

Psalm 46: God is our Refuge and Strength

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[0:00] Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, sometimes your word is very shocking and even upsetting.

We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would do a gentle but powerful work within us, that the gospel would become so real to our hearts, that we would trust that even when your word is its most shocking or most upsetting, Father, that these are words that you know that we need for our soul's health, to become more like Christ and to live with freedom and integrity, with justice and goodness and beauty in this present age, until we come to the age to come, the new heaven and the new earth.

We ask, Father, for this gentle but important and powerful work of your Holy Spirit, and we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So when I get the privilege occasionally to help people speak, one of the common mistakes that people have to speak make is they assume that people know the text quite well.

I've probably read Psalm 58 this week. I wouldn't be surprised if I read it 30 times. And so it's very present and fresh in my mind, but maybe not to yours.

[1:24] And if some of you are maybe just watching the sermon and haven't heard anything, what I'm going to do is I'm going to read all of Psalm 58 again right now, and then we're going to go back. I'll make a couple of other comments, and we'll go through it slowly.

But because some of you might say, like, what did that say? Did Ross say that? Like, did it say that? And so let's just hear it so it's fresh. And then people will understand a little bit some of my comments at the beginning as we walk towards the text.

And by the way, why are we preaching this text? I'm preaching this text because our summer series are all the—we were to pick—the 10 sermons were to pick Psalms between 31 and 60, and 58 is within 31 to 60.

And I saw the text, and I knew it was one of the main cursing texts in the Bible. And I don't want to hide it from people. And I thought part of what it means to be a church is that we learn to read the Bible together and that I provide some help with a text that otherwise might really shock you.

And so that's why I'm looking at it. I wasn't thinking, oh, let's pick the most offensive text I possibly can and preach on them. No, it was within that, and I think it's important. Many Christians can go decades, maybe their whole life in church, and never once hear a sermon on a psalm like this.

[2:40] And it doesn't help you. It doesn't help me as a preacher either. So here's what the psalm says. To the choir master, according to Do Not Destroy, a mitkam of David, do you indeed decree what is right, you mighty lords?

Do you judge the children of man uprightly? No, in your hearts you devise wrongs. Your hands deal out violence on earth. The wicked are estranged from the womb.

They go astray from birth, speaking lies. They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or the cunning enchanter.

Oh God, break the teeth in their mouths. Tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord. Let them vanish like water that runs away.

When he aims his arrows, let them be blunted. Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime, like the stillborn child who never sees the sun.

[3:50] Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns, whether green or ablaze, may he, that's God, sweep them away. The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance.

He will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. Mankind will say, surely there is a reward for the righteous. Surely there is a God who judges on earth.

And I'm going to say, this is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. So, I mean, for many Christians, to even see that this psalm is in the Bible is a shock.

And for people who are maybe trying to figure out the Christian faith, this confirms a lot of their worst fears. They've always suspected that beneath that pleasant, oh yeah, we all believe in love, you know, God is love.

There is, in fact, an iron fist that will hurt people. They say, George, didn't this psalm just pray that people will die?

[4:58] Didn't this psalm ask God to kill people? And did it really just say that we want to bathe in the blood of the wicked? George, are you actually saying that we should pray this and live this?

And if you're not, then that confirms what I've always thought, that you pick and choose. And so, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, you pick the text about sex that you like and dump on everybody else, but when you have complicated texts like this that go against you, you just ignore them.

I've always thought that's what Christians were like, just picking and choosing, and it's pure prejudice if you talk about sexuality or some other types of things. It's just your prejudice, because you don't talk about texts like this.

Now, we're going to go through this text to show that we don't just pick and choose. I don't want to pick and choose. I want to have the Bible speak into my heart. And I'm going to tell you right now, I mean, when I read this text on Monday, I thought, whoa, okay, and I sort of wondered if I should have picked it.

But I've actually now, after studying it a week and praying about it, I actually am very pleased that this text is in the Bible. And I think we should all be pleased that it's in the Bible and that, in fact, it opens the door to how helpful and insightful and real to humans' experience the Bible is, like for real human beings living their real lives.

[6:27] Now, I'm going to say also, my sermon's going to be a little bit different than some of the others. You know, I can just tell you, there's three lines in this text where there's some major, major translation issues.

I'm only going to talk about one. I'm not going to talk about the other two. And there's really only one place where the Hebrew sort of is very helpful to understand the text, and I'm going to talk about that.

But, you know, the rest of the text, I could nuance and stuff, but it's just as shocking. Like, it's just as shocking. Like, the text is good enough as it is in English. And it, like, you might go and read eight different versions about the first part of verse one and get different translations, but the part about bathing your feet in the blood of the wicked, it's fundamentally, you won't see that fundamentally different than any of the text because that's just very blunt there.

So let's look. Let's walk towards the text, and it begins like this. And in this particular case, I hope Claire has it up, the so-called superscriptions, actually very important to interpreting the text.

And the superscription says, to the choir master. So I guess David wrote this so the people could sing it. And the tune is, according to Do Not Destroy, which must have been a tune.

[7:46] Nobody knows what mitkam really means nowadays, but it's a mitkam of David. So King David is the one who wrote this psalm. And then he continues on like this. Do you indeed decree what is right, you mighty lords?

Do you judge the children of man uprightly? No, in your hearts you devise wrongs. Your hands deal out violence on earth.

Now, this text is actually very, very simple and very, very profound. It's as if, with just a couple of very simple lines, it gives a bit of an outline about how you live a moral and good life and the different aspects of it.

The very first line, and so first of all, the first verse is rhetorical. In other words, it's expected that you say no. That's the expected answer. It's rhetorical.

It's not like a real question. It's no. The answer is no. And the other thing about the text, which is important to know, is that there's a lot of debate about how to translate the first part of the line.

[8:55] And so really, at the end, you can go read some commentaries on it and all that. The bottom line is, the first part of the first verse is contrasting two different ways to do wrong.

Sins of omission and sins of commission. And so what that means is, you know, let's say somebody comes to me with some complaints about things that are going on in the church and maybe about a particular person and make some accusations against them.

And one of you happen to have been a witness of the actual event and you know that the person who's accused is innocent and you remain silent. That's a sin of omission. It's actually a sin which isn't really talked about much in our culture.

It could be that you hear about a great financial need and you have, and the God puts it on your heart to deal with it, but you don't do it. That's a sin of omission.

You could have given that check that would have helped with that financial need, but you didn't do it. And we often don't think of that. There's times when you can speak out and you remain silent. And it's a very, that's the first type of the sin.

[10:04] The second type of the sin where you actually make bad decisions, wrong decisions, decisions which are unjust, corrupt, hurtful. And that's a way to understand how to live a very moral life.

You don't fail to act in a good way when you can because you should. And you don't do things which are wrong. And the other part of the psalm, which is actually very, very profound, is that if you look at verse one again, it says, do you indeed decree what is right?

Remember I told you there's the implicit, if you look at all the different translations, you'll see the words, they're trying to figure out how to do silence and how to, anyway, we don't go into it. But the main thing is, verse one asks about whether you do right, and verse two talks about you do wrong.

And what the psalmist is doing is picking actually the very most basic, simple moral categories, right and wrong. We had lots of grandchildren visiting us over the holidays.

And, you know, some of them were just two or three. And you see parents either succeeding or failing in just some very simple moral instruction. Don't do that. That's wrong. You know, that's wrong.

[11:14] You should do this. That's good. You know, you should share. That's good. You don't tell a lie. That's wrong. Very, very simple things. You don't hit your brother in the head with a metal rod.

That's wrong. You know, but very simple right and wrong. And that's the way that the psalm sort of phrases the issue.

Now, here's the part, the one part in the psalm where the underlying Hebrew isn't entirely caught in the English. It's sort of there, but it's not purely caught.

And the underlying language of especially verse 2 is that this isn't just something that you do occasionally, but that it grows.

And that's part of the main idea behind the text. So what it means is it's very easy for me to tell a lie, maybe, or to do some other sin.

[12:09] And I do that, and then I repent of it, and I, you know, then later on maybe I tell another lie, and I repent of it. But it's possible when you do something which is wrong that you then do it again, and then you do it again, and then you do it again.

And before you know it, doing that particular wrong act has become a habit. And then before you know it, that habit has grown, and it now reflects your character.

And then before you know it, it's not just your character, it's your identity. And before you know it, it's not just your identity, but it's a fixed part of your identity. And that's what the psalm is talking about.

So one of the things which is quite remarkable then about the psalm is that, and it's easy for us to get it mixed up, but when we see, oh, sorry, I forgot an important part.

The whole psalm is addressed to wicked tyrants. That's the insignificance of mighty lords. And so the thing which is very significant about the psalm is that what we, is how do we in our culture think of great evil and people who do great evil?

[13:21] And how does this psalm speak into how our world understands great evil? And you see, what you can see right off the bat is that the psalm is doing something very different than what we do.

Well, Stalin, he was a psychopath and a sociopath. You know, and then you fill in the blank. This tyrant, they were a psychopath. They were a sociopath. And what we tend to do in our culture is we psychologize the evildoer.

We objectify the evildoer. And what we do is give ourselves a break. Well, there's these really evil guys like Stalin and Hitler, psychopaths, sociopaths.

There's them, and you describe them in psychological categories, but we now have a bit of a break. And the Bible doesn't do that. And so when the Bible, especially in this next little bit when it's describing the wicked, what you're not to understand is it's somehow trying to just use biblical language to objectify or put a certain class of people.

And this is very important because most of the way modern thought works is to do this, you know, that a person of a certain race, they're all bad or they're all good. Or a person of a certain socioeconomic category, they're all bad or they're all good.

[14:29] and we put people in boxes, we put people in prisons, and we put people in prisons in such a way that we can flatter ourselves and give ourselves a pass on the evil that we do.

And the Bible uses very simple, nothing more complicated than you would, a parent would tell their two-year-old about right and wrong.

That's the categories that the Bible uses. Very simple. And it's warning us that evil can grow. In fact, you see, this is what you see in the next verses three to five.

And just as we start reading the three to five, you need to keep in the back of your mind another biblical image. And in the biblical image, in the Bible, Genesis chapter three is all about the serpent in the garden.

And the serpent speaks lies, believable lies to Adam and Eve. And Adam and Eve swallow the lies and act on them because they want to be like God.

- [15:30] And so keeping this in mind, listen to how verses three to five goes. It goes like this. The wicked are estranged from the womb. I'm going to talk about that more in a few minutes.
- They go astray from birth speaking lies. And we're going to talk about this in a moment because right now all of it does, it does sound a little bit like there's a separate category of evil tyrants that are just bad from birth.
- And so we're now objectifying them, putting them off as if it's all them. So it does, but I'm going to explain why that's not what the text is saying. I'll read it again. The wicked are estranged from the womb, estranged from God, estranged from the moral order of the universe that is based on, is rooted in God, comes from God.
- They go astray from birth speaking lies. And in the original language it's actually more they speak the lie in a sense. In other words, they speak lies and at some point in time they become ones who only speak a lie.
- They only become, in a sense, they become the lie. And that's seen in verses 4 and 5. They have venom like the venom of a serpent. All of a sudden, what is it? They become like a serpent. You're thinking of Genesis chapter 3.
- [16:43] It's that they begin with a lie, they begin with a lie, they begin with doing something wrong, and before you know it it's a habit, and before you know it it's a character, before you know it it's your identity, and before you know it you are indistinguishable from the devil.
- And you have power over others, and boy do you use it. They have the venom like the venom of a serpent, like the death adder that stops its ear so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or the cunning enchanter.
- See, it's painting this picture that you continue on and you come to this point in time when it not only becomes your identity but it becomes in a sense a point of your identity that's completely and utterly fixed.
- You won't hear anything against it. You won't hear things against the sexual sins you commit, the lies that you commit, the greed, the idols that you pursue.
- You won't hear anything against them. You become in a sense a fully devoted follower of these idols, these lies, these sins, and that's now become who you are.
- [17:47] So, you won't repent, you won't listen, it's become who you are. Now, I just want to pause here and say, I'm not going to sort of quote back and forward, but I have been remarkably blessed by Derek Kidner's commentary on Psalm 58.
- And everything I say this morning is indebted to his insights. Once or twice, I'm going to quote him, I'm not going to mention him, but he was the one, I think, who pointed me in the direction to understand this Psalm.
- So, I just want to give credit to where credit is due. Derek Kidner, a commentary written over 50 years ago, but still in print. And here's the point before we go any further in the Psalm.
- If you could put up the first point, Claire, that would be very helpful. This Psalm is a portrait and a mirror. This Psalm is a portrait and a mirror.
- This is what Derek Kidner talks about. So, it's a portrait. And we're going to give some examples in a moment, actually. But it's a portrait of what happens when you become a lie, when you become a sexual sin, when you become greed, when you become power hungry, and power hunger consumes you, when selfishness consumes you.
- [19:11] You become that. And so, it's a portrait. But it's also a mirror. It's something where to look at and see, Lord, oh, I've been giving my greed a pass.
- I've been giving my lack of forgiveness a pass. I've been giving my desires for revenge a pass. I've been giving my sins of envy a pass. I've been giving my anger a pass.

And are you saying that I can become like this? Like, maybe not like a Stalin that can cause millions of death, but, you know, all of us know petty tyrants, tyrants in families, tyrants in workplaces, tyrants in neighborhoods.

You know, the dad who is a tyrant. And we all know that. And is that the direction of my life? So, it's both a portrait and a mirror. And in fact, I'm going to show you why that's the case.

If you turn in your Bibles to Psalm 51, Psalm 51, and I think, Claire, I'm just going to read verses 4 and 5. So, here's the significance of David being the author.

[20:17] David also wrote Psalm 51. And David wrote Psalm 51 after he'd had adultery with Bathsheba, and he was caught out by Nathan the prophet.

And Nathan confronts him, and David acknowledges that he is the man. And after he has done that, he writes this psalm. And just listen to verses 4 and 5. Against you, talking about God, you only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Now, here's the thing. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. You see, that's why I said that when you read the text, it's exactly the same language as occurs in Psalm 58 in verse 3 about being born in sin, about being estranged from God.

So, David is not saying there's this class of psychopaths or sociopaths who are tyrants, and the rest of us get a pass. It's me, it's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of repentance.

It's me, it's me, it's me, oh Lord, standing in the need of redemption. That's why we understand the psalm not just as a portrait, but also as a mirror.

[21:41] Now, we can say, George, okay, well, what about the language? Okay, that's, I mean, sort of interesting, George, but the fact of the matter is, George, the fact of the matter is, it talked about praying for the death of people and bathing your feet in the blood of the wicked.

So, before we go any further, I want to give you a couple of things to think about when we're going to read verses six to nine, and then when we're going to consider verse 10. Six to nine are the prayers about, you know, have them be defeated, have their weapons fail, have them die, have them be completely and utterly annihilated by your judgment.

Those are the prayers. And before we read them again, I want you to consider this. In 1988, while he was a firm ally of the United States of America, Saddam Hussein used mustard gas on an innocent population and killed 5,000 people.

And the American government did nothing against him. And Reagan, of beloved conservative memory, was the president. And 10, 15 more thousand people were permanently hurt by this mustard gas attack, purely and utterly to maintain his power.

A group called, believe it or not, the Committee of Union and Progress, ruling in the Ottoman Empire, in around the middle of the 10s to 19, like 15 or something and around there, forced the mainly Christian Armenians on a death march.

[23:28] And 600,000 to 1.5 million people died. An atrocity committed by the Committee for Union and Progress.

And Armenians would say that the figure of 1.5 million is too low. In the 1970s, the Khmer Rouge killed somewhere between 1.5 to 3 million people in their own country, and their own country before this had less than 8 million people.

Less than 8 million people, and they killed maybe 3 million of them. In the 1930s, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics created a forced famine in the Ukraine, an artificial famine where they stole the food and killed 3.5 to 5 million Ukrainians.

In Rwanda, 500,000 to 800,000 people were killed in the genocide. In Uganda, in the 70s, Idi Amin killed 300,000 to 500,000 Ugandans.

And then the National Socialist Party, of course, killed 6 million Jews. How does our system of thought handle such great evil by such great tyrants?

[25:07] I want to challenge you if you're trying to figure your way through what's true or not. A profound question to ask yourself is this. Many people think that the way to have enlightenment is to take on Hindu religious practices and Hindu philosophies and obviously there are things within that which are admirable.

But Hinduism, at its very core, justified the caste system that oppressed a significant part of their population and did not see it as evil but justified.

Does Buddhism teach you to be quiet in the face of evil? Does Marxism provide you the categories to be able to see such things like this as a great evil?

Does contemporary secularism have categories to describe such sheer evil of a massive scale and if it cannot handle evil of such a massive scale, can it handle it in a small scale?

Mindful of these examples? Let's listen to verses actually no, before I do that we'll do this.

[26:27] So I'll just give you these examples. Now imagine for a second that you are one of those Armenians on the death march that will kill maybe all of your family and you will be one of the few people who will survive or you were a Cambodian who somehow manages to survive all of that but lost all your family or you were in that village, those villages in Iraq when Hussein, Saddam Hussein mustergassed all those people and killed them or just imagine how do you react to it?

Most North Americans want to ignore it because it's upsetting and they won't enjoy their pumpkin latte and pumpkin scone if they think about it.

Post-modernism teaches you to shrug. Oh well. Diplomats like silence. Fellow travelers like to apologize and defend the evil.

Capitalists like to accommodate. If somebody has to sell them coal it might as well be us. Somebody has to sell them bullets it might as well be us.

Many people are urged to surrender to the inevitable triumph of injustice and evil. and many admire it and join it.

[28:06] Not recommending you watch Peaky Blinders but if you do one of the things which is very powerful and quite accurate is the large number of people in England in the 30s who admired Hitler.

So given those options given the evil and given the options let's read verses 6 to 9 maybe with different ears.

What is 6 to say? Oh God break the teeth of their mouths tear out the fangs of the young lions oh Lord in other words that these young lions aggressive and powerful and ravenous tear out their fangs break their teeth let them vanish like water that runs away when they my enemies when these tyrants aim their arrows let them be blunted in fact God let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime like the stillborn child who never sees the sun let them be dead sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns whether green or ablaze God may you sweep them away in your wind which one of those options would you prefer to be describing a view in the face of horrendous tyranny and why is it that our default position when we hear psalms like this as Canadians is one of the different things which I mentioned like being an ostrich or a postmodern shrug or diplomatic silence or accommodation to evil what about the language of blood well here's the problem with prayer here's the problem with prayer you know I pray into a need for you know maybe to support more missionaries or I pray into the need to see some things done in the church or maybe I pray into the need to deal with to help the poor and the next thing that happens is that while I'm praying about how there needs to be something done to help the poor and God whispers into my voice you should donate \$500 to the food bank or you're praying that something needs to be done in the church which there's a gap and the next thing that the Lord is putting on your heart is that you need to volunteer to step up and take that on or you're praying that there has to be something to do to help this the missionary outreach to a place like Iran and the next thing you know is that God is putting on your heart that you have to give \$1,000 or \$2,000 towards the missionaries every year that they can support and do that that's how prayer works and so God is saying you're praying against injustice we're going to topple them come along now here's the thing to understand about this psalm it's a scream it's a scream against injustice it is a visceral scream that means you don't necessarily take every single word exactly literal it is a scream against injustice and the problem we have with the Bible is the

Bible never surrenders or pardons injustice and it never justifies doing evil it is implacable unfailingly opposed to the reality of human wrongdoing whether it starts with the two year old who decides they want to hit their brother on the head with a metal rod or whether it's Stalin planning to kill five million or more Ukrainians it's an unbroken line a moral line so just in closing so what do we do George are you saying we just pray Psalm 58 like are you just saying that that's what we should do no I'm not and if you could put up there if you follow in your Bibles Romans chapter 3 verses 10 to 26 as we draw the sermon to a close

Romans chapter 3 verses 10 to 26 and the way the book of Romans is structured is you have like the first 15 verses are sort of just some you know this is who I am and this is a few things I've been doing in my plans and then it's almost like in verse 16 and 17 Paul gives a quote from the book of Habakkuk and he sort of gives his pracy that describes what the whole book is going to be about and then from chapter 1 verse 18 to this part that I'm about to read it's sort of what's the problem that the gospel is going to solve and then from chapter 3 beginning in verse 21 to the end of 11 it's how the gospel the good news of Jesus dying on the cross in your place how that solves the problem and then chapter 12 13 14 15 is how do you live given that Jesus is the gospel is true that's how the book of Romans is so this what I'm about to read you is the end of solving the problem and remember how the first part of Psalm 51 about the wicked being astray from their birth and all of that type of thing and listen as Paul is bringing his whole argument to a conclusion he quotes from a variety of Old

[33 : 43] Testament verses beginning at verse 10 none is righteous no not one no one understands no one seeks for God all have turned aside together they have become worthless no one does good not even one their throat is an open grave they use their tongues to deceive the venom of asps is under their lips their mouth is full of curses and bitterness their feet are swift to shed blood and their paths are ruin and misery and the way of peace they have not known and there is no fear of God before their eyes and as we see later Paul knows that this is describing him especially in verse chapter 7 verse 19 now we know that whatever the law that's the Old Testament says it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be stopped in other words those who know what's right and wrong and the whole world may be held accountable to God for by works of the law in other words by our own moral actions no human being will be justified made right with

God in his sight since here listen to verse 21 but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the moral law although the law and the prophets bear witness to it this thing which is separate from the moral order the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe for there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified made right with God by his grace purely and utterly unmerited as a gift how through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood in other words as he took our place and turned aside he he bore in his body the wrong that we had done the the good that we failed to do and all anger that might be directed against that all was on him and we receive what he's to be done by faith and this was to show

God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over it's an image of the book of Exodus in other words he's dealt with former sins it was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just just as is maintained and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus if you could put up the gospel changes everything you and I who are Christians cannot simply pray psalm 58 and you and I cannot simply ignore it since the gospel changes everything you cannot simply pray psalm 58 and you simply cannot simply ignore it see the gospel tells us that God wants to maintain the moral order and the just order and while that is only going to lead to our being eternally separate from him Jesus dies in our place because he it's a whole other thing but he can he dies in our place out of love for you and me and the punishment that

I deserve fell on him and the destiny that he deserved is given to me and he does it out of love and it tells us that there will be a killing maybe 500,000 Ugandans fled Uganda and lived a luxurious life until his natural death in Saudi Arabia but the gospel tells us he does not evade God's justice no human being will we can take that to the bank we can base our life on it doesn't mean that we can be indifferent to evil at all but it relativizes the claims of tyrants to know that they will meet the triune God and they will be judged you see in a sense what happens in salvation is it's not that

I appear before God and I say well you know I was a pretty good guy you know at least a B minus in terms of as a husband or something like that and that's a passing mark won't get me into graduate school but it you know it's at least a passing mark you know and it's not like that at all in a sense that God's judgment on me has been dealt with in Jesus it it's passed but every human being will appear before the judgment seat of God and unless you're clothed with Christ you will not pass and the gospel changes everything because it means that when I have given my life to Christ and then somewhere down the line I discover there's this wonderful phrase about the I think it's Psalm 74 about the dark places the dark habitations and I discover some dark habitation deep within me that it comes to a shock just to realize how controlling

[39:10] I am or how unforgiving I am or how self righteous I am or how bitter I am or envious or lustful or ungenerous and miserly and I come face to face with some profound area of darkness deep within my life where I realize in a moment of moral clarity how some great evil speaks so deeply to something within me only the gospel can only in the gospel can I realize that Jesus puts his arm around me and says George I knew that about you when I died for you I knew that about you when I died for you and my death for you covers that see only the gospel gives us the security to look at the dark places in our own lives and to cry out to God that he might deliver us from our unforgiveness our greed our anger our selfishness or whatever it is and so those of you who maybe went on some

Zoom calls with me at the beginning of the pandemic you'll notice that I often did something with a smile because you know there was a lot of talk about how it was infiltrated by members of the Chinese Communist Party and I would say for those members of the Chinese Communist Party listening in on our wardens meeting I want to say two things one stop persecuting Christians two give your life to Jesus and like I said in a bit of a light hearted way but that's how Christians pray Psalm 58 we pray God let me never forget the scream against injustice or be like all those other things of post modern church let that never describe me and Lord I ask that you do two things to that evil tyrant in the workplace that evil tyrant who inhabits a country I ask Lord that you would defeat them and I also ask that you will bring them to a saving faith in Jesus Christ and that is how we live Psalm 58 invite you to stand at this time please and bow our heads in prayer

Father Jesus has warned us that we are really good at seeing specks in other people's eyes and very terrible at seeing huge logs sticking out of our own eye and so Father we're really good at seeing how evil others are and we're not very good at seeing the evil within our own lives and Father we thank you that you knew that about us and still Jesus came and still he died for us and we give you thanks and praise Father that your word starts to shine a moral light and change our conscience and help us to understand who we really are and what right and wrong really is that it provides a sure and certain guide and we thank and praise you Father for the gospel that means that as we get convicted of sin that you also convict us of grace and the need for Christ and Father we thank you for this and we ask that the gospel would become more and more real to our heart that we can examine ourselves and repent and amend our lives and also

Father that the gospel becomes more real to our avoid sins of omission to be generous to be forgiving to be active and supporting to reject evil and to pray unceasingly and act unceasingly against injustice and evil in the world to pray against it and to act against it when it is in our power and Lord we ask that you would do this wonderful work in our lives worthy as we are except for what Christ has done for us and we ask these things in the precious name of Jesus Amen