

Psalm 58

Introduction – Through a slew of psalms filled with troubles and enemies, we come to one of David's imprecatory psalms. Not just a phrase of imprecation (Psalm 55:15), but an entire psalm. The prayer is for God to overthrow and judge the wicked. God's hymnbook gives us songs to sing to and about our enemies, something that cannot be found in most modern worship books and services. The contemporary church is impotent before the culture enveloping us, kowtowing to the secular mindset in the public square, and keeping our public worship sweet, friendly, and easy-going. But God would have us publicly pray and sing against wicked rulers.

"That's Not Very Christian" – In 1980 the Church of England exempted its members from having to read Psalm 58 in worship. But the Psalm-singer's anger reflects God's holy wrath and moral indignation, presenting a vital warning to the wicked and perverse. This was the language and violent language of Jesus to the wicked rulers in His day, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites..."* (Matt 23:15ff), referring to them as *"sons of hell," "fools and blind," "whitewashed tombs, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness,"* and ends with language echoing Psalm 58, *"Serpents, brood of vipers, how can you escape the condemnation of hell?"* Jesus could not abide their use of power to exploit the weak, twist God's law to their own ends and perversions, and lead people away from Himself, the promised Messiah. He promised certain wrath would come upon them (Matt 23:34-36).

The Indictment of the Malicious (vv1-5) – He begins with the rhetorical question, "Do you mighty ones, silent against the evil you put forth, in your courtrooms and legislative sessions, do you speak righteousness – because you constantly try to act like you are" (v1). NO! And you know in your heart of hearts you are putting forth wickedness, your courtroom scales weigh out violence from your hands and laws (v2). They are doing what they do naturally, from the womb, as all unconverted hearts go, speaking lies from the womb (v3). These are lies parading as righteous judgments from our caring leaders. But they are poisonous lies that kill people, ruin lives, destroy justice, and pay off their supporters. Therefore, no honest arguments will be heard, and no testimonies of the harm done will be considered, like a deadly but deaf cobra that will not respond to any charms (vv4-5).

In our day, the lies come at us in a torrent: the political elites, the majority of mainstream media, the woke academia and nationally acclaimed institutions, and elections that continue to put openly wicked men and women in places of power. They display these lies as righteous and good: women's reproductive rights, gender-affirming medical care, lovingly redefining marriage, multicultural egalitarianism, and taxing the rich to pay their fair share. You can hear the polite applause. These voices shout "you Christians are mean, intolerant, unloving; there is no place in the public space for God's Word and laws; you people are not reasonable, not respectable; you are backwater folk with your guns and bibles..." You can see the stern faces looking at you, shaming you. Meanwhile, they protect the slaughter of the unborn and the mutilation of the rest. Brothers and sisters, take out your psalters.

Seeking God's Just Vengeance (vv6-8) – This is another psalm with the inscription, "Do Not Destroy." We are not to seek revenge, but we are to turn to God for just vengeance (Rom 12:19). And while these verses are full of violent pictures, note there are two general prayers. If they have no capacity for good, at least deprive them of their ability for evil. The first is a plea to destroy the ability of the wicked to harm their victims (*"break their teeth," "let his arrows be as if cut in pieces"*). The second is a request that God would remove the evil effects of the wicked and eradicate their corrupt legacy. Let them flow away like water down a drain. Let them melt away like a snail leaving its slimy trail behind it. Let them never come to full term; remove them like the abortions they promote.

We are not to take our own revenge, but do we hate the evil in this world with the hatred God has for it? We certainly pray for the salvation of sinners. We are sinners. But we are also to pray against the success of their sin. We want their clinics, their institutions, their academies, their legislative halls, their courtrooms, and their churches, closed, flattened, made impotent and one day forgotten. We are to want God to do this and we are to sing to Him to do so.

Rejoicing in God's Vengeance, Present and Final, by Faith (vv9-11) – Singing straight at the wicked, *"before your pots can feel the burning thorns..."* the Psalm-singer displays His faith in God's coming vengeance. We are to tell them that in a moment, when God determines that perfect moment, like a whirlwind, all of their dreams and intentions will vanish in His *"living and burning wrath."* The Psalm-singer anticipates rejoicing when he sees the vengeance of God. He will rejoice when he sees God judge their pretense of uprightness (v1). He will judge their wicked plans worked out in backroom deals (v2). He will judge all the bald-faced lies and the crooked, convoluted reasoning (v3). He will judge their poison and their refusal to listen (vv4-5). He will do so in this life as He chooses (and often does, praise God for His grace), but nevertheless, He will do so completely at the final judgment. Everyone dies. And when the wicked die, it is like a sudden hit of a switch. All their wicked power, all their wicked lies and laws, all their wicked wealth and influence, all their wicked titles, degrees, and accolades, all their wicked reign – is gone, broken, melted away, aborted. *"Every unregenerate man is an abortion. He misses the true form of God-made manhood; he corrupts in the darkness of sin; he never sees or shall see the light of God in purity, in heaven"* – Spurgeon. And this is why each one of us must be born again.

The righteous (those who are covered in the blood of Christ's atoning work) will rejoice and wash his feet in the blood of the wicked (v10). "What? I'm supposed to sing that?" But listen to Paul – *"What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction"* (Rom 9:22). There is only one place in the New Testament where we hear the voices of the redeemed cry out *"Alleluia"* and that is when John, the beloved disciple of the Lord, tells us of the fall of Babylon. The righteous are told, *"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"* (Rev 18:20). And a great multitude sang (Rev 19:1-5).

The Result of Such Psalm-Singing – *"men will say, 'Surely there is a reward for the righteous, surely He is God who judges the earth'"* (v11). God uses such prayers to judge the wicked here, convicting them of their sin and eternal doom, and washes them in the judgment blood of Christ that they may have His righteousness (Rom 9:23-24). Congregational, public singing, is more powerful than our materialistic mindset fathoms. Songs change the world. Songs change hearts. Songs declare warnings that must be heard by rebels (Psalm 2:10-12). Songs remind and revive the hearts of the righteous that there is a reward, that God is using His church by the Holy Spirit to spread His kingdom, that the wicked will not prevail. Love God. Hate evil. Hate evil so much you have to sing.

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