

Psalm 59

1 Samuel 19:1-17

A God for the Weak

Intro: Our Psalm this morning is written from the context of persecution. The title of this Psalm explains that it was written "When Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him." We read about that in 1 Samuel 19. Men were seeking to take David's life – though he had done no wrong.

You may be wondering what this Psalm has to say to us today. After all, what happened to David happened a very long time ago. It may be helpful to realize that the spiritual conflict that spawned this incident is just as real today as it was then – with identical results. This very same story is being told and written in a thousand different places in our world today. Nigeria, Syria, Indonesia, North Korea, Vietnam, Eritrea, Pakistan, Somalia – all over the world we have brothers and sisters suffering for Christ. Nearly 3,000 Christians lost their lives this past year, simply because they were Christians. Many thousands more have suffered imprisonment, beatings and confiscation of their goods.

Open Doors Ministry reports

"Around the world, more than 260 million Christians live in places where they experience high levels of persecution, just for following Jesus. That's 1 in 8 believers, worldwide."

I think we are being naïve if we do not sense that, here in America, we will be facing increasing opposition in our own day. Psalm 59 is a Psalm for an oppressed believer, for a persecuted church. It is a psalm written in the presence of enemies and from the experience of Gods' blessings there.

I. The Prayer

As we saw in 1 Samuel 19, David isn't imagining things when he speaks of his "enemies". Saul had twice tried to kill him with a spear, and now there are evil men lurking around the corner, in order to kill him when he comes out of his house. His wife had explained the situation clearly, (1 Sam 19:11),

"If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."

That's bound to get your attention. That's the context of this Psalm. That's the danger David was truly in. And in that place, David prays.

"Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
protect me from those who rise up against me;"

² deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men.³ For behold, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men stir up strife against me.

These men are not seeking justice! They aren't seeking to repay David for some great evil or wrong he has done. He hasn't done any evil – at least not anything that would justify this attack on his life. As David says,

“For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD, ⁴ for no fault of mine, they run and make ready.”

David isn't claiming sinlessness – but he is claiming innocence. In other words, he has not sinned in any way against Saul that would make Saul's attempts on his life reasonable or just. And David appeals to God on the basis of his innocence!

Plummer, The whole power of such a plea depends on its being true”.

It was true, and Saul himself knew it was true! When his son Jonathan admonished him in 1 Samuel 19, Saul didn't protest. He didn't try to explain to his son the evils David had committed against him. There weren't any! Saul himself knew that David was innocent.

So why was he trying to kill him? There's a very sinister reason given to us in 1 Samuel 19. “A harmful spirit from the Lord came upon Saul.” What's that about? God is not the author of evil. The best explanation is that God, in judgement on Saul for his sin, has given Saul over to his sin. God has released Satanic influence upon Saul, just as he did upon Job. In Job's case, it was to prove Job's faith and God's worth. In Saul's case it was to prove Saul's heart of rebellion. God has given Saul up to the powers of darkness. It's a terrifying thought. (You see the same thing with Judas Iscariot.)

The spirit that drove Saul to persecute David is the same spirit that drove Judas to betray David's Son. And that same spirit is persecuting the church of Christ Jesus today. The story of David's persecution is being told over and over again in our world today. For instance, I'd like to read to you the story of a man named Samson, in Myanmar, recently converted to Christianity from Buddhism. These events happened just a few months ago.

“When our family accepted Jesus Christ, the village people learned that we became Christian. Our neighbors informed our village chief and discussed with Buddhist monks and higher authorities. They had a big meeting in a Buddhist monastery and they called our family members. They also called other families from the village to attend this meeting. So, in that meeting, there were a lot of people. There were around 50 monks

and around 200 people there. They were all talking about what they would do with my family.

“The Buddhist monk then asked me, with his booming voice: ‘Do you really believe in the Christian faith? Are you really going to believe in Jesus? Are you not coming back to our religion?’ “I said: ‘We are not going to deny our faith. We’re not going to reject our faith. We’ll believe Jesus until we die!’”

Bright and early the next morning, Samson and his daughter were just about to head back to the monastery. They had been called again for another meeting with the leaders of the village, so to prepare themselves for the meeting, their family prayed.

While they were praying, Samson heard voices. It was the village chief’s voice, and he wasn’t alone. “Kill him! Samson, ask your God to save you now!”

His family knelt together to pray, hand in cold, sweaty, hand. The shouts grew louder and louder, “KILL HIM!” Then there was silence – a whoosh, and a thud. The first rock.

Samson remembers, “They threw stone upon stone upon stone. All our windows and doors were open and they were stoning us nonstop. “There was so much noise. They were shouting ‘Kill them, kill them!’ But we were still praying to God. We did not stop praying, even when they almost burned our house.

“We were crying and praying. They were still shouting at us: ‘If your God is alive, tell him to save you now! Still, we just prayed.”

Help finally arrived and Samson and his family are now living in a secret, safe place. They would like to return to their home but cannot because the leaders of their village would still try to kill them.

This is the spiritual warfare that has existed in the world since the fall into sin. The darkness rages against the light. And God’s people will feel the wrath and venom of men’s hatred of God.

Plummer: “We shall find it necessary to cry for help and deliverance as long as we have enemies; and we shall have enemies as long as we live.”

This is absolutely true. The world, the flesh and the Devil are the sworn enemies of your eternal soul. We will not be done with enemies until we are done with this life. But when Gods’ people are under attack, whether from wicked men or from our flesh or the Devil himself – we have a God to whom we can cry!

II. The Persecutors

David spends a good bit of time in this Psalm describing his enemies. They are very real and very present. They are right there – outside the door.

In verse 1 we are told of their nature, from which flows their deeds (vs2). They **are** evil (vs 1) and they **work** evil (vs 2). As Jesus said, you will know the tree by its fruit.

In verse 3 David describes them as “**fierce**” men – they are able and committed to carry out the murder they have in mind.

In verse 6 we see that they are **persistent** – each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city.

They are **impudent** - brazenly confident that no one will hold them to account.

:7 “Who, they think, will hear us?”

People who are committed to sin think this way. Who will know? Who will see? Who will hear? They convince themselves that they will not be held accountable for their crimes. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Maybe this describes you this morning. Are you living in secret sin, believing that no one will know, no one will find out? You are just deceiving yourselves. God knows and he will, in one way or another, deal with you and your sin.

III. The Progression of Fear to Faith

:4b Awake, come to meet me, and see!

There’s a note of panicked urgency. Lord, wake up! Come here and see what’s going on! It is similar to the disciples in the boat – Lord, wake up! Don’t you care if we drown??

We know what these prayers are like – don’t we? When the tragedy strikes or the diagnosis comes back with bad news or the boss tells you that you’ve been let go – we know what panicked urgency feels like! Lord wake up! See! Help. That fearful cry isn’t a bad cry – but if we are willing to think upon the Lord to whom we call, we will find that fear giving way to the confidence of faith. That’s what we see happening here.

In verse 4 there is a note of panic. But, beginning in verse 5, the fear begins to lay hold of God in faith. David's mind turns from the reality of his enemies to the reality of his God.

⁵ You, LORD God of hosts, are God of Israel.

God was the Lord of hosts – the commander of the mighty armies of heaven. He is also the God of Israel – the God who made covenant with his people to protect them. As Gods' child and servant, David has every right to appeal to the God to act on his behalf!

“Rouse yourself to punish all the nations; spare none of those who treacherously plot evil.”

Notice how personal and intimate the language becomes in verse 9.

⁹ O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress.

O my Strength! What a wonderful name for God – and what a wonderful time to remember it. David is in a place of great weakness. His life in true danger. Death is approaching. But David has a God for that. A God who is mighty and who exercises his might to save his own.

One of the things we so often forget in times of trouble is to take the strength and power of God as our strength! “O **MY** strength” is how David prays. God is not only a fortress – he is “**my** fortress”. That personal pronoun turns the objective truth of Gods' power into a subjective experience of peace.

Children, imagine that you were in grave danger. You were walking down the street and a stranger was approaching to kidnap you. And then imagine you saw another man coming down the street – and this man was a father. Let me ask you – what would you rather: would you rather this be the father of the kids down the street or would you rather it be your father?? You would want him to be your father! Why? Well if he was just a father of some kids down the street - maybe he would help you, maybe he wouldn't. But if he was YOUR father, do you have any doubt in your mind?? No! You know that your father will help you!!

The same for Gods' people. It's not enough to say that God is a refuge and strength in a generic sense. We need to say, as in Psalm 46,

“God is **our** refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

Because God is **OUR** refuge and strength – “we will not fear though the earth gives way,

though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.”

It is because of David’s confident use of the personal pronoun that the prayer of verse 4, “Meet me”, becomes a profession in verse 10.

My God in his steadfast love **WILL** meet me!

God **will** let me look in triumph on my enemies.

Why is he so sure – I mean, he is still in the midst of great danger! He’s sure because he knows his God. “MY God, in his steadfast love, will meet me.” David remembers that his God is a God of steadfast, unfailing, unceasing, unremitting, relentless love.

Plummer, “When once we get Jehovah with all his glorious names and attributes secured to our cause we are safe, come what will.”

The horizon of David’s life has moved from being filled the reality of his enemies to the realities of his mighty, loving, faithful God. And in the knowledge of his God – David can rest secure. As David wrote in Psalm 34 – a Psalm that was also written in this time of persecution.

Psalm 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. ⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!

And it is that tasting of God’s goodness – not because he has been delivered from danger but because he has taken refuge in what he knows to be true concerning his God - David is moved to worship and sing.

IV. The Praise

¹⁶ But I will sing of your strength;

I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.

For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.

¹⁷ O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love.

The J.B. Philips translation reads, “My citadel is God himself, the God who loves me.”

That’s the critical lesson for us today. We need to be convinced that there is a God in heaven and a Savior on the Throne of this world who actually, truly, intentionally, personally, loves us. And there’s a gospel to assure us of this very thing.

God sent his own Son into this world to manifest his love for us. Psalm 59 prophetically points to what the gospel fully reveals – the suffering of Christ for the manifestation of God’s love for sinners.

The gospel is the story of God’s love for you – from beginning to end.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, *because of the great love with which he loved us,* ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

The only reason you are not dead in your sin today, the only reason you have any faith at all, any concern for godliness, any hunger for holiness – the only reason is because God loved you. And if he loved you when you were dead in your sin, how much more now that you are his adopted child. Do you sin? Yes, you do. Is it wicked and grievous? Yes, it is. Are you weak, in an of yourself? Yes, you are. Will you be able to stand in the face tragedy and trial and persecution in your own strength? No, you will not. Can your weakness separate you from the love of God?

Romans 8:37

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

Because God loves you – he will strengthen and establish you. **2 Thessalonians 2:16–17**

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

The gospel is meant to convince you of the love of God for you.

John 15:9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”

How would your life change if you actually took those words to heart and put that command into practice? If you struggle with that concept, commit yourself to discovering it in truth. Pray for God to make his love manifest to you. Pray for the Spirit of Christ to reveal it to you. Then open the Bible and read the story of God’s love for you. Read and wrestle and pray until you become convinced it’s true. Then you will be able to experience God as your Strength. Then you will be able to trust, in whatever circumstance or trial you face, that God Himself is your fortress, the God who loves you. Amen.

