

# Justice

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[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you James. We're going through the Psalms this summer and we've got to Psalm 7 which we just read together.

! If you keep your Bible or your app on your phone open, that would be great, thank you. I suspect there's not many people in this building or watching online who will remember this movie. It came out in 1983 so you'd have to be in your mid to late 50s to have seen it the first time round. It stars by then quite young Michael Douglas and Hal Holbrook. Michael on the right, Hal on the left. And they're both judges in the courts in New York. Michael Douglas's character is an idealistic judge and gradually through the beginning of the film he gets disillusioned because he sees criminals coming into his court who get let off on technicalities. They're obviously guilty but because of bad evidence, the wrong type of search warrant, corrupted, contaminated evidence, not being allowed lawyers, procedural issues, they get off on technicalities. And he gets really quite deluded with the system, the legal system in America. And Hal Holbrook, an older judge, has a talk with him and I'll come back to that talk they have in a moment. But during that talk he eventually introduces him to what's called the Star Chamber. The Star Chamber was a group of 10 judges who were all fed up with this justice system, seeing criminals getting off on technicalities, getting away with murder literally sometimes. And basically they gathered together and they brought cases to the Star Chamber court and they would try them, they would be prosecution, they would be judge, they would be jury and in most cases they would be executioners because they would cause, they would take out contracts on these criminals to get rid of them. And gradually, obviously, things start going wrong. I won't spoil the plot for you. I did look on streaming platforms, it's not available unfortunately, any streaming platform I can find. But if you do get to see it, it's a really good film. But what struck me, and I remember this film really well, although it's 40-hundred years old, because there's one bit of dialogue which is brilliant in it. So when Michael Douglas' character and Hal Halberd's character are discussing the problems with the legal system, Michael Douglas says, but what's happened to justice? Aren't we supposed to be just, aren't we supposed to be bringing justice to these people? What's happened to justice? And Hal Halberd says, someone's taken it and hidden it in the law.

Yes, maybe a cynical view of it, but the view of justice according to this movie The Star Chamber, was about retribitional justice. It was about paying back people what they'd done wrong. And it was, it was a vigilante type. But that's not real justice is it? And today's psalm, Psalm 7, is all about justice.

[ 3 : 31 ] It's all about David and calling out for justice. So if you have your Bibles with you, you know, that we'll be going through this psalm and there's three basic points.

First of all, before we start, there's the title of the psalm. Is, we don't know what Shigion is, it's some sort of song we think, but it's about Cush, a Benjamite.

First, I challenge you to find Cush, a Benjamite in your Bibles, because he's not there. We have no idea who this guy was. We have no idea what he did or what he'd done to David or why this was written, but it's about Cush.

We're told he's a Benjamite. That was the same clan as King Saul came from. And as we know from our Old Testaments, if you know your Old Testament, there was bad blood between Saul's family and Saul's clan and David when he took over the kingship.

We know that he was cursed by Shimei and by Sheba in 2 Samuel 16 and 2 Samuel 20. So there's bad blood there. But whatever was said or happened, we don't know.

[ 4 : 44 ] But the rest of the psalm makes clear that David has been wrongly accused. So he cries out in the first five verses for justice against his accusers.

This is personal for David. This is something really personal for him. And he starts by mentioning that he has a personal relationship with God. Notice three times he mentions, in verse 1 and in verse 3, he says, My God, this is personal. And he uses the word Lord, the covenant name of God, the one he calls on God, the one to come and rescue his people.

And he runs for refuge and safety to his God, the covenant Lord. Save me, I take refuge in you. Save and deliver me from all who pursue me. David has been badly treated and persecuted and is in great peril.

It describes here as people pursuing him and hunting him like a lion stalks his prey. We never actually saw when we were in Africa many times.

We never actually ever saw of that happening. But we did see a couple of times with other animals stalking and pursuing their prey and getting them. And he was afraid. Here he knows what's going on, but this enemy of his is stalking him like a lion and wants to rip him to pieces.

[ 6 : 18 ] This is very graphic language he's using here. He feels he's going to be ripped apart because this enemy has done these accusations against him.

And the thing that hurts him most is the fact that he's innocent. That he's innocent of these charges, whatever they are. He pleads his case and declares his innocence before God.

His conscience is clear. This isn't sinless perfection. This isn't where he's absolutely perfect. But his conscience is clear. He's innocent of the charges that are being laid against him, whatever they are. Many of the commentators speculate about what that is. I'm not going to go into it because there's no point. All we know is that he were charges and he was innocent of them. And then he uses this interesting tactic against God.

When I was learning negotiation in my days as a procurement manager, we were always told there are several things you've got to say. And there's if you, then I.

[ 7 : 21 ] It's one of the things you're told to do, to negotiate. If you do this, then I'll do that. And David uses this sort of tactic against God. He says, if. If. If, then.

He says three times. Although it doesn't come out in our translation, but three times he uses that phrase, if. In verse 3 and 4. If I have done this. If there is guilt on my hands.

If I have repaid my honor with evil or without cause of rob my foe. Three times he says to God, if I've done these, then bring the judgment on me.

He says, let my enemy pursue me and overtake me. Let them trample my life to the ground and make me sleep in the dust. This is dangerous. If David isn't innocent, this is dangerous to say to God, if I've done this, then let them get me.

But David is clear that he is innocent before God. His motives, his conscience is clear. And he knows he's under God's gaze. He knows that God is looking at his life and God will know that he is innocent of these charges.

[ 8 : 35 ] He knows that the moral code he has followed is what God demands. It's quite interesting. If you look a couple of times, I'm just going to cover, if you have Exodus chapter 23, he knows he's followed the moral code that God had laid down to the Old Testament people.

Do not spread false reports. He's got false reports against him. Do not help a guilty person by being malicious witness. He's got a malicious witness against him. Do not follow the code in doing wrong. This guy's doing wrong. If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to turn it. And then it says, if you see the donkey as someone who hates you falling down under its load, do not leave it there.

Be sure to help them with it. He's saying to God, look, I haven't done this. I haven't done these things. That I haven't repaid my ally with evil. Like you're saying your word.

And even Job, in Job says, if I've walked with falsehood or my foot has hurried after deceit, let God weigh me in honest scales and he will know that I am blameless. David's saying this to God.

[ 9 : 45 ] He's saying, you know I'm blameless. You know I am free of what is, of the guilt against me. So here's David living this godly life and he's got these false accusations against him.

It's a reminder to us that if we live godly lives, if we live lives that follow God, then we will be maligned, maybe persecuted, maybe have said things against us falsely.

Jesus even says, when you are, he almost guarantees this, when people speak falsely against you for my sake, rejoice and be glad. It will happen. If you're following God, these things happen.

David knew that. People will align your character. They'll question your loyalty. They'll sow seeds of lies in people's hearing.

If you're following God like David was, people will malign you. So David calls for justice.

[10:59] And what he does is he leaves justice to the righteous judge. Verses 6 to 16, then take this on. John MacArthur and his commenter on this says that David's confidence in the divine judge is the backbone of this psalm.

He knows all the way through, running through this psalm is the fact that God is the righteous judge. He's the divine judge who sees all things and he will do the right thing. He will show that David has been right and upright.

He calls on God in verse 6 to arise, rise up. It's an interesting word he's used here because in Numbers chapter 10, this is the word that's used when the Ark of the Covenant is sent out into battle.

If you have Numbers chapter 10 and verse 35, when the Ark set out, Moses said, rise up, Lord, may your enemies be scattered, may your foes flee before you. It was the picture of God marching out with the Ark of the Covenant to defend his people.

And David's saying to God, rise up, rise up and defend me. Rise up and go out against my enemies because they're doing this. Symbolizing God going to battle for his people.

[12:15] And David is calling on God to go out and battle for him against these people. From the battlefield, we now move to the courtroom.

Let the assembled peoples gather around you while you sit enthroned over them. Here God is sitting as the judge. And the people are assembled to hear the judgment that God is about to proclaim.

And again, in verse 8, David pleads his innocence, integrity. He hopes for justice for the wrongful accusations leveled against him and resting in the anger of God the Lord against injustice.

That God hates injustice. If we feel aggrieved and troubled by injustice, then God feels it infinitely more than we do.

If we feel aggrieved when people malign us personally, God feels that more than we do. If we see injustice in our world, God feels that at a far greater level than we do.

[13:25] God is the righteous judge. Because he is the righteous judge. But in verse 9, the psalm starts to go to a deeper level.

Because there's almost like a change here where David goes from his own accusations against him and the maligning of his own character and starts to go to a deeper level.

When he starts pointing to not just justice for his, the wrongs of being committed against him, but it points to justice, but beyond justice against those false accusations against him, to the ultimate justice that God will bring against sin.

Alistair Begg, who some of you know was an assistant pastor when I was a teenager in Edinburgh, says about this that he isn't just asking for personal vindication, but he's asking for justice for all, for everyone.

Verse 9, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure. You are the righteous God who probes minds and hearts.

[14:39] The accusations against David have arisen from an enemy whose heart ultimately is controlled by sin. And he knows God sees this. In verse 9 he says, God, you probe minds and hearts.

And David looks forward to a day when sin, the violence of the wicked, will be ended and righteousness for himself and all those who trust, the righteous, himself and all those who trust in God are secure.

that day when injustice is fully defeated and justice and perfect law rules and reigns. And he uses such, again, such graphic language, such vivid images.

Verse 12 and 13 talk of fierce fighting weapons, talks of sharpening his sword, about bending the bow and stringing his bow, about preparing deadly weapons and about flaming arrows.

These are not just gentle little things that tap you on the shoulder. These are severe weapons that God is using. He entreats God to use against sin and against evil and against injustice as he sees it.

[16:02] They point to the fact that ultimate judgment on sin is death. that ultimately sin is defeated through death. And then David is confident that evil is bound to fail.

In verses 14 to 16, he talks about that sin and evil brings its own consequences and is self-defeating. And again, look at the images.

pregnancy, pregnant with evil, conceives trouble, gives birth disillusionment. The people who are so focused on giving birth to evil thoughts and evil things that it actually brings trouble and it brings disillusionment.

It doesn't work. It fails. And then verse 15 is almost slightly amusing. Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out falls into the pit they've made.

Here's someone who's dug a hole to trap somebody and he's taken a step back and fallen into his own pit. There's almost an amusement here that this has happened.

[ 17 : 18 ] That it's self-defeating. Again, that echoes the words of the Proverbs. Proverbs 26 verse 27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it.

If someone rolls a stone it will roll back on them. So again, there's wisdom here where it says that sin is self-defeating. It may look like it's prospering. It may look like it's bringing forward what you want to do and the evil you want to do it.

But it isn't. It's self-defeating. It comes back on itself and it comes back on the person that's perpetrating it. And then when you jump to the New Testament in Galatians chapter 6 it says Do not be deceived.

God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh and the flesh will reap destruction. Whoever sows to please the spirit from the spirit will reap eternal life. This is a theme in scripture that whoever sows will reap. What you sow will come back to as a harvest to you. If you're sowing good stuff it's a good harvest.

[ 18 : 36 ] If you sow evil it'll be an evil harvest and it'll come back on you. I don't know if you remember a few years ago there was a song that was put out.

and it went to number one in the charts and it was about Perfect Day it's called. And the last line repeated over and over again was you're going to reap what you sow.

You're going to reap what you sow. You're going to reap what you sow. And I was fascinated that song got to number one in the charts. But it is the truth of scripture.

That evil when it brings when it comes to fruition will come back on itself. It'll come back on the person perpetrating it. And David was confident that God would bring justice.

We don't need to look far in our world do we? At the moment for injustice. You just have to sit in front of the news for a few minutes and you'll see injustice.

[ 19 : 47 ] Gaza. Misogyny. People getting cancelled from TV shows because of things they say and do.

Ukraine. Dare I say even the Alaska Summit this weekend. someone said I was reading the news yesterday someone said that the world has gone irrational.

Where the the invaded president is harangued and the invading president is applauded and lauded. There's justice everywhere.

You don't have to look far for it. I remember in the height of the Me Too crisis one of our friends who are not Christians she was we were talking about it and she said I thought we got past this I can't believe this is happening in our world these days that people are taking such liberties for other people I thought we got past it.

No. Because sin is there. Because there's injustice there. And if we feel aggrieved at injustice if we feel torn by the pictures we see of children malnourished on our news due to the effects of man's inhumanity to other man then God does too.

[ 21 : 34 ] God feels it far far more than we do. It grieves his heart and he's not indifferent to injustice and David in the psalm is calling on God to act against injustice and suffering and as he says it will fail ultimately and he he is confident we should be confident that evil will ultimately fail.

It may not be a midget but it will fail. We've just celebrated earlier in the year VE day and over the weekend VJ day the end of the second world war.

I suspect those people in London in the middle of the blitz or those people who are POWs in the far east at times wondered when is this going to end?

Is justice going to come? Is the evil being perpetrated on the world which is the root cause of the war is it going to be vanquished?

I've been watching a drama recently I wouldn't recommend it to everybody it's called The Narrow Road to the Deep North is quite harrowing at times and it tells a story it's a novel it's a fiction but it portrays the Australian POWs in the Japanese prisoner war camps on the Brahma Railway and it's horrendous I remember I was reading an article about it and it said that the cruelty of the Japanese

guards was so much because they didn't see the people they'd imprisoned who'd given up and been captured were not human and therefore anything they did was not worth doing because they weren't human and they did inhumane things to those people yes it's a drama but boy is it difficult watching man's in humanity to man those people suffering in those places did they ever think it wasn't going to end

[ 23 : 45 ] I'm sure they did but it did end God did bring justice but what about now what about now in our world because of sin as I said humanity's ability to be in human is still there we feel helpless when we watch these images on our news screens but David was confident and we can be confident that God will act God will judge and God will right these wrongs it may not be a midget but it will happen the righteous judge will judge and will bring justice but look how these verses point not just to

David's situation and maybe our situations as well but they point beyond that they point to Jesus they point to the ultimate justice that God brings by being unjust to his own son brings ultimate justice to us David here was falsely accused and maligned even though he was innocent Jesus was falsely accused and maligned and he was innocent not just innocent he was perfect David wasn't sinless David did wrong things we know he did but in this instance David pleads his conscience is clear Jesus conscience was always clear because he was perfect and he perfectly kept God's law and yet he took those judgments he took those accusations he didn't respond to those accusations and the floggings and the beatings he got he trusts himself like

David did to the righteous judge who judged ultimately David calls on God to bring out the fearsome weapons of his judgment the sword the bow and the flaming arrows Jesus faced those weapons of God those arrows of God's wrath and God's judgment and God's justice are pointed at injustice in the world but at you and I because we're sinners as well but Jesus stood in front of those arrows and took those flaming arrows for his people those flaming arrows didn't hit us they took they took him he took God's wrath he took

God's punishment he took the arrows of God's fire for us for love so that he would rescue a people and he would rescue us from the kingdom and he would eventually put injustice to the end and would bring absolute justice David knew these things here when he was wrestling with God Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was asking God to take away and to bring justice but he knew that justice was going to fall on him he knew that to actual fact to allay God's wrath against sin and against human inhumanity he had to take the punishment he had to take the punishment and although he pleaded with God to take it away he knew he had to face that judgment this psalm points beyond

David beyond his situation beyond us in our world today to the fact that Jesus took the punishment and was the righteous judge can truly forgive and cleanse sin and take away injustice because his justice has fallen on his sinless perfect son and then the psalm takes an interesting turn after all this judgment and justice and retribution it comes to praise it resolves itself in a verse of praise because David at the end in verse 17 says I will give thanks to Lord because of his righteousness I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord most high it's almost quite surprising we started this morning talking about a movie where justice was hidden and it was retributinal but we end with we finish with a hymn of praise to the

[ 29 : 06 ] God of justice and for his righteousness that his just judgment is there and he has brought it through his son John MacArthur describes David's journey through this psalm as moving from tense anxiety to a transcendent assurance he's come from a point where he was in turmoil because of these false accusations and then he turns and praises God for God's justice which he sees by faith through Jesus head of him the psalm opened with a plea a cry to God for justice in the face of false accusation as I said injustice matters and God cares deeply about it and if we believe in a God of justice then that's a point for praise that's good news and worthy of praise that evil will ultimately end it that those who do these wrong things and have done these wrong things that we see in our news will get judged it will happen because

God is a God of justice and we can praise him for that I love Dave Ralph Davis a little book on these psalms and he says he calls this verse David's post-it note it is he's reminded to himself to praise God to praise the righteous judge who vindicates him in his current circumstances and ultimately through grace and the sacrifice of Jesus brings final justice to this sin sick world if you remember nothing else remember this post-it note verse that god's justice will prevail that the cry that david had for justice will be has been heard and is being answered and will ultimately be answered in a

few minutes we're going to sing a final song and as i was preparing this it was quite obvious to me that what we should sing and it's um steward townon's song we have sung our songs of victory we haven't sung that song for a long time we sung it twice now in the last few weeks we sang it if you remember at the end of uh when we did nehemiah um the last chapter of nehemiah before we started the psalms a few weeks ago we're singing i'm singing we're singing today and it just i just thought it encapsulated beautifully what we would just be thinking about but i did something i'd never done before i went online to just to check the words etc i was i was in line with the words how it was going to go and i scrolled down at the bottom of the the jewett townon website there's a about the song and it tells about the song and it is so appropriate to this psalm we call we've been calling these the songs of god of god's heart and stuart townon says this song that we're just about to sing was an attempt to echo a cry expressed in a number of places in the psalms i find it very striking that the hymn book of the old testament expresses a much broader range of emotion than most of our modern song books it seems the psalmist was not afraid to express to god his sorrows his anger his disappointments as well as his joy in song and perhaps we should do the same but i also wanted to follow the pattern of the psalms by seeing our present sufferings in the context of the big picture that life will not always be like this so the final verse of the song longs for the day when the pain of the afflicted the orphan will cease the pain of the afflicted the widow and the orphan will cease when god finally and fully dwells among his people in a new heaven and a new earth that's what this post-it note at the end of the psalm tells us that one day it will be right god sees and the righteous judge will do justice let's pray father we thank you for the book of psalms we thank you that it's in your inspired word we thank you that it gives such a range of emotions from joys and happinesses to sorrows and to christ for justice as we've been thinking about this morning we pray for our world today we pray for the injustice that we see we pray that all you would overrule even now in this this day those who are seeking to do evil that you would stay that you would stay the hand of evil people from doing more evil and that you would bring justice to those who have injustice at the moment to those who are helpless and those who have no energy for themselves to those who seem like it feel like it's lost and that you would help us to be people who live holy and godly lives and point to you the just and true god and that we would indeed look forward to that day and all this will be gone all the pain and the sorrow will be rolled up and thrown away we will stand in your presence we will sing the beautiful song of praise to the lamb who was slain who took the injustice of the just god so that we would live who took the wrath that we deserve that we might have grace and mercy and freedom help us to trust you help us to trust jesus we pray in jesus name we ask amen so