

Slandered Yet Singing

Psalms Series
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Well, I'm glad that you can join us on what I trust will be a very practical time of teaching from God's word here this evening. We need realistic expectations about the spiritual life. All too often, churches are not very faithful to give us a sense that sometimes the spiritual life can be a struggle, it can be difficult even for those who know Christ. Psalm 34:19, says that, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Acts 14:22, says that, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." The idea that you would come to faith in Christ and then have a smooth glassy sea until you enter the port of heaven is a falsehood, it is fiction that can only serve to ultimately discourage sincere believers as the realities of life eventually come and make their presence known.

Psalm 7 is a Psalm that looks at these challenges realistically. One of the difficult trials that we eventually face is the realm of slander. Someone has a false or uninformed statements that they make that injure our reputation. We are made low in the sight of men through things that are untrue, sometimes said by those who were supposedly our friends. Charles Spurgeon said, "It is a meanness, most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation. We must be ready for this trial for it will surely come upon us." Continuing on he says, "If God was slandered in Eden we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, you children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all." And we can think about that either individually in our own private lives and probably be able to look back and see examples of it that we have known from past experience. I know that I can, I'm sure that most of you can to one degree or another. And the truth of the matter is that it would be wise for us to be prepared for something like this to come upon us corporately as a church. It is inevitable that as we proclaim God's word and we seek to be uncompromising in that, that it will someday arouse opposition and there will be those who will malign us simply because we're trying to be faithful to God's word. And if that happens we will come to the spirit of Psalm 7 and respond to it with humility and with confidence in God.

Now, the problem with slander is what is at stake here in Psalm 7 as David is expressing himself. The word refers to an emotional poetry. David comes with an agitated heart as he is writing this Psalm. The inscription there says it's concerning Kush, a Benjamite, but there's no other reference in the Old Testament to this man. Perhaps, he was somehow

connected with King Saul when Saul was pursuing David. We just don't know. What we do know is that David was being falsely attacked. If you look at verse 14 of the Psalm for just a moment, you see that he's speaking of his enemy and he says, "Behold, he travails with wickedness. And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood." There was a real man who was of the tribe of Benjamin who was causing difficulty for David. He was lying. He was saying things that were untrue and accusing David in ways that was a great threat to his reputation. David alludes to this a little bit in verse 4 when he says, "If I have rewarded evil to my friend or if I have plundered him who without cause was my adversary." Apparently he was being accused of taking advantage of people in his position. David says it's just not true. So here is the situation: a man of influence is accusing David and slandering him with falsehood in his character and David is threatened by this. The possibility of harm is real and he writes Psalm 7 and he sings Psalm 7 in response to that situation. If you're a victim of slander in an ongoing sense right now, I'm glad that the Lord has brought you here. I believe this time will be an encouragement to you and perhaps you're like me and you don't really feel the weight of such accusations at the moment but this message will help prepare us for that time when it comes.

You know, one of the things that I'm just very grateful because it's pretty much the same group Tuesday after Tuesday and I'm grateful for that, glad to have visitors with us as well. But the benefit of this time on Tuesday nights studying the Psalms is not so much found in each particular Psalm or in any individual Psalm but it's the cumulative impact of this teaching from the Psalms over a period of time that will prepare us and build a foundation for us to stand firm when difficulties come, when they inevitably come. It is very difficult to respond well to trials if you have not been prepared for them in advance. Even as a Christian, it's just a little bit too late to caught up, it's a little bit too late to put plywood up on the windows when the hurricane has already hit and so, we prepare in advance and we prepare our hearts as we would prepare our homes for a storm. We prepare our hearts in advance and then when it comes, we're ready to respond and then we can dig down into what we have previously put into our hearts and watch the Lord bring it to mind and bring it out of our character in the time when that happens. And so, I'm grateful for you and I'm grateful to Lord for the work that he's doing in your heart to set this into place because I fully expect in the days and months and years to come we will find and we will watch each other go through difficulties such as described here in Psalm 7 and we'll say, "Ah, he's living out what we have already seen from God's word," and that will be a stamp of God's approval on your life and upon our fellowship. Let's aspire after that, wont we? Let's be like this. Let's sink the foundation deep in our hearts as we hear God's word taught this evening and say, "This is what I want to do. When I am falsely accused, this is how I want to respond."

Well, what we are going to see here first of all, is David as we have seen is in the midst of slander and what we want to see first of all is the prayer of the slandered in the first 11 verses. The prayer of the slandered. How is it the David went to God in the midst of this slanderous assault on his character? His reputation was endangered by the false words of whoever this man was. There are three aspects to the prayer in these first 11 verses that I want to show to you. The prayer of the slandered, when you are falsely accused, when

your reputation is under attack, what do you do? How do you respond to that? David shows us the way here in Psalm 7 and the first step that you take, the place where you immediately go is first of all, you declare your trust. If you're taking notes, the big heading is the Prayer of the Slandered, the first aspect of that prayer is to declare your trust. David at the start of this Psalm entrusts himself to God's hand no matter what the outcome may ultimately be. Look at the first two verses with me, he says, "O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge; Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me, Or he will tear my soul like a lion, Dragging me away, while there is none to deliver." He comes immediately into the presence of God and he says, "God, I am taking my shelter in you. I am coming to you for the defense of my life in this time of slander, in this time where I am being met with men who are all too happy to speak falsely about me."

Now, there is a temptation that all of you can relate to when people start to speak badly about you. Every one of us can relate to this, every one of us has done this in one degree or another. There is a temptation when you are falsely accused to go on the counter offensive. You talk to strategic people who might be able to influence the situation for your benefit. You go to friends who you know will be sympathetic and you explain the situation to them and you court their sympathy and their support. You figure out, you calculate in your mind perhaps, how it is that you could strike back and get your own digs in. Well, what we will need to see is that the word of God right here is correcting us from that and is calling us out of that kind of carnality. As understandable as it might be on a human level, the word of God calls us to higher ground in the midst of such accusations, in the midst of human assaults on our character. And what David does is he runs to God like we run to shelter from the rain and he takes his protection. He goes to God directly for his protection and he expresses his trust in him.

Look at it there in verse 1 with me again, he says, "God in you I have taken refuge," and right from the very beginning of this Psalm you see that true spiritual life, speaking as a New Testament believer, true Christianity is intended to be a very practical, personal, deep level of trust in the God who saved us. We do not simply go through the motions of rituals as true Christians. There is an element where the circumstances and the pressures of life draw us and push us into the reality of what we believe about the God of our salvation and we believe him to be strong, we believe him to be real, we believe him to be sympathetic with our cause and therefore we go to him for our protection rather than trying to gather human support around us to help us and to tell us how good we are and how wrong it is that somebody would say those things. David leaves all of that behind and goes into the presence of God and says, "God, right here you're my refuge. I am not trusting in man. I am trusting in you to be my help." It's an expressive metaphor that he uses there in verse 2, he says, "This man who is after me, he will tear my soul like a lion." He says, "He's going to rip me apart like a lion goes after a lamb and just breaks its bones apart." He says, "My life is threatened by this accusation, by this one who slanders me."

If we're going to enter into the sympathy of the Psalm we need to realize that this was no mild threat, the very existence of David's reputation and life was at stake. And so, that's very important, we're not excused from seeking refuge in God, we're not justified in

seeking human relief as a Christian simply because the threat is great. The greater the threat all the more we go to God as our trust and our refuge in the midst of it. And so we go to God in prayer and the first words that come out of our mouth, what we have prepared our heart to say in the midst of that kind of slander is, "God, I trust in you in this situation." And there is a resolve, there is a commitment of heart that says, "I am going to trust God through this. I am not going to give in to fear. I am not going to retaliate. I am going to commend my case to God and let him defend me. I trust him that much. I trust him so much that I don't have to speak on my own behalf. I can simply bring it into his presence and trust him there even if I'm about to be mauled like a lion."

Now, secondly this Prayer of the Slandered, and this next section is very, very, searching. You not only declare your trust, you define your innocence. You define your innocence. David, as we read through this Psalm, we see that David was examining his life as and even before he prayed for help. This is so greatly important. Look at verse 3, he says, "O LORD my God, if I have done this, If there is injustice in my hands, If I have rewarded evil to my friend, Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary, Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; And let him trample my life down to the ground And lay my glory in the dust." What is going on here? David is protesting his innocence as he prays. He's coming to God and he's not starting with an attack on, he's not calling imprecation upon the one who is accusing him, he starts by an expression of self examination. He shows that he has examined his life, watch this, he shows that he has examined his life before he asks God for help. The point of his prayer here, in verses 3-5 is not that he wants God to take his side no matter what, it's not that he is simply consumed with the thought of the one attacking him and is only concerned that God would strike that person down and stop the carnage spiritually that is taking place, David here humbly lays out his life before God and he says, "Lord, I've examined myself in this situation. I have not done what they have said I have done. I am innocent of the accusation."

Now, let me clear something up here, when David says, "If there is injustice in my hands," and he goes on and he defends himself, David is not claiming absolute sinlessness as he prays here in verses 3-5. He is not saying that, "I am utterly and completely without sin and therefore I am before you in my own merit." He is not talking in those terms. He is simply talking in a more narrow sense. He is limiting it, he is speaking in the context of these accusation and he says, "God, this slander is false. I have not done what they have said that I have done. I am not guilty of what is being said about me. I am unjustly accused." And so sincere is his self examination, so clear is his conscience that he says, "God, if I have misrepresented this before you, if I am guilty, if I have betrayed my friends, if I have taken advantage of my position, then Father let the enemy come and lay me down in the dust." That is one bold prayer. And you know what? A man doesn't pray that way unless he is examined himself and he's made awfully sure that he is not speaking rationally in the presence of God. And so what you have here in front of you in verses 3-5 is David has checked his conscience, he has examined his life before he comes and prays to God about the slander that he is suffering from. He has reflected on his own conduct before he began to pray. He can offer his life to the dust because he knows that he is free from wrongdoing.

Now, let's take ourselves in hand in response to this passage of Scripture and let's deal firmly with ourselves before we think about those who are making accusations against us. Even when the external pressure from human assault is great and you have this sense of injury that has been inflicted upon you because of what others are saying about you, you must have the humility of mind, the lowliness of spirit to be willing to look in the mirror and ask yourself whether there is any truth to the accusation. Because it stings doesn't mean that you can simply avoid looking to yourself because sometimes even though we don't like it, sometimes our critics are right. And even when they are unsaved critics, sometimes they are saying things that are true enough about us that we should take note of them and rather than praying against them, we should humble ourselves and repent because they've identified something true about us. The Christian church as whole would do well to humble ourselves before the critics that mock us for the way that we let obvious charlatans continue and we don't call them out. I'm just speaking very broadly about the church, not about Truth Community at the moment. But, when people point out obvious charlatans, people who are obvious frauds taking advantage of weak and unsuspecting people, we need to have the humility to say, "You know what, you're right. That is shameful." And to not insulate ourselves under a Christian bubble just because the critic is speaking with unkind motives. If the critics are right, we need to humble ourselves and repent. Whether that's corporately or whether that's individually and what God is looking to bless is a spirit that is humble enough to say, "Lord, I've examined myself before I've come to you, before I invoke your power to help me I've cleared my conscience, I've confessed my sin. I have examined my heart and I am holding nothing known of wickedness in my own life."

David has examined himself and he says, "Lord, there is nothing there, and therefore, Lord, I can be so bold as to say if I'm lying to you now let me fall to the dust, let my reputation be shattered if I'm lying here." That is a very bold prayer to make in the presence of God. Look at it there in verse 5, "Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; And let him trample my life down to the ground And lay my glory in the dust." There's a level of boldness that comes from having examined your heart and having cleared your conscience and knowing that there is no truth to the accusation but, here's the point, beloved, here's the very practical point for you and me, is that, before we start asking God to help us against our human opponents, we have to step back and we have to turn the search light on ourselves before we proceed in prayer. Now if we do that, and we can say with a reasonably clear conscience, "God, their assault is untrue. I have not done what they have accused me of doing. This is an utter fabrication that is designed to harm me." Then what you see David doing in verses 6-11 is this, having examined himself, having defined his own innocence, now he depends on God's righteousness.

So what's the Prayer of the Slandered? Let's just review real quickly. You declare your trust in God. That is the framing, defining aspect of this prayer. "God, I trust you. You have saved me. You have brought me into relationship with yourself. I am resting in the merits of Christ as my righteousness before you and, God, therefore I trust you. You say you will be my God, you will be my protector, I am resting in that and that frames everything else that follows." Then you examine your heart, you define your own

innocence and you say, "God, there is nothing against me here. There is nothing true to what's being said, and yet this attack carries on and this attack is starting to be persuasive with others and it is turning other against me."

What then? Well, that's where you come to the third aspect of this Prayer of the Slandered as we've called it. The Prayer of the Slandered. You depend on God's righteousness. You rest in the fact that God is a God of righteousness. He hates wickedness and he loves justice and truth. He is opposed to falsehood. He arraigns himself, he arrays his power against those who violate his holy standards of truth and righteousness. God evaluates things honestly, he evaluates them fairly in accordance with his own holy character. There is no shadow, there is no variation in his character and when people are doing wrong they find themselves on the wrong side of the power of God. God is opposed to the proud but he gives grace to the humble. That's who he is. That's who he has revealed himself to be. That's who we know him to be and we trust that. Now, listen to me: it is one thing for you to affirm that theoretically in your mind, it is one thing for you to read the "Knowledge of the Holy." by A. W. Tozer or "Knowing God" by J. I. Packer and say, "Right on, Amen. I believe that," or whatever, whoever else your favorite good theologian is. It's one thing to view it that way and to embrace it theoretically. It is another thing altogether for you to say, "I am going to shape my life response by what I know to be true about the character of God. I am going to shape both my internal reaction and the way that I interact with human beings around me because of what God has revealed about himself in Scripture." And you say to yourself, "I'm going to depend on God's righteousness. I'm going to trust in that alone to be my source of hope."

And as you go on in this prayer beginning in verse 6, you see that God's righteousness is the ground of David's appeal, its what he points to, to justify his prayer before God and to motivate God, as it were, to respond to his prayer favorably. Look at what he says in verse 6, he says, "Arise, O LORD, in Your anger; Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries, And arouse Yourself for me; You have appointed judgment. Let the assembly of the peoples encompass You, And over them return on high." He says, "Arise, Oh God, lift up yourself, arouse yourself." What he's saying is, "God, you have not intervened in this situation up until now and it has gotten progressively worse. I am now threatened. I am under assault. I am vulnerable to these accusations that are being made against me. They are not true. I am willing to suffer the consequences if they are. But, God, I now appeal to you as a God of judgment to step up, to intervene, to help me because you are a God who judges against wickedness. And God, I am being accused wickedly here and so wake up, as it were, arouse yourself, get yourself involved in this situation." He's asking God to exercise his providential control of situations and to turn it to his advantage. He said, "God, don't let this situation continue unchanged. Vindicate me before the peoples. Help me display the truth of this matter publicly so that my character can be vindicated."

Look at verse 8, he says, "The LORD judges the peoples; Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me. O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; For the righteous God tries the hearts and

minds.” David is saying, "God, you will judge the nations in righteousness. You'll judge nations. God, you also will judge individuals. You try the hearts and minds," and for those who are not Christians, they need to come to grips with the fact that God knows not only their external conduct, he knows the thoughts and intentions of their heart. And those who harbor wicked desires find themselves exposed before a holy God as much as they murderer on death row does and God looks not only at external conduct, he examines the heart. And David says, “God, you are that kind of God. You are a God of universal rule. You are a God of universal justice. Nations will come and give an account to you, just like individuals do.” And so he is appealing to the righteous judgment of God to be the motivating factor that causes God to intervene on his behalf. He’s saying, "God, you’re a God of truth and you see these lies going on. This can't go on for long. You can't be indifferent to this. You can't be a passive observer forever about this because you’re a God of truth, you’re a God of righteousness and these lies and this sin against me surely can not go on unchecked."

And so look at verse 10, he is so confident of this, he is so assured of God’s ultimate justice that he says in verse 10, “My shield is with God.” "God, you’re going to protect me like a shield over my vital organs in close combat. You will defend me. You are my shield, my shield rests on you because, God, you’re the one who saves the upright in heart. You deliver them. You assist them. You aid them. You’re not indifferent to the obedience of your people. You’re not indifferent to the sincerity of our hearts." And so that is the basis of David’s appeal. He is appealing to the righteousness of God to be the reason that God would intervene and help him here. Look at verse 11 there, he says, “God is a righteous judge, And a God who has indignation every day.”

Now, here’s what I want you to see. We’ve said this so many times about David in these first several messages from the Psalms. David here is not appealing to God from a self centered desire for ease. This is not simply David saying, "God, get me out of this tight spot." You must see this, beloved, you must understand the level at which David is praying. All kinds of people who know nothing about Christ and his shed blood for salvation, all kinds of people pray to a God they don’t even know, "God, help me out of this situation." That’s not how we pray. That’s not why we pray. That is not the motivation of our seeking God. David’s prayers are always tied to elements of God’s character. He is appealing to the righteousness of God. He is aligning himself with the holiness of God and saying, "God, because of who you are, I appeal to that to be exercised so that your own purposes could be advanced." He was a man of integrity who rested in God’s righteousness. He is not trying to use God to get his pound of flesh from the person who is assaulting him. He is not calling on God out of self interest and self motivation. He’s saying, "God, there is a principle of righteousness that motivates everything that you do. Ultimately your righteousness is going to set forth the clarity of the universe. Its on that basis of who you are that I appeal to you in this time of need." His prayer is not at the level of pure self interest. He has brought the character of God to bear and is praying in accordance with what he knows God, himself to be like.

Verse 11, "God, you’re righteous. God, you get angry over sin everyday. There is a fence against you over and over again. I know that you’re like this and what’s happening to me

invokes your anger as well and so, God, because you don't like it, I ask you, intervene, help me, assist me." And so, step back for a moment, and let's just think about what he's done here. He says, "God. I trust you. God, I've examined my heart. God, you're a righteous God. On those bases, Father, from my position of trust and my knowledge of my character, I ask you to help me." This is not the superficial prayer of a man who wants out under affliction. It is driven by a deep knowledge of God that is forming the content of his prayers.

Now, we've looked at the Prayer of the Slandered. Let's look at the protection of the slandered. The protection of the slandered. That's the second main point in your notes if you're taking notes today. And if you're not taking notes, it's the second main point in my notes anyways, it comes out the same. The protection of the slandered. What you see in the following section of this Psalm is David is warning the wicked that their falsehoods will not stand. He's asserting the fact that while temporarily their accusations may seem to be taking root, it's a shallow driving of the plant in the soil that will easily be uprooted. And so, he's confident of the ultimate outcome. How can he do that? Why is he so sure? Well, notice that it's not because he's about to take vengeance into his own hand. He is furthering his trust in God as he speaks here. Look at verse 12, he's now turned away from the focus on his own innocence and he's now focusing on the wickedness of those who are opposing him. Look at verse 12, he says, "If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts." What's he saying here? He's saying, "What is the basis of his protection?" He's not praying so much anymore, he's not asking God for something here, he's reciting things that define his environment and the protection of the slandered, if you are in the midst of false accusations that are making your life very difficult, here's where you find your refuge. This is where you draw your spiritual strength from. First of all, God judges the wicked, God judges the wicked. The righteousness of God guarantees their doom. God will not allow unrepentant men to go unpunished forever and if they are exercising their wickedness to your harm, you can step back and take refuge in the knowledge of what God does with wicked people.

What he does here in verses 12 and 13, is he uses different metaphors to talk about the inevitability of God's judgment. Look at it with me in verse 12, "He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow. He makes his arrows fiery shafts." These are all expressing the inevitability of judgment. He is saying, "God is a warrior for righteousness. God will fight. God will defend his principle of righteousness. He will not allow sin to go unchecked forever." The image of a fiery arrow has the idea that the arrows were sometimes dipped in oil or pitch and then set on fire and then they would be set off to inflict their damage. What he's saying is, God is going to bring to bear his powers of judgment upon his enemies who dwell in sin without repentance. He will judge the wicked because he is a God of righteousness. Now listen, David is taking refuge in that in the midst of a personal result. Their doom is appointed, this can not possibly come out well for them because God is the ruler of the universe, he is the most high God and he will not allow sin to go unanswered. God himself, will step up and exercise judgment on

wicked people. And so he says, "In the long run I am secure here. In the long run this cannot go badly for me, it can only go bad for them," and that defines his perspective.

Secondly, its not just that God judges the wicked, he makes a somewhat similar point in verses 14-16, and it's this, that wickedness backfires. Wickedness backfires. Look at verses 14-16, he says, "Behold, he travails with wickedness," now he's referring to the wicked people, "he travails with wickedness, And he conceives mischief and brings forth falsehood." It's a very vivid picture that he's using here. He's picturing the wicked man as somebody who is pregnant, heavy with child only he's not heavy with child, he's heavy with evil and that evil comes forth, it comes out of him. He says that's what he's like, he's pregnant with wickedness but it can't go well for him. Verse 15, "He has dug a pit and hollowed it out, And has fallen into the hole which he made. His mischief will return upon his own head, And his violence will descend upon his own pate," the crown of his head. He's saying that like a boomerang, wickedness returns to those who practice it. He's full of evil. It has to come out but it will not succeed. He's digging a pit for me to fall in metaphorically speaking, but actually what's going to happen is that that pit will be his own destruction; his own wickedness will be his own downfall. That which he meant to harm someone else will eventually harm him.

My favorite biblical illustration of that is in the book of Esther. Do you remember when Haman was after Mordechai and built the gallows that he was going to have Mordechai hung on because Haman was second in command and he hated the Jews and he hated Mordechai because Mordechai wouldn't bow down to him? And you remember how the story turned, his evil plot was exposed because he didn't know that the queen was a Jew, that was his primary miscalculation there and they came, the king's assistants came and said, "Haman has built the gallows," and the king said, "Hang him on it," and Haman was hung on the gallows that he had built to destroy Mordechai on. His own wickedness became the source of his own downfall. And Scripture tells us over and over again this is the way it works out. We don't always see it in this life, sometimes God allows it to play out for a very long time that tries our patience deeply but in the end, their wickedness comes back upon themselves and we trust in that. This is the principle upon which God operates the universe. And even if it doesn't seem like we see that outcome in this life, its certainly going to be true in the final judgment when God brings all wickedness to account and settles every score. There will be no wrong that is done to you as a believer that is not ultimately corrected because you are in the hands of a righteous God who is faithful to his people. That is the outcome. What Scripture intends to happen in your heart as a result of that is for you to rest in the outcome and be patient while the wickedness plays itself out. For you to be willing to rest in the goodness and the knowledge and the ultimate favor of God instead of getting worked up about it, instead of retaliating, instead of taking vengeance into your own hand. This banishes worry when we embrace it fully, when we work it all the way through. It deals a death blow to our own worry. It let's us be peaceful even when we are being attacked.

And we see, that the reality of God's character, the reality of his sovereign control over good and over evil, the reality of his faithfulness to his people and his opposition to the proud and the wicked, all of those things are not abstract theological attributes. They're

not things musty in a book of theology that doesn't have any impact on real life. Beloved, what we know to be true about God changes everything about life. This defines the way that we interpret everything that happens to us, everything that goes around us, everything that could possibly come to bear upon us in life, we must interpret through the righteousness and the grace and the sovereign majesty of God. And the better we know him, the more truly we are going to see things for the way that they really are. Show me a person who is consistently, greatly agitated, show me someone who is plotting their own revenge against those who have hurt them, show me people like that and I'll show you people who have not yet drunk deeply from the character of God.

This should resonate with your heart, beloved. Say, "I want to be a person who lives in light of the character of God." And if this is just utterly, totally foreign to you and you have no concept of what it is that I'm talking about, let me invite you to the Savior Jesus Christ who shed his blood for sinners. It could be that you need to be reconciled to God for the very first time, that you need to come and confess. "I've been one of those wicked people who has rejected your rule over my life. I come and confess my sins and ask Christ to receive me." Do you know what? He will receive you. He will receive you and forgive all of your sins if you come to him like that. And for those of us who have come to him like that, we do know him, then our lives should be a reflection of what we know to be true. That's the standard, that's the high and lofty standard that we aspire to and we demand it, as it were, from our own souls. I demand it for myself, you should demand it from yourself. I'm not going to live at this low level of anxiety and distress over what's happening around in life. We come up to the character of God. We let that pull us up so that our minds and our thoughts and our reactions are different than if we were unsaved. That's what David did.

Look at the last verse in Psalm 7, Psalm 7:17, we've seen the Prayer of the Slandered, we've seen the protection of the slandered, here in verse 17 we see the praise of the slandered. You know what David's doing at the end here? Nothing has changed. This is so often the case, the circumstances don't change but the attitude does because it has been brought into submission to the character of God. David started out saying, "Lord, I'm at risk of being mauled like a lion," and in verse 17 he ends on this note, "I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness And I will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High." In the midst of the slander, David is singing praise to God, the Lord Most High, has the idea that God has a universal reign, he will remove evil and suddenly what would have caused David to despair has been transformed into his hope. The affliction of his soul, the accusations of his enemy have actually driven him ultimately to praise. That is what happens every time we respond rightly to our trials, beloved. When we respond rightly to our trials, they lead us to the throne of God where we bow in worship and we praise and we sing.

I don't say that lightly. I don't say that superficially, especially knowing some of the deep waters that some of you are trying to treat through right now. But, beloved, your trials are designed to be a current, perhaps a white water bare knuckles clinging on kind of current, but they are a current that is designed to deliver you to the throne of God where you can

worship and sing because it has caused you to bring his character into focus, to trust him above all else and to rest. Despair is transformed into hope.

David is slandered by a wicked man and apparently people are receptive to the falsehoods but David is singing. He's singing. He's singing praise because he trusts the God who reigns over all. What should we take away from this? Just to wrap this up. Beloved, you're quite likely to be slandered and to be hurt by it before this life is over, if you're not going through it right now. Rather than retaliate, rather than worry, rather than seeking sympathy from men, I invite you, I challenge you in light of this Psalm go to the Lord and pour out your heart to him and leave it there, leave it with him. Don't try to recruit people to your aid in a battle of gossip. Go to God and say, "God, I'm going to trust you. I'm going to leave this with you. I'll manifest my trust by not raising my hand in my own defense, by not opening my mouth to defend myself." Trust him that much, beloved, and watch him honor it in time. Christians shouldn't be known as those who are prickly and always out to defend themselves. Although further, Christians shouldn't be known as those who are always promoting themselves. That's a sermon for another time. Just go to the Lord with a humbled heart, "Lord, I'm examining my life in your presence." Get alone with him, be quiet with him and remember his righteousness and ask him to help you and while you wait for his help to manifest itself, which it most certainly will, sing. Sing his praise. Worship him. Beloved, let's be a people that are committed to praising God before we see how our trials come out. Let's not reserve our truest worship until we see the outcome. Let's praise him now because of his inherent worth and trust him like that. Let's be Christians like that at Truth Community. Let's sing his praise while the questions are still unanswered.

Let's pray together.

Father, help us to trust you when we are slandered. Help us further, Father, so that we would not be one who slanders with our own tongue. And then help us even further to defend those who are wrongly accused because, Father, as we move along that spectrum, as we slide along that scale, we will be more and more reflecting your righteousness and that's what we want to do as your people. Help us, Lord, to live righteously for the sake of our righteous God. And Father, for those who do not know Christ here today, I pray that you would just be merciful to them, lead them to the cross of Christ. Lead them to the Savior who says, "Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." To the one who said, "Believe in me," cast your cares upon him because he cares for you. Father, may the one troubled with sin go to Christ who bore the sins in his body on the cross and rose again victorious over the grave. The perfect sacrifice that can silence a guilty conscience and the one alone who can reconcile us to a holy God. We love you, Lord. We love your word, we're grateful. And we thank you that you've given us this time together. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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