

The past two weeks we've looked at the first two Psalms, first a psalm about blessing in Christ and perishing outside of him, and then a psalm about God's power and authority over every other authority on earth, but for today? Today we have the first psalm of lament. A psalm that David was inspired by the Spirit to write when he was on the run, cast out from the city by a rebellious son leading a coup on his throne.

But this is the Word of God, and it is given for our benefit. It is a word that is timeless and relates to us in our own struggles and sorrows. For all the joy that can be found in simple moments of our lives, we could easily lose them in the sea of suffering that is human life.

So in our moments of joy, we remain grounded in why we have a lasting joy. Whenever we face confrontation or feel overwhelmed by opposition, we may turn to God's Word and know of what we have in God, the peace and rest we can enjoy as his children, and the good news of salvation that we can bring to sinners from every background!

The opening words of this psalm highlight the dire situation David was in. He is surrounded by enemies. They are a great horde of people that have risen to oppress him. He's not just describing an enemy that he might face on the field of battle, but more specifically those that would oppress him. They would press in on him. The impression is that he is being crushed, pressed in on every side, worried about being overwhelmed by it all.

There are times where we feel like we can't catch a break. And we might ask where is the God of Psalm 1 and 2? Where is the Lord who has set his king on Zion? Where is the Lord God who laughs at the enemy? Now many are even willing to blaspheme and say that God won't provide salvation! An open taunt of no salvation in God for the soul. It can seem as though the world around us is changing, is transforming into an unfamiliar place, giving rights and freedoms that ought not to be, while withholding rights from others, like the unborn. It seems as though there is intense opposition to the Word. But for all the sense of crushing, for the opposition that can be experienced, how things appear, how things seem, does not line up with reality. With how things are.

Notice how the oppressor talks, how he does not say the name of God. “There is no salvation for him in God.” They cannot say the covenant name of the Lord. They do not fully understand what they are talking about. If his enemies did know the name of the Lord, if they did know the power and authority of the living and eternal LORD God, they would not rise up.

The reality that David was portraying in his sense of despair was not a true reality, but one that his enemies were pushing. They had an agenda, they wanted him to feel overwhelmed, and to not acknowledge his God and his power. And this covenant child, despite the overwhelming situation he was in, did not give in to despair. For however dire his situation appeared, he knew he could call upon the Lord. Right from the start of the psalm, he names the one his enemies would not. He calls out, “Oh Lord.” For how things appear is not how things are! This psalm does not end with David being overwhelmed by his enemies, but it carries on into the reality of the LORD.

He confesses that the LORD is his shield, his glory, the one who lifts up his head. He counters the false assumption of the unbeliever with the truth. David knows the reality of his enemies pressing in on every side, and he does not succumb to a fear of the enemy because he knows that God is sovereign. He knows that God is in control. He knows that the LORD is in control, and that he is the one who is acting in this world. Therefore he does not set himself against the foe, but calls upon the LORD to act.

He appeals to God to arise and save him. Arise, O LORD! Save me, O my God! This is the plea for deliverance we could expect after the first two verses. This is what we expect from the man who needs help from the Almighty One, the God who is able to save, the one who is his shield.

It’s important for us to recognize that the great insults of verse 1 and 2 are primarily against the LORD God. When they taunt and say there is no salvation for him in God, they are insulting the Lord himself. So the wrath to be incurred is not David’s wrath, but the Lord’s wrath. He himself left the city of Jerusalem, fleeing for his life from his son. Part of the reason David fled the city was because the city would be put to the sword. He himself left with his officials, and Absalom spared the city. He waited on the LORD before battle would take place.

We know, brothers and sisters, that when Christ Jesus returns, he will put to shame all of his enemies. We know that in the last judgment those that do not believe in him will perish, and that his people will receive a crown of glory. We know that his victory is guaranteed, and that he waits that day so that he can call his people out of darkness and into his light. Both in the Old and the New Testament, God reminds his people that Vengeance is his. Both in his law in Deuteronomy and in Paul's letter to the Romans, the LORD reminds us that he will have vengeance for injustice against his name. We may call on him to act in justice, but what about ourselves? How do we act?

In our knowledge of how God will bring judgment to those who reject him, we need to come with grace and care for our neighbours. We cannot know who God has called to follow him, and who he leaves in darkness. We can only know that we ourselves are recipients of undeserved grace, and are called to bring the message of a LORD God who is a shield, and who does give glory and dignity to his people.

Our desire for the justice of God and for his vengeance is from that perspective. Oh Lord, may you be a shield to me, to your people, to those you call your children. And also Lord, may you show your power and glory in how you will respond to this world's affront to your holy name. But may that vengeance be the Lord's, and not our own. May we not stand in the way of the gospel. Let us stand as a witness to the world of the beautiful reality we live in: one that is grounded in Christ. One that knows we are protected for eternity. One that knows glory and honour await when the earth is made new. For Salvation belongs to the LORD; his blessing is on his people!