**God is a just judge** 19/12/21 dkm

Read: Psalm 7, Romans 2

Text: Psalm 7

Psalms: 31:1-7, 57:1-6, 37old:12-19, 72old

‘And do you think, O man, that you who judge those practising such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God’ (Romans 2:3). How often have you heard someone condemning the behaviour of another, while saying to yourself, ‘But you do the same thing!’ How often have you been guilty of the same hypocrisy? It is a feature of a sinful heart to see the sins of others like a log, but our own sins like specks of dust, if at all (Mat 7:3). We call upon God to judge other people, but when it comes to God judging us we try to change the rules. Of this one thing you be sure however, God will not change the rules, because God is a just judge who hates partiality or favouritism. Judgment by men in black gowns and white wigs is frequently flawed, but God’s judgment is never flawed.

David was king of Israel, although he might have been briefly exiled when he wrote this Psalm. He did not claim to be a sinless man or a righteous judge but he knew someone who was- ‘The Lord my God’, ‘The Lord Most High’ (7:1, 3, 16). With God’s help, he examined his own heart, as we see in this Psalm, before calling upon God to judge the wicked, in particular those who were pursuing and persecuting him.

This Psalm is entitled ‘A Meditation’. The Hebrew word is ‘*Shiggaion’,* which is left untranslated in most versions. It may well have been a musical term consistent with this Psalm being sung to the Lord. It is a prayer being sung to the Lord. It is being sung in response to ‘the words of Cush, a Benjamite’. Apart from being from the tribe of Benjamin, we know nothing about this man. David’s predecessor, King Saul, was from this tribe, so the Benjamites opposed David, who was from the tribe of Judah. When David was forced to flee the city in the face of Absalom’s coup, a fellow from the house of Saul called Shimei cursed David. Later on, another Benjamite called Sheba rebelled against David (2Sam 20).

While the words of Cush gave rise to this song, the lessons of the Psalm are for all time, and for all of us. The first words are a prayer for divine protection. This will be our first subheading. We will look at the rest of the Psalm under another five subheadings.

**1. Protection from the Lord**

David grew up as a shepherd, looking after his father’s sheep. In those days there were lions in the land of Israel, and lions love lambs. We do not have shepherds or lions, but we do have dingoes and wild dogs that prey on sheep. David felt he was the prey of men pursuing or persecuting him (7:1). Their attacks may well have been verbal, but David feared violence- we learn more about their wicked ways later in the Psalm.

‘Lest they tear me like a lion’ said David as he prayed to the Lord for deliverance. David, no doubt, took precautions, fleeing from the enemy when necessary. He did not in any way provoke his enemies to violence (cf. his treatment of Shimei in 2Sam 19:18f). David responded to their attacks by crying out to the Lord his God for deliverance. He had total confidence in the Lord to protect him in his time of trial. He found in the Lord a place of refuge. ‘Above our lives in this world stands the eternal God. He is a righteous judge. When we bring our cases to Him He answers’. This is the first lesson from this Psalm. Have you learnt it?

**2. Protestations of innocence**

When we come into the presence of the Lord, we should confess our sin, especially if we are asking for vindication against an enemy. Do not expect the Lord to see and judge the sin of others while turning a blind eye to your sin. The prayer Jesus taught his disciples included a word of confession: ‘Forgive us our sins’. David knew that the Lord is just, and that the Lord examines our hearts and minds (7:9). So let us be examining our hearts and confessing our sin when we pray. Do not be so foolish as to try and hide your sin from the Lord.

David takes us through the process of examining his own heart, before he asks the Lord to judge the wicked. We read a series of three ‘Ifs’. If he has done any evil, such a repaying evil for good, or plundering his enemies without cause, then he was willing to suffer the consequences. These may have been the charges being directed at him by his enemies. If he was deserving of their attacks then he was willing to face justice, as administered by God. ‘Let the enemy pursue me, overtake me and trample me into the dust’ (7:5). He was willing to suffer the shame of defeat if he was guilty of any sin.

Some leaders feel free to break an oath of allegiance or a treaty, but not David. God was always true to his word and David sought to be true to his word. One writer reminded me of how Hitler would sign a treaty one day and break it the next. Still today, there are rulers and business leaders and family men who break treaties, contracts or marriage vows with impunity. They put things like ‘national interest’, ‘the bottom line’, or ‘my well-being’, above their sworn word. David however, was a man of his word- are you?

**3. Plea for God to judge his enemies**

Having examined his own heart, and found no reason for his enemies to be pursing him, David returns to his call for the Lord to save him from his enemies. David is not saying he is without sin, but that if he had sinned against these enemies, let the Lord judge him. Besides, he knew that if he confessed his sin the Lord would forgive him. Note the ‘Selah’ after verse 5- to examine our hearts we must cease from the busyness of life and spend some time with the Lord. Even in the busyness of life we find time to plot vengeance, but time in prayer is more important. David was not a man to take personal vengeance, nor was he a man to give up on justice. These are the only two options for the ungodly, who end up suffering at the hands of their enemy after taking vengeance, or giving up in the face of injustice.

David did not despair of justice. He cried to the Lord for justice. He called upon the Lord to ‘Arise’ and ‘Rise up’ and meet the raging threats of his enemies (7:6). He calls for God himself to be angry with righteous anger, and to judge according to his own ‘command’ or word (7:6). ‘Shall, not the Judge of all earth do right’ said Abraham (Gen 18:25); he was pleading for God not to destroy the righteous along with the wicked in Sodom, knowing that God’s destruction of the wicked was perfectly just. The righteous and the wicked are not separated by birth, by family upbringing, or by good works; the righteous are those who know the grace of God and the wicked are those who don’t.

David pictures God’s judgment in a court setting. David himself once sat on a throne above the people, deciding on cases brought before him. So he pictured the Lord lifted up on his judgment seat, with the ‘congregation of the peoples’ surrounding him (7:7). At the final judgment, that congregation will include you and me, and people from all nations (Mat 25:32). From his judgment seat, the Lord will judge the people with justice. David acknowledges God’s right and necessary duty to judge him according to ‘my righteousness’ and ‘my integrity’ (7:8); he makes no claim to perfection. His righteousness came from the Lord when he confessed his sin before the Lord. David was not a man who glibly confessed his sin thinking he could continue in his sin; and I trust you are not such a person either.

David wanted to see righteousness prevail and wickedness come to an end- don’t you? This of course, means that God will judge the wicked: ‘Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end’ (7:9). It will mean that, by the grace of God, the just or righteous will be established. David was looking forward to a land in which righteousness, and therefore the righteous, dwell (2Peter 3:13). Abraham looked forward to such a land also (Heb 11:10). Are you looking forward to such a land?

**4. Prediction of imminent judgment**

In verse 10 David is no longer addressing God but the people around him, be they friends or enemies: ‘My shield is of God, who saves the upright in heart’ (7:10 ESV). When we trust in the Lord to deliver us, people around will see the difference in our reaction towards the wicked. They may well ask why we are not ‘sticking up for ourselves’ and taking vengeance. In any case, we can tell them that ‘God is a just judge and ‘God is my shield’.

Let us assure our enemies, and everyone who will listen, that God is a just judge and that he will judge everyone who has ever lived. Let us assure them that, ‘God is angry with the wicked every day’ (7:11). ‘But we don’t see such divine anger’ they may say. We do not see because we do not look upon our life from God’s perspective. How many of the disasters happening around us, and around the world, are God’s judgment upon someone?

The picture of God’s judgment changes from one of Him sitting in courtroom to one of Him destroying his enemies on a battlefield, the picture of a warrior God. Anger at the wicked leads to judgment of the wicked if they refuse to repent. Too often the wicked arrogantly stand against God, but not for long. The all-powerful God will shoot them down in an instant. David speaks of God sharpening his sword, and of bending his bow, loaded with fiery arrows. Such weapons are ‘instruments of death’, instruments symbolizing God’s readiness to judge and destroy the wicked.

**5. Portrait of the wicked**

David began by crying to the Lord because the wicked were persecuting him (7:1). But until now he has not actually detailed their sins. In verses 14-16 he speaks of their perversity, and the mischief they make with their lies. They plot evil against righteous men like David. Evil words and actions come from evil hearts, as Jesus said (Mat 15:19) and as James affirmed (James 1:14-15).

The wicked can be clever as they plot ways to bring down the righteous- sometimes too clever. God is powerful to turn their cleverness back on themselves: ‘He made a pit and dug it out, and has fallen into the pit he made’ (7:15). Daniel’s enemies ended up in the lion’s den, and Haman, the enemy of the Jews, ended up hanging from the gallows he made for a Jew called Mordecai.

Such divine retribution continues today, so beware of plotting evil against a righteous person. Remember that David left all revenge to the Lord (Rom 12:19). By all means pray that your enemy will turn from his or her wicked ways, and if not, ask the Lord to deal with him or her. A missionary friend told me to pray for the Lord to improve or remove a wicked leader, and I have followed her advice to this day.

**6. Praise to the Lord Most High**

We are not told the historical context of this Psalm so we do not know the outcome of David’s prayer. Nor does David does tell us here in the Psalm itself, what the Lord did by way of delivering him and judging his enemies. But David’s knowledge of God as a just judge, and his trust in God who is sovereign in all things, gave him confidence to praise the Lord Most High for delivering him.

In the closing verse of the Psalm, we sing praise to the Lord Most High by way of thankfulness for his righteous or just ways. Our Lord is truly the Lord Most High who will judge the earth in righteousness through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (Acts 17:31). No human being, or heavenly being for that matter, will stand against the Lord Most High when he stretches out his hand to save the righteous and destroy the wicked.