

Consider My Lament!

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[0 : 0 0] Our Heavenly Father, we do thank you that the Lord Jesus is our rock of ages, whose blood secures our life for eternity. And Father, we thank you for your word as well, which points us to the Lord Jesus.

Your word through which you continue to speak to us. And so, Father, we pray that you would give us ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts that would indeed live in light of your word this morning.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, as you know, we've heard lots about Christians being persecuted in recent times, haven't we?

And some of our children have picked up on this. And so one night at dinner, when we forced them to eat their vegetables before dessert, they exclaimed, this is persecution. To which I replied, well, Jesus said, blessed are you when people persecute you.

Out of context, I know. But the thing is, the Bible does promise persecution. And we have seen it. And not just with Christians in Syria or Iraq or even Indonesia, but even here in Melbourne.

[1 : 1 4] It looks different for us here, of course. For us, it takes the form of conspiracy and lies, or at least the suppressing of the truth. So, for example, in the age last month at Christmastime, New Year's Eve, a journalist wrote this on the next slide.

It says, historically, there is no evidence that a biological Jesus ever existed, which I'm pretty confident is a lie. We have the removal of SRI from the school curriculum.

One group that led the charge to getting rid of SRI is ironically called Fairness in Religion in Schools. And for four years campaigned against it.

And when it was removed, the leader, Lara Wood, exclaimed, we won. At suppressing the biblical truth, I might add, that's what they've won. It's not just at an institutional level.

This sort of persecution filters down to a personal level as well. And so last year, a five-year-old boy from our 1030 congregation wrote a birthday card for someone in his class.

[2 : 1 6] And at the end of it, wrote, God bless. He was forced to rewrite the card and remove the reference to God. It's a local school not far from here.

Our daughter Katie was bullied last year by another girl. Lies were made up about her. And partly because she is competition for this other girl, but partly because this other girl knows she goes to church.

You see, persecution is here. And sometimes it's not even from those outside the church, but from people who call themselves Christians as well. At my first clergy conference here in Melbourne, I sat next to a minister who ridiculed me and anyone else who believed the whole Bible.

True. And he said he preached through the lectionary, but when he came to those ridiculous passages, he had to try and help himself from laughing. That's what he said to me. Persecution is here.

And it will come in the form of lies about us or conspiracies to suppress the biblical truth, both at an institutional level and a personal one. And so what are we to do?

[3 : 18] Well, as we come to Psalm 5 today, we see this sort of persecution and what David does. This is a Psalm of David, who was God's anointed king of Israel.

We're told it's of David in the bit underneath the heading underneath Psalm 5, which was part of the original Hebrew in which it was written. Of David means either David wrote it or it's about David, but written by someone else.

I'm going to assume David wrote it. But either way, we see that God's anointed king is being persecuted by his enemies, predominantly, though, by conspiracy and lies.

Let me show you. So if you just look at verse 6 for a moment, bottom corner of the page, David says of God, you destroy those who tell lies. Or the next line, the bloodthirsty and the deceitful you, Lord, detest.

Or over the page in verse 9, he's talking about his enemies and he says, not a word from their mouth can be trusted. Why? Well, because they tell lies. Or again, verse 9, their throat is an open grave.

[4 : 25] That is, they conduct conspiracies and lies to bring people to their grave. Or the end of verse 9, with their tongues, they tell lies. Verse 10, let their intrigues, you know, their conspiracies and lies be their downfall.

You see, it appears that the situation is one where God's anointed king is being attacked through the lies of others. And the intention is to see the king fall, perhaps even be killed.

It's a serious situation. And the seriousness of it is seen by the desperate cry of David. Point 1, verse 1. So come back to the beginning and let's work our way through.

David writes, verse 1, listen to my words, Lord. Consider my lament. Hear my cry for help, my king and my God. For to you I pray.

Now notice in these verses, David cries out three times to God for help. Do you notice? He says, listen, consider and hear. And what he wants God to listen, consider and hear are his words, lament and cry.

[5 : 34] Actually, the word lament in verse 1 is literally groaning. Our children started back at school last week and there was some groaning. But David's groaning is of a different order.

It's the wordless groans of someone in deep distress. And so we see three pleas for God to listen, consider and hear, matched by three descriptions of his words groaning and cry.

And the repetition, you see, is meant to show us that this is a desperate cry and situation. It's so desperate, in fact, that David kind of reminds God of their relationship.

See verse 2 again. It's as though he says, listen to my cry for help because I pray to you, my king and my God. Notice the repetition of the word my.

There's a personal relationship there, isn't there? Which David appeals to so that God might answer him. He's saying, listen to me, God, because I am praying to you and you are my king and my God.

[6 : 37] But this relationship also means that David's desperate cry is not a hopeless cry, but rather a confident cry. Because God is his king and his God, then David has confidence to approach God and confidence that God will hear and answer him.

Do you see verse 3? He says, in the morning, Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning, I lay my request before you and wait expectantly. He expects a response, you see.

Part of our holidays was camping with some friends who have four children of their own. Though we were told it wasn't real camping because we took our coffee machine with us. But with seven kids between us, we needed our coffee, okay?

Now, when our children needed something, they naturally came to us for help or to ask. But sometimes they had to approach our friends for something. And it was interesting to see the difference in their approach.

When they approached us, they were much, much more confident. Perhaps too confident sometimes. Compared to when they approached our friends. Why? Well, obviously, because we are their parents.

[7 : 53] And that's what's going on here. God is David's king. David's God. And so David has confidence to approach him. Not only approach him, but confidence that God will hear and answer him.

And so he waits expectantly. Yet there is more about God which gives David confidence. You see verse 4? Verse 4 starts with the word for or because.

Which gives us further reason for David's confidence. He says, verse 4, Here we see that God is a God who does not tolerate the wicked in his presence.

And that means judgment. See verse 4? He says, They are not welcome. Verse 5, They are unable to stand in God's presence. In other words, They are shut out from God's presence.

And that is linked with being judged by God. Similar to the next slide from Psalm 73. Where the psalmist says on the next slide, I think it is, Those who are far from you will perish.

[9 : 14] You know, It's far from God, You're going to perish. But as for me, It is good to be near God. You see, God is a God who does not tolerate wickedness in his presence. And that will mean judgment in the end.

But God is also a God of love and grace. And so those who turn to him, He does enable to come into his presence. To come near him. And that by implication means salvation, refuge.

So verse 7, David says, But I, unlike the wicked, By your great love, Can come into your house. And in reverence, I bow down toward your holy temple.

Now God's house or temple is where God dwelt. This is where God's presence was. And David can come into God's presence. To find his prayers heard by God.

And to find refuge in God. But notice, It's not because he's any better than the wicked. Do you notice how verse 7 began? He says, But I, Because or by your great love, Can come into your house.

[10 : 23] Into your presence. Great love here is that Hebrew word that Doug mentioned last week. And that Andrew has taught us time and time again. It's that hesed. The word that refers to God's abundant loving kindness.

His undeserved generosity or grace. It's because of this that David has been made one of God's people. And given entry into God's presence.

So that he can be heard by God and find refuge in God. And then in response, David reverently bows down in worship. But the point of all this, Is that it gives David even more confidence that God will hear and answer his cry.

For help against his enemies. For not only is God his God and his king. But God is also a God who does not tolerate the wicked in his presence. But shows great love to those who turn to him like David.

And enables them to come into his presence. And so David has great confidence that God will hear and answer his cry. We have some friends who have three children of their own.

[11 : 24] But they are keen to adopt some children, some orphans. Who cannot find a home. In fact they are planning to adopt a further three siblings this year.

Now at the moment these three siblings have no right to come into our friend's house. And no confidence that if they asked our friend something that they would be heard. But because of our friend's love for them.

And their plan to adopt them. When they do adopt. They will be enabled to come into their house. Won't they? And these orphans who have then become adopted. Will have confidence to ask our friends things.

And confidence that they will be heard and answered. This is how it is with David and God. Well that's the first part of the psalm. A desperate but confident cry.

The second part of the psalm is the content. And conclusion of his cry. As it tells us exactly what David prays. Or cries out for. So point to verse 8.

[12 : 24] He says. Lead me Lord in your righteousness because of my enemies. Make your way straight before me. For not a word from their mouth can be trusted.

Their heart is filled with malice. Their throat is an open grave. With their tongues they tell lies. The first thing David prays for is guidance to be godly.

He says. Lead me in your righteousness. That is. Help me live your way God. Now again it's hard to work out what the situation is. Perhaps his enemies are trying to mislead him.

Or perhaps spreading lies to cause his downfall. It could be. Given Psalm 3 mentions Absalom. David's son who is trying to steal the throne from David.

It could be the conspiracy that Absalom led. In 2 Samuel 15. Either way they're out to get him. But what matters for David is not so much that he be saved from the situation.

[13 : 23] From the persecution. But rather that God will keep him living his way through the persecution. Do you notice? I find this a little surprising. I mean if I am honest.

When I'm suffering or being persecuted. My first cry is usually. Make it stop. Not keep me godly. It's usually. Take it away.

Not lead me through it. And I'm guessing I'm not alone in this. But somewhat surprisingly. David's first request is. Keep me godly. Keep me as one of your people.

Because of my enemies who are trying to bring me down. Of course he does still pray for other things like justice. Which is his second request. See verse 10. He says.

Declare them guilty oh God. Let their intrigues be their downfall. Banish them for their many sins. For they have rebelled against you. David asks that they be declared guilty and banished.

[14 : 23] That they will be seen for who they are and judged. Though ultimately. It's because their attacks on David. Are really rebellion against God himself.

You see. David is God's anointed king. The one God chose. And so to attack the Lord's anointed king. Was to rebel against the Lord himself.

But here is the content of David's cry. It's essentially. Keep me godly. And judge the wicked. And as we've seen. This is a confident cry. Because of who God is.

He is. David's king. And David's God. He's also a God who shuts out the wicked from his presence. But by his great love. Can welcome those who turn to him like David.

Into his presence. To be heard. To find refuge. And David concludes. If this is true for him. Then it's true for everyone who takes refuge in God. And so he ends or concludes.

[15 : 23] By telling all to rejoice in these truths. See verse 11. But let all who take refuge in you. Be glad. Let them ever sing for joy.

Spread your protection over them. That those who love your name may rejoice in you. Because Lord you bless the righteous. And you surround them with your favor. As with a shield.

He those who take refuge in God. Are those who like David. Have turned to God. And been enabled by God's great love. To come into his presence. And David prays that. As they take refuge in God.

God will spread his protection over them. Like a mother hen. Spreads her wing over her young. And in the context of this psalm. The protection. I think is similar to verse 8.

That is it's not protection from persecution. But through persecution. To be kept walking in God's ways. To be kept and preserved as God's person.

[16 : 22] Even when others. Are persecuting us for it. And just as David is confident. God will do this for him. So he is confident. God will do this.

For all his people. In fact verse 12. Actually starts with the word. Because. And so it's as though he prays in verse 11. Spread your protection over them. Because verse 12.

You do bless the righteous. And you do surround them with your favor. Like a shield. In other words. God does. Protect them. God blesses and shields his people.

Protects them by his favor. His grace. And will. So David is confident. God will answer this prayer. To protect his people. Because this is what God does anyway. And because of this.

They are to rejoice. In fact. Just as the psalm started. With a threefold cry. So it ends. With a threefold cry. But this time it's different. It's not a cry for help.

[17 : 21] It's a cry to rejoice. You know it's verse 11. Be glad. Sing for joy. And rejoice in you. They are to rejoice.

Not because they will escape persecution. But because God will protect them through persecution. He will keep them as his people. And so we come now to where.

The part where we apply the psalm to ourselves. But before we do. We've got to realize. That the New Testament. Applies it in an unexpected way. You see. A person reading this.

Might think that. Oh well I'll be like David. And. And the people who take refuge in God. And that's true. And we'll come to that. But the New Testament. Firstly. Applies the psalm to the wicked.

David. Our second reading. In Romans 3. Quotes this psalm. Romans 3. Paul uses this psalm. To show that there is no one righteous. Not even one. Including us.

[18 : 17] And he quotes. Their throats are an open grave. And they practice deceit. To show that there is no one righteous. And so. We are firstly. Those who are shut out of God's presence.

Which means judgment. And it's Jesus. Who is firstly identified with King David. For Jesus. He is King David's descendant. The ultimate. Anointed King.

Or Christ. And Jesus is the one who suffered. At the hands of. The lies and schemes. Of the Pharisees. Do you remember. Who plotted to have him crucified. I think on the next slide.

Is a verse. From his trial. Where it says. Many false witnesses. Came forward. They're lying. To condemn him. Just like they were doing to David. And Jesus is the one who cried out to God.

For protection. Not from death. But from temptation. To turn from God's will. So the next slide. From Luke 22. Jesus says. Father. If you're willing. Take this cup from me.

[19 : 13] Yet not what I will. But yours be done. And an angel from heaven. Appeared to him. And strengthened him. You see.

Jesus is the one who fulfills. David's role here. In the first instance. And yet. Because Jesus did die for us. We. The wicked. Can be made. The righteous.

You see. Like David. It's because of God's great love for us. That he gave his only son. To pay for our sins. So that we. Who were once far away. Can be brought near.

As he's forgiven people. And Jesus stands. As our high priest in heaven. Such that we have confidence. Also. To enter God's presence. All the time. Without having to go to a temple.

Like David. And so the next slide. From Hebrews chapter 4. We read this. Let us. Then approach the throne of grace. With. Confidence.

[20 : 10] So that we may receive mercy. And find grace to help us. In our time of need. But do know. This is only for those. Who have turned to Christ.

Who have put our trust. In him. For it's only. If we believe in Jesus. That we are welcomed. Into God's presence. As his people. So the first question.

I need to ask this morning. Is. Do you believe. In Jesus. Or do you remain. In God's sight. Far from him. Like the wicked. Destined. To face judgment. And for us.

Who do. Trust in Jesus. When persecution comes. What are we to do? Well. Three things. First. As we've seen. We are to cry out. With confidence. Knowing that God.

Will hear our prayer. And give help. In our time of need. Second. While we can pray. For all sorts of things. Including for Jesus.

[21 : 06] To return. To put things right. And judge. All the wicked people. Above all. We must pray. That God will keep us godly. That God will keep us. As his people.

For this is God's. Will for us. You see. And so Paul writes. In Romans 8. On the next slide. I think it is. He says. We know that God. In all things. God works. For the good. Of those who love him.

I'm guessing. Every person in this room. Has heard this verse before. Who have been called. According to his purpose. But notice the next part. This is what our good is. For those God foreknew.

He also predestined. To be conformed. To the likeness. Of his son. That's the good. That God is working for. To conform us.

To the likeness of his son. To keep us godly. To grow us. In his image. I was reading an article. About Christians. Who are being persecuted. In North Korea.

[22 : 02] A while ago. And the head of the mission organization. Supporting them. Wrote this. On the next slide. I think it is. He said. They don't pray. To be released. From persecution.

They pray. To be found. Faithful. In it. And so. Just as David's. First request. For himself. Was to be kept godly. Just as David's request.

For everyone. Who took refuge. In God. Was to be. Protected. Not from persecution. But faithfully. Through it. So too. Are we to pray. And thirdly.

We are to rejoice. Yes. Because we know. God will always. Answer. That prayer. With a yes. In fact. I suspect. The type of help.

On view. In that Hebrews passage. Is help. To keep us godly. Help. To bring us home. To heaven. Help. To preserve us. As one of God's. People. And we have these promises.

[22 : 58] All through the New Testament. On the next slide. I think. Just the two examples. Of those sorts. Of promises. Notice.

From two Thessalonians. Pray that we may be delivered. From wicked and evil men. For not everyone has faith. But the Lord. Is faithful. And he will strengthen. And protect you. From the evil one.

From giving into temptation. Or one Corinthians one. He will keep you strong. To the end. So that you will be blameless. On the day. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact.

We sung it. In our first hymn. Amazing grace. The Lord has promised. Good to me. His word. My hope secures. My shield. And stronghold.

He shall be. As long. As life. Endures. And so God will always answer that prayer. With a yes. Because that's what he's promised to do. If that's the case.

[23 : 53] Then we are to rejoice. That God will keep us as his people. And preserve us to the end. Indeed we are to remember what Jesus said. Blessed are you when people persecute you.

Not by forcing you to eat vegetables. Like I do with my kids. But when they insult you. And falsely say all kinds of evil against you. Because of me. Rejoice. And be glad.

Because great. Is your reward. In heaven. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father. We. Thank you for your word.

Which reminds us that. Persecution will come. Indeed. We only have to look around us. To know that it is already here. But father. We thank you for this psalm.

Which reminds us that we can confidently cry out to you for help. Knowing that you will hear and answer us. We thank you that it reminds us that.

[24 : 48] When we cry out to be. For help to be kept godly. And be kept as your people. We know. That the answer will always be yes. For this is what you have promised to do for us.

And so help us thirdly to then. Rejoice. In you. Knowing that you will keep us until heaven. And for we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.