

Psalm 7

Just Justice

Amington St Editha

Sunday 25 June 2017

The Way of the Righteous in the Muck of Life (7)

from Dale Ralph Davis' book

Refuge (1-5)

There is a lot of anger in today's psalm. **§ (x3)**

§ Yet again, David is in trouble. This time he's in trouble with someone called Cush the Benjaminite (title). We don't know what he did – only that David thinks he is innocent:

Lord my God, if I have done this
and there is guilt on my hands—
if I have repaid my ally with evil
or without cause have robbed my foe—
then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;
let him trample my life to the ground
and make me sleep in the dust.

Psalm 7.3-5 (NIV)

People talk like that quite a lot in the Old Testament – it's called a curse formula, and David was using it to make the point quite forcefully that he is *innocent* (not in everything, but certainly in *this* situation, whatever it is).

But even as he protests his innocence, David also takes refuge in God – look at v1: **Lord my God, I take refuge in you.** In other words, David is saying, 'I'm innocent – I didn't do it – *but even if I did*, I still take refuge in God, and *he* will keep me safe.'

Think for a moment about what David is saying here: he knows God sees everything. He's like one of those famous **§** Cold War spy planes that took such clear photographs that the analysts could read the time on the soldiers' watches. God sees everything, in perfect and clear detail, he is the God who **probes minds and hearts** (9).

§ A burglar broke into a house one night. He shined his torch around, looking for valuables, and when he picked up a CD player to place in his swag bag, a strange, disembodied voice echoed from the dark saying, **§** 'Jesus is watching you.'

He nearly jumped out of his skin, **§** clicked off his torch, and froze.

When he heard nothing more after a bit, he shook his head, promised himself a holiday after the next job, then clicked the torch on and began searching for more valuables.

Just as he pulled the stereo out so he could disconnect the wires, clear as a bell he heard, ¶ ‘Jesus is watching you.’

Freaked out, he shone his light around frantically, looking for the source of the voice. Finally, in the corner of the room, his light came to rest ¶ on a parrot.

‘Did you say that?’, he hissed at the parrot.

‘Yep,’ the parrot squawked, ‘I’m just trying to warn you.’

The burglar relaxed. ‘Warn me, huh? Who in the world are *you*?’

‘Moses,’ replied the bird. “‘Moses’?” the burglar laughed. ‘What kind of people would name their bird “Moses”?’

‘The kind of people that would name their ¶ Rottweiler “Jesus”.’

God is watching you – but unlike the parrot, that isn’t a veiled threat. For David it is the ultimate comfort: God is watching, God sees everything and knows everything me, *and yet still he loves me*. Innocent or not, he takes ¶ refuge in God, safe and secure in God.

Hope (6-9)

What makes *you* angry? ¶ I confess to some petty-mindedness. I get angry at missing or incorrect apostrophes. I get angry when I am cut up on a roundabout. I get angry when people have a go at me over something I didn't even do.

But they are all petty things. Most of us in this country do not have to face real injustice. That's why things like the awful fire at ¶ Grenfell Tower are *so* shocking. Those people were ignored by those in authority because they were poor.

Every now and then events like that shock us, they shock us out of our complacency.

Now, I need to be careful how I say this next part. I do not want to belittle any of the struggles we all face. We all have different struggles, none of us has a perfect life – and I mean that.

But, in the main, in this country the vast majority of us are safe, dry, fed, watered and clean. And that I think is why we find some of the Old Testament so uncomfortable.

David says, **arise, Lord, in your anger** (6)... **God.. displays his wrath every day** (11)... **He has prepared his deadly weapons** (13)... and we shift uncomfortably on our seats.

‘That’s not the God I believe in,’ we say to one another. I can’t tell you the number of Christians who tell me they don’t like all that nasty violence in the Old Testament, that they are New Testament Christians, that the God of Moses isn’t the God of Jesus, that it’s all about love, and not anger and vengeance.

To which I say: open your eyes and see the suffering.

David begins by complaining about his own situation, asking for personal justice: **rise up against the rage of *my* enemies** (6), **vindicate *me*, Lord** (8). But that prayer also drives him to pray for the wider injustice suffered by God’s people: **bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure** (9).

Dale Ralph Davis puts it like this:

His own trouble stimulated his prayers for the suffering people of God as a whole. And that should be the case for us, whether or not we ourselves are currently battling unjust oppression. Try to keep the trials of the ‘persecuted church’ before you on a regular basis. Think of the attacks of terrorist groups on the 3,000 Christians left in the Gaza Strip; of the ‘disappearance’ of the North Korean girl and her family because she told the teacher it was ‘by God’s grace’ she had gotten a good grade; of the way

the Burmese army uses Karen Christian women and children as human minesweepers; and on it goes. But why? So you will throw up your arms and cry, ‘Oh, let the evil of the wicked ones come to an end!’ So it would stir us up to prayer for God’s anger and justice to rush forth and work deliverance for his people.

The way of the righteous in the muck of life, p88-89

There are more slaves today than ever before in human history. Children are made to watch their parents be killed, before being forced to fight as soldiers. Women are brutalised, men are battered. People are tortured horrifically – O Lord, **bring to an end the violence of the wicked!** (9). And that’s saying nothing about the economic slaves we have created through our desire for cheap clothes and cheap food. What about those whose homes and livelihoods will be swept away as sea levels rise as a result of *our* two hundred years of polluting, while we sit here, safe behind our flood defences?

When people say they don’t like it when God gets angry in the Bible, I’m afraid they are making God less than he is. God is love – yes he is – but he is also *holy* and *just*, two things the world is definitely not. God made this world, and *this is what we have done to it*. Angry? You bet. One day he will right all this injustice.

God's anger is therefore about *hope* – that one day, justice will reign and God will punish all violence and destruction. For those who suffer, God's anger is not an embarrassment, but a source of *hope*. God's anger looks very different from a § safe suburban garden, than it does from the inside of a § prison camp.

If you find the language in Psalm 7 shocking, or embarrassing, if you find it is not your view of God, please can I suggest you don't dismiss it or ignore it, but allow *the Bible* to challenge *your* view of God, rather than the other way round? Please hear its challenge and ask God to show you more of himself.

Praise

Because *all* of God is worthy of praise. Unlike us, his anger isn't petty-minded ranting over someone misusing the lanes on the roundabout at the end of Sheepcote Lane.

The more you see of God, the more you will praise him – exactly like David. As so often this psalm ends with praise §:

I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness;
I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.

Psalm 7.17 (NIV)

This should be our normal, default position.

Not complaining.

Not ranting.

Not even clamouring for justice.

But giving thanks and praise to God.

As Christians, we have so much to learn from David – he was after all the ‘man after God’s own heart’. This is perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn from him: in all situations (don’t forget David is in deep trouble here), give thanks; in all situations, sing praises to God; in all situations, remember God is righteous, his name means salvation, he alone is glorious, he will one day bring perfect justice and right every wrong – and the only safe place, the only true refuge, is in his love.

May we all learn David’s heart of prayer: longing for justice, knowing we are safe in God’s hands.

Amen.