

# Who Do You Fear?

A Sermon on Psalm

by

Grayson Stewart Gilbert

## 1. Introduction

## 2. The Righteous Will Be Ensconced (vv. 1-2).

- a. “Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint.” (v. 1a).
  - i. David begins the psalm with an urgent cry that God would hear his prayer.
    1. The idea is not that God will merely passively hear him, but that God will act.
    2. While this might seem like an overly simplistic observation, the reason why David cries out is that he believes God will be moved to action.
  - ii. Yet it also carries a freight of implicit beliefs about God as David cries out to Him.
    1. David believes that God sees the injustice being done to him and will punish the wicked.
    2. David believes that God not merely the righteous Judge who *wants* to punish the wicked, but He can and will actually do so.
- b. “Preserve my life from dread of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of evildoers, from the tumult of those who do iniquity” (vv. 1b-2).
  - i. David asks God to preserve his life—but from a very specific thing: *dread* of his enemies.
    1. He has very good reason to be afraid of these men, for they are incredibly wicked.
      - a. However, he does not want to be paralyzed by the fear of them and what they can do.

- b. He has a working theology that demands he not be afraid of mere mortal men.
- 2. David asks that God would hide him from the conspiracies and tumult, or insurrection, of the wicked.
  - a. He gives us a vivid description of these men and what they're capable of.
  - b. David calls them evildoers and workers of iniquity; these are both very broad terms, but it speaks to the totality of who they are as people. \
  - c. David's request is a simple one: preserve my life from the dread of my enemies, and hide me from their evil plots and actions.
- ii. David takes refuge in the only place he knows is utterly safe from the wicked, but not safe *for* the wicked.
  - 1. God will uphold and protect the righteous, but He will cast down and destroy the wicked.
    - a. The implied point is that God is decisively *not* a safe place for the wicked when His judgment falls.
    - b. Psalm 46 also gives us a clear depiction of this reality.
  - 2. Everything in history is hurtling towards this great and terrible day of judgment.
    - a. For the people of God, who by repentance and faith, trust in Jesus Christ, this is an immense comfort.
    - b. Whether we live or die, the Lord reigns over all the earth and the wicked will have no say in the matter.

### **3. The Reprobate Will Be Exposed (vv. 3-8).**

- a. “[These evil men] have sharpened their tongue like a sword. They aimed bitter speech as their arrow, to shoot from concealment at the blameless; suddenly they shoot at him, and do not

fear. They hold fast to themselves an evil purpose; the talk of laying snares secretly; they say, 'Who can see them?' They devise injustices, saying, 'We are ready with a well-conceived plot,' for the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep'" (vv. 3-6).

- i. In this small sampling of what these men do, we learn quite a bit about their character.
  1. First, they use their words to maximize the destruction they can do (v. 3).
    - a. Notice the different ways David shows how their preferred weapon of war is their tongue.
    - b. At the heart of their speech is a cruel, profound hatred that has its sights set on David's destruction.
  2. They hide under the guise of anonymity to attack the innocent.
    - a. The implication is that not only do they hide, but they do so with the intent to strike their targets unaware.
    - b. All the while, they aim their bow at the innocent.
  3. They do not fear (v. 4).
    - a. The context of their lack of fear is a little difficult to flesh out, but it is likely speaking to the fact that they do not fear reprisal, or consequence.
    - b. They are set on using whatever means they can to destroy David—and they have no concern if God sees it.
  4. They strengthen themselves in their evil purposes and hubris, or pride (v. 5).
    - a. Some of your bibles speak of them "holding fast" or "encouraging one another" in their evil purposes, but the Hebrew conveys the idea of growing stronger and stronger until you prevail.
    - b. The idea speaks toward a continual strategizing so they can bring him to utter ruin.

5. They search out the ways of unrighteousness, or as the NASB puts it, they devise injustices.
  - a. The word here literally speaks of cruel malice—the intent to cause serious harm and delight in their suffering.
  - b. Physically, mentally, spiritually—in every way, they are searching out the depths of injustice.
- ii. David looks upon all of this, and the extent of their depraved hearts is an anomaly to him. He simply cannot understand how they can possibly think the way they do.
  1. Finally, David gives a summary statement at the end of verse 6.
  2. This is quite similar to Jeremiah 17:9, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”
    - a. It is a statement that describes the entire problem of mankind in a nutshell.
    - b. The level of evil within the heart of man is unsearchable to man—but it is not unsearchable to God.
- b. “But God will shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they will be wounded. So they will make him stumble; their own tongue is against them; all who see them shake the head” (vv. 7-8).
  - i. The tone of the psalm changes rather radically here, as God judges these men by their own devises.
    1. Where David was perplexed at the unsearchableness of their hearts, behind the scenes, God has already taken note.
      - a. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that “the Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and

the intentions of the heart.” How much more so can the God who gave us His Word?

- b. What then does God find? Mark 7:21: “evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.”

2. What was a mystery to David becomes a clear warning to any who foolishly think they can pull the wool over God’s eyes and keep their evil deeds hidden from Him.

- a. This is a clear case of proverbial justice, where God returns their own deeds upon their heads in judgment.
- b. It must be said, if nothing in all of creation can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord, nothing can hide you from the penetrating gaze of God, who searches all things and knows all things and judges all things.

ii. The result of God’s judgment is a revelation, one which the psalmist makes clear: “All who see them will shake the head” (v. 8c).

1. The people he is talking about here are contrasted with the godly, so they will be the ones to see the judgment of God on display against these conspirators.

- a. The Hebrew here is notoriously difficult to convey in English, and that is why some of your translations will render this phrase differently than another.
- b. The sense of what it means though is that the witnesses of this judgment will sway like a drunkard.

2. It is much like what Christ depicts of the Day of Wrath to come in Luke 17:26-30,

- a. "...Just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed."
- b. In other words, every day that hastened toward judgment, was just another ordinary day—until it was not.
- c. It will be the same for those who live to see the judgment of God poured out on the earth when Jesus Christ returns.

#### **4. God's Retribution Will Be Exhibited (v. 9).**

- a. "Then all men will fear, and they will declare the work of God, and will consider what He has done" (v. 9).
  - i. One of the inevitable results of God's judgment being poured out, is fear.
    - 1. If you recall, these same men were those who operated without fear in verse 4.
    - 2. Now that they have seen the judgment of God firsthand, they are moved to dread.
  - ii. It is not all that difficult to consider why they would be moved to fear in seeing God's judgment displayed.
    - 1. What seemed so set in stone with their best laid plans and scheming came to an abrupt end.

2. Think of Haman, who spends all his time scheming against Mordecai in the book of Esther, yet is hung on the gallows he built to kill Mordecai.
- b. What stands out more than anything else though is that when the wicked see the judgment of other wicked men—they must come face to face with the reality that they are next.
    - i. They are confronted with their own sin and the righteous judgment of God, and they fear.
    - ii. Yet this fear of God’s judgment will inevitably produce something.
      1. They will declare the work of God and will consider what He has done.
        - a. The result of God’s judgment will lead to the wicked actually recognizing this is the work of God.
        - b. They will deeply consider what God has done to the wicked, realize their own end will be much the same, and fear Him all the more.
      2. This does not indicate though that they will become believers though. This is the particularly frightening part of this psalm.
        - a. Certainly, some might repent and believe. They might cast themselves before God for mercy—but it does not always end in such a way, though that is the hope.
        - b. Many will be much like those described in John 3, who reject Christ out of their hatred for Him and their love for sin.

#### **5. God’s Righteousness Will Be Extolled (v. 10).**

- a. “The righteous man will be glad in Yahweh and will take refuge in Him; and all the upright in heart will glory” (v. 10).
  - i. The final result of God’s judgment on the wicked is joy.

1. Many shrink back at the prospect of why joy would accompany God's judgment being poured out, but notice where the righteous man's joy is found.
    - a. He will glad, or take joy, in Yahweh Himself. Why? The reason is rather simple:
    - b. The threats of the wicked can no longer remain a danger for the people of God.
  2. There is genuine peace from the threat of evil, and the God of all has done what is just and right.
- ii. Yet there is a more important reason why the righteous will rejoice in the Lord.
1. The word "Lord" is in all capitals in your bibles, which signifies to you that the psalmist is using the divine name, "Yahweh."
    - a. The name "Yahweh" of course speaks of God being eternal, the One True God, and more.
    - b. As David uses "Yahweh" at this particular spot, he invokes the personal name of God.
  2. The righteous, in other words, will rejoice that God is *their* God, and He is ever-faithful to His covenant promises. He will uphold the righteous, and cast down the wicked.

## 6. Conclusion