



MATT BLACK, Sun, September 2, 2018
livinghopechurch.net

7 | PSALM 7

FROM PANIC TO PRAISE

Drawing Near to God when Fearing

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. Crossroads Kids Club: we are starting a crossroads kids club at Parkwood, and we are in great need of volunteers. It will be on Thursdays from 2:30 to 3:30pm starting in October, but we need to begin training so please volunteer today. Email or call Emily to volunteer.

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to **Psalm 7**. The title of our study this morning is: “From Panic to Praise.” I remember I was in a play about the five missionaries who gave their lives for the Whoudani tribe in Ecuador. My wife was playing Marge Saint, and I was playing Marge’s husband, the great pilot, Nate Saint. My wife gave her lines without a hitch, but when it came to me, I froze. I couldn’t remember anything. Fear is incredibly powerful, isn’t it? It can wipe out your memory and cause your heart to pound. Physically, it puts adrenaline and cortisol into your system. Those are wonderful when you need to keep out of danger, but when fear is held onto beyond what is healthy, it becomes sinful and terribly unhealthy.

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY FEAR

Healthy Fear

Fear is not always sinful. Caring can also be a form of vigilance and responsibility. There is what we might call a “faithful fear.” Paul said, “Apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches” (2 Cor 11:28).

We feel faithful fear when we try to protect or defend against evil or harm.

A faithful parent will feel fear when his child runs out into a busy road. That’s vigilance.

A faithful spouse will feel a godly fear in trying to protect their marriage.

A faithful worker fears the Lord and takes care and pride in his work and responsibilities.

Healthy fear is stimulated by real **threatening danger** and then disappears when that danger is no longer present. Being faced with what could be a matter of life or death, healthy fear encourages or requires us to take action. Healthy fear moves us to action: it helps us to get out of the way of danger.

The most healthy fear is the fear of the Lord. It’s a holy reverence and awe for God. That kind of godly reverence leads us to feel the love of God. It’s the fear of the Lord that leads us to peace.

Unhealthy Fear

But there is a fear that is bad. It crosses over into sin. It doesn’t lead us to Jesus. It leads us to another master. It leads us to be controlled by anxiety, worry, rage and anger, bitterness. It leaves us completely stressed out. Sinful fear is unbelief in God’s goodness, greatness, and love. Sinful fear is rooted in a lack of trust in God. Bad fear is really

unbelief. This kind of unhealthy fear is a very real problem for each one of us. It's incredibly powerful. It can be the simplest thing.

All of us have difficulties with negative, toxic emotions. What do you do when you feel you want to explode from anger or fear? What do you do when you've been wronged?

Many of the wrongs we all experience are minor problems. David is faced in this Psalm with the "words of Cush" who is from the tribe of Benjamin. David felt like these words would **tear his soul apart like a lion** (7:2). Words are powerful.

His testimony and reputation were being destroyed. His character was being questioned. He had every reason to panic. He had every reason to let anger and bitterness take over his thoughts. He had every reason to become paralyzed by depression. But he didn't. Instead he teaches us how to praise God in the storm.

What should you do when you are tempted to give up or blow up? Psalm 7 gives us the answer.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read our passage today, Psalm 6,

A Shiggaion (*impassioned poem*) of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.

O Lord my God, in you do I take refuge;
save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,

²lest like a lion they tear my soul apart,
rending it in pieces, with none to deliver.

³O Lord my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,

⁴if I have repaid my friend with evil
or plundered my enemy without cause,

⁵let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it,
and let him trample my life to the ground
and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*

⁶Arise, O Lord, in your anger;
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.

⁷Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you;
over it return on high.

⁸The Lord judges the peoples;
judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness
and according to the integrity that is in me.

⁹Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
and may you establish the righteous—
you who test the minds and hearts,

O righteous God!

¹⁰My shield is with God,

- who saves the upright in heart.
- ¹¹ God is a righteous judge,
and a God who feels indignation every day.
- ¹² If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword;
he has bent and readied his bow;
- ¹³ he has prepared for him his deadly weapons,
making his arrows fiery shafts.
- ¹⁴ Behold, the wicked man conceives evil
and is pregnant with mischief
and gives birth to lies.
- ¹⁵ He makes a pit, digging it out,
and falls into the hole that he has made.
- ¹⁶ His mischief returns upon his own head,
and on his own skull his violence descends.
- ¹⁷ I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness,
and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High.

This is God's Word.

David outlines four healthy responses to the temptation to sinful fear. He wrote a song about how to respond to panic, fear, or bitterness because of injustice to you or your character. He said by the grace of God he would respond with:

Outline

1. Refuge (7:1-2)
2. Conscience (7:3-5)
3. Justice (7:6-16)
4. Praise (7:17)

1. ADOPT THE PRINCIPLE OF REFUGE: SAVE ME (7:1-2)

REFUGE NEEDED (7:0)

God tells us 365 times in the Bible to “fear not.” That’s enough for every day of the year. He knew we needed to hear it. You are not called to be controlled by fear, but comforted by faith in the Lord. If you are a person who struggles with anxiety, which I think is every one of us at times, then this Psalm is for you.

Context: It seems this Psalm is written during the time he is fleeing from King Saul. David is in his 20s. After David was anointed by Samuel to be King of Israel there were many years that he had to hide from Saul, running for his life. David became king of Israel when he was 30 (2 Sam 5:4), but he was anointed when he was in his late teens. So he’s on the run for around 7 to 10 years.

David is being slandered by one King Saul’s henchman: Cush. This is doing great damage to his reputation. Remember, David is married to Michal, Saul’s daughter. There

should be trust. But Saul knows the great prophet Samuel has anointed David. He's jealous. He has a death wish for David. And Cush's words are making everything worse.

There is great reason to **panic**. David wanted to escape. He wanted those words to be undone. He wanted justice. There is fear, there is anxiety. What should David do? He writes a song.

A Shiggaion (impassioned poem) of David, which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjaminite.

A Shiggaion is an impassioned poem. David is hurting because of the words of Cush. He's afraid of what might happen. He feels like these words might tear him apart.

What should David do? What does David do?

REFUGE FOUND (7:1)

Instead of sulking in fear or despair of hopelessness, David seeks refuge in God.

O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge;
 save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,
²lest like a lion they tear my soul apart,
 rending it in pieces, with none to deliver (7:1-2).

Do you see what a simple concept this is? His problem is still there. There are words that have slandered David and may cost him. Perhaps he's tempted to think, "I've been anointed as king, but now that is probably gone." David chooses not to dwell on all the what ifs. Instead he takes **refuge in God** so that these words don't **tear his soul apart**.

Scripture Proofs

Philippians 4:8 tells us instead of focusing on the fears of our own heart, we need to focus on what is true. "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." It's all about focus.

That's also what Isaiah says, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you" (**Isa 26:3**). Focus on the Lord, not on your fear.

Peter Walking on Water

We see that we need to find God as our refuge in times of fear. Peter illustrates this. Remember when he was walking on the water? As long as he was focused on Jesus he was walking on water. What a great example of walking by faith! But when Peter got his eyes off Jesus and on to the wind and the waves, Peter began to sink (Mt 14:22-33).

REFUGE REQUIRED (7:2)

David knew he needed to seek refuge in the LORD, or else his enemies would **tear his soul apart, rending it in pieces with none to deliver**.

O LORD my God, in you do I take refuge;
 save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,

²lest **like a lion they tear my soul apart**,
rending it in pieces, with none to deliver (7:1-2).

Mental Paralysis

This is a striking description of **mental paralysis**. David isn't worried about death, but *his mind and heart being torn to pieces*. He doesn't want these circumstances to tear his soul apart. He wants to have a sound mind for the Lord. That's exactly what Paul said to his companion in ministry: Pastor Timothy. He is a pastor in Ephesus, and he struggles with fear, anxiety, etc. Paul says: "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" (1 Tim 1:7). "Self-control" means a mind of self-discipline, self-control. A major pivot point between peace and fear is what you choose to focus on. You must choose to focus on the LORD and his character and person as your refuge.

God is good. He is kind. He is the wonderful counselor. He is all powerful and he sent his only Son to die for you to give you "all things" (Rom 8:32).

No Other Refuge

You need to come to the reality that there is no other true and lasting refuge outside of the Lord. He's your shepherd. He's your high tower. He's your mighty fortress! He'll never leave you, nor forsake you. He's always there for you.

When your **friends** let you down, he's a friend that will stick closer than a brother.

When your **doctors** let you down, he's the great physician that will give you a new body at his Second Coming.

When your **job** lets you down, he's Jehovah Jireh and he can provide when all you have is five loaves and two fish.

Can I get a witness?

When your **enemies** come at you and won't relent, he is your fortress, your refuge, your helper, your guide, your friend. Oh, he's so good, isn't he?

When you are confused by **circumstances**, he's your wonderful Counselor. He's the all wise God who never lacks the intellect, intelligence, or empathy to hear and guide you every single time!

We have **no other refuge** outside of our Great God and his Son Jesus Christ! Wow. And I want no other refuge.

We need to **focus** on God as our refuge as David did. You say, how do I focus on the Lord in that way? I'm glad you asked. Let's see what David does.

2. ADOPT THE PRINCIPLE OF **CONSCIENCE**: SEARCH ME (7:3-5)

CONSCIENCE PRINCIPLE EXPLAINED

In order to draw near to God as a refuge, the first thing David does is cleanse his conscience. He examines himself. He wants to make sure he is right with God.

³O LORD my God, if I have done this,
if there is wrong in my hands,

⁴if I have repaid my friend with evil
 or plundered my enemy without cause,
⁵let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it,
 and let him trample my life to the ground
 and lay my glory in the dust. *Selah*

In order to enjoy God as your refuge, **you have to be right with God**. David searched his heart and asked God to chasten him for any sin patterns in his life. **He was confident that his conscience was clean**. What a powerful insight into this man with such a heart for God. The secret to David's great power was a clean conscience.

David wasn't claiming to be sinless; he was stating that he was blameless in his motives and actions. If indeed David was guilty of sin, he was willing to accept God's **discipline**; but he knew that his hands were pure. David had two opportunities to kill King Saul and refused to do so (1 Sam 24, 26). This was proof enough that his heart was not filled with personal malice and a desire for revenge.¹ David's conscience was clean.

Grieving & Quenching the Holy Spirit

A Christian in order to serve God, must always maintain a clean conscience. It is possible to **grieve** the Holy Spirit. And if you continue grieving the Spirit, it is possible to **quench** the Holy Spirit. We are told in Scripture never to do either of these things.

David says to God, Lord, if any of this is true, let me bear my sin. Show me my sin so I can repent. Give me the **chastening** I need, and "lay my glory in the dust" (7:5c). David is saying, "**Lord, do whatever it takes for me to have a clean conscience.**"

Ask Yourself the Hard Questions

How can you get to where David is? How can you gain a clear conscience? Ask yourself the hard questions.

1. Are you right with God in your conscience and in your heart? David says, "if there is wrong in my hands..." (7:3). Is there any wrong in your hands (actions) or thoughts? Is there anything between your soul and the Savior? This is the way to a renewed power and joy in the Holy Spirit. Do you remember that the fruit of the Spirit begins with: "love, joy, peace..." (Gal 5:22)? Do you have that? Are you walking in the freedom and joy of the Holy Spirit? As you search your heart, remember: God is holy and he's interested in your holiness. This holiness includes both your visible deeds and your motives (Psa 11:4; Isa 6:1-7; 1 Cor 4:5; Heb 1:8-9).

You cannot expect for God to do great things through you if your conscience is defiled. Search your heart. Is there anything between you and the Lord?

- Is there **gossip**? Have you spoken ill about someone behind their backs?
- Is there **bitterness**? Are you holding a grudge against anyone?
- Is there **deceit**? Are you lying about something?

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., "Be" Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 37.

- Is there **anger** or **fits of rage** in your life? Is your temper out of control at home? Are you blameless before your spouse? If you have kids, do they see a parent in you that is self-controlled?
- Is there **lust**? Are you free from any thought or action of pornography or any kind of unclean sexual activity? Is your conscience completely clean?
- Is there **worldliness**? Does everything you see on your phone or TV or in the theater bring honor and glory to God? Does your music and media exalt God?

Do you have a clean conscience? None of us is perfect, but when we sin, there must be great repentance and sorrow. Confess your sins to one another. If you have a spouse or kids, they ought to be able to see a pattern of constant repentance.

CONSCIENCE PRINCIPLE EXPANDED (7:3-5)

David fully surrenders to God's chastening. David says, "if there is wrong in my hands..." (7:3), then give me the fiercest chastening. "**Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and let him trample my life to the ground and lay my glory in the dust**" (7:5). That's pretty severe chastening that David is inviting. David has replaced sinful fear with a godly awe and reverential fear of God. In verse 5, David prays if he is guilty, God would chasten him by sending his enemies against him to do him harm. We see here that David has a far greater fear of God than his enemies.

Replace Sinful Fear with Godly Fear

If you are to overcome sinful paralyzing fear, you must begin with a healthy fear (awe) of God. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline." (**Pro 1:7**). You have to fear God more than you fear living with fear or anxiety or worry.

- Believe that God created you because he loves you.
- Believe that God has a future and a hope for your life.
- Believe that God (not fear) has the right to be your **Master**
- Believe that God wants you to entrust your life entirely to him.
- Believe that God has the power to change you.
- Believe that God will keep you safe as you trust in him.

Replace sinful fear with a godly fear of the LORD! So now, David builds on this and he focuses on the fear of the Lord and God's ultimate justice and judgment of mankind. It's frightening. And the fear of the Lord drives out the sinful, ungodly fear that David might be tempted to have because of his earthly enemies. He's got to have a healthy fear of God who is not David's judge, but David's heavenly Father. And he's your heavenly Father too!

3. ADOPT THE PRINCIPLE OF JUSTICE: SUPPORT ME (7:6-16)

Remember, this Psalm is very likely written during the time David is being chased by King Saul. He's had two chances to kill King Saul, but he's chosen not to. Fear can drive us to do very irrational things. But David stays far away from letting fear control him. He keeps fear away from him by focusing on the fear and holy reverence for his all powerful, all wise, heavenly Father.

DIVINE JUSTICE (7:6)

David focuses on God's divine justice. Can I just let you know that you are in God's hands, not man's? Man's justice is often corrupt and imperfect. But God's justice is perfect. All of us will appear before the Judge of all the earth. And if you are a Christian, your future is secured in Christ. "Surely [God's] goodness and mercy [steadfast love] shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psa 23:6). Not so for the unbeliever. The wicked will face **the wrath of an angry God**. David knew this. He says:

Arise, O Lord, in your anger;
lift yourself up against the fury of my enemies;
awake for me; you have appointed a judgment.

David was secure in his place before God. He wasn't perfect but he was forgiven and justified because of faith by grace in the Lord.

Divine Justice is in God's Divine and Perfect Timeframe

David is languishing in the injustice he has experienced. This Psalm is a Shiggaion, or an "impassioned poem." David's heart is exploding and yearning for God to come down from heaven and judge his enemies immediately. God's justice can't come soon enough!

When you are angry or hurt, it's hard to wait on God to intervene. The picture is that David is trying to rouse the LORD from sleeping! That's how David perceived it. It's hard to wait on the Lord isn't it? David calls him to "Arise" and "awake" because it seemed like God was sleeping on his justice of the wicked. David says, **"Awake my Lord! Come to my defense!"** **Let me tell you, God is not asleep**. Do not fear. God will repay. God is just. He's appointed a day in which he will judge the world by his Son Jesus Christ.

So it's not only **divine** justice, it's **universal** justice.

UNIVERSAL JUSTICE (7:7-9)

David is saying: *Bring your court to session*. This is very judicial language. David pictures a public judgment scene and pleads:

⁷Let the assembly of the peoples be gathered about you;
over it return on high.

There is coming a judgment day and it is universal. Here it seems to be the first picture of the Second Coming recorded in the Psalms. Jesus returns on high and rules over his tribunal. All must appear. It's universal justice. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27). And David is saying: bring on your judgment. David

is content to rest in God's verdict. It's like John says in Revelation: "Come quickly, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20).

The Righteous are Judged

David could have worked himself up in fear because of the words of Cush. Instead he thinks of himself at the Last Judgment. It's true that all of us as Christians will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Cor 5:10). David knows he is in right standing with God, so he looks forward to judgment day. Look at verse 8:

The Lord judges the **peoples**;
 judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness
 and according to the **integrity** that is in me (7:8).

David, as a regenerate man was saved by grace through faith. This has always been the way of salvation. David could appeal to his **righteousness** and **integrity**. It was never perfect righteousness, but a right way of living that reflected his faith in Yahweh. David is confident. He says, "Judge me. Test me. Try me. I'm a real follower of Yahweh." Don't be confused. He's not saying he's perfectly righteous. That was never meant by these appeals. David knew he was a sinner. He would often write Psalms about his broken-heartedness over his sin (Psa 51:17; 25:11; 32:5; 38:3). David was a sinner, but he was truly a "man after God's own heart." He had a new heart, a clean heart, a converted heart. That's what he was saying: Judge me. Test me. I'm the real thing. Can you say that?

The Wicked are Judged

Those who do not walk by faith in the grace of God will be tested on that Day of Judgment. David says: Bring it on. Let the Judgment Day begin.

⁹Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,
 and may you establish the righteous—
 you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God!

So it's not only **divine** justice, it's **universal** justice, and it's **personal** justice.

PERSONAL JUSTICE (7:10-11)

Shifting to a battlefield motif, David describes God as a victorious general. The Lord easily deflects all the fiery darts of false accusation hurled against David.

God My Shield

Now David looks at God as the victorious general who himself is a shield.

My shield is with God [*al-Elohim, God Most High*], who saves **the upright in heart** (7:10).²

David must be remembering God's words to Abraham in Genesis 15:1, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

David says that not only is his shield with God, but that **God himself is his shield**. Many translations translate this verse: **My shield is God Most High** (NIV).

Regeneration: The point is God is a shield for all his children. He will protect all his people – who are **upright in heart** because of **regeneration**. You are protected by God if you are **born again**. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). God is the fortress and protection for all his truly born again people.

God My Righteous Judge

God is the **righteous judge** sitting in a courtroom setting and handing down the verdicts of his court.

God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation [*against the wicked*] every day (7:11).

The final judgment is coming, but God doesn't wait to express his wrath until then. In fact, he displays his indignation, his wrath against the wicked every day.

Every day, God takes men and women from this earth. He could take anyone home today. 150,000 people die every day.

SWIFT JUSTICE (7:12-13)

So it's not only **divine** justice, it's **universal** justice, it's **personal** justice, and it's **swift** justice.

In this display of vengeance, God would not relent or be turned back from pursuing wrath, but he sharpened his sword, and readied his bow with flaming arrows. All his deadly weapons were prepared, poised, and pointed at the enemies of his chosen ones. God is in a constant state of war against his enemies.³

¹² If a man does not repent, God will whet [*sharpen*] his sword;
he has bent and readied his bow;

¹³ he has prepared for him his deadly weapons,
making his arrows fiery shafts.

God's judgment is already resting upon the heads of the lost. Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn the world because the world is condemned already (Jn 3:16-21). God has sharpened his sword.

² This verse could be translated either way (*with God* or *God Most High*) because the "al" could be translated "with" or it could be an abbreviated form of "El Elyon" which means "Most High." So **al Elohim** could be translated "with God" or "God Most High."

³ Steven Lawson. *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Psalms: 11* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2003), 87.

SELF-INFLICTED JUSTICE (7:14-16)

So many look at divine justice as unfair, like God does not give anyone a chance. The truth is God is patient and merciful. Man goes to hell on his own accord. God is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet 3:9). But the wicked, if they don't repent, will indeed perish.

Pregnant with Sin

The lost of this world have afflicted themselves by their own sin. David describes the lost man as **pregnant** with sin, who **gives birth to lies**.

Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and gives birth to lies (7:14).

Self-Inflicted Trap

The next image is one of a hunter who makes a pit to trap an animal, but he falls into his own pit.

¹⁵ He makes a pit, digging it out,
and falls into the hole that he has made.

¹⁶ His mischief returns upon his own head,
and on his own skull his violence descends.

Here the hunter is hunting himself. His sin returns upon his own head. All those who go to hell get there by their own actions. The lost person falls into hell by his own schemes. He falls into the pit by his own weight.

The wicked must go to hell because this is what the sinner wants. What is hell, then? It is God actively giving us up to what we have freely chosen – to go our own way, be “the master of our fate, the captain of our soul,” to get away from him and his control. It is God banishing us to regions we have desperately tried to get into all our lives. J.I.Packer writes:

“Scripture sees hell as self-chosen.... Hell appears as God’s gesture of respect for human choice. All receive what they actually chose, either to be with God forever, worshipping him, or without God forever, worshipping themselves.”⁴

If the thing you most want is to worship God in the beauty of his holiness, then that is what you will get (Psa 96:9-13) If the thing you most want is to be your own master, then the holiness of God will become an agony, and the presence of God a terror you will flee forever (Rev 6:16; cf Isa 6:1-6).

But if you love the presence of God now, you will love his presence forever and ever. “In thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore” (Psa 16:11, KJV).

⁴ J.I.Packer. *Concise Theology* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), 262-263.

4. ADOPT THE PRINCIPLE OF **PRAISE**: SHEILD ME (7:17)

THANKS TO GOD (7:17)

Gratitude demonstrates a humble, contrite spirit. That is an attitude that is attractive to God.

I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness,
and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High (7:17).

David demonstrates gratitude to God. Gratitude to God is the highest evidence of surrender and trust in God. He will protect you dear saint. “No weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Isa 54:17). That’s something to sing about.

Paul gloried in all his weaknesses because he was instructed that divine strength is made perfect in human weakness. Do you believe that? When it comes to weak humans like you and me, **divine strength is made perfect in human weakness!**

Give thanks!

Conclusion

Fear is a paralyzing reality as fragile, finite creatures. Because of our great God, we have the power to walk in faith instead of fear. We are weak, but he is strong.