

1. Psalm 7: An Appeal for Defence Against the Wicked

Read Psalm 7

Re-read verses 1-5. What kind of afflictions does this passage suggest were troubling David? Violent personal attacks / accusations seem to be the problem. (cf. vv.1-2).

From these first 5 verses, how does David feel about these attacks?

David feels sure that these attacks are unjustified and that he is innocent. Thus, he can declare against himself, that if he has sinned in the way accused, may God punish him. He is sure that he is innocent and is sure that God will find him so.

Have you ever felt like David, this way? In what kind of situations? Discuss.

Read verses 6-11. What is David's great hope in time of affliction?

David calls on the LORD to rise up against his adversaries (v.6). He is confident that God will judge the wicked (vv.6,8,9) but vindicate, save and establish the righteous (vv.8,9,10).

What three roles of God are evident from this passage?

God is a righteous Judge (vv.6,8,11), Saviour (v.10) and Highest King (v.7).

How can David be sure that God will see beyond the outward appearance of things to judge accurately?

David knows that God can see inside our hearts and minds (v.9). God is a righteous judge and it is His daily occupation to be indignant at men's wickedness and evil hearts (vv.10-11).

Can we have the same confidence as David in God, when we are innocent?

(cf. Deuteronomy 32:3-4, Malachi 3:5-6).

Yes! Jesus is the Judge and King to come, who will righteously judge sin from His throne. (cf. New Testament: John 5:22-23, Rev 19:11-16, 20:11-12)

Read verses 12-16. What will characterise the ways of those who won't repent?

Violence and Mischief, as well as falsehood, characterise the unrepentant.

How will God respond?

God will return their own evil upon them.

Consider v.17. Even while waiting for God's justice and deliverance to come, how does David respond?

David is so confident that God will deliver him (v.1) that he can already give thanks to the Lord, and can sing praises to Him.

Why is David so confident in his final praises? What does he ground this confidence in, according to these verses?

In God's character: "according to His righteousness".

How can we respond to affliction and opposition today? (cf. also 1 Peter 2:19-20, 23) Discuss.

Summary: Sometimes we will suffer personal attacks for following Jesus. We can respond by entrusting ourselves to the Righteous King, Saviour and Judge, confidently praising Him in advance for our vindication and his justice against sin.

2. Psalm 17: A Prayer for Protection

Read Psalm 17

Examine verses 1-5. Consider the author of the Psalm, and the tone of the first 5 verses? What is David asking for, and where is he coming from?

David is asking for a fair judgement from God, and he comes from a place of innocence while afflicted.

What do these first 5 verses imply about the conditions that might apply for our petitions to be 'heard' by God? (Psalm 66:18, Isaiah 59:1-2, John 9:31)

David is certain that God will hear a just cause (vv.1-2), that God will hear a prayer from an honest man, and listen to one whose heart He knows to be innocent (v.3), peaceable, and a faithful follower of Him (vv.4-5). By implication, those who are otherwise, should not expect God's vindication.

Read verses 6-8. How does David view God in these verses?

David is confident that God is the one who will hear (v.6), and in lovingkindness, save whoever takes refuge in Him (v.7).

In verse 8, David refers to God's defence of His people in terms which recall our defence of the eye's pupil, and a mother bird's defence of her chicks. How do these metaphors deepen our understanding of God's love for us? Discuss.

Consider verses 9-12. How would you describe David's enemies, in this passage?

David's enemies are wicked and deadly (v.9), they outnumber and surround him (vv.9-11), they are dispassionate and proud, and focus on David's destruction, like a lion with its prey (vv.11-12).

Whom do David's enemies remind you of (cf. 1 Peter 5:8)? Does this feel familiar?

Read verses 13-15. How do the desires of the wicked versus the desires of the righteous contrast in these final verses?

The wicked find their good portion only in this life, in prosperity and posterity (v.14), but this is short-lived. David knows that his soul will be delivered (v.13), that one day he will see God's face, and he will be like God one day (v.15 cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 John 3:2).

Summary: David is confident that God will vindicate and rescue him from deadly enemies due to his innocence and trust in God, and due to God's lovingkindness and faithfulness to save His children. David can rejoice that the success of the wicked is temporary, but the hope of those who trust in God will be vindicated and eternal.

3. **Psalm 21: On the Victory of the Messiah!**

Read Psalm 21

Examine verses 1-6. What is the mood conveyed by David's psalm in these verses?

David's psalm conveys a mood of gladness (v.1), rejoicing (v.1), as well as gratefulness and satisfaction (vv.2-6) for all the Lord's blessings.

What key blessings does King David cite as examples of God's goodness towards him? David mentions salvation (v.1), that his prayers and requests are heard and granted (v.2), good things and kingship (v.3), eternal life (v.4), salvation-glory (v.5), splendour and majesty (v.5), and the joy and gladness of God's presence (v.6).

What has God blessed us with in Christ (cf. Eph 1:3-14; Col 1:9-20)? Discuss.

Read verse 7. What does this verse say about the difference in outlook of the one who trusts in God and the one who does not?

The 'For' refers back to v.6 – the King's trust in God fits with his joy at always being in God's love. Also he can have confidence in God's lovingkindness so that no matter what happens, his world will not shake apart. Not so the person who does not have this confidence.

Consider verses 8-12. What main theme can you discern in these verses?

God will judge sin and sinners, and will frustrate their wicked plots.

How severe will God's judgement be against those who rebel against Him?

God will find them out (v.8), and their destination will be the fire (v.9).

What does the New Testament teach on the destination of the ungodly?

(cf. Matt.25:41; Rev 20:11-15, 21:8)

What should our response and reaction be to God's judgment? Discuss.

Read verse 13. Why does David end his Psalm in this way?

Why are these attributes of God so reassuring to David?

David praises God as the natural result of his confidence that God is a just saviour. God's power is very reassuring in that context: He is both good and powerful, together.

So, if we suffer at the hands of God's enemies, how, from this Psalm, can we be encouraged to respond?

We can even rejoice and take confidence that God will ultimately save us, that He watches over us and will bring about a just and righteous result in the long run.

Summary: David can confidently rejoice and give thanks that God will continue to bless and save His servant, and that God will ultimately judge sin and sinners in righteousness, truth, and power.

4. Psalm 25: Deliverance from Shame, Sin & Stresses

Read Psalm 25

Examine verses 1-3. David is anxious not to be put to shame. What does he mean by that? He does not want to bear the shame of his enemies triumphing over him; for not only would he be shamed, but also God would be, for he was a man who served God.

How does David deal with his anxiety of being put to shame?

He trusts in God to help him overcome his enemies, and he reminds himself of how God, in the past, had rescued the godly from shame, and returned it upon the heads of the enemy.

How do you deal with your anxieties and concerns? [Discuss] cf. also 1 Pet 5:6-7

Read verses 4-7. In vv.4-5, what does David plead for? Why?

David pleads for God to lead him in His righteous ways and to teach him in His truth. He does not want to be like the wicked, who walk in their own ways and who walk in falsehood.

David seeks to live a godly life, but in vv.6-7 what is he aware of? What does he plead?

He is aware of his own sins, even back to the times of his youth. He hasn't been holy and righteous all his life, and so he pleads for God's forgiveness according to His compassion, lovingkindness and goodness.

Like David, do we plead with God? For forgiveness? For walking in righteous paths?

Read verses 8-15. All humans sin against God, but which sinners does God help and bless?

Those who are humble (v.9), who seek as best they can to keep His covenant (v.10), who fear the Lord (v.12), and who trust (look) to Him (v.15). *Does this describe you? [discuss]*

What does God do for those sinners who are humble, who fear Him and trust Him?

God instructs them in His ways (vv.8-9, 12), He pardons their sins (v.11), He promises prosperity and a blessing on their posterity (v.13), He makes known His secret counsels and the blessings of His covenant (v.14), and He rescues them from enemies (v.15).

Why does God bless such humble sinners like this?

God is good and upright (v.8), as well as forgiving and gracious. Praise the Lord!

Do you grasp your own sinfulness and God's great grace? Cf. v.11 and 1 Tim 1:15

Consider verses 16-22. How does David's sins and the attack of his enemies affect him?

David is lonely & afflicted (v.16), troubled & distressed (v.17), afflicted & burdened (v.18).

What does David ask for from God? What does this show?

He asks God to turn to him and be gracious (v.16), to deliver him (v.17), to forgive him (v.18), to deal with his enemies (v.19), and to guard and protect him (v.20). David truly trusted in the Lord with all his heart. There was no one else he turned to, except the Lord.

Why should God help David, according to what we read in vv.20-21?

Although David was a sinner (vv.7, 11), he had made the Lord his refuge (he trusted in God), and he waited on the Lord. *Does this describe you?*

In vv.20-22, what were David's final pleas?

He wanted to not be put to shame, and to be a man of integrity and uprightness, and for God's people Israel to be redeemed. He wasn't just self-focussed, but focussed on God's people and God's glory. *Are we the same, as we live in Christ's kingdom?*

Summary: David is confident that God will deliver him from shame, from sin, and from the stresses and struggles that come from sin and enemies. We can be confident too, if we have put our faith in Jesus, and wait on the Lord to help us.

5. Psalm 36: Contrast of God and Man

Read Psalm 36

Consider verses 1-4. Who does the psalmist describe in this section? What are they like?

He describes the ungodly, the unrepentant sinner; the person who is not a servant of the Lord. There is no fear of God in them (v.1), they entertain sinful thoughts and plan wicked things (v.1,4), they flatter themselves about the wicked things they dream up (v.2), their words are deceitful (v.3), and they do not despise or hate their sin. *Who does this remind you of today?*

In contrast, the godly (ie, the repentant sinner) is different. In what way?

They put to death evil thoughts and desires, and are ashamed when they see it in their heart; they loathe it. They try to be wise, despising evil and clinging to what is good (Rom 12:9).

What two things help the godly to live a righteous life? (Heb 12:28-29; 1 Cor 15:9-10) They fear the Lord, and they are so thankful for God's grace in their life (grace to us sinners).

How does the fear of God and the sinfulness of humans inter-relate in these verses?

The more we comprehend the holiness and glory of God, and how fallen and sinful we are, the more we will see our sin and loathe it, and seek to be humble and desire God's grace.

Reflect on verses 5-9. In contrast to the ungodly in vv.1-4, what is God like?

God is full of love (v.5a, 7a), and is faithful (v.5b), righteous (v.6a), just in His judgements (v.6b), preserving (v.6b), protective (v.7b), and abundantly good in blessing us (v.8-9).

How could the psalmist specifically receive God's abundant goodness?

He could receive God's goodness by fearing the Lord (v.1b), taking refuge in Him (v.7b), and humbly coming to Him and seeking Him (v.8). NB: Jesus taught that God's goodness is upon all (Matt 5:44-45), but His greater blessings are upon those who seek Him.

How do we receive the fullness of God's goodness today? (cf. John 4:13-14; 5:24; 6:35-37; 8:12; 11:25-26).

We receive God's blessings and goodness through Jesus – trusting and believing in Him.

Consider vv.5-9 again. What do you notice in regard to the language of this section?

Huge metaphors are used to describe God's greatness and His abundant goodness. He is truly a great God who deserves our highest praises (cf. Eph 1:3-6).

Examine verses 10-12. What is David's request in the light of God's goodness, as well as living in a world full of ungodly people?

He requests for God to continue to show Him His love and righteousness. He also asks that we might not become like the ungodly who are proud, and that we might not be led astray.

Is this something we should pray for? Why?

Like David, we are still sinners, but we long for God to continue to show us His grace and goodness. Also, we are weak and in need of God to help us not be led astray and to become like the ungodly who are carefree and proud.

In v.12 it says that the ungodly are not able to rise from the destructive pit they are in.

What makes it almost impossible for an ungodly person to turn back to God?

It's human pride (v.11) and their lack of fear of God (v.1b). Pride keeps many from turning to Jesus and receiving God's grace, and the lack of fear stops many taking God seriously.

Summary: Even though we are all sinners, fear the Lord and take refuge in Him. Through Christ and by God's amazing goodness and grace, He will bless us with abundant life and light (cf. Psalm 36:8-9; John 4:13-14; John 10:9-10).

6. Psalm 39: On Wisdom and Futility

Read Psalm 39

Consider vv. 1-6. What conditions did David place on himself? Why?

David decided to guard his speech and not vent his distress in front of the wicked. It would reflect poorly on his own trust in God; or worse, dishonour God's name in the eyes of men.

Did refusing to speak help to restrain David's pain? Why or why not? (vv.2-3)

It didn't help his pain before the wicked. He grew more frustrated with them.

Instead of breaking his vow to not speak before the wicked, what did David do? (v.4)

David spoke to the Lord. He poured his heart to God.

What can we learn from that principle that David sets for us? (cf. Psa 39:12; Phil 4:6)

When we are upset and frustrated, we must pray first. If we don't, there is a high chance that we will sin with our mouth and disgrace God's name. We can bring all our petitions, griefs and sorrows to God in prayer; respectfully and legitimately (cf. Jesus in Matt 26:36-39).

What is so surprising about what David prayed to the Lord? (vv.4-6)

As David poured out his heart to the Lord, he didn't angrily "go off" at the wicked. Instead, he spoke to the Lord about life.

What are the two main topics of David's musing about life (vv.4-6)?

Firstly, human life, both for the wicked and the righteous, is brief (vv.4-5). Secondly, all our activities to gain riches is meaningless, as we can't take anything with us into the life to come.

Consider vv.7-9. How do vv.7-9 contrast with David's sober prayer in vv.4-6?

Although life and riches are temporary, for the righteous (like David), God is our hope (v.7), He delivers from sins and sin's consequences (v.8), and He stops our mouths complaining.

Why should our mouth be stopped when it comes to complaining, or venting our frustration? (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11)

God is sovereign, and He allows things to happen for our spiritual good.

Consider vv. 10-11. What reasons can you see here for God afflicting us sometimes?

God uses afflictions to chasten us over our iniquities (v.11a), to consume our idols (v.11b), and to remind us that we are sojourners here (v.11c) –heaven is our real home (v.11c).

Consider David's final prayer in vv. 12-13. From v.4 David has been praying to the Lord. What is his plea in the closing part of his prayer (vv.12-13)?

David pleads that God would answer him; the Lord is his only hope (v.7); that God would hear his words, see his tears, and the loneliness that comes from being rejected by the world.

In v.13, God's gaze is one of wrath. What is David's great hope here? Is it ours too?

David's hope is to not have to endure God's wrath, but to enjoy God's favour. This should be our desire too, which is a reality through our dear Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:36; Eph 2:1-5).

As we come to the end of this psalm, how can we be happy/rejoice in affliction now? (cf. Luke 6:20-23; Rom 5:1-5; Col.1:24; 1 Peter 3:13-16, 4:1-2, 4:12-14)?

We can remember that God's purpose is to develop us through suffering, as part and parcel of our rich inheritance in Christ Jesus; and then after that, we will be received into glory.

Summary: Worldly vanities and our sufferings are transitory compared to our eternal hope. We can trust in and pray to the Lord, even rejoicing for a time as we suffer for Christ's name, knowing that through it we will be refined, and bring glory to God.

7. Psalm 40 – Trusting in God and Delighting in His Will

Read Psalm 40

Consider vv. 1-3. *David was in a bad state (v.12). What did he not do? What did he do? (v.1)*
He didn't try and sort out his state. Instead, he prayed, and patiently waited for God's help.

So often we don't patiently wait for God, but take things into our own hands. Why? [Discuss]

As David waited for the Lord, what did God do for him? (vv.2-3a)

God rescued him from destruction, restored him to a secure position, and made him rejoice in God's goodness and grace. *Consider the metaphors used in v.2. Can you relate?*

When we wait on the Lord and He helps us, what impact does this create? (v.3b)

It causes others to realise who God is, and to revere Him and to rest (trust) in Him as well.

Consider vv. 4-5. *As we live life, we have two choices. What are they? (v.4)*

We can trust in the Lord and be blessed, or we can trust in man (ourselves or others), and not be blessed and helped, because man is proud and given over to falsehood (cf. Psa 146).

Why should we trust in the Lord, according to v.5?

There is no one like the Lord. For those who trust in Him, He performs wonders to help us, and He also has thoughts (wonderful thoughts) toward us. God loves us and cares for us.

What 'wonders' from Israel's history might David be thinking of in regard to God?

God rescued Israel from Egypt, gave them amazing victories so that they could live in the Promised Land, rescued them again and again from enemies, and blessed them.

What wonders has God done since David's time that now bless us even more?

God sent His Son Jesus, who died for us and rose again, so that we could be rescued from sin and be reconciled to God. What incredible blessings we now have in Christ (cf. Eph 1:3-8).

Consider vv. 6-8. *Read also Heb 10:4-10. What is so amazing?*

Heb 10 is about Jesus, which therefore means Psa 40:6-8 is about Jesus; not just about David.

David sought to obey God and to delight in His will, rather than just perform religious service (eg, offer sacrifices). How did Jesus fulfill these words in Psa 40 so profoundly?

Jesus came, not to offer sacrifices under the Mosaic Law, but in obedience to God and in accordance with His will, to offer His own body as a ransom and an atoning sacrifice for us. Indeed, the blood of animals could not actually atone for our sin; only Jesus' blood could.

Consider vv. 9-10. *David lived out these words. In what way has Jesus fulfilled them fully?*

When Jesus walked this earth He constantly proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom; ie, of God's righteousness, faithfulness, salvation, love & truth. He made clear to all that by God's righteousness and faithfulness, we can know His salvation if we trust in Him (the Christ).

Consider vv. 11-12. *In the midst of David's afflictions what is David confident of?*

David is confident that God will show him compassion, and that the Lord will preserve him and guide him in His love and truth. *Are we confident of these things too? [Discuss]*

Consider vv. 13-17. *Because David is confident in God's care, what does he do?*

David prays for God's quick deliverance and for His justice (vv.13-15). He is sure that the Lord is mindful of his afflictions and that God will help him and deliver him (v.17).

Because God does deliver those who look to Him, what should believers do? (v.16)

Together, we should rejoice and be glad in the Lord. We should magnify His name. *Do we?*

What can we do to help us handle affliction today?

We can remember, like David, all that God has done in history to save us, and His future plans to bless us in Christ. We can trust wholly in Him for justice, mercy and deliverance.

Summary: May the godly wait patiently for the Lord, trust in Him, and delight to do His will; and God will bless us, and ultimately deliver us and bring us into His glory.

8. Psalm 65 – On God's Greatness and Goodness

Read Psalm 65

Consider vv.1-4. What should cause us to praise God's name?

God hears our prayers (v.2), forgives transgressions (v.3), and satisfies us with the goodness (v.4) that comes from being in His presence (in the OT, from being in His house/temple).

God's great and good blessings are particularly for who? (v.4)

It is for those whom God chooses to bring near to be in a close, personal and reconciled relationship with Him; such was the case for David.

Are we able to enjoy the same great blessings as David? (cf. John 6:44; Eph 1:3)

Yes we can, if God has drawn us to Himself through Jesus. In Jesus, we are even more blessed than David, through what God has done for us in Christ.

Consider again vv.1-4. What characterises those who have drawn near to God?

They praise God, they fulfil their promises to God, they pray and seek His forgiveness, and they love to dwell in God's court (ie, to have fellowship with God and His people).

Consider James 4:6-10 and 1 John 1:5-10. What do these passages add about what characterises those who know God and who have been drawn close to Him?

James 4:6-10 - they humble themselves before God and seek Him, they repent of their sins and seek to be cleansed, and they wait for God to exalt them.

1 John 1:5-10 - they maintain their walk with God by confessing their sins, and by having their sins cleansed through the Saviour's blood that was shed for them.

Consider vv. 5-8. How is God described in v.5?

God is awesome in His power and righteous, and is able to save those who call on Him.

What examples are given of God's power and righteousness in Creation? (vv.6-8)

God establishes the mighty mountains, He calms massive storms, and He even has the power to manage people when they roar and rave. God's power is seen throughout the whole earth.

When we consider God, what should the response be of all people?

We should trust Him (v.5), be in awe of Him (v.8), and like Creation, "shout for joy" (v.8).

Consider vv. 9-13. In this section, what does David give praise to God for?

Not only does God save those who call on Him (v.5), but He also blesses the earth with great abundance so that we are well satisfied and filled with joy (together with Creation).

In this psalm, David praises God for saving Him, and for His abundant goodness. Why should we, if we are in Christ, praise God even more? (cf. Eph 1:3-12; Rom 8:31-39)

In Christ, God has saved us with an eternal and very great salvation; our sins are forgiven, we have been reconciled to God, and we have an eternal inheritance, because of God's grace. In Christ, we have seen the pinnacle of God's power and righteousness and grace. Amen!

Not only has God saved us in Christ, but can we identify with vv.9-13 of this psalm?

We can totally identify and glorify God, especially in Australia, because God has abundantly blessed us with so much. We have all our physical needs met abundantly.

What should our response be to God's goodness in Christ and in Creation?

We should rejoice in Him, and glorify Him with praise! (cf. 1 Thess 5:16-18; 1 Pet 1:8-9).

Summary: God is worthy of all our praises as our great Creator and Saviour. By His goodness, He blesses us with abundant material goodness; but even more so, by His grace He blesses us with abundant spiritual blessings when we are in Christ Jesus.