

Introduction

Entrenched in our culture's legal system is the expressed right to self-defense. In the absence of any authorized earthly authority, we are allowed to take matters in our own hands when threatened and, of course, this has parallels to our freedom of speech to speak out whenever desired. There are many scenarios in our worldly system of justice which allow us to not just speak out but take action. The biblical response to not just spiritual seduction but literal persecution is always to wait on the Lord and, in the meantime, perform a kind of self-diagnostic, if you will. What are the cracks in our own foundation which will fissure and expand in such times? How do we compare to those coming against the Lord through us?

Read verses 1-3

Q: How are the antagonists described?

- **"evildoers"** – Not just immoral by the world's standards, but in the opposite character of God's goodness. The Hebrew word is also used in the sense of to break or shatter.
- **"adversaries"** – Spiritual thorns (Num. 33:5) enticing one into idolatry (Num. 25:18). In the midst of our trials such often challenge, "Where is your God?" (Ps. 42:10)
- **"enemies"** – Most often refers to those who are against God and therefore come against His followers. In Scripture it is more often someone in opposition theologically rather than politically or morally.

Point: *The enemies of God are our enemies who attempt to spiritually draw us away from Him through deception, or shatter and break us through persecution. Their actions taken against us are really directed at God.*

Q: What actions do they take?

- (v.2) **"...came upon me to devour my flesh..."** This is comparing them to wild animals who kill and consume those they pursue.
- (v.3) **"...a host encamp against me..."** Numerical superiority is often employed to isolate and overwhelm us.
- (v.3) **"...war arise against me..."** Such attempt to forcibly enforce their ways and eradicate our ways in the Lord, attempting to eliminate if they cannot subjugate.

Point: *Our antagonists are fighting for spiritual victory to either force a change away from God if possible, or failing that, to completely remove us. They want to eliminate our having any possible influence where our faith and trust in God is concerned.*

A Psalm of David.

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the defense of my life;
Whom shall I dread?
²When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh,
My adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell.
³Though a host encamp against me,
My heart will not fear;
Though war arise against me,
In spite of this I shall be confident.

Q: What is the right response to all of this?

- (v.1) “Whom shall I fear?”
- (v.1) “Whom shall I dread?”
- (v.3) “My heart will not fear”
- (v.3) “I shall be confident”

Q: What is the difference between “fear” and “dread”? Why is the appropriate response to “be confident”?

A: “Fear” in this context is the anticipation of evil people and their deeds to come; “dread” is the kind of fear that causes one to tremble or shake. Both are properly dealt with by our trust, or more specifically our confidence, in the Lord.

Point: This is why the qualities of God here emphasized are “my light and salvation” (v.1) and “the defense of my life” (v.3). He is the source of complete spiritual and literal protection.

Application: True **hope** and **trust** in the Lord produces a **confident** faith in spite of the **agenda** or **actions** of our adversaries.

Read verses 4-6

Q: What are the various descriptions of the right position to take when we have biblical confidence in God?

A: “... the house of the LORD” (v.4), “His temple” (v.4), “His tabernacle” (v.5), and “His tent” (v.5 & 6).

Q: What is the difference, if any, between “house” and “temple” vs. “tabernacle” and “tent”?

A: The more permanent structures of a house and temple parallel their temporary earthly counterparts. (Heb. 8:4-5) Our temporary earthly structures will give way to the permanence of God’s.

Q: So what is the greater meaning of desiring these places to dwell?

A: It expresses the greater desire to live and serve in the presence of God both in this life and the one to come.

Application: To live and serve Him in the earthly yet temporary tent of the Tabernacle is to actually begin taking up our eternal residence with Him in heaven. Ironically, in the very end, we are the replacement for the tent (1 Co. 3:16) and God and the Lamb are the permanent replacement for the heavenly. (Rev. 21:22)

Q: What activities are undertaken when in God’s dwelling?

- (v.4) “...behold the beauty of the LORD”.
- (v. 4) “...to meditate...”
- (v.6) “...offer...sacrifices...”

⁴One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD
And to meditate in His temple.
⁵For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;
In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;
He will lift me up on a rock.
⁶And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me,
And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

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- (v.6) “...sing praises...”

Application: This describes the biblical goals for the proper worship of God in either Testament, whether originally in a structure or currently as a body of believers gathered together.

Q: How is God’s response thus described?

- (v.5) “...He will conceal me...”
- (v.5) “...He will hide me...”
- (v.5) “He will lift me up on a rock.”
- (v.6) “...my head will be lifted up above my enemies...”

Application: In reality, biblical “escape” is allowing God to effect our deliverance and victory. Our main focus throughout is to continually engage in authentic worship of and service to God alone.

Read verses 7-10

Q: How has the tone and emphasis suddenly changed?

A: Previously, things were spoken of in general and now it has turned quite personal.

Q: What is the contrast between v.7-8 and v.9-10?

A: In v.7-8 the emphasis is on “Seek My face” and “I shall seek”, whereas in v.9-10 it is “Do not hide Your face”, “Do not turn Your servant away...”, and “Do not abandon me nor forsake me”.

Point: Both appeals are more concerned with a personal relationship with God and His personal response to the petitioner’s spiritual condition.

Q: What is specifically being requested of God?

A: “Hear”, “be gracious”, and “answer me”. (v.7)

Q: How is a past experience with the Lord in these things providing faith that He will likewise respond favorably to the current dilemma?

A: “You have been my help”. (v.9)

Q: How has this shaped his view of God?

A: He acknowledges that “God is my salvation” (v.9), that He alone rescues.

Q: What is particularly intense about the situation detailed in v.10?

A: While being forsaken by “evildoers”, “adversaries”, and “enemies” is to be expected, it is at its worst apex when it comes from our immediate family.

Point: Faith clings to God even when all others fail us, even those closest to us on whom we would normally rely; the Lord will take us up—that is, rescue and elevate us;

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice,
And be gracious to me and answer me.
⁸When You said, “Seek My face,” my heart said to You,
“Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.”
⁹Do not hide Your face from me,
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not abandon me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
¹⁰For my father and my mother have forsaken me,
But the Lord will take me up.

¹¹Teach me Your way, O LORD,
 And lead me in a level path
 Because of my foes.
¹²Do not deliver me over to the
 desire of my adversaries,
 For false witnesses have risen
 against me,
 And such as breathe out
 violence.
¹³I would have despaired unless
 I had believed that I would
 see the goodness of the LORD
 In the land of the living.
¹⁴Wait for the LORD;
 Be strong and let your heart
 take courage;
 Yes, wait for the LORD.

Application: We are not the **author** nor **instrument** of our salvation. When we realize it is the Lord alone who saves (both **literally** and **spiritually**) then we **wait on Him** for all outcomes.

Read verses 11-14

Q: Who is identified as the antagonists?

A: “Foes” (v.11), “adversaries” (v.12), “false witnesses” (v.12), “and such as breathe out violence”. (v.12)

Q: How does this fit with this Psalm’s opening reference to “evildoers”, “adversaries”, and “enemies”? (v.2)

- “**foes**” – Someone who walks in the stubbornness of their own heart and has steadfastly rebuffed God’s admonitions in their personal life. Their opposition to God carries over into their opposition to His followers.
- “**false witnesses**” – Those who are not merely mistaken or perhaps wrong, but willfully and purposely lying.
- “**such as breathe out violence**” – In the Old Testament this is most often associated with “sinful violence”, a description of extreme wickedness. It is used in connection to the cause of the Flood in Noah’s time. (Gen. 6:11, 13)

Point: Whereas the opening list speaks to influences attempting to spiritually draw us away from the Lord, here it is narrowed down to their specific tactics. They are not merely mistaken or acting out of factual error but willfully working against anyone who is a follower of Christ, even to the point of using lies and even violence.

Q: What is sought as the proper response to such outright enemies?

A: To be taught “Your way” and led “in a level path” so as to not be turned over to them.

Point: Immediate concern for one’s own spiritual state is always the correct spiritual response.

Q: What served to stave off becoming personally overwhelmed by the opposition’s concerted efforts?

A: According to v.13, it was faith in an anticipated response of “the goodness of the LORD”.

Q: How is this very different from what might be usually requested in circumstances where spiritual deception and seduction has escalated into literal persecution?

A: It is not faith that their destruction and defeat will be witnessed, but the greater result of God’s personal response on our behalf characterized as “the goodness of the LORD”.

Q: What actions are we to undertake in response?

A: Verse 14 twice states to “wait for the LORD”.

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Q: What does such an action express and what are its immediate effects on us personally?

A: It is the expression of a right faith in God which provides us with the strength and courage to trust Him for the outcome. We are actually experiencing an attack directed at Him.

“The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

John 7:7

Application: The correct response to all ***opposition*** both spiritual and literal is to ***“wait on the Lord”***; in the meantime, we should engage in a spiritual ***reassessment*** of our self.

Overall Application

- Do we ever allow the agenda of our enemies to influence us? How might this be a primary reason for not responding biblically but in our own strength and will?
- Have we ever allowed our opposition’s efforts to distract us from worshiping and serving Christ? Why should these never be put on hold?
- Have we ever actually chosen to *“wait on the Lord”*? What happens when we forego first inquiring of the Lord? Is it a bad thing we may have to wait for His response?
- Have we ever responded first by conducting a personal self-assessment of our own spiritual state? How might this change our own actions and response?