

Refuge in Christ (Psalm 7)

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[0 : 00] If you want to go ahead, you can turn to Psalm chapter 7. That's where we'll be today. But as you're turning there, I want you to think about this. Some of the times that are most frustrating in this life are when we are falsely accused of something that we didn't do.

Can we all agree with that? Sometimes the most frustrating times in life is when you're accused falsely of something and you know that you didn't do it. Whether it be at work, at home, my personal favorite is when Catherine wakes up mad at me in the mornings.

And just wakes up and just is already, I can tell something is off. I'm like, are you okay? And you know, what's wrong? And I'm like, I didn't even have time to do anything this morning.

It can't be something that I've done this morning. We just woke up and come to find out she had a dream that I did something and now she's mad at me. I'm like, I love it. I'm like, I didn't do it, sweetie.

I promise I didn't do it. That wasn't me. Or Resi and Jacob get accused of things all the time because they have a little sister that will throw them under the bus faster than anything.

[1 : 05] If she feels like she's going to be able to get out of something by blaming it on Jacob or Resi, she will say that so quickly. And it's frustrating. And it should be because those are things that we didn't do.

And they're justified by being frustrated with it. But Psalm 7, in part, is about injustice. David is here. He's being accused of something that he's saying, look, look, I didn't do this.

God, look at me. Check my life. Look at my life. This is not something that is a part of who I am. I did not do this. And so when you look at the heading of this passage, when you look at the superscript that is there above verse 1, you'll see that it says this.

It says, Now, first of all, what in the world is a shagayan?

I don't even know if I'm saying that right, much less what exactly this is. This most likely refers to some type of musical reference, but we're not exactly sure what it means.

[2 : 08] If you look it up, some of the commentators will suggest that it refers to this. It says, When I read that, I was like, I'd love to hear Clay sing that.

This would be a fun song to hear him sing. But the truth is, we really don't know what it is. We're not completely sure what this refers to. But it's some type of song in which David sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush.

Yet again, we're stumped because the historical narratives that we have throughout Scripture, we really don't know who this Cush is. It's referred to here, but we really don't know this interaction from other places.

Now, some scholars, James Hamilton in particular, he makes a very strong case that this Cush here in Psalm chapter 7 is the same Shammai that earlier when David was fleeing from Absalom. He was a relative of Saul. And so we know from 2 Samuel that this Shammai, when he was talking to David, David fleeing from Absalom, he began to curse David, saying all kinds of things about David and accusing him of all kinds of things.

[3 : 19] And so when you look at the context of this psalm, when you look at some of the issues that he's addressing, it seems most likely that this Cush may be this Shammai. But again, we really aren't sure.

But those will hopefully give us a little bit of background as we come into this psalm to help us understand it in a greater way. And so if you've had time to turn to Psalm chapter 7, I want you to follow along as we read these verses.

Now, this is the longest psalm that we've gotten to so far in the Psalms, and it's 17 verses. But I think you'll find that they flow together well to help paint this picture for us.

Starting in verse 1, it says this, Oh, Lord, my God, in you do I take refuge. Save me from all my pursuers and deliver me.

Lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it to pieces with none to deliver. Oh, Lord, my God, if I have done this, if there is any wrong in my hands, if I have repaid my friend with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it.

[4 : 29] And let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. Selah. Arise, oh Lord, in your anger, lift up against the fury of my enemies.

Awake for me, for you have appointed a judgment. Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you. Over it return on high. The Lord judges the peoples.

Judge me, oh Lord. Judge me, oh Lord. Where did I go? Judge me, oh Lord. According to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me.

Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end and may you establish the righteousness. You who test the minds and hearts, oh righteous God. My shield is with God who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge and a God who feels indignation every day. If a man does not repent, God will wet his sword. He has bent and readied his bow and he has prepared for him his deadly weapons, making his arrows fiery shafts.

[5 : 40] Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies. He makes a pit, digging it out and falls into the hole that he has made.

His mischief returns upon his own head and on his own skull his violence descends. I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.

And so in this psalm as we read this, there are going to be several things that we see David calling for, David calling out for. And so as we work our way through this, there's going to be periods where we see something in David's heart that we should have in our heart.

As we look at these calls that David places, we'll see how this applies to us. And so to begin with, the first call that we see in this passage is a call for help.

We see a call for help here. Verses 1 and 2, Oh Lord my God, in you do I take refuge. Save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it to pieces with none to deliver.

[6 : 55] You see, David begins this psalm by appealing to his strongest relationship. He begins this psalm by appealing to his strongest thing in his life, and he's appealing to the Lord by calling out to the Lord himself.

And I think there's a really simple reminder that we would probably all agree with, but it's important for us to consider today. And it's this, that when you are in need, call for help from God.

When you're in need, call for help from God. This sounds, I know this sounds incredibly simple, but I firmly believe that this is a reminder that we all must consider today.

We all call for help when we're in need. The question becomes, where are we looking for help? You see, each and every one of us, when we are in need of something, when we're in despair, we're going to call for help from somewhere.

The question becomes, where are we calling from help from? Think about your own life. The last time that you were going through a difficult time in your life, where did you turn for help?

[8 : 00] Was it God or did you call on something else? Something else to temporarily fix the problem or to take your mind off of the problem? Many times it can be things that aren't bad or that aren't sinful in themselves, but in those moments when we turn to them to provide something to us that only God can provide, those things are at best unhealthy, at worst are sinful in our lives.

When we turn to things that we know are just going to take our mind off of it, when we know they can't provide what they're promising to deliver, that only God can provide it, yet we turn to those things in those moments of need.

When we deal with our stress or anxiety or depression by spending hours scrolling through social media to fill a void, to take our mind off of it, what we are doing is making that void bigger.

When we mask our problems through alcohol or drugs, they're not being dealt with. When we try to take our mind off of our problems by spending more money than we have, what we're ultimately doing is we're not fixing the problem and we're creating other problems in our life.

And so the question becomes, in your moments of need, in your time of need, where are you looking for help? And David gives us a strong reminder that he is looking to the Lord in this time of need.

[9 : 25] And so as we go through this passage, it's important for us to see how this points us to Jesus because he is our ultimate call for help.

To help us see this, Danny Akin, he provides some helpful insight. He says, when it comes to the Lord Jesus, these words, talking about here, these first few verses here in this psalm, perfectly describe the intent of the religious leaders who persecuted him, talking about Jesus.

They tried to arrest him, insult his death, yet being in the center of God's will, he was saved and rescued. He rested, in other words, he found refuge in his father, as refuge until his hour arrived, to go to the cross, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And it's a reminder, call on the Lord. When you are under attack or in danger, he is available. He cares. He hears your cries for help.

Now this doesn't mean that we always get what we ask for, but we can take great confidence in knowing that God hears us when we cry out to him. That as believers, he has already met our greatest need, our need for a savior.

[10 : 37] And he has promised us eternal life with him. A life that will one day be free of those disappointments and heartache that we face in this life. But yet this hope is not just a hope for eternity.

It's not just a hope for some far off day in the future. It's a hope for us today. It's a hope for us for tomorrow. And yes, it is a hope for all of eternity.

And so what David is realizing here, in this moment of great distress, he calls on the name of the Lord for help. It's a call for help to the one and only who can provide that.

So the next thing that we find in this passage is a call for examination. A call for examination.

Verses 3 through 5. Oh Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands, if I repaid my friends with evil or plundered my enemy without cause, let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it.

And let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust. Selah. Now remember from our study of Psalm 3. When we see this word Selah here, it's instructing us to pause for a moment and think about what is just being said.

[11 : 54] Again, these verses give credibility to the argument that the man called Cush here in the heading is the same person that we read earlier in 2 Samuel, that is Shimei.

Back in 2 Samuel 16, we are told that Shimei cursed David when he was on the run saying, he says, Get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man.

The Lord has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you have reigned. And the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son Absalom.

See, your evil is on you for you are a man of blood. This is what Shimei was calling on. This is what he was cursing David with. This is what he was accusing David of.

In the accounts of David's life, we have no proof of these claims. And in fact, the accounts that we have say just the opposite. Cush's words truly were false accusations and David's conscience was clear in this matter.

[12 : 53] Now sometimes you can fool other people. Sometimes you can get your crew in your corner and say, I didn't do this. I had nothing to do with this when the truth is you did.

Or maybe you can see it when you watch the NFL on Sundays. You'll see a player take a cheap shot and then act like they're the victim when somebody else retaliates to try to get the penalty caused on them.

But now we have replays so we can see it all in just real time and also in replay. But yeah, we can try to fool other people and say, hey, I didn't do anything wrong.

But there's no fooling God. And so here in this passage, David is saying, God, take a look at my life. Look at my life. If I've done any of these things, if I've done any of these things, then let it come down on me.

If I have made this bed, then let me lay in it. He uses the word if three times to emphasize his innocence. He's not claiming complete innocence, but he's claiming innocence in this matter.

[13 : 54] For example, when a defendant pleads not guilty in a court, they're not saying that they're not guilty of any crime that has ever been committed. They're saying, I'm not guilty of this crime that I'm being accused of.

They're not saying I've never speeded. I've never, you know, not buckled up. I've never looked at my phone when I'm driving. They're not saying I haven't done anything wrong, but I'm just saying in

this accusation, I'm not guilty.

And that's what you have David doing here. He's not saying that he's not, that he's blameless in every aspect of his life because he would later write in Psalm 53 that Romans 3 quotes where it says, none is righteous, no, not one.

No one understands, no one seeks for God. We must all understand that there will be times when we get falsely accused of things that we did not do.

Few things in life are as frustrating as when that happens. When we are guilty, well, we get the just cause of our guilt. But when we did nothing wrong and get accused of it anyway, it can be frustrating.

[15:01] This is where David finds himself. In those moments, we naturally want to retaliate. We want to argue. And oftentimes, we find ourselves on the same level and starting to slander as well, falsely accusing them, well, if they're going to do this to me, then I'm going to respond here.

David's first response here was to take a look at his own life, to examine himself, to recognize that we all have sinned, that we are all sinners, but then David asked God to examine his life.

He takes these accounts and he says, Lord, if I have done this, look at my life. If I have done this, then let it come down on me. Before we go on the defensive and play the part of the victim, let us understand that we are first all sinners and only secondly are we sinned against.

Let us understand that we all have guilt and only secondly are we sinned against. Before we get on our high horse, let us humbly come before God and say, Lord, examine my life.

Before we start arguing and trying to justify everything in our lives, let us say, God, examine my life. Help me to respond to this in a way that is honoring and glorifying to you.

[16:15] Help me respond to these false accusations in a way that doesn't lead to sin, but in a way that honors you and who you are because we ultimately know he is perfect in his justice, which brings us to the next call that we see in this passage.

And we're really going to tie in two things because I wanted to separate them, but then they went together so well and so we just have two calls right here in this next point that we want to make and it's this, a call for action and a call for justice.

A call for action and a call for justice because ultimately this justice is God acting. And so what we see in verses six through nine says, Arise, O Lord.

In your anger, lift up against the fury of my enemies. Awake for me. You have appointed a judgment. Let the assembly of all the peoples be gathered about you.

Over at return on high, the Lord judges the people. Judge me. O Lord, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is mine, O let the evil of the wicked come to an end and may you establish the righteous.

[17:22] You who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God. David uses three strong imperatives in verse six to call for action. He says to the Lord, he says, Arise, O Lord.

Lift yourself up. Awake. Well, we know that we serve a God who never sleeps and never takes time off, but he's just, he's emphasizing, Lord, I need you to act in this.

God has declared that he is just and will always do what is just and David is confident that he will. And so he's calling him to act as a part of who his character is.

He's calling him to act justly. In our prayers to God, the things that we ask God, especially concerning other people, are we asking God to act in a way that is consistent with his character or are we asking him to act in a way that is characteristic and consistent with our sinful motivations? And so when we come before God and we call him to act and we're calling him to say, God, will you please work in this situation? Are what, is what we're asking God, is we asking him to work and to act in a way that is consistent with who he is or are we begging him and asking him to act in a way that is consistent with our sinful motivations?

[18:43] I think that's the heart behind what David is calling God to do here. He's calling him to act in a way that is consistent with who he is. David knows that God is the judge of all the world.

His great hope is that God will give him justice in the heavenly courtroom. Here's the thing, you may go to your grave wrongly accused of something. The history books may be wrong about you and slander your name to the coming generations, but there is a final justice in this world and it comes from God himself, the great judge who knows all without ever having to call a witness, who not only knows actions, but he knows motivations behind the actions and what he does is he acts in truth.

He knows not only these actions, but the motivations. God is bigger than lies. Truth will triumph. And this is something that we can count on so we can call on the name of God to take action and to act justly and we can rest assured that he will do this.

So this call for action is a call for justice that we see in verses 10 through 16. In these verses, we see a couple examples of how God's justice plays out naturally in this world many times.

It gives you two images here, this one image of conception and birth and then also digging a pit and falling into it. To begin with, we see it says, Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies.

[20 : 19] Because evil has filled him up, he eventually conceives trouble and gives birth to deceit. Is this not how sin works in our life? Is this not how the pattern that sin takes so many times, it works its way out from the inside.

It starts with our hearts and our minds when no one else is around and works its way out but God sees all of it. Even the private, even in our minds, God sees it and will act justly.

Those things that start in private often times come out in very real ways and many times in very public ways. And so what we're seeing here is a God who's acting justly where those sins that we try to keep in private, they will come to light.

They will come out, they'll give birth to what we see coming next. And we also see this justice at work in that sin never produces the desired outcome.

I love this next part. It says, the psalm tells us, it says, he makes a pit. So there's this man makes a pit digging it out and then he falls into the hole that he has made.

[21 : 26] His mischief returns upon his own head and his own skull his violence descends. You see, part of God's justice plays out in sin because it never delivers on what it promises.

I love how Eugene Peterson says this, he says, mischief backfires and violence boomerangs. Mischief backfires and violence boomerangs. See, we have high hopes that sin is going to give us our deepest desires, but part of God's justice and I would say part of God's mercy is showing us that sin never delivers on what it promises.

Part of God's justice and I would say at the same time part of God's mercy is showing us that sin never delivers on what it promises. In this passage we have a call for God to act justly.

The call is for God to act justly and this is going to happen whether we pray it or not because that's who God is. But we must then take this characteristic of God and apply it to our lives.

We must have this heart for justice that God has in situations. James Montgomery Boyce in talking about this he says in order for us to have this justice talked about here in Psalm chapter 7 there's going to be several things at least three ways in which this plays out.

[22 : 51] We must be champions for the poor and disadvantaged. Who will help them? They are unable to help themselves so we must be champions for the poor and disadvantaged. We must be upright in conduct.

We cannot honestly pursue justice for others if we do not practice it ourselves. And finally we must seek vindication of the righteous. We must see those who do good are acknowledged to be good and those who are wicked are identified as such.

Will we be serious about this justice in the world even if it doesn't directly affect us? Will we seek justice even when it doesn't affect us in a way that is consistent not with our own character but in a way that is consistent with God's character?

In other words will we look in this world and will we see injustices that are taking place all over this world that don't really necessarily directly affect us that we could turn a blind eye to and it wouldn't change anything about us are we going to see those injustices and are we going to act in a way that is consistent with who God is?

Because if we love justice then we must act in a way that is consistent with how God calls for this finally very quickly we see a call for praise verse 17 I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord the most high all of this should cause us to praise God the fact that we can come to him in our most difficult times and that he hears us how wonderful is it to know that before God we will never be wrongly accused because God is perfect in his justice but this also means that he will act justly against our sin he'll act justly against sinners because it tells us if a man does not repent God will wet his sword he has bent and readied his bow he has prepared for him deadly weapons making his arrows fiery shafts this is a picture of God's justice justice and wrath against sin we as sinners are objects of this wrath and justice but this is also a cause to praise because God made a way for Jesus' death to count as ours the penalty the

just penalty for sin is death and so death is going to be present some of you may have seen the movie

[25 : 24] National Treasure before anybody seen National Treasure it's kind of an older one now but many of you have seen it at the end Benjamin Gates he's already stolen the Declaration of Independence broken all of these laws and he's sitting next to the FBI agent that's been pursuing him and the FBI agent asks him what do you want to get out of all of this and he says well I just really don't want to go to jail I mean if I could not go to jail that would be great and the FBI agent looks at him and says well somebody has to go to jail there's been crimes that have been committed there's been crimes that have been committed and somebody's going to have to pay the penalty for those crimes so somebody is going to have to go to jail when we we all want forgiveness and mercy but in order for there to be forgiveness a payment must be made God's justice cannot be compromised the penalty for sin is death and that can either be your death or Jesus's death but a penalty is going to be made and God's justice is what now gives us assurance because God's perfect in his justice he can never punish us for what he's already punished

Jesus for he can never punish us for our sin because he's already emptied that he's poured out that punishment on Jesus and so that gives us assurance that as believers as those who've placed our faith and our trust in Jesus when God looks at us he doesn't see our sin and our shame he sees his son's holy and perfect life and so we can take assurance that God's justice has been satisfied and it is my prayer that as we've studied this psalm today that it will be clearly a reminder of where we turn for help in this life that we will see our sin and that when we are wronged it won't produce more sin in our life but it will produce thankfulness for the joy of God's perfect justice but more than anything I hope that this psalm points us to Jesus the one and only truly innocent God man that laid down his life so that we can experience new life the only one that will can and will take your sin shame and regret if you place your faith and your trust in him will take that on himself pay for it and full on the cross and give you his perfect and righteous life and so that when God looks at you we can clearly say we can confidently say

God look at my life because it's no longer my life that is counted but it's Christ's life that is counted in my place and so we can stand confidently before God and say I am righteous not because of what I've done but because of what Jesus has done and God is perfectly just to look at us because that payment has been satisfied and call us his son or his daughter that's the beauty of this that's the the hopefulness of this psalm that even in those false accusations may point to us and realize that we really are sinners and that even though we are falsely accused of things we really do have sin in our life but Jesus is the only truly perfect innocent that was slain for us so may it produce in us joy that nothing else can father thank you so much for your word thank you for what it teaches us about you thank you for for placing these psalms like this in scripture that are real that are authentic that we can identify with and we can resonate with that even

King David was struggling with many of the things that we struggle with but God you were there with him and we know that you'll be here with us and so Lord help us to look at this passage help us to see our sin and help us to see you as the only truly perfect the only truly righteous one who paid our sin debt so that we could have a relationship with you and so Lord help us to act in ways that bring honor and glory to your name and act in a way that truly shows our gratitude for all that you've done for us we love you and we thank you for Jesus and it's in his name we pray amen I'm going to invite you to stand we're going to sing a song of invitation here this morning if God is speaking to you this morning won't you respond as we stand together and sing