

Prayers

To God

Weekly Theme: The Wisdom of God

Seek God's wisdom; seek this throughout your day and praise Him for the light of His insight and knowledge.

For myself

Lord God Almighty, lead me through the storms of life I pray. Lead me when my mind is in turmoil because of the many different things happening to me; lead me when my heart is uncertain because I am concerned about the future; lead me when I cannot understand what is happening in the world around me. Take me to a place of sure ground and solid foundation, where I may build my life on the rock of Christ. AMEN

For others

Pray for those who are in prison. The largest number of people per head of population in prison is in the USA, with some other European countries close behind. Pray for justice and equity in your land.

Meditation

Breathe on us, Holy Spirit; breathe.

May we feel the breeze that comes from heaven,
And breathe more deeply of the things of God.

May we accept the unconditional love of Christ,
Which sweeps away our troubles and our fears.

May we rejoice in the challenge of the Spirit's power,
By which the impossible is done within our world.

May we fully accept those unrestrained gifts of God,
Which guarantee our faith, and enable ministry.

May we be comforted by the Holy Spirit's presence,
God's generous strength to help and touch to heal.

May we wonder at the mystery of His graciousness
With joy unbound at all he promises ahead.

Breathe on us, Holy Spirit; breathe.

Bible Passage

Psalm 7

A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjaminite.

¹ O LORD my God, I take refuge in You;
save and deliver me from all who pursue me,
² or he will tear me like a lion
and rip me to pieces with no-one to rescue me.

³ O LORD my God, if I have done this
and there is guilt on my hands,
⁴ if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me
or have robbed my foe without cause,
⁵ then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;
let him trample my life to the ground
and make me sleep in the dust.

Selah

⁶ Arise, O LORD, in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.
⁷ Let the assembled peoples gather round You.
Rule over them from on high;
⁸ let the LORD judge the peoples.
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
according to my integrity, O Most High.

⁹ O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts,
bring to an end the violence of the wicked
and make the righteous secure.
¹⁰ My shield is God Most High,
who saves the upright in heart.
¹¹ God is a righteous judge,
a God who expresses His wrath every day.
¹² If He does not relent, he will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.
¹³ He has prepared his deadly weapons;
he makes ready his flaming arrows.
¹⁴ He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble
gives birth to disillusionment.
¹⁵ He who digs a hole and scoops it out
falls into the pit he has made.
¹⁶ The trouble he causes recoils on himself;
his violence comes down on his own head.
¹⁷ I will give thanks to the LORD
because of his righteousness
and I will sing praise
to the name of the LORD most high

Review

Psalm 7 is a famous psalm of David, and in general, it describes David's struggle to deal with an enemy. In common with many other similar psalms, psalm 7 describes David struggle with an enemy (7:1-5), whose evil creates trouble amongst God's people (7:12-16). It also offers us insight into how a godly person might deal with such problems, and verses 6 to 11 contain some powerful spiritual insights concerning the authority of God (7:7,8), His righteousness (7:9,11) and His saving power (7:10). The whole psalm ends with praise and worship to God (7:17), which is a characteristic of nearly all the psalms in Bible. So despite problems, David shows that by keeping God at the very centre of our thoughts and deeds, and trusting in Him, the enemies of God's people can be overcome.

At the very beginning, the superscription of the psalm is rather interesting. Firstly, it describes the psalm as a '*shiggaion*', but what does this mean? This is an ancient Hebrew word but is not found anywhere else in literature for us to be able to check it out what it means! However, studies in ancient languages reveal that it could mean something like rapid movement or changing. So for this reason, some commentaries say that it implies psalm 7 is a rapid and vigorous song with many changes to its tune and structure. But this is no more than reasonable speculation.

The second mystery is the information we are given that David's enemy is 'Cush, a Benjaminite'. But there are no Bible stories of confrontation between David and someone named 'Cush'! One possibility is that this person was an enemy of David because of inter tribal loyalties. David was Judean and Cush was a Benjaminite, and the two tribes were not always on good terms. King Saul was a Benjaminite and was supported by his tribe throughout his life (1 Sam 13:2f. 1 Sam 22:7), and Benjaminites hated David because he had been Saul's enemy (1 Sam 22:7f. 2 Sam 2:25)! Cush could have been one of Saul's soldiers who pursued the young David while he was in exile (1 Samuel 16f.), or perhaps he was a Benjaminite who sought to take vengeance against David later in his reign when he was old, and his throne was threatened by turmoil at court (2 Samuel 15f.). This may be all speculation, but it serves to remind us that the 'enemy' who attacks God's people is often an enemy 'within'

Now at the beginning of the psalm, David is clearly in fear for his life and is being pursued (7:1,2 – hence our assumptions about Cush, above). But despite his predicament, David prays to the Lord and seeks the Lord's deliverance (7:1). Whatever happened, David's fight with Cush was fierce, and his life was at stake; David describes it as like being hunted by a lion (7:2) a biblical picture with demonic undertones (see 1 Peter 5:8).

However, with typical honesty, David agrees that he deserves to be attacked if he has done anything wrong (7:3), but believes that God will judge him right (7:8). For a Christian, it may sound strange for David to claim before God that he is 'in the right', but we must be careful. David was not claiming 'righteousness' in the sense of claiming his eternal salvation. He was coming to the Lord for help in the struggles of life, and quite properly, he made his request to the Lord believing that he was doing what was right. In the same way, we should not be afraid to come to the Lord when we need His help, especially when we are seeking to do His will and believe we have acted properly. The Lord saves those who are '*upright in heart*' (7:10), and the enemy cannot hound those who are in the Lord's hands (7:9,10).

In order to present this theme, David paints a picture like that of a courtroom (7:8), a technique often used in Scripture to present the idea of justice (see also Job 1 and 2). Here, the public is gathered, the Lord takes his raised seat as the Judge, and we can imagine David calling upon the court for justice (7:8); only divine judgement will sort out what lies between David and his Israelite brother Cush. God alone is righteous and His judgements

are to be feared (7:11f.), and he is confident to stand before God having confessed both his humanity (7:3) and his faith (7:1).

David then describes the fate of those who oppose God (7:14-16), and there is a certain amount of ridicule in his words when he says, '*he who digs a hole falls into the pit he has made*' (7:15). Here, he states the eternal truth that those who are evil are ultimately foolish, because wrongdoing can never produce anything other than further trouble and distress. As David says, '*he who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble gives birth to disillusionment*' (7:13).

David's wisdom here is like a proverb describing the futility of violence, as we see it even now in the world around us. War creates more war, just as hatred creates hatred, and those who will not repent receive the same violence they have meted out to others, with the same vigour, force and weaponry they have used themselves (7:12,13). We may be concerned about the violence described in these verses, but we should not cut out such sections of the psalms when we read them because they have a message for us that is from God. Today, many are cushioned from violence and strife, but we still need to empathise with those who are not so protected, and who need to know that God can protect them in times of trouble, indeed, that evil is ultimately self defeating in God's world.

The hope of all who place their trust in God is that he will overcome all evil and is powerful enough to deliver and save His people (7:17), whatever the circumstances. Of course, this hope is no a vague expectation, because we, like David, have every reason to be confident that God will indeed fulfil the promises He has made within His Word. Because of this, David concludes his psalm with praise for God's '*righteousness*' (7:17), and in the same way, Christians today can praise God for His salvation. In Christ we have the evidence of God's ultimate defeat of all evil, and with David, we place our trust in Him for our eternal future.

Discipleship

Application

Asking for God's judgement

In the midst of this psalm, David asks for the Lord's judgement on the righteousness of his cause and what he has done. It is a scary thought that we might do the same. Perhaps we should! Most of the time we assume that God is in charge of all things and what we do is of little concern to Him. We just carry on doing what we do. Indeed, we assume that if God wants anything of us, then He will call us, and we sometimes pride ourselves on being ready for the call, even if we are doing nothing outside of the ordinary things of life that might be called 'Gospel'.

David shows us a different kind of discipleship. He assumes that everything He is doing is part of God's will ;both for him and for his people, and he is concerned to make sure that everything that happens to him is 'right' in relationship to God's will. How about interpreting our own lives in this way? Can we really believe that everything we do from day to day is of interest to God and His Kingdom? Can we offer the most mundane of tasks to the Lord and allow Him to use these for His Kingdom? If we do, then we will find that we are opposed, for the enemy of God does not like it if we try to live like this, but psalm 7 will come to life for us as we seek to deal with him. The devil would rather we assume that God is mostly uninterested with what we do, but we must stand against him!

Personality clashes!

The origins of this psalm seems to lie in conflict between two individuals, one of whom calls on God for vindication. I have experienced personality clashes or conflicts with others at various times in my life and work, and they have always affected me deeply. It is always the stiffest of challenges to respond to such problems in a godly way, and the temptation is to fight against those who have cause upset. Yet each of us must find a way to deal with such things by placing ourselves in God's hands. He reveals our enemies and gives us the strength and the ability we need to deal with them.

Ideas for what to do

- Have you experienced clashes of personality or other conflicts at work or at church? Consider how you deal with such things and whether you are able to be victorious over your own feelings. Prayerfully hand over such things to the Lord.
- Pray for any people you know who are embroiled in conflict, and ask the Lord to act with justice to help people find resolution.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Today, who pursues God's people, the Church, with false accusations? How should Christians deal with this?
2. Is the picture of God as a judge helpful, and what does it mean to you?
3. Psalm 7 talks about the 'enemy'. Discuss what this means in the psalm and what it might mean for people today.

Final Prayer

Bring us, Lord Jesus, to that happy place where we can look back and be content that we have learned from the past, and to where we can look forward and anticipate with joy the future you have in store for us. May we be content that our lives reflect the faith that has been handed down to us, and bring us to that place of peace, we pray. AMEN
