

# ***"Break Their Teeth!" | An Honest Prayer (Psalm 58)***

## **INTRO**

### **Psalm of Lament:**

A psalm of lament is a prayer or song in the Bible that expresses deep sadness or trouble and asks God for help. These psalms can come from an individual or a group going through hard times. They usually include parts like a cry to God, a complaint about the situation, a request for help, reasons why God should act, trust in God, and praise. Even though they describe pain, they usually end with hope and faith in God. Over one-third of the 150 psalms are laments.

### **Imprecatory Psalm:**

An imprecatory psalm is a kind of lament where the writer asks God to punish their enemies. These psalms are often written during times of danger, war, or unfair treatment. Instead of seeking personal revenge, the writer is asking for God's justice. Though some of the language may seem harsh, these psalms are focused on trusting God to do what is right.

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## **Psalm 58 ESV**

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO DO NOT DESTROY. A MIKTAM OF DAVID. <sup>1</sup> Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods? Do you judge the children of man uprightly? <sup>2</sup> No, in your hearts you devise wrongs; your hands deal out violence on earth. <sup>3</sup> The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies. <sup>4</sup> They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, <sup>5</sup> so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter. <sup>6</sup> O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD! <sup>7</sup> Let them vanish like water that runs away; when he aims his arrows, let them be blunted. <sup>8</sup> Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime, like the stillborn child who never sees the sun. <sup>9</sup> Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns, whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them away! <sup>10</sup> The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. <sup>11</sup> Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth."

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## STRUCTURE OF CONTENT: CHIASTIC PSALM

A [v1]: Leaders do not judge righteously

B [v2]: The wicked have violent hands

C [v3-5]: Description of the wicked: Like a serpent

D [v6]: Break their teeth O God

D [v6]: Break their teeth O Yahweh

C [v7-9]: Curses on the wicked: like a snail

B [v10]: The righteous wash their feet in the blood of the wicked

A [v11]: God will judge

## CONTEXT:

- David is the attributed author of [Psalm 58](#).
- [Psalm 57](#) & 59 are both tied to events with King Saul.
- Therefore it is quite possible that [Psalm 58](#) is also David dealing with Saul due to its placement in the book.

## WHAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT THAT IDEA:

- In the scripture we see David repeatedly honor King Saul and that he valued his life as precious.
  - Even though Saul dishonored David and attempted to kill him several times.
- Yet, this Psalm is a glimpse into the heart and prayer of David as he's processing all the conflict and abuse from King Saul.
- He was determined to take the high road and honor Saul
- But David was raw and authentic in how he prayed about the situation.
- In the end, this Psalm of David teaches us to:
  - Take our cries for help and justice to God.
  - Leave our enemies in the hands and timing of God.
  - To not take personal vengeance... let God take care of it (as He wills and in His time).
  - Ultimately, God's justice will prevail.

## ONE OTHER NOTE:

- Scholars also note the imagery used in [Psalm 58](#) makes allusions to [Gen 3](#).

### **Genesis 3:15** ESV

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

- I'll refer back to this on occasion, as I think this also was in the mind of the psalmist at certain points.

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## **A [v1]: LEADERS DO NOT JUDGE RIGHTEOUSLY**

### **Psalm 58:1 ESV**

<sup>1</sup> Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods? Do you judge the children of man uprightly?

#### **Here's the lament:**

- The rulers do not decree justice.
- "gods" could also be rendered as 'mighty ones'
  - Its clear in the context of [Psalm 58](#) that these are human rulers who are responsible for bringing about justice.
  - The problem is that they are failing to do so.
  - This is likely in reference to King Saul and his band of leaders.
- There's also strong evidence that the text should read: 'Do you indeed decree what is right in silence?'
  - To be silent in the face of injustice is wrong.
  - To be silent in the case of these wicked leaders is to agree with and deal out the injustice.
- In David's realm...
  - Saul has abused and mistreated David.
  - Is there no one in his counsel that will step up and say 'No! This isn't right!' to king Saul?

#### **Allusion to [Gen 3](#):**

- Do you judge the sons of adam uprightly?

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## **B [v2]: THE WICKED HAVE VIOLENT HANDS**

### **Psalm 58:2 ESV**

<sup>2</sup> No, in your hearts you devise wrongs; your hands deal out violence on earth.

#### **Note the progression of wickedness:**

- in the heart, evil is embraced, devised and plotted... long before the hands deal it out
- Which is why we are commanded to guard our hearts and treasure God's word in our hearts!

### **Proverbs 4:23 ESV**

<sup>23</sup> Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

## Proverbs 3:1 ESV

<sup>1</sup> My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments,

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## C [v3-5]: DESCRIPTION OF THE WICKED: LIKE A SERPENT

### Psalm 58:3-5 ESV

<sup>3</sup> The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies. <sup>4</sup> They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, <sup>5</sup> so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter.

### Condition of the wicked:

- They are estranged from the womb.
  - They are born sinners (like all of us).
  - However, they keep wandering away from God.
  - They don't seek God, they don't respond to God.
- They speak lies
  - They are of their father, who has been lying / murdering from the beginning. ([Gen 3](#))
- They have venom like a serpent... cobra... and a deaf ear to not hear its charmer.
  - These people are venomous towards people and deaf towards God.
  - They are hardened in their ways and dangerous to be around.

### The lament of the righteous:

- What can the righteous do?
- Those who are supposed to yield their authority and position for justice are corrupt liars!
  - They are lost, dead in their sin.
  - They are hardened against God
  - They are using their power to hurt and kill rather than to heal.
- The following is the climax of the Psalm... a heart wrenching prayer for justice TO the only One who can bring it.

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## D [v6]: BREAK THEIR TEETH O GOD, BREAK THEIR TEETH O YAHWEH

### Psalm 58:6 ESV

<sup>6</sup> O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD!

### David prays to 'defang' the wicked.

- Remove their power to harm, crush, and poison.
- Remove them from their positions of authority that they are using to 'deal violence'
- Again, remember:
  - David honored Saul and the elders of Israel in action and spoken word.
  - But David took them to prayer seriously.

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## C [v7-9]: CURSES ON THE WICKED: LIKE A SNAIL

### Psalm 58:7-9 ESV

<sup>7</sup> Let them vanish like water that runs away; when he aims his arrows, let them be blunted. <sup>8</sup> Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime, like the stillborn child who never sees the sun. <sup>9</sup> Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns, whether green or ablaze, may he sweep them away!

### David continues his prayer against these wicked rulers:

- That they would be wiped out and disappear.
- That their arrows would be blunted and harmless.
- That they would disappear into a trail of slime or ooze like a snail/slug.
  - They thought themselves to be a venomous serpent... make them like a harmless snail.
  - Remember to compare this to the other 'line C' - the wicked like a serpent.
- The passage also contains a few sayings whose meanings are no longer clear... but the essence is the same: God take out the wicked in a blaze of fiery judgment!

### Some of these prayers (curses) are quite harsh.

- David, that doesn't sound very Christian...
- Q: Is God just?
  - Does God's justice demand that he punish the wicked?
  - Note that the wicked David is crying out against are those who have been hardened in their rebellion against God.
  - David too is a sinner... ahh, but he was a repentant one. Who sought out and received the mercies of God.
  - Such mercy is available to all sinners IF they repent and run to the cross of Jesus.
  - However, those who remain defiant against the Lord, will experience his wrath... the justice of God.
- To pray imprecatory prayers is not 'unchristian'

- Its the prayers of the saints in the book of Revelation!
- It's praying in alignment with God's character.
- We again note, that we don't seek vengeance for ourselves, but we make our appeal to the Lord.
- Further we recognize that one of the ways we want to see this prayer answered is in the repentance and salvation of our enemies.
- However, the prayer to defang them and remove them from power is a just prayer.

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## **B [v10]: THE RIGHTEOUS WASH THEIR FEET IN THE BLOOD OF THE WICKED**

### **Psalm 58:10 ESV**

<sup>10</sup> The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked.

### **Now David, this is definitely 'unchristian' and gross. Wait a minute...**

- This was a customary and cultural saying of the time and other scriptures.
- It's implication was one of triumph and victory over their enemies.
- Remember to connect it with the other line B: 'The wicked have violent hands'
- Let's also recognize the connection to [Gen 3:15](#).
  - In the end, the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.
  - In the end, the people of God (in and through Christ) will be victorious.

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## **A [v11]: GOD WILL JUDGE**

### **Psalm 58:11 ESV**

<sup>11</sup> Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth."

### **This is the hope and righteous expectation of the Christian.**

- Though rulers of men (mighty ones/gods) fail to enact justice...
- God will be the righteous judge in the end.
- Though corrupt leaders deal out violence and venomous lies from their depraved hearts... they will not escape accountability and justice.
- The righteous will be saved in the end and see the victory... the wrongs made right.

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## RESPONSE:

- Pursue justice and speak up when you can (unlike the agreeable silent wicked)
- Do not take vengeance... for it belongs to the Lord.
- Choose to honor (like David)
- Pray.
- Pray authentically and 'in your feelings'.
- Pray for God to deal with the wicked.
  - May they respond to his Gospel and mercy.
  - May they be defanged of their power to harm.
  - Should they be unrepentant... God will do rightly.
- Rest in God's ultimate victory and justice.