together — a *charming* song (so others), very delightful. David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner unto the Lord, *concerning the words* or *affairs of Cush the Benjamite*, that is, of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David bespoke him rather a Cushite, or Ethiopian, than a true-born Israelite. Or, more likely, it was some kinsman of Saul named *Cush*, who was an inveterate enemy to David, misrepresented him to Saul as a traitor, and (which was very needless) exasperated Saul against him, one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of (~~III~~ 1 Samuel 26:19), that made

mischief between him and Saul. David, thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord. The injuries men do us should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause. Nay, he sings to the Lord; his spirit was not ruffled by it, nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful that he was still in tune for sacred songs and it did not occasion one jarring string in his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindle and excite our devotions. In these verses,

I. He puts himself under God's protection and flies to him for succour and shelter (v. 1): “*Lord, save me, and deliver me from the power and malice of all those that persecute me, that they may not have their will against me.*” He pleads,

1. His relation to God. “Thou art *my God*, and therefore whither else should I go but to thee? Thou art my God, and therefore my shield (¹⁵¹Genesis 15:1), my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants, who may expect to be protected.”

2. His confidence in God: “Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee: *In thee do I put my trust*, and not in any arm of flesh.” Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them, especially if they themselves have encouraged them to do so, which is our case.

3. The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being swallowed up by them: “Lord, save me, or I am gone; he will *tear my soul like a lion* tearing his prey,” with so much pride, and pleasure, and power, so easily, so cruelly. St. Paul compares Nero to a lion (³⁴⁷2 Timothy 4:17), as David here compares Saul.

4. The failure of all other helpers: “Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me, for otherwise *there is none to deliver*,” v. 2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

II. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God, the searcher of hearts, concerning it, v. 3-5. Observe, in general, 1. When we are falsely accused by men it is a great comfort if our own consciences acquit us —

— *Hic murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi.* —

*Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence. —*

and not only they cannot prove their calumnies (~~4013~~ Acts 24:13), but our hearts can disprove them, to our own satisfaction.

2. God is the patron of wronged innocency. David had no court on earth to appeal to. His prince, who should have righted him, was his sworn enemy. But he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous Judge there, whom he could call *his God*. And here see,

(1.) What the indictment is which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him, and, in order to that, levied war against him. This he utterly denies. He never did this; there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand (v. 3); he abhorred the thought of it. He never *rewarded evil* to Saul when he was *at peace with him*, nor to any other, v. 4. Nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did those mischief that had injured him.

(2.) What evidence he produces of his innocency. It is hard to prove a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of: *I have delivered him that without cause is my enemy*, v. 4. By *this* it appeared, beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life — that, once and again, Providence so ordered it that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and conscientiously prevented it, when he cut off his skirt (~~0204~~ 1 Samuel 24:4) and afterwards when he took away his spear (~~0202~~ 1 Samuel 26:12), to attest for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, our so doing may turn to us for a testimony, more than we think of, another day.

(3.) What doom he would submit to if he were guilty (v. 5): *Let the enemy persecute my soul to the death, and my good name when I am gone: let him lay my honour in the dust*. This intimates,

[1.] That, if he had been indeed injurious to others, he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that has his hand against every man must reckon upon it that every man's hand will be against him.

[2.] That, in that case, he could not with any confidence go to God and beg of him to deliver him or plead his cause. It is a presumptuous dangerous thing for any that are guilty, and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent and suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronise their unrighteousness.

[3.] That he was abundantly satisfied in himself concerning his innocency. It is natural to us to wish well to ourselves; and therefore a curse to ourselves, if we swear falsely, has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any. With such an oath, or imprecation, David here ratifies the protestation of his innocency, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause; for the occasion here was important.

III. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocency, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and backs every petition with a proper plea, as one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and pleads their wrath against him: “Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them and let them know that thou art so, v. 6. *In thy anger lift up thyself* to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, *because of the rage*, the furies, the outrages (the word is plural) *of my enemies.*” Those need not fear men's wrath against them who have God's wrath for them. *Who knows the power of his anger?*

2. He prays that God would plead his cause.

(1.) He prays, *Awake for me to judgment* (that is, let my cause have a hearing), to *the judgment which thou hast commanded*; this speaks,

[1.] The divine power; as he blesses effectually, and is therefore said to *command the blessing*, so he judges effectually, and is therefore said to *command the judgment*, which is such as none can countermand; for it certainly carries execution along with it.

[2.] The divine purpose and promise: “It is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. Thou hast commanded the princes and judges of the earth to give redress to the injured and vindicate the oppressed; Lord, awaken thyself to that judgment.” He that loves righteousness, and requires it in others, will no

doubt execute it himself. Though he seem to connive at wrong, as one asleep, he will awake in due time (~~1985~~ Psalm 78:65) and will make it to appear that the delays were no neglects.

(2.) He prays (v. 7), “*Return thou on high*, maintain thy own authority, resume thy royal throne of which they have despised the sovereignty, and the judgment-seat of which they have despised the sentence. Return on high, that is, visibly and in the sight of all, that it may be universally acknowledged that heaven itself owns and pleads David's cause.” Some make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who, when he returned to heaven (returned on high in his exalted state), had all judgment committed to him. Or it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world, to execute judgment upon all. This return his injured people wait for, and pray for, and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men.

(3.) He prays again (v. 8), “*Judge me*, judge for me, give sentence on my side.” To enforce this suit,

[1.] He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court: *The Lord shall judge the people*, v. 8. He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he will do right and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment.

[2.] He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul, and desires only to be judged, in this matter, according to his righteousness, and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken towards his preferment.

[3.] He foretels that it would be much for the glory of God and the edification and comfort of his people if God would appear for him: “*So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about*; therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their raises and services in the courts of thy house.” *First*, They will do it of their own accord. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance of his righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness, as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers and fill their mouths with praise. David was the darling of his country, especially of all the good people in it; and therefore, when they saw him in a fair way to the throne, they would greatly rejoice and give thanks to God; crowds of them would attend his footstool with their praises for such a blessing to

their land. *Secondly*, If David come into power, as God has promised him, he will take care to bring people to church by his influence upon them, and the ark shall not be neglected, as it was *in the days of Saul*, ~~1~~1 Chronicles 13:3.

3. He prays, in general, for the conversion of sinners and the establishment of saints (v. 9): “*O let the wickedness, not only of my wicked enemies, but of all the wicked, come to an end! but establish the just.*” Here are two things which everyone of us must desire and may hope for: —

(1.) The destruction of sin, that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought are forsaken, and the stream which ran violently towards the world and the flesh is driven back and runs towards God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end. When there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted, when a stop is put to the spreading of the infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no further, their folly being made manifest, when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled, and their power is broken, and the man of sin is destroyed, then the *wickedness of the wicked comes to an end*. And this is that which all that love God, and for his sake hate evil, desire and pray for.

(2.) The perpetuity of righteousness: *But establish the just*. As we pray that the bad maybe made good, so we pray that the good may be made better, that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked nor shocked by their malice, that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God and in their resolution to persevere therein, may be firm to the interests of God and religion and zealous in their endeavours to bring *the wickedness of the wicked to an end*. His plea to enforce this petition is, *For the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins*; and therefore he knows the secret wickedness of the wicked and knows how to bring it to an end, and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to and has secret ways of establishing.

As far as we have the testimony of an unbiased conscience for us that in any instance we are wronged and injuriously reflected on, we may, in singing these verses, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at furthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

PSALM 7:10-17

THE PERSECUTOR'S DOOM

David having lodged his appeal with God by prayer and a solemn profession of his integrity, in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part does, as it were, take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous and the certain destruction of wicked people that continue impenitent.

I. David is confident that he shall find God his powerful protector and Saviour, and the patron of his oppressed innocency (v. 10): “*My defence is of God.* Not only, God is my defender, and I shall find him so; but I look for defence and safety in no other; my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone; if I have defence, it must be of God.” *My shield is upon God* (so some read it); there is that in God which gives an assurance of protection to all that are his. His name is a strong tower, ¹⁸⁰Proverbs 18:10. Two things David builds this confidence upon: —

1. The particular favour God has for all that are sincere: *He saves the upright in heart*, saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*; he saves them out of their present troubles, as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the divine protection.

2. The general respect he has for justice and equity: *God judgeth the righteous*; he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. *God is a righteous Judge* (so some read it), who not only doeth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

II. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his persecutors, even as many of them as would not *repent, to give glory to God*. He reads their doom here, for their good, if possible, that they might cease from their enmity, or, however, for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands,

1. That they are children of wrath. They are not to be envied, for God is angry with them, is *angry with the wicked every day*. They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up *against the day of wrath*. As his mercies are new every morning towards his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in the days of their devotion; for, if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are an abomination. The wrath of God abides upon them (~~BBB~~ John 3:36) and continual additions are made to it.

2. That they are children of death, as all the children of wrath are, sons of perdition, marked out for ruin. See their destruction.

(1.) God will destroy them. The destruction they are reserved for is *destruction from the Almighty*, which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the *wrath of God*, v. 13, 14. It is here intimated,

[1.] That the destruction of sinners may be prevented by their conversion, for it is threatened with that proviso: *If he turn not* from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin; but, if he turn, it is implied that his sin shall be pardoned and all shall be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of those that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die and their blood is therefore upon their own heads.

[2.] That, if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general (v. 13), *He has prepared for him the instruments of death*, of all that death which is the wages of sin. If God will slay, he will not want instruments of death for any creature; even the least and weakest may be made so when he pleases. *First*, Here is variety of instruments, all which breathe threatenings and slaughter. Here is a sword, which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows, which wound and kill at a distance those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. If the sinner *flees from the iron weapon*, yet the *bow of steel shall strike him through*, ~~BBB~~ Job 20:24. *Secondly*, These instruments of death are all said to be made ready. God has them not to seek, but always at hand. *Judgments are prepared for*

scorners. *Tophet is prepared of old.* Thirdly, While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and *long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.* Fourthly, The longer the destruction is delayed, to give time for repentance, the sorer will it be and the heavier will it fall and lie for ever if that time be not so improved; while God is waiting the sword is in the whetting and the bow in the drawing. Fifthly, The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet comes surely; for it is *ordained*, they are of old ordained to it. Sixthly, Of all sinners persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of divine wrath; against them, more than any other, God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of his judgments.

(2.) They will destroy themselves, v. 14-16. The sinner is here described as taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than, if directed aright, would save it. His conduct is described,

[1.] By the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, v. 14. The sinner's head with its politics *conceives mischief*, contrives it with a great deal of art, lays the plot deep, and keeps it close; the sinner's heart with its passions *travails with iniquity*, and is in pain to be delivered of the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what does it come to when it comes to the birth? It is falsehood; it is a cheat upon himself; it is a lie in his right hand. He cannot compass what he intended, nor, if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself. He brings forth *wind* (²³⁸⁸Isaiah 26:18), *stubble* (²³⁹¹Isaiah 33:11), *death* (³⁰¹⁵James 1:15), that is, *falsehood*.

[2.] By the pains of a labouring man that works hard to dig a pit, and then falls into it and perishes in it. *First*, This is true, in a sense of all sinners. They prepare destruction for themselves by preparing themselves for destruction, loading themselves with guilt and submitting themselves to their corruptions. *Secondly*, It is often remarkably true of those who contrive mischief against the people of God or against their neighbours; by the righteous hand of God it is made to *return upon their own heads*. What they designed for the shame and destruction of others proves to be their own confusion.

— *Nec lex est justior ulla*
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua —

*There is not a juster law than that the author
of a murderous contrivance shall perish by it.*

Some apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In singing this psalm we must do as David here does (v. 17), *praise the Lord according to his righteousness*, that is, give him the glory of that gracious protection under which he takes his afflicted people and of that just vengeance with which he will pursue those that afflict them. Thus we must sing to the praise of the Lord most high, who, when his enemies deal proudly, shows that he is above them.