

When Enemies Attack Us

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Date: 12 August 2018

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[0 : 00] Please turn your Bibles to Psalm 56. And this morning we are continuing our at the end to have an opportunity to ask those questions.

Psalm 56. I'm reading from the English Standard Version. If you have another translation, yours will read slightly differently.

Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me. All day long an attacker oppresses me. My enemies trample on me all day long. For many attack me proudly. When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God whose word I praise, in God I trust. I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? All day long they injure my cause.

[1 : 27] All their thoughts are against me for evil. They stir up strife. They lurk. They watch my steps. As they have waited for my life.

For their crime will they escape. And wrath cast down the peoples, O God. You have kept count of my tossings.

Put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call.

This I know. This I know that God is for me. In God whose word I praise. In God I trust. In God I trust.

I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? I must perform my vows to you, O God. I will render, thank offerings to you.

[2 : 31] For you have delivered my soul from death. Yes, my feet from falling. That I may walk before God. In the light of life.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word this morning. Lord, I pray that you would use your word to speak to all of our hearts.

Wherever we may find ourselves this morning. Father, help us to hear as we should and then to obey as we should.

Lord, I ask that you would grant me abundant grace to bring your word to your people. Lord, I bring nothing in and of myself.

And I look to you and trust you to feed your sheep this morning. Father, we commit ourselves as we ask these things in Jesus' name.

[3 : 36] Amen. Recently I watched a movie. The title of the movie was Gallows Road. And the movie is set in the United States at a time when there was not segregation, but there was still a whole lot of racial oppression.

So in this predominantly white town, there was this sheriff, white sheriff, and his two nephews who he just allowed to commit crimes and do whatever they wanted to do.

And they had no justice or accountability coming their way. And there was a black man who owned a store in town.

And it was a very successful store. And his two nephews were jealous of this man. And so they harassed him. And on one particular night, went to his house.

And learned him outside, had guns. And they attacked him. And then they burned his house with his wife and two children in the house.

[4 : 46] And then this man was a believer. And you saw the scene where at the funeral, and they were burying his wife and two daughters.

And his brother was there, who was his partner in the business. And he took his wedding band off at the end of the graveside service and stuffed it in his brother's hand and said to him, I'm done with God.

God will let this happen to my wife and my children. I'm just done with God. And the rest of the movie was all about him living with a lot of anger, a lot of resentment, a lot of bitterness in this very corrupt set of circumstances where there was no justice being needed out because the sheriff was corrupt.

And he is plotting how he's going to get revenge for what these two men have done for him. And I'm not much of a movie watcher, but that one really got me to thinking, both as I was watching it and even afterwards.

And I really wondered. I thought parts of the movie was well done. And I really wondered, how would I respond if I faced a situation like that?

[6 : 06] How would I respond if someone were to take the life of any member of my family in such a senseless and cruel way and was able to walk around with no accountability, no justice being needed out?

And I thought about that. And as I was preparing this sermon, that certainly came to mind. But the reality is, I'll probably never know.

I pray that if that were to happen to me, I would find grace to be able to respond as a Christian should. But I don't know, and I will never know, because more than likely I would never face that situation.

But here's what I do know. I face lesser situations. I don't face a situation of a person taking a family member's life, but I face the regular, run-of-the-mill kinds of situations where there are people who are in opposition to me for any number of reasons, people who would seek to make my life difficult and miserable and who would leave hate out to me.

And the truth is, that's your situation as well. You probably aren't going to face that kind of injustice because thankfully we live in a country with laws. And if we were to face some kind of a horrific tragedy like that, at least we can look to the courts to bring justice to the person who perpetrated the injustice.

[7 : 45] But for most of us, we actually face, in an ongoing way, the regular kind of run-of-the-mill enemies that we will face in our lives.

And I believe as we think about that, it is a very, very real situation. I know if I were to survey us this morning, we would all, to some degree or another, be able to point to someone, maybe several individuals in our lives, who we would count as enemies.

Maybe for you this morning, it's a work situation where you are subject to an unjust supervisor. A supervisor who is unjustly causing you to perhaps not get a raise or to get a promotion.

Perhaps it's an unbelieving neighbor who acts towards you in ways that you can't match as a believer and sinfully makes your life difficult as you live side by side and there's no end in sight.

Maybe it's a corrupt official or corrupt system where you are being required to pay bribes or things that should come to you by way of law are being unjustly repelled from you.

[9 : 12] And that's your lot day in and day out. Maybe for some of you, it's a teacher or a lecturer who dislikes you for whatever reason and your grade is at the mercy of that lecturer.

Maybe it's a relationship that's gone bad, a husband or wife, where divorce has happened, or boyfriend or girlfriend, where breakdown has taken place. And that person treats you as an enemy and dishes out mistreatment to you at every opportunity that he or she gets.

And the situation is such that there's very little that you could do about it. I recently heard about a situation in a particular family where two persons had not spoken in over eight years because one perceived the other to be an enemy.

These are the kinds of situations that we, at some point in our lives, will face.

And truthfully, one of them is enough. Perhaps some of us are facing these situations right now, some of them. And for those of us who belong to Christ, those of us who have surrendered our lives to Christ, the question is, how are we to respond when enemies attack us, when enemies oppose us?

[10 : 50] I believe that Psalm 56 is one of the many places in God's Word that we can turn to, where we can find answers when we face enemies who attack us.

And what Psalm 56 says to the people of God is this, when attacked by our enemies, we must turn to God.

When attacked by our enemies, we must turn to God. And that is a simple answer to the question how we should respond. But I think all of us have lived long enough to know that it is easier said

than done.

It is natural to turn against our enemies and to try to attack them in return. But what we see the Psalm is doing in Psalm 56, when his enemies were attacking him, is he turned to God.

We're given a brief background to this Psalm in the superscript before verse 1. This is the Psalm of Lament, and we are told that David wrote this Psalm when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

[12:11] And this Psalm of Lament actually is one of the most popular Psalms where the people of God are pouring out their laments to God in the midst of life's troubles and trials.

And as we consider this Psalm, there are three particular activities that we see the Psalmist engaging in as he is being oppressed by his enemies.

And there are number one, praying to God. Number two, trusting in God. Number three, waiting for God. Those are the three main activities that we see the Psalmist engaging in as he is being oppressed and attacked by his enemies.

He's praying to God. He's trusting in God. He's waiting for God. And so this morning, I want to consider these three responses for the people of God when they are attacked by their enemies.

First, when attacked by our enemies, we should pray to God. That's what the Psalmist does in this whole Psalm.

[13:26] He prays to God. This entire Psalm is a prayer to God. In the face of oppressive enemies, the Psalmist is praying to God.

And notice how he opens his prayer. In verses one through three, Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me. All day long, an attacker oppresses me.

My enemies trample on me all day long. For many attack me proudly. When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In the midst of hostile enemies, the Psalmist prays to God, asking God to be gracious to him. And the truth is, that's exactly what we need when our enemies attack us.

We need the grace of God. We need God to be gracious to us because minus that grace, the best of us will respond in kind.

[14:28] Or perhaps, even worse. I can tell you, when enemies attack me, my natural response is not to pray.

That's not the first thing that comes to my mind, pray. Prayer doesn't naturally come to my mind.

And I believe the same is true for you. Prayer is not a natural response.

But it's the right response. We need God's grace to respond in prayer. Notice what we see the Psalmist doing.

In these 13 verses, what the Psalmist is doing, he's not just praying some quick prayer like you pray when you're praying for your food. Now the Psalmist is pouring his heart out to God.

He's crying out to God. And look at the detail that he is bringing to God. Look at verses 5 through 7. He says, All day long they injure my cause. All their thoughts are evil against me, against me for evil.

[15:37] They stir up strife. They lurk. They watch my steps as they have waited for my life. For their crime will they escape.

And wrath casts down the peoples, O God. The Psalmist pours out his heart to God and he is specifically recounting the evil deeds of his enemies against him.

Look at verse 8. He says, You have kept count of my tossings. Put my tears in a bottle. Are they not in your book?

Here the Psalmist is acknowledging that God is aware of his oppression. He acknowledges that God keeps count of his tossings. But he cries out to God and says, God, bottle up my tears.

Put my tears in your bottle. And that is an indication of the extent of the Psalmist's grief that he was weeping so much that he felt that his tears could actually be collected as a kind of memorial to the grief that he was faced with.

[16:48] An expression that he was confident that God would not allow his tears and grief to go in vain, but that God would answer him and God would deal with his enemies.

Brothers and sisters, it doesn't matter how godly we may be this morning. When enemies attack us, prayer is not the natural response. Prayer is a supernatural response.

And so when enemies attack us and we are praying, it is an evidence that God is at work in our lives. Giving us the grace to pray.

And perhaps this is your lot right now in this season of your life. You're being attacked by enemies in some way, some shape, some form, but maybe you're not praying.

And maybe you are attacking in kind. And we have a wonderful way of how we sometimes can justify responding in kind.

[17:57] Sometimes say, my mother, she didn't want no fool. I'm not letting anybody take advantage of me. And we justify all manner of conduct that is not appropriate for those of us who name the name of Jesus Christ.

But if that's your lot this morning and you find yourself instead of praying, retaliating, responding in kind, and ask God for grace.

Lord, be gracious to me as the psalmist prays. Be gracious to me. Asking him to help you to not respond in that way but to pray to him.

If your enemy is attacking you this morning and you are responding by praying to God, looking to him for grace, then praise God. God is at work in your life.

Well, in addition to praying to God, as we consider Psalm 56, we also see that when he was being attacked by enemies, the psalmist was also trusting in God.

[19:15] This brings me to my second point. When we are attacked by enemies, we must trust in God. Three times in this psalm, the psalmist expresses his trust in God.

Look at verses three and four. He writes, When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust, I will not be afraid.

What can flesh do to me? And then in verse 11, In God I trust. I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?

In the face of the arch enemy of Israel, the Philistines, David says, God, I trust in you.

I notice two times in verses 4 and 11, he says, I shall not be afraid. I shall not be afraid. And the fact that David says, I shall not be afraid is a clear indication that there was reason to be afraid.

[20:26] As a matter of fact, in verse 3, he acknowledges, he says, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. So David was not in a situation where there was the absence of fear.

Fear was very much present, but he says, when I'm afraid, I will put my trust in you. And so for those of us this morning, when we are being attacked by our enemies, the question is, are you afraid?

Are you afraid? And sometimes it is important for us to face what those fears might be. perhaps it is someone who can bring harm to you or bring harm to your family.

Maybe he or she really does hold your employment situation in their hands in a very significant way. It can cause you to not get a raise, it can cause you to not be promoted, it can actually cause you to lose your job or to cause your business to suffer.

And you can be afraid. maybe it's someone who has the authority to put your application to the bottom of the pile. Maybe it is being fearful about the loss of child support, having it reduced or having it taken away altogether.

[21:59] maybe it's the fear that you won't pass the class. And the list goes on. Enemies who are true enemies can oftentimes harm us and make life difficult for us and for those we love.

And the natural tendency is to be afraid. But really the psalmist helps us to see that we do have a choice, that we are able to fear or we can trust God.

Notice how in verses 1 and 11 the psalmist connects trusting in God and being afraid. In verse 4 he writes, in God I trust, I shall not be afraid.

And then in verse 11 again, in God I trust, I shall not be afraid. We cannot, simultaneously trust God, truly trust God, and at the same time be afraid.

As a matter of fact, the evidence that we are not trusting God is when we are fearful. Fear in our hearts is an indication that we are not truly trusting God with whatever is causing us to be afraid.

[23:22] afraid. And I don't want you to get me wrong this morning. I'm not trying to minimize or simplify this issue.

I know sometimes you can be preaching about something that's foreign in your life or at least foreign to the degree that you're talking about it.

And I want to say to you this morning, no, this is not one of those. This is someone who identifies.

So I know what we're talking about this morning is not easy. But when we consider Psalm 56, there are three very important realities in this Psalm that if we bear in mind, they will help us to not be afraid.

If we can remember them, if we can bear them in mind. And the first one is this. We need to see God for who he is. That he is the sovereign Lord, the all-powerful one, the all-wise God who is in control, absolute control of this world, everyone and everything in it.

The Psalmist recognizes that that is why in the face of enemies he prays to God. He prays to God as the one who is sovereign over all the circumstances.

[24 : 41] And look at what he says in verse 7. He says, for their crime will they escape. He is asking God this because God is the one who has the ability to bring justice to those who were persecuting him, those who were oppressing him.

He says, and wrath cast down the peoples, O God, knowing that God had the ability and God was sovereign over his enemies. And we must do the same.

We must recognize that it matters not who opposes us, who oppresses us, that God is more powerful than our enemies.

They are subject to God. We must see God for who he is, the sovereign, all-powerful God, ruling the universe and ruling everyone and everything in it.

The second reality is that we must see our enemies for who they really are. We must see God for who he really is. We must see our enemies for who they really are. Look at what the psalmist says.

[25 : 46] Well, a question he asks first in verse 4. He asks it two times, but beginning in verse 4, he asks this question, very last sentence in verse 4, what can flesh do to me?

What can flesh do to me? And then in verse 11, he asks this question, what can man do to me?

In the NIV, in verse 4, the way it's translated is what can mortal man do to me? It's important for us to see our enemies for what they really are.

Our enemies are mortal men and women. Yes, they may be powerful. Yes, they may hold authority, but at the end of the day, they are mortal men and women. They're not gods.

And so the psalmist recognizing God for who he is, he's praying to God, he recognizes his enemies for who they are. They are mere mortals, just like him.

[26 : 52] And he says, I'm not going to be afraid. What can mere mortal man do to me? What can flesh do to me?

What can flesh do to us? And sometimes when we face those fears and we say, you know, the most this person can do, they can stop the promotion, they can perhaps cause me to get fired, but when all that happens, God is still in this room and God will take care of me in the midst of it all. Again, no matter how big and powerful they are, they are flesh. One day they will die and they are accountable to God today and on the day of their death.

And third, we must remember that God is for us. We must remember that God is for us. Look at what the psalmist writes in verse 9.

He writes, very last sentence, this I know, that God is for me. In the face of hostile enemies, the psalmist did not lose sight of the fact that God was for him.

[28 : 16] And brothers and sisters, we must do the same. We must not lose sight of the fact that God is for us, no matter what hostilities we face, what difficulties we face.

It doesn't matter how large enemies loom in our lives. We must remember that God is for us, no matter what. He loves his children and he will care for us.

He will watch over us. This is God's care for the psalmist. Look at what he says in verse 8.

God's care for him. God's care for him. He says, you have kept count of my tossings. This is true. God's back isn't turned as we go through trials and difficulties and the torments that people can bring into our lives. God's back is not turned to us.

[29 : 26] He is aware of it. He makes note of it. Not necessarily literally that he writes down or he tossed here, he tossed there, not necessarily in that way.

But what the psalmist is doing is he's speaking in a figurative kind of way and he's saying, God, put my tears in your bottle. Not in a bottle, but in your bottle in the sense that God is aware of the tears of his people.

They're precious in his sight. He doesn't discount them. He doesn't disregard them. He takes note of them. He has regard for them.

The psalmist says, are they not in your book? This is God's care for the psalmist. The psalmist said, this I know, God is for me. And this is so important for us to see because for so many Christians, they tend to gauge God's love.

They are based on the ease and comfort in their lives or the lack of it. If all is going well and I'm happy, then God loves me and God is for me.

[30 : 36] But if things are going haywire and we're being oppressed and we're facing difficulty, we begin to think, well, God is not for me.

God is probably punishing me for something I did. And all of us have many things that God rightly can punish us for. And it's so easy to think he's punishing me for that. But no, the psalmist says, this I know, God is for me.

This week I had the opportunity to seek to bring comfort to several individuals from Romans 8, 28, just reminding them of this promise.

God is God for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. And you know that this verse was actually written in the context of suffering, in the context of difficulty, in the context of trial, where Paul is saying to us, he is saying to us, that because of God's saving work in our lives, because God has before the foundation of the world set his love upon us, and God has called us in accordance with his purpose, that is the evidence that we can hold on to, to know that in all things God is at work for our good.

This is a comfort when things are not going as we would want them to. This is a comfort when things are bad, when things are difficult. And all things includes bad things.

[32 : 15] When scripture says we know that God works in all things, all things includes bad things, because if it doesn't include bad things, then it's not all things. God is able to work in all things, including when our enemies are giving us their very best.

So what we are to do when we want to not be fearful in the face of trials from enemies, we want to see God for who he is, that he's the sovereign Lord.

We want to see our enemies for who they are. They are mere mortals just like us. And we want to remember that God is for us, no matter what things look like.

We can trust in God. God is going to ask you this morning, how do you see God? Do you see him as one who is just helplessly watching the events of life and your life and human history?

Or is he the sovereign Lord who knows all and who is over all, including every detail of your life? and he counts the very here on your head. And not one falls to the ground except he knows it.

[33 : 40] And if God is concerned about that detail of our lives, how much more is he concerned about the bigger details of our lives? And therefore we can trust him. How do you see your enemies?

Do you see them as supernatural or do you see them as the mere mortals as they really are? Do you see them as having sway over your life? Or do you see God ultimately above that even though they seem to have sway over some aspect of your life?

And do you truly believe that God is absolutely for you? No matter what it looks like, no matter how hard the day is, no matter how hard the circumstances are, God is for you.

And it seems like the psalmist, we must become convinced of this, this I know, God is for me.

Brothers and sisters, one of the worst things we can ever do is to misread the circumstances of our lives, the difficulties of our lives to believe that God is not for us.

We sang about it this morning. God moves in a mysterious way. And how easy it is for us to misconstrue the providences of God in our lives.

[34 : 59] Where Cooper says, blind unbelief is short of error and scan is working vain. God is his own interpreter and he will make it plain.

We must trust and believe that God is for us. So in this psalm, we see the psalmist praying to God, we see him trusting God, but we also see him waiting for God.

God. And this brings me to my third and final point. When enemies attack us, we must wait for God. Now this activity of waiting is not explicitly expressed in the psalm.

The psalmist doesn't say, oh Lord, I wait for you. He doesn't say that. But when you read this psalm, you can see that the psalmist indeed was waiting for the Lord. First of all, we can tell from the psalm that his situation seemed extended over a period of time.

Humanly speaking, he was at the mercy of the Philistines. And so he had to pray to God. He had to trust in God. And he had to wait for when and how God was going to answer and act.

[36 : 15] Two times the psalmist says his enemies were attacking him and injuring his cause. In verse one, he says all day long they are an attacker oppresses me.

And then again in verse five, all day long they injure my cause and all their evil thoughts and all their thoughts are against me for evil.

the psalmist is praying to God and there's every indication that he is having to wait.

Again, verse eight gives that indication where he's saying that his tears are, he's asking God to put his tears in his bottle, write his tossings in a book.

after praying to God, he had to wait for God, to wait for God, to answer and for God to act.

[37 : 21] Part of waiting for God includes praising God. And the psalmist says in verse four, And again in verse 10, And then in verse 12, I must perform my vows to you, O God.

I will render thank offerings to you. Part of waiting for God includes praising God. It is so easy to be waiting for God to deliver us, to change our circumstances, and then we will shout a praise of victory.

So what the psalmist is doing, in the midst of the difficulty, the psalmist is praising God. And he's reaffirming his praise to God.

He's actually saying, I must perform my vows to you, O God. I will render thank offerings to you. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, one of the closing exhortations that we read is, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you.

May God us not blind to think that our lives will not be filled with hardship and difficulty, and that's the reason he says, give thanks in all circumstances. He tells us to give thanks in all circumstances, knowing full well that sometimes our lives will be hard, sometimes people will oppress us, people will be against us.

[39 : 08] But even in that, we have much to praise and thank God for, remembering again that he's sovereign, remembering again these are mere models, remembering that God is for us.

Therefore, who can be against us? I believe that waiting is perhaps the most difficult part of dealing with our enemies, waiting for God, waiting for God to act, because God doesn't seem to respond to our prayers for deliverance when we are being attacked by enemies, when we are being unjustly treated.

He doesn't seem to respond quickly. That is the witness of Scripture, it's the witness of human history among the people of God.

And maybe part of it is that the Lord allows character to be built in us by allowing us to walk through those particular circumstances. Maybe it is that God gets more glory out of our lives when we are hard-pressed when we are treated unjustly and we can respond in a way that is God-glorifying. Maybe God gets more glory out of that than when things are going well and they're praising him because of that.

[40 : 42] Waiting is difficult. And what we see the psalmist doing as he waits is he fully places his lot in God's hands.

You know, as difficult as this psalm is for us to fathom in particular, if you're facing ill treatment by enemies right in this very moment, you know, Jesus gives an even more radical way to respond to our enemies than what we find in Psalm 56.

it. Psalm 56 really just tells us, you know, pray to God. And we see the psalmist rightly saying, Lord, judge them. Cast them down, Lord.

But Jesus in Luke 6, 27 through 29, says these words, Jesus is it is.

it is. Yes, know it is. it is. that it's not enough to pray to God about our enemies, but he calls us to love them.

[42 : 13] And here this is not a warm, fuzzy feeling. This is not a feeling of endearment of that person.

He's not calling us to do that. He's not calling us to pretend as though we love the person who's oppressing us. In terms of wanting to be around them and wanting to enjoy time with them, that's not what he's calling us to.

The love that he's calling us to, Paul defines for us in Romans 13, 10, when he says it this way, love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

This kind of love is not a feeling love, not a fuzzy love. It is a love that will actively do no ill towards a neighbor. And actually what Jesus says, it actively does good towards that neighbor.

Does good to those who hate us and those who curse us and those who abuse us. And when we think of what Jesus says about being hit on one cheek and turning to the other, isn't it interesting that none of us have ever experienced that?

[43 : 27] We just haven't. And so clearly, Jesus is not teaching us to literally wait for someone to hit us on one cheek and then when we get hit on that cheek, say, here's the other cheek.

That's not what Jesus is saying to us. But he's calling us to have such a posture that in the face of ill treatment, we will do nothing to mirror that ill treatment.

We would rather endure even more ill treatment rather than respond in like manner. It's a radical kind of love that he calls us to.

And it's not easy. If you think it's easy, you don't understand what Jesus is calling you to. If you think it's easy, you think it's just a lip service kind of love.

But the love that God calls us to is to love from our hearts. I remember a number of years ago, we were at the boys' industrial school and there was a pastor, a Sovereign Grace pastor, who was there and he was sharing about a particular experience that he had had.

[44 : 42] And one of the things he said is this. He said, when you've been sinned against, to truly forgive a person from your heart, to truly forgive a person from your heart takes a miracle.

To truly forgive, we can mouth it, we can act it, but to truly forgive from the heart requires divine intervention.

God has to touch our hearts. God has to transform our hearts. And if any of us would be honest this morning as we consider what we're being called to, we'd recognize, I need God's help to do it.

And when Jesus uttered those words, Jesus recognized that as well. Jesus did not utter those words that we would treat our enemies in that way, believing that we could do it on our own.

We can't. We can't. And so the psalmist does rightly pray, God be gracious to me. God give me grace to be able to do this.

[45 : 51] And while the mistreatment of the psalmist at the hands of his enemies, the Philistines, was no doubt very severe, Scripture records an even more severe mistreatment at the hands of enemies.

And is the worst mistreatment, not just in Scripture, is the worst mistreatment in life? In some ways, you could have said that the Philistines were justified to treat David that way because they were arch enemies.

But Scripture records that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, needed the worst mistreatment, had the worst mistreatment meted out to him by sinners when he was crucified on Calvary's cross. And while there's much that we can learn from this psalm, as much as we can learn from Psalm 56, our greatest example is the Lord himself.

Our greatest example is the Lord Jesus Christ. When he hung on the cross when he was being crucified, he uttered those famous words, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they're doing.

[47 : 11] And Jesus perfectly forgave, perfectly prayed for the forgiveness of those who were crucifying him. And if he didn't, his sacrifice would be imperfect.

His sacrifice would have been tainted the very moment when he was atoning for the sins of the world. He himself would have been guilty of sin, but he uttered those words, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they're doing.

And it was a forgiveness extended from a perfect heart that did not have even the hint of sin.

But more than looking to Jesus this morning as our example as to how we should relate to our enemies, we need to look to Jesus as our Savior.

We need to sincerely respond to our enemies and pray to God and trust in God and wait for God. We need to do our best to love them as Jesus has called us to love them.

[48 : 27] But we must remember this morning that our efforts are only acceptable to God through Christ. Scripture says that our righteousness is like filthy rags in God's sight.

Our best acts of righteousness fall short of what God has called us to do. They're only acceptable through Jesus Christ.

So even as we seek to relate to our enemies in this godly way that is being held out for us, we must recognize that it is only through Jesus Christ that it is acceptable to God.

And when we fall short in our forgiving, when we fall short in our loving and praying for our enemies, we should remember that Jesus succeeded. He didn't fall short.

And Jesus did on the cross what we need and God credits to every believing sinner. He succeeded on our behalf and so we can look to him and we can trust in him as our great savior.

[49 : 41] And may God be gracious to all of us. May God be gracious to those of us right now for wrestling with injustices and ill treatment at the hands of those who don't mean us well.

May God be gracious to us if that's not our lot now but it will be our lot in the days to come. May he be gracious to us to enable us to pray, to trust, to wait and ultimately to look to Jesus as our example and as our savior.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we give you thanks this morning for your word. Thank you for reminding us that in this life, in this fallen world, there will be times when we will be unjustly treated, when enemies will oppose and oppress us and we are called like the psalmist to pray, to trust and to wait.

Lord, we are also called to hear the voice of one who is greater than the psalmist and to love our enemies and do good to them to bless when they curse.

And Lord, help us to remember that it's only through Jesus Christ that our best efforts at doing these things can be acceptable in your sight. May we look to him as both our example and our savior.

[51 : 32] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I heard one guy describe his sermon like he said, my sermons are like Swiss cheese.

They have a lot of holes in them. So I probably left a lot of holes and you may have a lot of questions and I'll do my best to answer questions you may have.

Any questions from the sermon? Yes, so like you said, the holes like Swiss cheese.

One of the things that kept playing in my mind while I was listening to you was when the believer is faced with some sort of civil social injustice or anything like that where they can evoke the courts, is it okay for a believer to pursue lawsuits? Absolutely. Absolutely. It is perfectly fine for us to avail ourselves of the courts. Remember that courts are instituted by God. So whenever a court is unjust, it is a betrayal of God because he is the one who institutes the magistrates and the authorities that we have. So the court as an institution is there for us. And scripture tells us that the law is actually for the lawless. However, what I would say is when that issue is between brothers, and in particular brothers in the same local church, then what scripture calls us to in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 is that we are not to rush to court to try to get those matters settled. Paul is confident that the least in the church is able to render judgment, render right judgment in those matters.

Now, I know that in some cases you can imagine a situation where maybe you have two businessmen in the same congregation, and they could have a very complex matter, the nature of which is just over the head of maybe people in the congregation. Maybe it could be a situation where you do have lawyers in the congregation, and they could try to arbitrate it and deal with it. But the clear indication from scripture is that we are to do every single thing that is humanly possible to avoid taking a brother or a sister to court. Now, I know that gets dicey because we know that not everyone who names the name of Christ belongs to Christ. So that requires wisdom, requires counsel, the counsel of elders as well, to consider how those things would be approached. But I think we should not hastily run to court when it has to do with another brother in the same congregation. Even sometimes when people are in different congregations, and there is cooperation between leadership and the individuals involved, you can also work those matters out outside of court as well. And over the years, I've had the privilege of being involved in some of those kinds of matters and really just saying the grace of God work out. Where lawyers weren't involved and hefty legal fees didn't come into play, but they were able to get a just outcome from having it addressed in that way. So our natural impulse should not be to run to court, but really to try to seek to work it out. I remember what the Apostle Paul also says. He says, you should rather take the loss rather than take it by the court. And I think the reason he says it is because God is able to make long sticks short and short sticks long. I think we have lived long enough to see sometimes when you think you're getting a long stick, it really wasn't that long. You think you're getting a short stick in time, God is able to lengthen it. So I hope that gets to the heart of what you're asking, Troy.

[56 : 03] And sorry, if you can indulge me. One more question. Sure, go ahead. Are there any other hands? Okay, there are two over there. So we'll come to the market. Okay, quick one. How do we reconcile the imprecatory Psalms, those Psalms that the Psalmist would wish some sort of graphic justice on somebody, you know, dash their heads in with the stones. I was looking for one to get them.

Yeah, there are quite a number of them. Yeah, how do we reconcile that? Yeah, the way we reconcile those Psalms is we see them through the grid of Christ, the grid of his cross, and really

the words that we just read that Jesus says, this is where you'd handle your enemies. And remember, Jesus used this terminology where he would say, you have heard it said, but I say unto you. And so we do not, in light of Calvary, in light of the revelation that we have of the grace of God, we do not have a legitimate right to lift the imprecatory Psalms from the pages of the Psalms and pray them against people. We're to take them to Calvary and we're to pray through the grid of Calvary. And so I think of this, I think it's Psalm 112, which is one of the, is it Psalm 112?

No, it's not Psalm 112. But yeah, one of the imprecatory Psalms that come to mind, David is saying, let his children be fatherless, let his wife, let another man take her. I mean, he just prays, he prays in the most violent way against this person. But no, we are of another spirit. Remember when Jesus was going by way of Samaria and the Samaritans were not preparing for him and one of the disciples wanted to call down fire on them. What did Jesus say? He said, you don't know the spirit that you are. And so we have a different spirit. And so no, we do not pray the imprecatory Psalms.

Okay. First of all, I'm glad that you picked the topic that you did today because I have a situation and I'm not sure about how to go about it. First of all, I know of a person who is hurting, a believer. And she's been hit a number of times during this year because of death and other situations and everything like that. And because of her hurt, she's now acting out like she's treating everybody like they're an enemy. I tried to reach out to her before and I've already been verbally abused.

So, but I'm still feeling deep down inside led to talk to her again. What do you suggest I go? I mean, what do you suggest I do? And how do I go about approaching her again?

I think first of all, pray. I've done that. Yeah. Pray, continue to pray, ask of the Lord to prepare her heart, to soften her heart. And I do think that when we have a context for what a person is walking through, it does help us to, it helps us to somewhat accept, and accept is not the right word I'm thinking of.

[59 : 51] So, it helps us to temper what they're actually saying because we know they're walking through some difficulties. So, for example, you walk into a business and you get poor treatment from someone.

You'll respond a certain way. But if you know that this person maybe has received an eviction notice from their house that morning or walking, we tend to all be accommodating to really understand that.

So, I would say just be aware of those circumstances. Recognize at the end of the day that only God can change hearts. We can't. Only God can reach into her. You can't. And so, when we recognize that we depend more on the Lord. And I would encourage you to not give up. I'd encourage you to be persistent, but be wise in your persistence. You don't get rejected at 11 o'clock and show up again at 2 o'clock.

You may want to just pray and give some time. Sometimes what is helpful as well is to write rather than just verbally talking because you can't interrupt a letter.

So, I'd encourage you to really just write and trust the Lord. My last thing I would say is love the person enough to be willing to go through some abuse at their hands. Love them enough for that.

[61 : 22] Thank you. All right. Any other questions? You may as well ask them now because you can't go anywhere. The rain is pouring. Anyone else? Other questions?