

# God, judge my enemies

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[ 0 : 00 ] That is a fairly complicated psalm, which we're going to have some fun with. I don't know what your first reaction is when you hear that read out. You might be a little bit uncomfortable, particularly with a few verses in there where David calls down God's fiery anger on his enemies.

You might be excited. You might think, finally, I've got biblical evidence that it's okay to call down God's judgment on those who I don't like. But the question has to be kind of lingering for us. What do we do with something like that? It doesn't seem to fit with the message of Christianity that we talk about, the call to love our enemy, the mercy and grace that God shows.

So what is a psalm like this teaching us? We can't just kind of skip over those six or seven verses that are a little bit uncomfortable. We actually have to wrestle with them because they're not the only verses that say something like this in the Bible.

So the question we've got to ask is, what are they doing there? Are they telling us that it's okay to pray down judgment? And I'm sure you're sitting there nervously saying, no, it can't be that. But if it's not that, what is it teaching us?

[ 1 : 04 ] So for us to wrestle with that, I want to pray and ask God to help us have his mind on his word. So please join me as we pray. Father God, I want to thank you for your word and I thank you that you give it to us so that we might know you better.

Lord, I pray that as we wrestle with a difficult passage that you would keep us from bringing our own ideas to the passage, but that we would come teachable and humble and ready to hear you speak. Lord, I pray that the result of wrestling with something like this would be that we see you more clearly, that we have a bigger picture of who you are. And I pray that by your spirit, you would illuminate your word and shape our hearts, that we might love you more and honor you more with the lives that you've given us.

Amen. Okay, Psalm in front of you, Psalm 69. The first thing that we need to understand and grab from this Psalm is that it's a Psalm of David. It's there right in the title.

It's of David. And David is the king. He's God's anointed leader for the people. And he is facing some sort of severe persecution. The Psalm doesn't go into heaps of detail about what that is, but it's severe.

[ 2 : 15 ] You can see it as he goes through. He's nearly overwhelmed. The waters are reaching up to his neck. The mud's dragging him down. There's no way out. He's worn out from crying out for help. He's exhausted, waiting for God's deliverance.

And more numerous than the hairs on his head are the people who hate him and seek to destroy him. And three times in the first four verses, in fact, particularly in verse four, David explains that his suffering, what he's going through, is unjust, is unfair.

It's not his fault. If you have a look at verse four, Now, it's not that David is saying, I'm perfect and anything bad that happens to me is unfair because of all the characters in the Bible, David's epic failures are probably more documented than others.

But he's saying that this issue here is not to do with him. This is not a Bathsheba problem. This is not something that David's done that has brought on the fire upon him.

Because he acknowledges that he's not perfect in verse five. He says, You know my folly, O God. My guilt is not hidden from you. But he is saying, But I am innocent of this. This suffering that I'm facing right now, it's not my fault.

[ 3 : 35 ] And from that position of despair and being overwhelmed, David cries out to God there in verse one. That's the point of the whole psalm. Save me, O God. And that just builds momentum as we go through all 36 verses.

That is David's heart's desire that he would be saved from this circumstance and opposition that he is facing. But there's something about that salvation that David wants that we need to wrestle with. We need to actually understand what is it that is driving his cry for salvation. Because it might not be what we first think. Have a look at verse nine with me.

Because in verse nine, David actually expresses what it is that's causing him such anguish. He articulates his frustration. And it's there. It says in verse nine, Zeal for your house consumes me. And the insults of those who insult you fall on me. He's talking to God here. David says, I'm consumed with a passion for you and for your name. It's the relationship that David has with God that is causing people to persecute and oppose him.

[ 4 : 41 ] That is the basis for the hatred that he receives from his enemies. See, his enemies hate God. And David is the person that they can see as representative of God.

So he becomes the object of their hatred. The insults aimed at David's heavenly father fall squarely on his shoulders. It's not dissimilar to a story that I was told recently about a man who was found guilty of a crime in Spain.

This man was born in Britain. He was an American citizen. But in Spain, he was convicted of a crime that everybody knew he hadn't done. People were aware that he was innocent. But he was convicted and sentenced to firing squad. Now, at this point, the British embassy and the American embassy came out and said, If you shoot this man, we'll declare war on you. And when the day came for his firing squad, the two ambassadors came out and draped the flag of America and the flag of Britain around him and said, If you fire a shot, we'll declare war.

[ 5 : 48 ] And sure enough, the firing squad turned around and walked away. But in the same way that that man was representative of those nations at that particular point, David here is representative of God.

He is God's king. He's the leader of God's people. And so when they see David, they see an opportunity to vent their hatred and opposition towards God.

And so when David, in verse 13, returns to his quest for salvation, his cry for rescue and redemption is a cry for God's name to be vindicated.

See, as David gets attacked, he feels this burden, not because his own character is under fire, not because his own name is being dragged through the mud. His fear is that God's name is being shamed.

His fear is that somehow God would be found guilty or God's people would be found guilty. And so he eagerly desires that he would be delivered because these enemies of his are his enemies because they're God's enemies.

[ 6 : 52 ] And he bears their hatred and their shame for the sake of his God. David's in anguish not for his own comfort, but because of God's name and God's reputation.

David is wounded by the rejection that God is facing. You've got to understand this here, that David's pain in these verses, and it's significant. There is this sense that it's almost beyond hope. And this is because his God is under fire. This is not a personal protection issue. This is him carrying the burden for the holy name of his holy God.

And so it's from that context that we come back to these verses that make us feel a bit uncomfortable and we need to look at them again. I want you to have a look at verse 22 because we will probably take the rest of the psalm and think, fantastic, God save your people when they're hurting.

But it's this bit that we need to wrestle with. And it's David with a deep concern for his father's holy name who articulates these words. Speaking of his enemies, he says, May the table set before them become a snare.

[ 7 : 58 ] May it become retribution and a trap. May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see and their backs be bent forever. Pour out your wrath on them. Let your fierce anger overtake them.

May their place be deserted. Let there be no one to dwell in their tents, for they persecute those you wound and talk about the pain of those you hurt. Charge them with crime upon crime.

Do not let them share in your salvation. May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous. I don't think that there is a harsher word that David could have spoken.

I can't even begin to comprehend a circumstance in my life where I would utter these words against even my most hated enemy. David is praying that God would direct his fierce, jealous wrath on these enemies, that they might be destroyed, that they might be blotted out.

But here's the key. David is not asking for revenge. David is not asking God to destroy David's enemies because they have hurt David.

[ 9 : 18 ] David is asking for justice against God's enemies. That is his heart's desire. Not that David would win, but that God's enemies would receive what they deserve.

See, this psalm is a psalm about God's name. It's a psalm about God's reputation. And David is God's representative. And so as he endures the hatred and scorn that is directed at his God, even David's plea for salvation is actually a plea for God to vindicate his own character.

In verse 1, when David says, save me, O God, his heart's desire, you can see it as we work through the psalm, is that God's name, the result of him being saved, the point of him being saved is that people would realize that God is powerful and just and mighty and righteous to judge.

Now I know we get nervous when we talk about the wrath of God. There's that sense that we need to water it down with God's love. But David is simply asking that those who hate God get what they deserve.

That's all he's asking for. David is saying, I am your chosen representative on the earth, God. I'm the one you anointed to be king and leader of your people. And if they reject me, they are rejecting you.

[ 10 : 40 ] And so please give them what they deserve. What you said you were going to give them. It's right that those who oppose God and reject his representative face judgment.

That's right. That's fair. That's correct. Because if you reject the Savior, then all that's left is the wrath that you could have been saved from.

It's like a man walking by a river who falls into the river. The river begins to pick up momentum and soon enough he realizes that the momentum is because there's a waterfall up ahead.

If that man chooses to ignore the safety rope that is thrown to him, then the waterfall is a fair enough result for that individual. In the same way, if people choose to reject the Savior that God offers, then the destruction is a fair and right outcome.

The New Testament quotes this difficult section in Psalm 69 twice to show us just how just it is. The first one comes in Acts chapter 1.

[ 11 : 52 ] And verse 25 of Psalm 69 is quoted. Verse 25 says, May their place be deserted. Let there be no one to dwell in their tents. When that comes into the New Testament, do you know who it's talking about? Judas.

The disciple who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. When we think Judas, we think that is right. He deserves to be judged. He betrayed his Savior from right under his nose.

From the inner group who spent time and traveled with Jesus, God's wrath deserves to be poured out on Judas. The second quote of this section comes in Romans chapter 11 and it's a bigger chunk.

And here Paul quotes the passage pointing to the Jews who have rejected Jesus as God's Savior. Now Paul's not looking for revenge on the Jews because Paul himself is a Jew.

And Paul expresses his desire that the Jews would come to faith in Jesus. But he's saying if you reject God's anointed one, in this case Jesus, if you reject the Savior that he offers you, then it is right and fair and just that you receive the wrath that all creation deserves.

[ 13 : 02 ] Paul is simply saying the Jews are in the river and they are ignoring the life rope of Jesus and so it is inevitable that they will face the judgment.

See, David is not crying out in this psalm because of his own suffering. He is driven by a zeal for God's house. By a desire that God's name would not be trampled by men, that it would not be okay for people to ignore him, pretend like he doesn't matter.

David is grieved by sin because that's what sin is at its core. It's a rejection of God, a rejection of Jesus as King and Savior.

And David isn't saying, God, make me strong so I can beat my enemies. He's saying, God, you're God. You're my God.

I'm your representative. These are your enemies. Pour out your wrath like you said you would. And this is really, really important.

[ 14 : 05 ] God has already promised Abraham, way back in Genesis chapter 12, that he would judge those who rejected his people. I want you to flick back with me to Genesis chapter 12 really quickly.

Keep your finger in Psalm 69 so that you're there, ready to go. But Genesis chapter 12 is the promises that God makes to Abraham, who's David's great, great, great, great, great, great, great, etc., grandfather.

And the promises that God makes to Abraham are the basis for Israel's relationship with God. They're the basis for David's relationship with God. They define what that interaction looks like. And in verse 3 of Genesis 12, listen to what God says. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse.

It was right there in the beginning. This shouldn't surprise us. God said from the starting point, those who curse you, those who reject you, my people, my representative, reject me and they will face my curse.

[15:09] They will face my judgment. They will face my anger. God had promised this. Those who oppose his people would be cursed because rejecting God's people is the same as rejecting him and for that God promised his enemies would face judgment.

David is not asking for permission to have revenge on his enemies. That is not what this psalm is about. He's asking for God to keep his promises, to keep his covenant, to bring justice, and to save him and that all goes together because in Genesis 12 God promised that he would save his people. That's what the blessing is. That's why David can say in verse 13, I pray to you in the time of your favor in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation.

He's confident because God has already promised it and necessary to that salvation that God has promised is judgment on the enemies of God.

See, there's no separation of those two things for King David. He doesn't see salvation as one request and the pouring out of his wrath as a second request. Salvation happens by God pouring out his wrath on his enemies.

[16:28] The pouring out of God's wrath on his enemies brings salvation for those who hope in God. They are one and the same action. Now, I want to say that again because this is really important and you need to grasp this.

Without judgment, there is no salvation. Without judgment, there is no salvation. We get very nervous about the ideas of judgment and wrath, but biblically, you need judgment for salvation. That is how it works. That is how it worked from the beginning. That is how Israel was rescued from Egypt by God bringing judgment on the Egyptians for oppressing his people. That is the pattern that he builds throughout Scripture.

Judgment is something that makes us nervous, maybe correctly because it is so horrific, but it is necessary for salvation. In this psalm, David's deep desire is God's glory.

That is what he cares about more than anything else and we need to ask God to shape our hearts so that we desire his glory more than anything else. Our biggest struggle with this psalm is when we think enemy, we think those who hurt me.

[17:43] The possibility of being as offended by what people say about God or the way they interact with God is just foreign to us because we are so self-absorbed in our own world.

It is easy to hate those who have hurt us, but only as God renews our hearts and teaches us to love what he loves can we begin to be offended by sin in the way that he is and that needs to be our prayer and that is the evidence of God's work in David's life that David is so offended by those who reject God that he is grieved to the point of being overwhelmed and crying out for God to do something.

We need to ask God to be shaping our hearts that we might love him and desire his glory more than our own. But that is where the question of this psalm gets even more pointed.

As we begin to see and hate sin with the same zeal that God does and with the same zeal that David does, how then do we respond to that sin? How then do we respond to injustice because in our world God is still rejected and hated by billions of people?

In our world there is still oppression and injustice all around us so how would God have us respond? I mean we've already said that in this psalm David is praying in line with the covenant and promises that God made to him but the question is as we look at sin around us is it right for us to pray the same thing?

[19:16] Is it okay for us to call down God's judgment on the sinners that we see in the world around us? The New Testament quotes this psalm quite a lot and I want to quickly show you three quotes in John's Gospel.

You don't need to flick there if you really fast go for it but if you want just scribble these down and check them out later on. In chapter 2 of John's Gospel Jesus discovers that the temple is being used as a market and he is so angry that he fashions a whip for himself and goes through cracking his whip and turning over tables and chasing out the people who are in there and his disciples are watching him do this watching his anger burn at these people who have perverted the use of his father's house and suddenly for the disciples it clicks.

Jesus is Psalm 69 verse 9 Zeal for God's house is consuming Jesus that is what's going on and John 2 says they remember this psalm and realise Jesus is doing it.

Second one in chapter 15 Jesus is sitting down with his disciples and explaining that they're going to be persecuted just like him. He's explaining that they're going to hate you just like they hated me and at the end Jesus says the world's rejection and hatred of him is a fulfilment of Psalm 69 verse 4 those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head.

He says that is me in that psalm. He says I'm experiencing all those things that David talked about and kind of foreshadowed earlier on this is about me and one last one in John chapter 19 Jesus is on the cross this is beginning at verse 28 in John 9 and Jesus has been whipped and bloodied he's about to die but one last thing he does so he's not sitting there thinking what boxes do I have to tick this was about him from the beginning and he says as he's hanging there so that the scripture might be fulfilled I'm thirsty and he's given a drink of wine vinegar Psalm 69 verse 21 they put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst it's not a coincidence this psalm is about God's anointed king and leader it is about King David absolutely it's first about

[ 21 : 45 ] King David but then it is about Jesus he fulfills this psalm he is the eternal king David was the temporary king the word used to describe David's role is the same word that's used to describe Jesus' saviour in the New Testament because the king was like the saviour but Jesus is the saviour of God's people Jesus lives out this psalm but the reaction that Jesus has to his enemies is very different to David's it's like Jesus is saying amen amen amen the whole way through and then he gets to verse 22 and something shifts because in Gethsemane you see Jesus praying prayers that kind of reflect what David's feeling Jesus feeling that anguish of if there's another way God can you do it but we get to verse 22 and it's where David and Jesus it becomes obvious just how different they are because Jesus' prayer is Father forgive them for they know not what they do see Jesus actually embodies the judgment that David prays for here he experiences the judgment he takes it on himself

Jesus wraps up all of verse 22 through to 28 on himself Jesus on the cross is not just about physical pain there is significant physical pain but it is more about what this psalm talks about it is more about the fierce anger of a holy God being poured out on his son Jesus takes that judgment in verses 22 to 28 and rolls it up with the rejoicing that David has in verses 29 to the end he combines them together and judgment and salvation become inseparably connected Jesus far surpasses anything that David could have even begun to hope for we get excited when we glory in the forgiveness that comes by the cross of our Savior but we cannot fully understand the forgiveness that we have we cannot fully understand the love that God has shown us unless we understand that at exactly the same time as that forgiveness was won the most direct and severe act of judgment that this world will ever know was being poured out until we grasp that all of God's wrath was poured out on

Jesus instead of us we will never begin to understand the love that God has shown us can we pray this prayer as forgiven sinners wrath is not ours to give we have a covenant that is better than the one that David knew we have a covenant that guarantees our eternal salvation through the blood of our son and as forgiven sinners wrath is not ours to give it is God's alone as followers of Jesus the model that we are given is to love our enemies love for our brothers and our enemies there's a great set of verses in Romans chapter 12 beginning at verse 17 it says do not repay anyone evil for evil be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody if it is possible as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone and here's really important do not take revenge my friends but leave room for

God's wrath for it is written it is mine to avenge I will repay says the Lord on the contrary if your enemy is hungry feed him if he is thirsty give him something to drink in doing this you will heap burning coals on his head do not overcome by evil but overcome evil with good the command to love doesn't remove the desire for justice it just helps us understand what justice really is justice isn't my vindication it's God's vindication it's those who have rejected him receiving what they

deserve and those who have trusted in the son being given the life that they do not so how do we respond to injustice and sin in the world around us as God does shape our heart to love him more than us and as we do

God willing become more offended by the irreverence that we're surrounded by how do we respond like David ultimately did from verse 29 he says I'm in pain and distress may your salvation oh God protect me I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving this will please the Lord more than an ox more than a bull with its horns and its hoofs and he rejoices because even though he's surrounded by injustice back in verse 13 he already knows that salvation is sure that judgment will come that God will bring justice and judgment and salvation respond like David ultimately did but more than that respond like Jesus did with sacrificial love even especially for those who persecute us because we are confident that God will bring justice we are confident because in

[ 27 : 40 ] Jesus he's already begun to do it and because he has promised that when Jesus returns he will bring justice fully and forever let's pray father god we acknowledge that it is our hearts first desire to protect ourselves but we ask that you would strip that away please shape our hearts that we would love you as you deserve that we would care more about your glory and your honor and your name and your purpose than any of our own ambition father as you shape us and as we recognize just how sinful and dark our world is may we be moved to love like you loved maybe we move to love sacrificially humbly without judgment knowing that it's you who judges give us the ability to love and forgive those who hurt us again knowing that it's you who judges and that your judgment is sure and right and just father be enough for us that we might be content in you that we might be released to love especially when it hurts father we thank you for your son we thank you that he was willing to take the punishment that we deserved lord may that truth daily break our hearts and excite us to share that love with others who don't deserve it thank you god for your word amen so you you other who