

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Can you identify those who pursue God's people, the Church, with false accusation? How should this be dealt with?
2. Is the picture of God as a judge helpful, or are there problems with the image that require us to be careful with its use today?
3. Psalm 7 talks about the 'enemy'. Discuss your understanding of the 'enemy' in this psalm and whether we can relate to this today.

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*The origins of this psalm lie in conflict between two individuals, one of whom calls on God for vindication. I have experienced personality clashes or conflicts at various times in my life and work, and they have always affected me deeply. It has always been the stiffest of challenges to respond to such problems in a godly way, and the temptation is to fight against those who have caused upset. Yet it is vital that we find a way to deal with this, for the health of one's Christian life. The message of this psalm is surely that we must rely upon God not just for the justice but also for how this works out in real life. Then, if we are faced by violence, then those who use it will find themselves dealing not with us, but Almighty God.*

### Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *In what ways has conflict or personality clashes robbed you of being able to serve the Lord fully at church or work? Consider how you can make sure that you live your life without fear of such troubles, and what you can do to hand things over to the Lord.*
- *Pray for any people you know who are embroiled in conflict, and ask the Lord to act with justice to help people find resolution.*

## Final Prayer

Bring us, Lord Jesus, to that happy place where we can look back and be content that we have learned from the past, and to where we can look forward and anticipate with joy the future you have in store for us. May we be content that our lives reflect the faith that has been handed down to us; bring us to that place of peace, Lord Jesus. AMEN

## Psalm 7

No: 26 Week: 196 Thursday 18/06/09

## Prayer

Lord God, I offer my all to You in worship. I honour you with my mind, I sing to You from my heart, I speak with You from within my soul, I praise You with all my strength, I raise You up with my spirit, and I know and feel Your presence through everything I do. This is my prayer, O Lord my God; fill me with Your goodness and grace and make me ready for everything that happens! AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: Secularism

*Pray for the universities of your country. Ask God to bless these places of learning with the wisdom to be open to the God who has made all things and is the fount of all knowledge.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for the leaders of your country*
- *Ask God to save us from all irresponsible use of the world He has given us*
- *Give thanks for the opportunities God has placed before you*

## Meditation

Simplicity is;

The love of God which made the world;  
The passion of Jesus for all people;  
The work of the Spirit in the believer's heart;  
The Gospel commission to save the world;  
The example of Jesus to heed the poor;  
The Word of God which corrects all error;  
The life of the Church which bears the Faith;  
The beauty of worship which lifts the soul;  
The joy of a life lived for God and for others;  
The defeat of Satan before Christ on the Cross;  
And the promise of eternal life with our Lord in Glory!

God's truth is simplicity itself.

## Bible Study - Psalm 7

A shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjamite.

- <sup>1</sup> *O LORD my God, I take refuge in you;  
save and deliver me from all who pursue me,*
- <sup>2</sup> *or he will tear me like a lion  
and rip me to pieces with no-one to rescue me.*
- <sup>3</sup> *O LORD my God, if I have done this  
and there is guilt on my hands,*
- <sup>4</sup> *if I have done evil to him who is at peace with me  
or have robbed my foe without cause,*
- <sup>5</sup> *then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;  
let him trample my life to the ground*

*and make me sleep in the dust.*

*Selah*

- <sup>6</sup> *Arise, O LORD, in your anger;  
rise up against the rage of my enemies.  
Awake, my God; decree justice.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Let the assembled peoples gather round you.  
Rule over them from on high;*
- <sup>8</sup> *let the LORD judge the peoples.  
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,  
according to my integrity, O Most High.*
- <sup>9</sup> *O righteous God, who searches minds and hearts,  
bring to an end the violence of the wicked  
and make the righteous secure.*
- <sup>10</sup> *My shield is God Most High,  
who saves the upright in heart.*
- <sup>11</sup> *God is a righteous judge,  
a God who expresses his wrath every day.*
- <sup>12</sup> *If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword;  
he will bend and string his bow.*
- <sup>13</sup> *He has prepared his deadly weapons;  
he makes ready his flaming arrows.*
- <sup>14</sup> *He who is pregnant with evil and conceives trouble  
gives birth to disillusionment.*
- <sup>15</sup> *He who digs a hole and scoops it out  
falls into the pit he has made.*
- <sup>16</sup> *The trouble he causes recoils on himself;  
his violence comes down on his own head.*
- <sup>17</sup> *I will give thanks to the LORD  
because of his righteousness  
and I will sing praise  
to the name of the LORD Most High.*

### Review

Psalm 7 begins with a mystery, because we do not know the identity of 'Cush the Benjamite' mentioned in the 'superscription'. If he was one of David's enemies, then he was one of many, because throughout David's life he had many enemies, in particular the family of Saul who he replaced as King. David could never escape the antipathy of Saul's family nor its threats and subversion (2 Samuel 16:5-14), and parts of psalm 7 appear to reflect animosity of this kind. So we will describe this psalm with David as the author, personally enduring all of its thoughts and feelings. Most commentaries wholly avoid this, but it helps us gain a feel for the psalm, whether it is correct or not!

The eight verses of psalm 7 are a quest for vindication. David asks the Lord for help and suspects will lose his life unless God responds (7:1,2); many pursuers are mentioned in verse 1, but then in the next verse, one person is said to hound him, 'he will tear me apart ... he will drag me away'. This sounds like a confrontation between David and Cush, and possibly some of Saul's men. The fighting is fierce, and lives are at stake. David feels as if

he is being hunted by a lion (7:2) a picture that feels almost demonic (see 1 Peter 5:8!). Verses 3 to 5 express a sentiment typical of David, who accepts that he deserves to be set upon by his enemies if he has done anything wrong, but doesn't recall it if he did! Most of us would accept deserved punishment, but object to injustice. Justice is important, because the salvation of God is always based upon justice and the honest truth of one who turns to God to repent. The enemy has no right to hound us if we have placed ourselves in the hands of our Lord!

So David calls for justice (7:6), and asks the Lord to act as judge. Then, a picture is painted in the psalm that looks surprisingly like a court room. The public is gathered, the Lord takes his raised seat as the Judge, and you can imagine David calling upon the court, God and people, for justice (7:8). The picture is only partial, but it helps us understand that God is just, and we may appeal to this, and the 'courtroom' scenes are typical of scripture (see Job 1 and 2 for example). The call for justice by David in this psalm presents us, however, with a personal challenge. If we were to speak out to claim our own integrity today, it would be considered rather hypocritical, an accusation usually flung at politicians and clergy. But surely, in the Lord's strength and the knowledge of his covenant love, we should aim for the highest of standards of integrity and honesty, for the benefit of all. We must certainly do this if we wish to defeat our enemy, Satan.

Before looking at the central verses of this psalm there is an issue to deal with in verse 9, concerning the words 'minds and hearts'. The words in the original Hebrew are 'hearts and kidneys', and 'the heart' was considered the seat of character and will, and the 'kidneys' were the seat of the emotions. We do not think like this today, because the heart links with emotions, and kidneys are just meat! Nevertheless, this phrase here in verse 9 really refers to emotional strength and will power. This is vital, for this is how Scripture describes mature judgement. It seems that God looks for character and mature emotional intelligence to rid the world of violence and 'make the righteous secure' (7:9).

The picture in the following verses graphically describe what happens to an enemy of God under judgement 'he digs a hole ... and falls in ... his violence comes down on his head' (7:15,16). These expressions have come down to us as proverbs of stupidity and violence, but this is what happens in God's moral world. Those who will not repent (7:12) receive the same treatment and violence they have meted out to others, with the same vigour, force and weaponry that they themselves have used. We may be concerned about the sheer violence of what we read in verses 12 and 13, but it is not always clear who the 'he' is at places in these verses. The NRSV has 'If one does not repent, God will whet his sword ...' which makes things clearer, but God is still described as incredibly violent.

In the early third millennium, many of us are cushioned from violence and strife, but we should be able to empathise with those of other nations and other times who are not, and we might understand that they would see God involved in their lives, trouble and war included. Generations before David, Moses wrote these words, describing God as one who would save His people 'I whet my flashing sword ... my hand takes hold of judgement ... I will repay those who hate me ... I will make my arrows drunk with blood' (Deuteronomy 32:41,42). Of course, this passage is designed to ensure that those who have rebelled against God fear Him, but if you have not rebelled, then there is nothing to fear!

Finally, David offers praise to God for his deliverance and power (7:17). A passage of praise such as this is called a 'doxology', literally, 'words of glory' offered to God. We should never fail to give thanks to God when he has done something for us, particularly when we have called on his judgement, and He has acted to save us!