

Psalm 058 - Michtam Psalm: A Prayer for Justice

Background

Enemies were rebels against the Lord. The Covenant People were protected under conditions of obedience (Lev 26, Deut 27-29; Cf. Gen 12:2-3). A battle between good and evil has been going on since Gen 3 (and we can't remain neutral in this battle).

Leadership Crisis

During David's exile years, Saul led the nation down a path of political and spiritual ruin as he disobeyed God's law and opposed God's anointed king. Saul was surrounded by a group of fawning flatterers who fed his ego and catered to his foolish whims (1 Sam 22:6ff) while David himself was treated illegally; many of his men lost everything for following him (1 Sam 22:1-2).

Ps 58 was probably written late during David's exile, or early in his reign at Hebron. It may have grown out of his pondering the mess he had inherited from his father-in-law.

[Lawlessness in leaders: Is 1:23-28; 5:22-25; 10:1-4; Amos 5:7-13; Micah 3:1-4. Nations, corporations, and even churches need to take leadership crises seriously.]

Psalm 58

[To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David.]

A Prayer for Justice

1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, you gods? Do you judge fairly, you sons of mankind?

1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, O gods? Do you judge uprightly, O sons of men?

1 How is it that by remaining silent you can speak righteously? How can you judge people fairly?

1 Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

2 No, in heart you practice injustice; On earth you clear a way for the violence of your hands.

2 No, in heart you work unrighteousness; On earth you weigh out the violence of your hands.

2 As a matter of fact, in your heart you plan iniquities! In the land your hands are violent!

2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

3 The wicked have turned away from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

3 The wicked go astray from the womb; they go astray, telling lies even from birth.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent; Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear,

4 They have venom like the venom of a serpent; Like a deaf cobra that stops up its ear,

4 Their venom is like a poisonous snake; even like a deaf serpent that shuts its ears,

4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear;

5 So that it does not hear the voice of charmers, *Or* a skillful caster of spells.

5 So that it does not hear the voice of charmers, *Or* a skillful caster of spells.

5 refusing to hear the voice of the snake charmer, the cunning enchanter.

5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

- The unjust judges were liars. Because of our sin nature, God established laws and government; for without laws, society would be in chaos.

6 God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out the fangs of the young lions, LORD.

6 O God, shatter their teeth in their mouth; Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD.

6 God, shatter their teeth in their mouths; LORD, break the fangs of the young lions!

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

- David prays for six destructions to come upon his enemies in this psalm:

(1) "Break out the great teeth of the young lions."

7 May they flow away like water that runs off; *When* he aims his arrows, *may they be* as headless shafts.

7 Let them flow away like water that runs off; *When* he aims his arrows, let them be as headless shafts.

7 May they flow away like rain water that runs off, may they become like someone who shoots broken arrows.

7 Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.

(2) Wickedness was like a flood! He asks that this flood of wickedness might just melt away

(3) The enemy is like a marksman who is shooting at him; the prayer is to foil the arrows of the enemy

8 *May they be* like a snail which goes along in slime, *Like* the miscarriage of a woman that never sees the sun.

8 *Let them be* as a snail which melts away as it goes along, *Like* the miscarriages of a woman which never see the sun.

8 May they be like a snail that dries up as it crawls; like a woman's stillborn baby, who never saw the sun.

8 As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

(4) There is a certain snail in that country called a "slimeworm" which actually melts away in the heat of the sun

- David is saying, "The enemy leaves a slimy trail, but evaporate him! Get rid of that slimy trail through the world."

(5) That is, may the things they plan in the evil womb of their mind not come to fruition. May they come to nought.

9 Before your pots can feel *the fire of thorns* He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.

9 Before your pots can feel *the fire of thorns* He will sweep them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.

9 Before your clay pots are placed on a fire of burning thorns— whether green or ablaze— wrath will sweep them away like a storm.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.

10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

10 The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

10 The righteous person will rejoice when he sees your vengeance; when he washes his feet in the blood of the wicked.

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

11 And people will say, "There certainly is a reward for the righteous; There certainly is a God who judges on the earth!"

11 And men will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!"

11 A person will say, "Certainly, the righteous are rewarded; certainly there is a God who judges the earth."

11 So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

(6) The twigs of the bramble bush are gathered together and put under the pot to heat it, then a wind comes along and blows them away.

- David says, "Oh, God, remove them before they can do their dirty work, before they can burn and sear."
- He asks the Lord to bring vengeance (Deut 32:35; Heb 10:30; Rom 12:19)