

Psalm 59

To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David;
when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

Psalm 59: The content of the psalm reinforces the occasion cited in the superscription. Though David was Saul's son-in-law, Saul sent men to kill him (1 Sam. 19:1-17). The psalm is David's prayer while so threatened by his enemies. It contains three key elements that are intertwined: petition (verses 1-3; 4b, 5, 11-13), lament (verses 3, 4a, 6-7), and expression of trust in God's answer (verses 8-10; 14-17).

Verses 1-17: This is another in a series of laments in which the psalmist pleads for God to defend him against his oppressors. The psalm is a mixture of prayers, unfavorable descriptions of the adversary, imprecations (imprecatory psalms are those psalms that contain curses or prayers for the punishment of the psalmist's enemies), and praise to God. Though written when David was king of Israel, the psalm recalls an earlier time of anguish when Saul sought to kill David (1 Sam. 9:11). Ultimately David's strong confidence in God's sovereignty transforms the lament into a song of assurance.

- I. Pleas for God's Deliverance (59:1-15).
- II. Praise for God's Defense (59:16-17).

Title: "Altaschith" (see note on Psalm 57). "Michtam" (see note on Psalm 16: Title). "Saul sent men ... to kill him".

Verses 1-2: The events surrounding this psalm are found (in 1 Sam. 19:9-17). The phrase "deliver me" is repeated for emphasis. Deliver means to "bring out" of trouble. To "defend" is to "set on high, out of the reach of trouble" (91:14).

Psalm 59:1 "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me."

David had his enemies in his youth, notwithstanding the amiableness of his person. The endowments of his mind, his martial achievements, his wise behavior and conduct, and the presence of God with him. Yea, it was some of these things that made Saul his enemy, who, by his power and authority, made others the same (see 1 Sam. 18:5). Christ had his enemies, though he went about doing good, both to the bodies and souls of men, continually. The chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, were his implacable enemies, and even the people of the Jews in general. And the church of God, and members of it, whom David may represent, have their enemies, sin, Satan, and the world. And as David and Christ, so the church has a covenant God to go unto. From whom deliverance from enemies may be desired and expected. Though his enemies were even at hand to destroy him, yet he assures himself that God had ways to deliver him.

"Defend me from them that rise up against me": Or, "set me on high above them"; Out of their reach, as David was protected from Saul and his men, who rose up in a hostile manner against

him. And as Christ was, when raised from the dead, and exalted at his Father's right hand. And as the saints are in great safety, dwelling on high, where their place of defense is the munition of rocks. And therefore, it matters not who rise up against them.

These Psalms are like all the Bible, in that we must try to learn from them how better to live our life now. If we do not apply them to our present situation, then we are just reading history. There are prophetic messages pointing to the time of Jesus, and there are also messages for our day as well in these lessons. Believers throughout time have needed to sound out this same cry to God. The enemies of the church are all around us. It is not a popular thing to be sold out to Jesus. Even nominal Christians think you have lost your mind, if you are seriously trying to accomplish something for God. Looking at David in this, he was in great danger. His life was threatened on every side. It was hard for him to know just who the enemy was. Couldn't we say this about our situation too? Do we really know who is walking in agreement and who is not? One thing that really impresses me with David, is the fact that he says, my God. God is God of individuals. He is my God. Is He your God?

Psalm 59:2 "Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men."

The workers of iniquity here referred to were Saul and those whom he employed to carry out his murderous purpose. The people that had been sent to slay him.

"And save me from bloody men": Such as Saul sent to kill David, as appears from the title of the psalm. And such as were concerned in the death of Christ. And such, are the enemies of God's people, the followers of the man of sin. The heap of words, the various expressions used in a way of petition, in this verse and (Psalm 59:1), show the distress the psalmist was in. And whom he represents; his importunity, earnestness, and fervency in prayer.

In the last lesson, we found that there are people who plan to do evil. They have dedicated their hands to the work of the devil. They really enjoy destroying other people's lives. There are even some people who are so sold out to the devil that, they get their thrills shedding other people's blood. Perhaps, that is the type person mentioned here.

Verses 3-4: Sometimes David was punished for his own sin (Psalms 32 and 51), but here he asserts again that he is being persecuted unjustly, that his suffering is undeserved.

Psalm 59:3 "For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not [for] my transgression, nor [for] my sin, O LORD."

For my life, to take it away.

"The mighty are gathered against me": They are all mighty, men of honor and estates, and interest in the court and country. They are in a confederacy, united by a league. And actually, gathered together against me. Combined both in consultation and action.

“Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord”: This is done, not on account of my violating the laws of the land, nor because it is alleged that I am a sinner against God. David was conscious that he did not deserve this treatment from the hand of man. He had been guilty of no wrong against Saul that exposed him to just punishment. He carried with him the consciousness of innocence as to any crime that could have made this treatment proper. And he felt that it was all the result of unjust suspicions. It was not improper for him to refer to this in his prayer; for, however he might feel that he was a sinner in the sight of God, yet he felt that a great and grievous wrong was done him by man. And he prayed, therefore, that a righteous God would interpose (see notes on Psalms 7:8; 17:2; 35:24; and 43:1).

The mighty mentioned in this, are not the mighty as far as God is concerned, but mighty in the sight of the world. They are not there because of anything David has done. He has not sinned against them. They just want to destroy him. Perhaps the reason they would like to destroy him is, because they do not want to lose their place of authority with the people. We do know that the very reason that the authorities in the temple in Jerusalem wanted to be rid of Jesus, was because they were afraid they would lose their authority over the people. He was a threat to them, because they could not do the miracles that Jesus did, and the people were beginning to follow Jesus and leave them.

Psalm 59:4 "They run and prepare themselves without [my] fault: awake to help me, and behold."

Or, "without sin in me"; or "without punishment in them". So the same word is rendered (1 Sam. 28:10). "They run", in a hostile manner, "against me", as the Syriac version adds. Or like dogs up and down, about the city, to find him and kill him (see Psalm 59:7). Or this may denote their readiness and swiftness to shed blood (Prov. 1:16). "And prepare themselves" with weapons, with instruments of death, as the men did that were sent to kill him. And as the band of men that came with Judas to take Christ prepared themselves with swords and staves.

"Awake to help me": Or "to meet me"; (see Genesis 46:29). With assistance and supplies, and to deliver out of the hands of enemies. The Lord, though he neither slumbers nor sleeps. Yet seems to be asleep when he does not arise to help his people, but suffers the enemy to prevail. And when he seems to take no notice of their case, but hides his eyes, and shuts them as a man asleep. Hence the following petition;

"And behold": The distress the psalmist was in, and the wickedness and malice of his enemies against him.

This is the very thing they did with Jesus. They followed Him around to find something they could accuse Him of. They wanted to kill Him, even at the beginning, but God protected Jesus right in the middle of His enemies. David is saying, they are plotting to kill me, God you are my only hope. David is asking God to just take a look, and see the evil they are planning.

Psalm 59:5 "Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah."

Compare (Psalm 69:6, also "a psalm of David"). "Hosts" represent God's angels as His army.

"The God of Israel": In covenant with all true Israelites, whom thou promises to protect and bless.

"Awake to visit all the heathen": "All" is emphatic, and means not only those without the covenant, but also those within; the wicked Israelites. It is noted that Saul's instruments consisted of two classes, actual heathen, such as Doeg the Edomite; and irreligious Israelites, as the Ziphites and others, who were no better than heathen. Or, these heathen, who, though they are Israelites by birth, yet in truth, and in their dispositions and manners, are mere heathen.

"Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors": That are deceitful and abominably wicked, as Judas Iscariot, the Romish antichrist. The Targum renders it, "princes of a lie". that speak lies in hypocrisy, and are given up to believe a lie, as the followers of antichrist. God is merciful to wicked men and to transgressors, but not to wicked transgressors. Apostates may be meant, such as deal perfidiously and treacherously, as the word used signifies. Who sin willfully and knowingly, after they have received the knowledge of the truth. Sin against light and evidence, and obstinately and wickedly persist therein. Who sin the sin against the Holy Ghost, the sin unto death, which is not to be prayed for, (1 John 4:16). Or otherwise this may seem to be contrary to the command and example of Christ (Matt. 5:44).

"Selah": On this word (see note on Psalm 3:2).

We see that David, unlike Jesus, wants his enemies destroyed. Even on the cross Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. When David uses the word hosts in the Scripture above, he is saying, God of the armies. David is saying, they have accused me unjustly, and I cannot help myself Lord. Bring your armies and fight my battle for me.

Psalm 59:6 "They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city."

Saul sent once to destroy him, and the messengers went back to inform him that he was ill. But they returned in the evening to bring him even in his bed.

"They make a noise like a dog": The Hebrew "jehemu", signifies the confused hum and noise of an assembled crowd. "The psalmist here compares the muttered threats of his enemies to the growling's or snarling's of a dog, ready to bite and tear any person": Dogs of the ancient world were often wild scavengers. Here, they serve as a simile for the messengers of Saul outside David's house setting an ambush.

Have you ever noticed, dogs bark a whole lot more than they bite? They are trying to frighten him by the noise. This is really not doing harm to David, but is just to frighten him.

Psalm 59:7 "Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords [are] in their lips: for who, [say they], doth hear?"

“Belch ... with their mouth”: Pictures the coarse, uncouth character of Saul’s henchmen (compare verse 12).

“Swords are in their lips”: Their conversation was dedicated to the assassination of David.

“Say they, doth hear”: A Blasphemy implying that God either doesn’t exist or doesn’t know what happens in the affairs of mankind.

Their evil speech comes out of their mouth so regularly and so uncontrolled, that it is like when a man belches. Swords are in their lips means that their words are cutting words, bent on destroying David. They are saying that David's God is not even hearing, or caring what is happening to David.

Psalm 59:8 "But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision."

“All the heathen”: Gentiles (see note on Psalm 57:9). This phrase and “my people” (in verse 11), imply that this psalm was written several years after the event when David was king and involved in international affairs. David wrote his psalms as a prophet under the super-intendance of the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2).

David knows that just because God has not rushed in, does not mean that He will not punish them. God is longsuffering, hoping they will repent. The word translated derision here, means laugh to scorn or mock. This is saying that God will have the last laugh. It will be mocking their laugh here. His laugh will be unanswerable.

Psalm 59:9 "[Because of] his strength will I wait upon thee: for God [is] my defense."

Either because of the strength of Saul, who was stronger than David, he determined to wait upon the Lord for salvation and deliverance from him. Though Saul has great power, yet I know that you bridle him: therefore, I will patiently hope in you. Or because of the strength of the Lord, which he expected from him, and therefore would wait upon him for it. The Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions, and also the Chaldee paraphrase, render the words, "my strength will I keep for thee"; or "with thee". I ascribe all my strength unto thee; I expect every supply of it from thee, and put my trust and confidence in thee for it. So did Christ as man, and had strength from the Lord, according to his promise (Isa. 50:7); and so every believer (Isa. 14:24).

"For God is my defense": Or "my high refuge"; or "high tower" (see Psalm 9:9). Where he was defended and exalted, as is petitioned (Psalm 59:1). And was safe and secure from every enemy.

David realizes that his strength is not enough to come against his enemies. He also realizes that they may be taunting him, but God has not allowed them to hurt him. David knows if he waits for God, God will take care of this. He also realizes that God has defended him until now, and will continue to defend him as long as he waits for God.

Psalm 59:10 "The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see [my desire] upon mine enemies."

The giver of all that mercy and comfort which I have or hope for.

"Shall prevent me": With the blessings of his goodness (Psalm 21:3). Thou shalt help me seasonably, before it be too late, and sooner than I expect.

"God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies": Namely, in their disappointment and overthrow, as it follows. Which was very desirable to David, no less for the public good than for his own safety and happiness.

How many times have we had God keep us from doing something that would be harmful to us? That is what I see in this Scripture about David. God does not want him to jump out and get ahead of God's blessing. Though David is surrounded by the enemy, God will let David see the overthrow of his enemies. If David will just wait until the time is just right for God, David will experience victory. One of the hardest things to do is wait on the Lord.

Psalm 59:11 "Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield."

"Lest my people forget": The psalmist thinks that if the Lord were to destroy the wicked too quickly, the lesson of God's hatred of evil might not be impressed on the minds of the people.

David is saying here that if they die, that will not be a good lesson for others looking on. He says scatter them, and the lesson will be learned by the ones in the places they are scattered to, as well as here. Strip them of their power and authority, but let them live. The word, translated shield, here, means protector. Notice also, (our shield). He is not just David's protector, but He is the protector of all who believe.

Psalm 59:12 "[For] the sin of their mouth [and] the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying [which] they speak."

That is, in belching out words of reproach and malice (Psalm 59:7).

"Let them even be taken in their pride": In the very midst of their schemes, or while confidently relying on the success of their plans. Even while their hearts are elated, and they are sure of success, let them be arrested, and let their plans be foiled.

"And for cursing and lying which they speak": That is, on account of the false charges which they have brought against me, and of their bitter imprecations on me. The allusion is to the accusations brought against David, and which were believed by Saul. And which were the foundation of the efforts made by Saul to take his life.

Pride comes just before a fall. Notice in the next Scripture, where pride comes from.

1 John 2:16 "For all that [is] in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Notice in the following Scripture, the terrible consequences of those who love to lie.

Revelation 22:15 "For without [are] dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

Lying is as bad a sin as murder then, because you wind up in the same place as a murderer.

Psalm 59:13 "Consume [them] in wrath, consume [them], that they [may] not [be]: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah."

The repetition of the request shows the passion and strong feeling of the mind of the petitioner, and the insistency in which he put up the petition. And suggests that the persons designed were guilty of very great sins, deserving of the wrath of God. And which came upon them to the uttermost (1 Thess. 2:16).

"That they may not be; either any more in the land of the living": Be utterly extinct, having no being in this world (Jer. 31:15). Or that they might not be in the glory and grandeur, in the honor, dignity, and felicity, they once were in. Which best suits the present state of the Jews. And this sense better agrees with what follows.

"And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob, unto the ends of the earth": This is to be understood of the Messiah, who is God over all. Blessed for ever and is the ruler in Israel. King of saints and reigns over the house of Jacob, in his church and among his people, wherever they are. Even to the ends of the earth, where he has had, or will have, some that are subject to him. For his dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth (Psalm 72:8). And this his government is known to men good and bad, by the judgments which he executes. And particularly it is apparent that he is made Lord and Christ, and that he is come in his kingdom, and with power, by the vengeance taken on the Jewish nation.

"Selah": On this word; (see note on Psalm 3:2).

The cursing and the lying have stirred David, until he is now saying, let your wrath arise and destroy these evil ones. Not only destroy them, but do it publicly, so that all the world will know what you do to the evil ones of the earth. Way back in another lesson we remember that, these are people who profess to know God. Remember, judgement begins at the house of God. He rightly says at the end of this, stop and think on these things.

Psalm 59:14 "And at evening let them return; [and] let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city."

What is related as matter of fact, is here expressed by way of a spoken curse. And what is there taken notice of as their sin, is here wished for at their punishment. Unless it can be thought that this should refer to the conversion and return of the Jews in the evening of the world, and to their

humiliation and mourning for piercing Christ. And to their very distressed and uncomfortable condition they will be in, until they have satisfaction that their sins are forgiven them (see note on Psalm 59:6).

Now David is saying, let them do all their bragging and threatening as loud as they want to. I know they are going to be taken care of by my God.

Psalm 59:15 "Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied."

Like hungry dogs.

"And grudge if they be not satisfied": Or murmur and howl as dogs when hungry, and can find nothing to eat. Or "when they shall not be satisfied, and shall lodge"; when they shall get nothing to satisfy their hungry appetite. And shall go to bed without a supper, and lie all night without food. The Targum is, "they shall wander about to seize the prey to eat, and will not rest till they are satisfied, and will lie all night;" that is, in quest of prey.

The dogs have lost their chance to devour David. Let them run around looking for someone else to tear to pieces. Lord, let them be angry when there is no one left to tear up.

Psalm 59:16 "But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble."

In creating all things out of nothing. In upholding all things in being; in the redemption of his people; in their conversion and calling. In the preservation of them to eternal happiness and in the performance of his promises to them. In the destruction of their enemies; and in their protection.

"Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning": Of providential mercies, which are new every morning. And of special mercy in the heart of God, in the covenant of his grace, in redemption, in regeneration, in the pardon of sin. And in eternal life and salvation. For thou hast been my defense (see note on Psalm 59:9).

"And refuge in the day of my trouble": Whither he fled, and found protection and safety (see note on Psalm 9:9).

David has seen help on its way. The time to shout and sing praises about the power of God is at the victory. The darkest hour is just before the dawn. Dawn has come for David. He begins his praise of God for protecting him through the dark night. Look at this with me, and learn from this. Though the night be dark and it seems there is no way out, though our enemy surround us on every side and we are outnumbered, our help is in the Lord. He will build a fence around us and defend us. There is a dawn of a new day just around the corner. Place your trust and faith in God, and He will not let you down.

Psalm 59:17 "Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God [is] my defense, [and] the God of my mercy."

That is, to God, whom he made his strength, and put his trust in for strength. And from whom he received it. Confessing himself to be void of all virtue and strength, he attributes everything to God. And he therefore determined to sing praise to him for it, and give him the glory of it.

"For God is my defense" (as before in Psalm 59:9).

"And the God of my mercy" (see note on Psalm 59:10).

Just as David speaks of the mercy of God, we must realize that it is only by the mercy of God that we are acceptable to Him. When we get to the end of our self, then God can take over and win the battle for us. Notice that David is not taking any of the credit for the victory here. He just praises God in word and song for God's favor in this. That is what we must do also. We are not saved by any of our great ability and power. Jesus did it all for us. Our place is just to believe and praise Him for what He has done.

Psalm 59 Questions

1. If we do not learn to apply these lessons to our life now, why are we reading them?
2. Why is it important to call God, my God?
3. What is an example of someone who is totally sold out to the devil?
4. Who are the mighty mentioned in verse 3?
5. Why are they so determined to destroy David?
6. Who were the people that felt this same way about the Lord Jesus?
7. These evil ones followed Jesus around for what purpose?
8. What does David call the Lord in verse 5?
9. In verse 5, what was the contrast between what Jesus asked for His enemies, and what David wanted for his?
10. What does the word hosts in verse 5 mean?
11. What is meant by them making a noise like a dog?
12. Explain the statement, belch with their mouth.
13. The word translated derision here, means what?
14. What does verse 9 say that David is assured of?

15. What is the word, prevent, saying in verse 10?
16. What is one of the hardest things for us to do after we pray?
17. Slay then not, lest _____.
18. David calls God, O Lord _____ in verse 11.
19. The word translated shield, here, means what?
20. Pride comes before a _____.
21. Pride of life is not of the Father, but of the _____.
22. Name a few of the sins that will keep you out of heaven.
23. What two things have stirred David to the point, that he says for God to consume them?
24. Where does judgement begin?
25. The dogs have lost their chance to devour David, so what are they doing?
26. I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the _____.
27. When is the darkest hour?
28. What lesson can we learn from all of this?
29. _____ is my defense.