



# PRAYING WHEN YOU KNOW YOU ARE RIGHT

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Psalm 7

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## Introduction

A curious feature of the Psalms, one that I have noticed only recently, is the way that some of them are grouped or linked. Psalm 6 and Psalm 7 are linked in that they are almost opposites; yet, spiritually, this opposition profoundly connects them. Psalm 6 is the first Penitential Psalm, a prayer of David when he knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was "in the wrong," and he longed for God's mercy to save him. Psalm 7 is a prayer when David believes that his behavior has been right. He has done no wrong; rather, he has been wronged, and he longs for God's justice to save him.

It was by actually using these psalms in prayer that I found them to be so profoundly linked. Start sometime by praying and meditating on one of these psalms, and you may find yourself moved toward the mindset of the other. Having become convinced of your own right standing on some problem, meditation on God's standards and character may lead you to see where you are in the wrong. Convinced that you are guilty of something, you may be led into a perspective of forgiveness and grace that gives you insight into the unrighteousness of others as you prepare to reach out and, in humility, forgive.

Having already looked at Psalm 6, today we will examine Psalm 7 and see how praying when you believe you are right yields some very helpful benefits:

- Willingness to have your heart and motives analyzed and exposed by God (7:1-5).
- Confidence in the presence and judgment of God, often expressed as a deep longing for God's judgment (7:6-9)
- Clarity of spiritual insight: You begin to see evil from God's perspective – how, from its very inception, it carries with it the seeds of its own destruction (7:10-16).

## *A Difficult Beginning (Psalm 7 Header)*

Before moving into the content of Psalm 7, I should note that the text and translation of this Psalm have proved difficult for scholars over the centuries, much more so than most of the Old Testament text. I don't know the reasons for this, but in my own study, I found a wide variety of textual variation as the church sought meaning from this text in many languages and over thousands of years. This has led me to take a very conservative approach to the translations I always start with when I study: the RSV and NASB. Even though I do not know Hebrew, I do feel free to take a "consensus" view of the biblical text: i.e. after careful study, I will accept a rewording or alternate translation if there is adequate scholarly support for it, and if it fits the overall context of the Psalm. Given the complexities of Psalm 7, however, I found much less of a scholarly consensus, and so felt less free to move away from the two translations that I have come to most love and trust.

The translation and contextual difficulties begin immediately with Psalm 7's header:

A Shiggaion of David, which he sang to the LORD concerning Cush, a Benjaminite.

Not only do we not know what a "Shiggaion" is, we do not know who "Cush" is, other than that he was a Benjaminite, the tribe of one of David's greatest enemies, King Saul. However, this little bit of information may help us, for the content of Psalm 7 fits extremely well into the situations David found himself in when Saul was pursuing and trying to kill him. On at least two occasions, David had Saul completely in his power and could easily have killed this man who was wrongly persecuting him. Instead of killing Saul, he withdrew his hand, and let his foe be delivered.

In fact, the most important variant reading in Psalm 7 (verse 4) reads like this in the NASB:

**If I have rewarded evil to my friend,  
Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary**

An alternate reading is:

**If I have rewarded evil to my friend,  
I who have delivered my foe without reward**

The alternate reading describes the situation David was in with King Saul. David had both served and saved King Saul. He could have killed him, rewarding evil for evil. But he did not. Yet, what did David get for acting mercifully? Saul's enmity and persecution.

Therefore, although we cannot know with certainty, it seems likely that Psalm 7 was written by David while he experienced the unfair, unwarranted, and deeply hurtful persecutions of King Saul. Whoever Cush was, it was through his hands that David was being wronged; in the middle of David's agony, God inspired David to write Psalm 7.

## *The Prayer of Exposure (7:1-5)*

If you are in a situation in which you really believe that you are in the right, and yet you are experiencing persecution, be it in the form of simple social exclusion and unfriendliness to being taken into court on trumped up charges, Psalm 7 is excellent for prayer and meditation. But be prepared! The first thing Psalm 7 does is guide you into self-exposure. Your spirit is laid bare by powerful images as you "dare" to confront God with claims of righteousness.

**O LORD my God, in you I have taken refuge;  
Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me,  
Lest he tear my soul in pieces like a lion,**

**Tearing me away, while there is none to deliver.  
O LORD my God, if I have done this,  
If there is wrongdoing on my hands,  
If I have rewarded evil to my friend,  
Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary,**

[Alternate reading: *I who have delivered my foe without reward*]

**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. Selah.**

Because of the complexities of life, I spent a lot more time working on Psalm 7 than any of the previous psalms. I began studying it in May of 2000 and completed it almost exactly one year later. While I didn't spend that whole year just on Psalm 7, I am thankful for the length of time I was able to ruminate on it. I took many situations before the Lord by means of these opening verses. I don't know about you, but in my life, one year provides ample opportunity for getting involved in all kinds of personal difficulties. Most often I was not convinced that I was completely "in the right" in the situations that I was confronted with, but I still found these verses in Psalm 7 a very helpful way to begin praying over almost any issue.

The prayer begins with a quick spiritual check up:

**O LORD my God, in you I have taken refuge**

I take this as a question or a challenge, in addition to being a statement of faith or fact: "Lord, have I actually placed myself in your hands on this issue? Have I sought you out as a refuge of safety and salvation? Am I trusting you to provide salvation, to lift me out of darkness and into light?" Most often this initial probe was all it took to change my prayer into one of confession. I had in fact been dealing with the issue on my own strength. I was proud, angry, and self-protective. I was after my own good and had not even begun to see the issue from God's perspective.

In sorrow, then, for this basic failure to trust my Heavenly Father, I would go on to the next verses:

**Save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me,  
Lest he tear my soul in pieces like a lion,  
Tearing me away, while there is none to deliver.**

Have you ever seen a lion capture and devour its prey? I only have on video. David, a shepherd in the hill country of ancient Israel, would certainly have seen this happen. Maybe it strikes me as being more horrible than it would to someone like David, whose life was exposed to the elements and contests of nature in a way that ours can never be. In any case, I find the description disturbing. The image in 7:1-2 is that of a lion both during and after the kill. Pathetically, no one distracted or disturbed the lion as it stalked and captured its prey. Chased without help or mercy, the victim was killed with bloody, suffocating efficiency. Then, with its powerful jaws and knife-like teeth, the lion casually ripped its victim to pieces in order to eat it.

David has asked God for salvation from those who would attack, kill, and devour him like a lion. Technically hyperbolic, this language is very moving. Most of us have probably felt this way at some point in life. We feel threat-

ened by a foe much larger than ourselves, who seems bent on our destruction. Out of fear, our language becomes strong. We cry out for help, not rationally, in measured, reflective words, but instinctively and desperately. When we hear what sounds like exaggeration or despair around us, we should train ourselves to think of the fear and insecurity that someone is feeling in order to speak or act as they are.

Sometimes those fears are well grounded. 1 Peter 5:8 says that the greatest enemy we have acts like a lion, seeking to devour us: "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour."

When our adversary seeks to devour us, we experience spiritual warfare. One of its classic symptoms is a vivid, but confusing, sense of being attacked. I was once involved in a situation in which several parties felt wronged, grieved, and hurt. Everyone, each one about the others, felt an inescapable sense of being attacked and hurtfully treated. When everyone feels this way, when confusion reigns, when clarity and truth seem clouded and distant, and when expressions of love seem impossible to make or are routinely misunderstood, then we are spiritually in a situation like David may have been. This is spiritual warfare, and our adversary, Satan, is somewhere close at hand. In David's case, the attack may have involved physical persecution. Even so, the plain evidence of Psalm 7 is that his spirit was distressed. Turning to God for deliverance, he cries out, desperately seeking salvation.

After bringing his fears to God, David exposes his soul to God in prayer in a way that I found extremely helpful:

**O LORD my God, if I have done this,  
If there is wrongdoing on my hands,  
If I have rewarded evil to my friend,  
Or have plundered him who without cause was my adversary,**

[Alternate reading: *I who have delivered my foe without reward*]

I believe that we could spend the rest of our time together today on these two verses. I would challenge you to use them as the starting point for self-examination whenever you face a situation in which you think you have been wronged. Ponder the words slowly. Give the Lord the time to let them saturate your soul and see what happens. Ask yourself some questions:

*Lord, in this situation, what sins and wrongdoings are my responsibility? Is there guilt in my conscience that I have ignored or denied? Where have I fallen short in my responsibilities of love and service to those around me? Has anyone come to me and received anything other than gracious and loving support or help in response? Have my words been unfair, unkind, or hurtful? Has a friend come to me in spiritual, emotional, or physical need and gone away empty-handed? Have I treated fairly those whom I know dislike me, or against whom I am prone to think negatively? Have I harbored evil and vengeful thoughts about them? Do I secretly long to see them suffer with the same suffering that I feel they have inflicted on me?*

I cannot engage in this kind of meditation quickly. When I prayed and meditated on these verses from Psalm 7, my mind would move very quickly over the many situations in my life in which I have failed. I would have to force myself to focus on each one, slowly remembering my

actions, and trying to see them from the other person's point of view. Did I like what I saw? Did the Lord prompt me to think of something that I could do or say that might offer healing or help? Was I patiently and gratefully accepting the hurt I felt as God's gift to me at that moment? I found these moments of meditation extremely helpful, as God prodded me to see the sins, which are, in the words of Psalm 51, "ever before me."

Amazingly, though, I came through some of this meditation just as David did: I concluded, after thorough, weeks-long examination, that I was not in the wrong. I was, in fact, being unjustly accused or unfairly treated in some situations. When David reached this point in his prayer, he expressed himself very boldly:

**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.**

Not only was David willing to put his physical life on the line if he should be found to be in the wrong, but he was willing to have his reputation, which had probably already been slandered, ground into the dust. How many of us are confident enough in our spiritual lives to put these kinds of things on the table before the Lord? Having the ability to count our life and reputation as nothing, as lion fodder, as grist for Satan's mill, is the first benefit we receive from God when we engage in prayers of self-exposure. If we really do work through our guilt before God, if he searches our hearts and minds and finds us acceptable, if we have truly done all that we can to love and live at peace with our neighbors, be they friends or enemies, then we are clean indeed! What glorious freedom! What heights of spiritual glory can we not soar up to when there is no weight of sin that drags us down! This is the same kind of freedom that Paul found in counting nothing in this life as being worth anything compared to the riches of being known by God: "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (Phi 3:8-9).

Appropriately enough, David pauses at this point in Psalm 7: *Selah*. I needed this pause. The brief prayer of self-exposure, and the deep spiritual meditation it can provoke, gave me more than I could handle in a brief moment in time. I needed to pause and wait, letting the words of God soak into my spirit and allowing time for me to act on them as the days went by.

#### **Longing for Judgment (7:6-9)**

After allowing us to catch our breath, David continues in prayer, seeking God's judgment on those who have wronged him. The first benefit of praying as David does in Psalm 7 is, as we have seen, a willingness to allow our inner self to be exposed before God and others. This self-exposure sets us free. The second benefit, as we will see in this section, is that we develop a healthy longing for the righteousness of God to be enacted on earth. Verses 6-9 of Psalm 7 are like the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven:"

**Arise, O LORD, in your anger;  
Lift up yourself against the rage of my adversaries,**

**And arouse yourself for me; you have appointed judgment.**

**And let the assembly of the peoples encompass you;  
And over them return on high.**

**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.**

What immediately caught my attention in 7:6 was its apparent contradiction to Psalm 6:1. Compare these two verses:

**O LORD, do not render judgment upon me in your anger,  
Nor discipline me in your wrath. (Psalm 6:1)**

**Arise, O LORD, in your anger;**

**Lift up yourself against the rage of my adversaries,  
And arouse yourself for me; you have appointed judgment. (Psalm 7:6-7a)**

In Psalm 6 David prays that God will not do precisely what he prays that God will do in Psalm 7: judge while angry. This contrast lays bare the difference between the two Psalms, and shows why we should begin in prayer with one or the other, depending on our convictions when we come before the Lord. When you have no doubt that you have done wrong; when you are weary with sin and grief and know that you can no longer survive without the mercy and forgiveness of God, then pray and meditate on Psalm 6. But when you believe you are in the right; when your self-reflection reveals no or only unrelated wrongdoing, then meditate and pray on Psalm 7. More often than not you will wind up "switching Psalms" after the Lord has his chance to work on your heart as you submit to meditating on his word. But, each of us must begin with the Lord wherever we actually are. It will not help to engage in false self-deprecation by asking God for mercy when in fact what we want is for him to smite our enemy hip and thigh! Conversely, it is hypocritical to pray for God's judgment on someone else when we are so obviously guilty.

It is crucial at this point, however, not to become confused. We cannot pray with integrity for God's judgment on others until we have confessed all of our own wrongdoing. We reach Psalm 7:6 only after verses 1-5. After thorough meditation on the possibility of being in the wrong, after total submission to the sharp insights of God's word, after he has had the chance to shine his radiant light of truth into the dark places in our heart, can we pray the words of Psalm 7:6-9 with spiritual integrity. But, when do reach that point (if we ever do!), then we can pray with a kind of fearful joy that the only one who is truly just will act in judgment on our behalf.

Interestingly, though, David's request for God to enter into judgment turns very quickly from a plea for himself to a hope that the entire order of the cosmos will be made right:

**And let the assembly of the peoples encompass you;  
And over them return on high.  
The LORD judges the peoples;**

David calls upon God to engage in worldwide, public judgment. Picturing the nations rushing together towards

God, God must rise up in order to be seen and heard. This is such a natural picture for someone in the ancient world. Today, mass communications require us to be seated in front of some electronic device: a computer, perhaps, or a television. But in the ancient world, a huge gathering of people required that the speaker be elevated so as to be seen and heard. In those few occasions in which we still depend upon the spoken word for mass communication (politics, church gatherings), we still use the technique of elevation. But in Psalm 7, this technique takes on cosmic proportions. David prays that so many will come before God's judgment seat that he will need to rise up. His dignity demands this, but so too does the mere fact of the pressing through of the audience. This shift from personal to cosmic, individual to global, is one of the signs of the spiritual health of David's prayer, and is another safeguard for us when we pray in similar conditions. If we are praying self-righteously, the tendency will be for us to remain focused on ourselves and our own difficult circumstances. If we have obtained a clean conscience, however, in whatever matter we are bringing before the Lord, then we become free to see ourselves and our situation as a small paradigm in the overall picture of God's universal sovereignty.

But there is another, more mystical, way to think about elevation and judgment. Is it possible that Jesus was echoing Psalm 7:7 when he said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:31-32, RSV)? And what about the ascension of Jesus, another kind of elevation that allowed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? In that outpouring, we enter into something new, for the world already stands judged, and in the age of the Church, God penetrates human society to bring about the salvation of many. Thoughts like this cause me to confess the limited nature of my intelligence, understanding, and insight. God's magnificent plan is being enacted all around me. Every time he is elevated in judgment, he brings about something new and wonderful, and he has ordained that I can participate in this process through prayer – a prayer, like David's in Psalm 7, that may begin with a petition for one's self and end up in the middle of the mystery of divine sovereignty.

With the cosmic stage completely set, David returns in prayer to his own situation briefly, in verse 8. But this is quickly subsumed in verse 9 by the great truth that God is a righteous judge:

**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.**

I have to admit that even after lengthy study and meditation on Psalm 7, verse 8 still grates in my spirit. I have never once gone to God in prayer saying, "according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me" do such and such. I am too close to the perpetual truths of the Penitential Psalms, and am so convinced of my sin that is "ever before me" that for me to utter these words would be to invite immediate death. For my righteousness and integrity are but filth before God, and they are not something I can ever depend on. When I first studied this, I thought I would find a loophole by investigating the words "right-

eousness" and "integrity." David could not really mean what it sounds like here! But that was not what I found. These words mean what you would suspect they mean. What are we supposed to make of this?

In the end, I concluded that to read Psalm 7:8 (or, the whole of Psalm 26 as another example) in this light is to read it too broadly. David is not talking here about the whole of his life, or even a general condition or disposition. Rather, he has a particular instance or circumstance in mind, and, after penetrating self-exposure before God about the specifics of the situation, he has concluded that he stands in the right. Therefore, he asks God to honor that conclusion. Indeed, David sees that it is not only for his own good, but that for the sake of limiting evil that he prays: "O let the evil of the wicked come to an end." Once again there is this rapid movement from the particular to the universal that so characterizes Psalm 7. David does indeed seek his own vindication, and he boldly presents his own right to claim that vindication. Ultimately, though, the larger vision of God's establishment of righteousness through the justice of his judgments is what dominates David's prayer.

We tend to skip quickly by phrases like the one at the end of 7:9:

**For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds.**

But we shouldn't be in such a hurry. For the fact that God's vision penetrates every part of our being, as the Hebrew literally says, our "guts and bones," is what makes God a righteous judge. This is the fundamental limitation of human judging. We create no end of law and complication in our courts because as humans we are forced to deal with external facts and evidence. We even pride ourselves on this sometimes, thinking that this is a kind of objectivity. But for God, there are no obstacles to the truth. He knows truth and speaks truth – indeed, he is truth. And this makes him totally reliable, totally just - no mistakes, no wondering, no hairsplitting. This can be a source of fear for us, but in Psalm 7 it is David's comfort. Frustrated with the slander and confusion he experiences on a human level, he knows that from God he will receive only right and true judgment.

*Evil Unveiled (7:10-16)*

The next section, 7:10-16, explores the third result of meditation on God's word when you think you are in the right: you begin to see the spiritual life the way God sees it. This is especially true with the evil that surrounds us. Once again, we will see that as David prays and ponders, his own particular circumstances melt away as the realities of the spiritual world around him are revealed through God's word and character:

**My shield is with God,**

**Who saves the upright in heart.**

**God is a righteous judge,**

**And a God who has indignation every day.**

**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.**

**Behold, he travails with wickedness,**

**And he conceives trouble, and brings forth falsehood.**

**He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,**

**And has fallen into the hole which he made.**

**His trouble will return upon his own head,  
And his violence will descend upon his own pate.**

A curious phrase begins this section: "My shield is *with* God." We often hear David pray in the Psalms that God is his shield, but as far as I am able to find, Psalm 7:10 is the only place in the Bible in which this phrase is used. Is this thought parallel to the very beginning of the Psalm, where David says that his refuge is in the Lord? Has David, through the prayer of self-exposure, set aside all self-defensiveness, leaving all of his protection with God whom he trusts to bring about what is right? Having thoroughly analyzed his motives before the Lord, having come to the place where, transcending concerns for self, all he longs for is the judgment of a just God, David is able to leave his shield with God. With nothing obstructing his view he can now see clearly into the spiritual reality of God and evil.

The first part of David's new vision celebrates something that we do not like to dwell on much in our day: God's unerring justice causes him to be angry every day. Having dwelt in our day almost exclusively on God's un-failing love and mercy, we are startled by insights such as this. But if we are to know God as he truly is, then we must see as much of him as our spiritual maturity allows. And David's inspired, prayerful meditation has revealed to him a God who hates evil so much that he is constantly prepared for war against it. Evil is pervasive, and so is God's ever-ready defense against it. Motivated by justice, God experiences wrath and indignation as he saves "the upright in heart."

David's spiritual vision sees God as a warrior, armed and fully prepared for battle:

**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.**

I found ancient and medieval commentators on these verses to be more insightful than more modern ones. Since swords, bows, and arrows were a part of the daily lives of ancient and medieval men, their minds dwelt on these verses with intense, realistic clarity. The sword is a weapon for hand-to-hand combat; the bow is for killing from afar. Yet notice, they said, that God is only sharpening his sword and bending his bow. His weapons are prepared for battle, they are not yet seen as slashing or shooting. Nonetheless, his weapons are truly deadly, like arrows that strike and then burn, there is no hope for escape when shot by such a powerful archer.

All of this anger, wrath, weaponry, and threatening, however, is meant as a warning, so that a man might repent. How poised is this vision! Many of you have read the book or seen the movie *The Hiding Place*. In the midst of the agony of her concentration camp experience, Corrie Ten Boom was unable to resist the temptation to imagine her enemies being hacked to death. But we do not have here in Psalm 7 a picture of vengeance through blood and death. Rather, we see poised before us the greatest warrior of all time: God himself, full of wrath, with sharp sword by his side, bends his bow and sights his target. We instinctively give way before such a picture, knowing the sure doom that awaits those who flee or fight.

Suddenly, though, and without any grammatical warning, the image shifts:

**Behold, he travails with wickedness,  
And he conceives trouble, and brings forth falsehood.  
He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,  
And has fallen into the hole which he made.  
His trouble will return upon his own head,  
And his violence will descend upon his own pate.**

In English, as well as in Hebrew, masculine pronouns continue to flow. But only the little word "Look" or "Behold" lets us know that the subject has changed from God, the Mighty Warrior, to the evil one against whom God is fighting. Almost without warning we have to refocus away from the God who threatens to one who is being threatened. And the result is startling. Rather than arrows flying and swords flashing, we find an intricate description of the self-thwarting machinations of evil.

The first image is common to both OT and NT: conception, pregnancy, and birth:

**Behold, he travails with wickedness,  
And he conceives trouble, and brings forth falsehood.**

Trouble at conception, wickedness in gestation, and falsehood in delivery is the pattern. Or, as James 1:15 has it: "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full grown brings forth death" (RSV).

In God's revelation to David, then, the first thing he learns is how much God hates and wars upon evil. With the merest glance, however, God also reveals how evil in human life is a fundamental process. Once begun, it takes its inevitable course. We could spend a long time looking at the individual words used in Psalm 7:14: wickedness, trouble, and falsehood. But for now I want to point out something that I keep seeing as a theme in the Psalms: the ultimate manifestation of evil, the look that it has when it comes to full maturity, is expressed in evil speech. With the tongue, God warns us over and over again, we maim, damage, hurt, and abuse. The evil that works its way through our life spills out most obviously in the wickedness of our speech through falsehood, gossip, exaggeration, and slander.

After noting the process of evil in man, David sees next how the wrath of God, that Omnipotent Warrior with his weapons of destruction, is revealed:

**He has dug a pit and hollowed it out,  
And has fallen into the hole which he made.  
His trouble will return upon his own head,  
And his violence will descend upon his own pate.**

The wrath of God is expressed in this: evil carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. That is why the NT so consistently presents us with the picture of God's wrath as allowing human beings to experience the results of our own folly and sin. The imagery here, plain to OT readers from the Ancient Near East, is hunting. Hunters used pits as traps for animals. We have here the picture of an evil man creating a trap for someone. He works hard, digging and delving, building a place of destruction for his enemy. But it is to no avail, for the evil that he intends is used for his own destruction. In the typical pattern of Hebrew poetry, the idea is then echoed or paralleled:

**His trouble will return upon his own head,  
And his violence will descend upon his own pate.**

Probably the second most helpful aid in prayer that I found in Psalm 7 was this notion that evil carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. Knowing this allows me to analyze my own faults and failures in a new way. When things are all messed up in my life, this truth sets me free to admit that the nature of the mess is probably a result of my own particular style of sinning. Literally, if my life is the "pits," Psalm 7 teaches me that I am an expert designer of pits and that God, in his wrath, will use this "skill" to give me a chance to repent. Since we are all skilled in making pits, let's take a moment to examine the kind of pits we make.

Is my pit a pit of stress and worry? Then, what are the things I have tried in vain to control and that are no longer matters of faith for me? Is my pit a pit of constant anger or jealousy? Then, what is it that I am angry at God for that makes me so weak as to take this out on others? Is my pit a pit of lust or addiction? Then, what love have I despaired of and sought to find in cheap or false experiences? Is my pit a pit of isolation and loneliness? Then, where have I failed to make myself vulnerable and, therefore, available to others?

The amazing thing in all of this is the amazing revelation that God's wrath and his love are one and the same thing. He loves us so much, so passionately, that he will not give up on us. He will pursue us and reveal to us the very things that we put up as barriers between ourselves and him. How do we learn what these barriers are? I believe that Psalm 7 makes it clear that we discover God's insights through lengthy meditation on his word. God is constantly speaking to us; we need to patiently listen. Listening of this sort takes time and integrity. It is elusive to those who seek quick fixes and easy step-by-step techniques for success.

### *Satisfied Praise (7:17)*

Convinced now that God's justice will prevail, and that the wicked will fall, in God's timing, into a pit of their own devising, Psalm 7 ends, as many Psalms do, with a brief expression of praise. The praise is focused on *God's* righteousness. The particular circumstances of David's problems seem to fade completely away into a spiritual state of thanksgiving and song:

**I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness,  
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.**

Like many Psalms, this one comes full circle. Having begun by seeking God as his refuge, David ends in fuller understanding of what it means for God to be his refuge. Having exposed himself in prayer before God, David is free to see how the spiritual life works, especially in situations requiring judgment upon evil. Yielding to this new insight, David comes to a point a rest and praise. No longer focusing on his own righteousness in a particular situation, David concludes by focusing on God's righteousness in all situations.

So, whether you know you are in the wrong or believe you are in the right, the Psalms give you a perfect starting point for prayer and meditation. My challenge to you, and to myself, is to yield and submit to this need for prayer and meditation. As we pray through the difficult circumstances that we face, the Psalms will cleanse and free us, leaving us, like David, in a place of rest and praise.

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