

A Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Psalm 59

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-8-09

Introduction

Before I read Psalm 59, I want to read a rather unusual passage as an introduction. It is Deuteronomy 22:22-24.

Deuteronomy 22:22 “If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die—the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.

There are some disasters that happen to the church because she has committed spiritual adultery, and the husband, Jesus Christ, is a jealous husband. He is forgiving when true repentance has occurred, but an adulteress who continues to sin with a high hand cannot expect to appease His fury. And there are passages in the prophets that apply this passage to God’s relationship to adulterous Israel. Continuing to read:

Deuteronomy 22:23 “If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, Deuteronomy 22:24 then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor’s wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

And I want to emphasize that phrase, “**because she did not cry out.**” Women were expected to resist their rapists, and they were expected to cry for help. Neither men nor women were supposed to be passive when it came to evil. They were to resist evil with all the means at their disposal. Obviously there were limits to their resistance. Jesus said that we can’t resist a civil magistrate with the sword unless another civil magistrate interposes and authorizes us to do so. But there are many other levels of resistance that people can have.

Applied to the church, this means that the church must cry out to her husband and His armies for help when she is being raped. There is too much passivity when it comes to persecution. God has given us the imprecatory Psalms to cry out, but many Christians consider those psalms to be sub-Christian. They take their persecution without crying out for protection and vengeance with the Psalms that God has provided. I want to remedy that this morning by preaching on Psalm 59 for Persecution Sunday.

© Copyright 2009 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to all readers to download, print, and distribute on paper or electronically any Sermons, provided that each reprint bear this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed to the public without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

Please stand. We will sing this Psalm as the bride immediately after the sermon, but as I read it now, make it your prayer on behalf of the persecuted church. I'm going to include the inspired title in my reading:

Psalms 59:0 To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him.

Psalms 59:1 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Defend me from those who rise up against me.

Psalms 59:2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from bloodthirsty men.

Psalms 59:3 For look, they lie in wait for my life;
The mighty gather against me,
Not *for* my transgression nor *for* my sin, O LORD.

Psalms 59:4 They run and prepare themselves through no fault *of mine*.
Awake to help me, and behold!

Psalms 59:5 You therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors.

Selah

Psalms 59:6 At evening they return,
They growl like a dog,
And go all around the city.

Psalms 59:7 Indeed, they belch with their mouth;
Swords *are* in their lips;
For *they say*, "Who hears?"

Psalms 59:8 But You, O LORD, shall laugh at them;
You shall have all the nations in derision.

Psalms 59:9 I will wait for You, O You his Strength;
For God *is* my defense.

Psalms 59:10 My God of mercy shall come to meet me;
God shall let me see *my desire* on my enemies.

Psalms 59:11 Do not slay them, lest my people forget;
Scatter them by Your power,
And bring them down,
O Lord our shield.

Psalms 59:12 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips,
Let them even be taken in their pride,
And for the cursing and lying *which* they speak.

Psalms 59:13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*,
That they *may not be*;
And let them know that God rules in Jacob
To the ends of the earth.

Selah

Psalms 59:14 And at evening they return,
They growl like a dog,
And go all around the city.

Psalms 59:15 They wander up and down for food,

And howl if they are not satisfied.

Psalms 59:16 But I will sing of Your power;

Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning;

For You have been my defense

And refuge in the day of my trouble.

Psalms 59:17 To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises;

For God is my defense,

My God of mercy.

And all God's people said? Amen. Let's pray.

[Prayer]

I mentioned earlier that around the world Christians are setting aside this day to especially pray for the persecuted church. We will have a special prayer meeting this afternoon, and we have special guides to help make your own family prayers more systematic. But I would encourage you to in some way set aside time for prayer today for Christians in other countries who are being tortured in the most barbaric ways, or where they have been imprisoned in bug and rat infested holes for years, or where gangs of militants have murdered, raped and pillaged Christian areas simply because they were Christians. You see, Scripture says, **“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them - those who are mistreated - since you yourselves are in the body also.”** If you are in the body of Christ, this is a Psalm that you can cry out as the bride.

And I thought I would begin just by reading a few news clips that will give a tiny sampling of the kinds of things that are happening to you, the bride, around the world.

[Here's a headline from this past Friday:] Egyptian security arrests several Christians for praying at home 'without a license.' Imprisoned Iranian women refuse to deny their faith. [Here's from November 5:] Christian believer assaulted in Karnataka State, India. [Some headlines a bit earlier:] Somalia militants kill Christian woman for refusing to wear veil. Pakistan police torture Christian brothers. A Christian young woman has been raped in the Indian State of Andhra Pradesh, but police refuse to detain the known suspect while her family faces death threats. Taliban group have threatened to kill Christians and burn their homes in Pakistan's Punjab province if they don't meet their demands. Iranian Christian women may face execution ... after an Iranian court officially charged them with 'apostasy.' Ethiopian Muslims attack churches. Christian teachers in Malawi threatened with death if home prayer meeting not discontinued. Sharia law in Northern Nigeria increases threats and

danger to Christians. Waimulang village in Buru burned to the ground by Militants... 1400 hundred Christians displaced, several killed. Laskar Jihad to blame. Muslim militants destroy Pantangolembe village, burning 68 houses and looting 1.5 tons of rice that the churches were using to feed Christian refugees from other villages. The militants proceeded to Poso where they surrounded an enclave of 50,000 Christians. The article said, "Sources in Indonesia said the jihad army was well equipped with AK-47s and other military-grade weapons - in places better armed than the local police and army units - while the Christians had only hunting rifles, spears and machetes."

Another predominantly Christian village burned to the ground by Muslim armed militia, with 350 homes being totally destroyed, several Christians killed and thousands displaced by the militants who occupied the territory. Massacre of church members in Pakistan and threats made on other churches. Eight foreigners detained in Saudi Arabia for meeting as a home church. Church attacked in Upper Egypt. 10 year old James Jedda is burned by Muslim soldiers in a bonfire because he refused to recant his Christianity. Amazingly he escapes, though with massive burns. Ritta cries out "Help me Lord, I do not want to deny you" as she is cut with broken glass by her persecutors.

Those of you who know how pervasive persecution is know that I could go on for the next hour simply reading headlines of Christians suffering for their faith over the last year. We tend to be a little insulated from such things in America, don't we? These aren't the subjects of the national news media. And by the way, if you get all your news from CBS, NBC, and other national news media, talk to me, because I think you are being brainwashed. Those are propaganda machines of the liberal left. You need to turn them off and start listening to good news. Get a Christian perspective on the news, or at the very least, a conservative perspective. And if you don't know how, I can give you all kinds of suggestions. But let's get to the Psalm:

I. Defensive Warfare (vv. 1-10)

A. Driven To God as Our Protector (vv. 1-5)

In this Psalm we see the cry of David, not just on his own behalf, but also on behalf of the bride as a whole. Yes, there is a historical context given in the title, but let me show you hints of how he (by inspiration) made this

much broader than just himself. The only enemy David had when he wrote this Psalm was Saul, a Jew. But notice in verse 5 that he calls on God to punish all the nations and to not be merciful to any wicked transgressors. Verse 8 is the same: “**You shall have all the nations in derision.**” This is the whole bride crying out wherever she might reside in the world. Secondly, the title says that he wrote this to the Chief Musician. In other words, it was intended to be sung in the temple by all God’s people. They take on the cause.

Let’s dig a little bit into the first verse: In verses 1-5 the bride is driven to Jesus, her husband and Protector. David said, “**Deliver me from my enemies, O my God.**” This is in the first personal singular (“me,” and “my”), and you might think, “How can I sing this? I don’t experience the bloody persecution that is mentioned here.” But again, we need to get used to thinking of ourselves as the bride of Jesus Christ calling on the Lord to protect her.

The Psalm says, “**Deliver me from my enemies,**” The church has a lot of friends, but it also has enemies. And you might wonder “Why?” The church has been such a blessing to the world! Read D. James Kennedy’s book, *What if Jesus Had Never Been Born*, and you will realize the huge number of blessings that the church has brought to the world. Down through history the church has *benefitted* mankind enormously: orphanages, old age homes, hospitals, schools, financial aid, and many other acts of love. Why would the world bite the hand that feeds it? Why would our love be responded to with hate? Well, the answer is that we don’t wrestle ultimately with flesh and blood, but with demons. The Bible says that unbelievers have Satan as their father, and the desires of their father they will do. And the demons that influence these men and women hate anything associated with Christ’s grace.

David goes on: “**defend me from those who rise up against me.**” What this Psalm is teaching us is that the church must not take abuse quietly. She must cry out, and when her husband hears her cries, He will respond with vengeance. A second thing we learn is that enemies rise up rather suddenly. What was not an enemy yesterday might rise up as an enemy today. Sometimes Christians don’t know where the next attack will come from. But there are people right now in our country who think that all Christians should be incarcerated in insane asylums because they think we are by definition crazy. As one Psychologist told me, “Anyone who prays to a being that isn’t there has a psychosis.” It is highly likely that Christians will face persecution in America.

The Psalmist goes on: “**Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloodthirsty men.**” The level of iniquity and the level of bloodthirstiness that can be aroused is often astonishing. I know a Baptist pastor in India who had been used by the Lord to convert many people. In fact, it was so noticeable, that the fanatical group of Hindus known as the RSS stormed into his church while the service was going on, dragged Pastor Paul into the street and beat him up. They told him never to preach again.

When he was released from the hospital he went back to preaching. But this time he was so savagely beaten that it took a long time to recuperate in the hospital. But when he got out, he was back at the work that God had called him to do, seeking to show love to his persecutors and preaching forgiveness, love, and the Gospel. People in the church were worried about him preaching anymore, wondering what might become of him, but he persisted.

The third time he was confronted by the RSS Hindus, instead of beating him, they grabbed his daughter, doused her with gasoline and set her on fire. Through the flames, his daughter held her head high and yelled at her dad - Don't stop preaching, Dad. Preach, preach preach the gospel." She died in front of him while the RSS men were holding him and keeping him from running to her.

Here was a man who was torn apart by anguish, yet knowing the anguish that his enemies would experience in hell if they did not believe, he continued to preach. The next time that they beat pastor Paul, they used a sharp rock on his stomach and cut his abdomen open so that his intestines spilled out. They also beat the rock up through his rectum so hard that it permanently damaged it and he had to have a permanent colostomy - simply because he was preaching the love of God to sinners. The last I heard he was back at preaching, bearing in his body the wounds of Christ. I tell you that story because I believe that *the bride of Jesus Christ needs to care about them and to sing the war psalms to the prince of peace!* The bride is being raped, and if we do not cry out, we are guilty of complicity with the ravisher. We need to pray these prayers until they are either converted (in which case the curse has already come upon Christ as their substitute) or until they themselves are destroyed. When you begin to see the evilness of men, you will not have problems with God's curses against them in these psalms. These persecutors are bloodthirsty. And we the bride are indeed experiencing these bloodthirsty attacks that David was.

Verse 3 goes on: **“For look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty gather against me...”** At this point, all David had done to Saul was to show him love, faithful service and loyalty. Yet the demon inside Saul continually moved Saul to destroy David. Sometimes Saul wasn't even sure why he hated David so much. Sometimes he was embarrassed by it later, just like some modern persecutors are. But because he had given Satan legal ground to work in him, he was powerless to resist these demonic temptations.

Well the same is true today. The devil hates the church, and he is trying to destroy it. The day before, Saul had thrown a spear at David. David thought it was a *temporary* fit of anger, but that night the soldiers of Saul were outside his room waiting to kill him in the morning. The title says **“To the chief musician. Set to "Do not destroy”** - an interesting title for a psalm calling for *destruction*, is it not? But in this all out war, it is one side or the other. Either the church will be destroyed or Satan's kingdom will be destroyed. And as Moses prayed, **“O Lord, God, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance...”** If it has to be one or the other, David is saying “Do not destroy your own people. Have mercy upon them.” Anyway, the title goes on to say, **“A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and they watched the house in order to kill him.”** Here's how the whole story goes in 1 Samuel 19.

1Samuel 19:11 Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, “If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.”

1Samuel 19:12 So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped.

1Samuel 19:13 And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats' hair for his head, and covered it with clothes.

1Samuel 19:14 So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, “He is sick.”

1Samuel 19:15 Then Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.”

1Samuel 19:16 And when the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats' hair for his head.

1Samuel 19:17 Then Saul said to Michal, “Why have you deceived me like this, and sent my enemy away, so that he has escaped?” And Michal answered Saul, “He said to me, ‘Let me go! Why should I kill you?’ ” [which of course was false, but she didn't have the courage to tell the truth.]

Saul immediately sent soldiers to arrest David and the chase was on. David was driven to the Lord for defense. And the question might come: “Why? What had David done?”

Back to our Psalm: Verse 3 says, “**For look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty gather against me, not for my transgression or for my sin, O LORD.**” He is not claiming to be sinless. He is claiming to not be committing spiritual adultery. He is claiming that there is no guilt in him that would justify the bride’s husband executing her. He is claiming that there is no justification for the persecution.

Sometimes we *are* persecuted because we are jerks, but that was not the case with David. He was living as a Christian should live. It was David's righteous life that offended Saul because it gave David integrity that Saul lacked, and this made Saul jealous. David had something Saul did not have, and it made Saul insecure. David's loyalty to Saul stood as a rebuke to Saul's lack of loyalty; David's love stood as a rebuke to Saul's unreasonable hatred. David's service stood as a rebuke to the king's lording it over others. His whole life was an offense to Saul because it showed Saul to be unworthy to be a king. And Scripture assures us that this is to be expected. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “**all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**” Make sure that your persecutions are not because of your sin. Make sure that it is because of the reality of God's presence within you. If it is, then your cry, “**Awake to help me, and behold!**” will be taken seriously by God.

Verse 5: “**You therefore, O LORD God of hosts.**” Notice that phrase: “God of *hosts*.” David realizes that Saul's visible army is not the one that makes the ultimate difference; it is God's invisible army (or hosts of angels) that counts. It is not the number of sophisticated weapons that were used by northern Sudan against the south that made the crucial difference. Obviously it would have been nice if the south had had a few Patriot Missiles to shoot down helicopters that were strafing women and children. But ultimately it was the favor of the Lord God of hosts. In fact, it is absolutely amazing the advances that the South had despite lack of any weaponry from outside. The only weapons southern Sudan had been able to procure were those that they captured from the North. One time the south was way outnumbered, and yet the northern soldiers ran away, leaving all their equipment behind. One soldier who was captured was asked why they ran, and the terrified soldier said that it was the fiery men who were advancing. He saw the angels. That was the Lord God of hosts who had his heavenly hosts fighting on behalf of Southern Sudan. Why? Because they had started using the imprecatory Psalms as Peter Hammond had coached them. They had become a bride who was crying out when she was ravished,

and her husband came to her defense. We would see more of this happening if the church would cry out with the God-authorized war Psalms.

And so David says, **“You therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to punish all the nations...”** Notice this Psalm is not just written for David's situation. It was included in the canon the moment it was written with the knowledge that it would be used in all nations of the world. **“Awake to punish *all the nations*; do not be merciful to *any* wicked transgressors.”** Ladies, would you not feel that way if you were being raped? You would want your husband to shoot him before he could rape you. And so it is with the bride of Christ. She is being coached to say by David's inspiration, “Awake to punish all the nations; do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors.” Can you say Amen to that? If you cannot, then you are not acting like Deuteronomy 22 says you should. It is a false piety when the church prays for persecution. Did you know that there have been persecutions that have wiped out the church? It's not right to pray for persecution. Paul commands us in 1 Timothy 2:2 to pray for peace. The Scripture commands us to cry out against persecutors. For the church to pray that we would be persecuted is like a woman asking to be raped and to not cry out. God wants us to cry out for vengeance. In the parable of the importunate widow, Jesus praised her, and then said, **“now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”** The question is not whether Jesus, our husband, responds. He does. The question is, “Will we cry out in faith like the importunate widow?”

And then in our Psalm comes a **“Selah”** notation, which means, "Pause." Pause so that God's people in all ages and in all nations can take some time to meditate on the reality of persecution. Pause so that you can be motivated to cry to your Protector in prayer. Pause to be gripped by the enormity of the conflict. Pause to reflect on the stakes involved. If the church is wiped out of these countries, what will happen to this world? May that **“Selah”** cause us to meditate upon the issues of Persecution and to not be passive.

B. Frustrated Howling of the Wicked (v. 6-7)

But now comes the heart of this Psalm - an expression of confidence in God as protector and warrior. We do not pray this psalm out of despair. No. We know that Jesus *will* defend His bride when the whole bride is

willing to cry out. We cry this in faith because we know of our Heavenly Husband's love. And so, this Psalm, in verses 6-10 focuses on God as protector, refuge and defense; and then parallel to that comes verses 11-15 which sees God as avenger, warrior and conqueror.

It's not critical that you understand the footnote that I put at the bottom of your outlines. But I thought you would find it interesting. There are many Hebrew techniques that God had writers use to communicate truth. Some (like the structure of the book of Revelation) are so intricately woven together that they argue for the inspiration of Revelation. I don't see how any mere man could have crafted the book of Revelation. But here we have a very simple technique where parallel thoughts are developed in an abcdcbafashion. So in your outlines, verses 6-7 are parallel to verses 14-15. Both speak of the howling frustration of the wicked.

Let's quickly read both sections so that you can see how the structure works. Verses 6-7: **“At evening they return, they growl like a dog, and go all around the city. Indeed, they belch with their mouth; swords are in their lips; for they say, ‘Who hears?’”** Now look at verses 14-15. **“At evening they return, they growl like a dog, and go all around the city. They wander up and down for food, and howl if they are not satisfied.”** There are slight differences in the parallels because the emphasis in the second half is offensive whereas the first half is defensive. But you can clearly see that they are parallel.

And knowing the parallels of each section helps us to appreciate not only what is being developed in the Psalm, but also what the heart of the message is. In the Hebrew chiasm, the center part of that triangle (in this case, the two D-points) is the heart of the message. We usually put the theme right at the beginning of a paragraph, and most Hebrew paragraphs do too. But the chiasm puts the theme in the center. So this is not simply a complaint about persecution. The persecution described at beginning and end sets the framework for why our God is a mighty fortress and a mighty warrior. He needs to be a fortress because of the war being wrought against the church. But He needs to be a Warrior on the offensive because God has ordained that the church of Jesus Christ shall triumph. Amen? He's not just a fortress, but also a warrior.

In fact, in the second howling section, the failure of the enemies of the cross is highlighted by the fact that though these dogs seek food, they are howling from the frustration of not being satisfied. Saul couldn't catch David. He couldn't win. More and more people were going over to David.

More and more people were being dissatisfied, which made Saul even more fearful, more insecure, and more intense in his efforts to suppress and control the people. And that's what is happening in so many countries. There are so many people going over to Jesus that the Muslims, and Hindus, and Buddhists, and others are fearing that they will lose control. We can protest that we love them all we want, but they will still have that demonic fear. The only thing they know is force, so they fight back out of frustration.

Well, enough by way of introduction to this concept of chiasm. Verse 6 says, "**At evening they return**" [and of course Saul's soldiers had come at evening to watch for David when he came out. They were creatures of darkness that liked to hide what they were doing from scrutiny. Many persecutions happen in the open, but many are whisked away with no one knowing where they have gone.

"**They growl like a dog, and go all around the city.**" What a picture of the wicked persecutors! Scavenger's who when they aren't looking for something they can have for themselves are picking a fight with each other; threatening. He says that those persecutors are like Eastern dogs. We live in a city where dogs are licensed and controlled, so we have a hard time understanding this image. But believe me, in oriental cities of that day, it was much like we experienced in Africa. You never went anywhere without a club to protect yourself. Wild dogs were everywhere. I remember being sick to my stomach watching a drunk being attacked by dogs in Addis Ababa. They were trying to eat him alive, and they would have finished him off if others had not chased them away. Middle Easterners didn't care for dogs very much. You can see that God does not have a high opinion of these persecutors.

Going on: "**Indeed, they belch with their mouth...**" They may see their bragging and boasting as something smart. God sees it as no better than a dog belch. "**Swords are in their lips; for they say, 'Who hears?'**" They thought they could get away with it. Sudan thinks it can get away with its arrogance. China thinks that its economic clout insulates it from any criticism. North Korea has been cocky in its who-cares-what-God-or-the-world-thinks attitude. Saudi Arabia belches forth acidic hatred upon its Christian citizens thinking that no one will hear or care. But you know what? They are mistaken. We do care! Amen? We will do something. We will take up upon our lips these nuclear weapons of the Psalms and begin to wield that rod of iron that Christ promised to share with us in Revelation 2. Let me read that passage. It is Jesus speaking to His bride, the church, saying, "**And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to**

him I will give power over the nations – [And to prove it, Jesus quotes Psalm 2] **‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron. They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ – as I also have received from My Father.**” He is saying that though Psalm 2 describes a rod of iron being given by the Father to Jesus, Jesus will share that rod of iron with us. When we take Christ’s prayers upon our lips, we are raising that powerful rod of iron to smash the nations. It’s a nuclear weapon, and the church must once again learn how to use it.

C. Confident that God is Motivated to Defend Us (v. 8)

In verse 8 David (now looking at life from God's vantage point - from the fortress throne room of heaven) is confident that God is motivated to defend us. **“But You, O LORD, shall laugh at them; You shall have all the nations in derision.”** Those nations may think that they can cast off the cords of Christ, but He who sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall hold them in derision. Their attempts to exterminate the church are as futile as a fly seeking to kill a man. And confident that God is motivated by His emotions to laugh and to be in derision, he goes on to say in verses 9-10

D. God on the Defensive (Fortress) (9-10))

“I will wait for You, O You his strength; For God is my defense. My God of mercy shall come to meet me; God shall let me see my desire on my enemies.” When the bride cries out, she can be confident that her Husband will come running with His guns blazing. Having asked in faith, there is no question in David's mind that God will be His defense. As Shadrack, Mesheck and Abednego said, **“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.”** The Christian has the best of both worlds. If he dies, he receives the ultimate deliverance from the pain and suffering down here into eternal bliss. He goes into the Savior’s arms. He or she is delivered from the earth. Heaven is a marvelous deliverance. And yet God is also able to physically deliver Christians out of the hands of tormentors in miraculous ways, and has done so many times. Either way, God is the victor and the Christian is more than a conqueror through Christ.

II. **Offensive warfare (vv. 11-17)**

D. God on the Offensive (Warrior) (vv. 11-12)

But God is more than merely a defense. He is on the offensive. And notice the interesting wording in verses 11-12. **“Do not slay them, lest my people forget; scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield.”** David over and over again spared Saul's life when he had

the chance to kill him. His ultimate desire was that Saul be *converted* and turned from an enemy into a friend. You see, those imprecatory Psalms that David wrote against Saul and Absalom are consistent with his love for both, and they can be answered by way of conversion, where Jesus bears the curse. If they are converted, they are destroyed as enemies and become friends. And so David prays, **“Do not slay them...”** That displays amazing love and forbearance. Do not slay them. In a later War Psalm David speaks of the love and kindness he had shown his enemies. He wanted them saved. Wouldn't it be a marvelous thing if the enemies in America were soundly converted and promoted Christ's kingdom rather than socialism and death? It would be wonderful! But David still prays that their power and their satanic kingdom would be utterly and totally destroyed - not just in word, but also in power. **“Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield. For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips, let them even be taken in their pride, and for the cursing and lying which they speak.”** There is plenty of reason for God to destroy the government of al-Bashir in Sudan as they propagate their pack of lies to cover up crucifixions, murders, slavery, forced sex, etc. And God *can* uncover those lies. In Zimbabwe, a leading official was caught on videotape telling the government thugs to beat any opposition party followers until they were dead, and blame it on the whites. He said no one would know. If they report it to the police, he said they had the police in their pocket. Yet God uncovered his lies. God had somebody leak a video. God has uncovered the lies of communists. God has uncovered the lies of our present administration. Isaiah 28:17 says, **“The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place.”** When we are willing to cry out to our God when being raped, He hears better than any earthly husband can. He can see through the deceptions and hiding places of these enemies and take them out.

C. Confident that God is Motivated to War for Us (v. 13)

He repeats his confidence that God is motivated to war for us in verse 13. **“Consume them in your wrath, consume them, that they may not be; and let them know that God rules in Jacob to the ends of the earth.”** Once again he doesn't want them consumed in a way where they can't know that God rules. He doesn't want them dead. He wants them scattered so that they can't do their dirty work and so that it is obvious to all that God rules. And that should be our desire. *Revolution is not the answer to any society.*

God authorizes legitimate wars under lower magistrates. But the ultimate solution is conversion and social transformation.

B. Frustrated Howling of the Wicked (v. 14-15)

Then working backwards he repeats that these enemies of the kingdom are like frustrated, howling dogs. **“And at evening they return, they growl like a dog, and go all around the city. They wander up and down for food, and howl if they are not satisfied.”** May that be the state of all the non-elect - frustrated at every turn in their efforts to advance humanism. Howling, but unable to intimidate the righteous. Howling, but running off into the darkness as the light penetrates their haunts. May it be, Lord Jesus!

Throughout this middle section David is expressing His confidence in God's power, God's ability, God's motivation and God's reasons for judgment. We too need to have a confidence that our God is a God of judgment - not just in eternity, but in time as well. The question is not whether God judges. The question is, "Are we willing to *ask* Him to judge? Are we willing to *arraign* people before the court of heaven and ask God to speak His verdict of guilty right now?" Courts can't judge when no one brings a case. When the church has a husband who has vowed to defend her, how can the church not cry out with such Psalms? We must. Deuteronomy 22 demands it.

A. Joyful in God as Our Protector (vv. 16-17)

After reminding himself of what a wonderful defender he has in God, it is no wonder to me that David ends on a joyful note. He says in verse 16: **“But I will sing of Your power...”** He doesn't lament that God is wringing His hands and frustrated over what the nations are doing. He doesn't relegate God's Power to the future. He says, **“But I will sing of Your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning;”** *But*, it is *mercy* to the church, and we should never forget it. Apart from grace we could be just like those persecutors. It was mercy and mercy alone that we plead. We can never charge God with wrong when He allows persecution. God has the right to allow the church to be persecuted. Our sins cry out to heaven. It clings to us. But because of our union with Christ, and because of His blood, *we can plead for mercy*. And any persecutor can plead for mercy. He goes on:

“For You have been My defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises; for God is my

defense, my God of mercy.” The ability to sing when you are down is an evidence of faith; faith in the sovereignty of God; faith in His goodness; faith in His mercy; faith in His power and strength. And what a great place for us to end the sermon! When we sing the War Psalms, we must sing them in faith that they portray a just and perfect and loving God.

Conclusion

Many people speak against the War Psalms as if they showed a harsh God. But I revel in them. I delight in them because they evidence a divine husband that is raised to fury when He sees His wife abused, beaten and threatened with rape. What kind of a husband would he be who passively sat by and watched and did nothing? That would not conform to God's own blueprint for a husband! God's blueprint says that we must lay down our lives for our wives. And Jesus is a better husband than any of us. God will declare War on all who violate His wife and we can rejoice that God is jealous for His bride. And of course, that jealousy will guarantee that He will execute a bride who invites adultery, and who wipes her mouth with her hands and says, "I've done nothing wrong." But when she hates adultery and cries out to Jesus, His jealousy defends her.

In Exodus 34:14 He says, **“for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.”** If His name is Jealous, it means that jealousy is part of His very character. It is part of His nature to rouse Himself on behalf of His bride. Can we not rejoice in that? Let's sing this Psalm with confidence. Let's sing it with joy. Let's sing it with zeal as we lift the rod of iron to smite the nations who persecute His church. And may all God's people say “Amen!”

A Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Psalm 59

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 11-8-09

Introduction

- I. David's prayer for God to defend His bride (vv. 1-10)
- II. David's prayer for God to avenge His bride (vv. 11-17)

Alternate Outline Following Hebrew Chiastic Form¹

- A. Driven To God as Our Protector (vv. 1-5)
- B. Frustrated Howling of the Wicked (v. 6-7)
- C. Confident that God is Motivated to Defend Us (v. 8)
- D. God on the Defensive (Fortress) (9-10))
-
- D. God on the Offensive (Warrior) (vv. 11-12)
- C. Confident that God is Motivated to War for Us (v. 13)
- B. Frustrated Howling of the Wicked (v. 14-15)
- A. Joyful in God as Our Protector (vv. 16-17)

Conclusion

¹ Technical explanation of the structure of this Psalm. The Hebrew writers often used a literary device known as a chiasm by which a topic was developed with parallel statements that were not next to each other. The parallel parts of chiastic poetry is often labeled with letters, as abcdcb, where the a's are parallel in thought and the b's are parallel with each other and the center of the chiasm (in this case the d's) describe the central theme of the psalm. Many scholars see a two fold division (verses 1-10 and verses 11-17) because each section ends with identical language. And this is true. The first half of the chiasm (vv. 1-10) is David's prayer for defense and the second half of the chiasm is David's prayer of offense.