

PRAYER OF THE POWERLESS

Wednesday, April 25

Reading: Psalm 58

Psalm 58:1 *Do you rulers indeed speak justly? Do you judge people with equity? 2 No, in your heart you devise injustice, and your hands mete out violence on the earth. 3 Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.*

In America, we live in a bubble. We don't really know what persecution means. Around the world millions of Christians face hostile governments who outlaw their faith. They are harassed, imprisoned, and killed for following Christ. It is estimated that thousands of believers are killed each year and we in America hear very little about it. Over 50 nations of the world persecute God's people and they are powerless to stop it.¹

Psalm 58 speaks to these powerless people who are suffering under unjust and ungodly regimes. The language may sound harsh or even brutal to us, but it is the heart cry of millions who have no recourse but to cry out to God for justice.

The psalm begins with a cry against the unjust and violent rulers who crush God's people. There is debate over the translation of the Hebrew word *'elem* in Psalm 58:1. The NIV translates it as "rulers" while the New King James Version uses "silent ones." The English Standard and New American Standard translate the word as "gods." All these are possible ways to translate this word. I think the ESV and NASB are on the right track with their translation of "gods" or spiritual beings. Behind the wicked rulers of the world stand the spiritual forces of darkness lead by Satan, "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). It is interesting that the first image David uses to describe these wicked rulers is a snake (58:4-5) - the very creature Satan used to tempt Adam and Eve.

This psalm also reminds us that evil comes from the depravity of man. Everyone is born with a sinful nature (58:3). Without the grace and mercy of God injustice and unrighteousness are the norm, particularly for people in power. The temptation to abuse that power for their own agendas and profit is strong. The desire to reject and fight against God and His people is the nature of sin and the plan of Satan.

The persecuted powerless believer has nowhere to turn except to the Lord. They pray "Break the teeth in their mouths, O God" (58:6), NOT "Let me break their teeth!" The righteous are glad when God brings justice and rewards their faithfulness. But the believers' reward is not the decimation of their enemies; it is the vindication of God's name (58:10-11). The believers' cry against their enemies is really a cry for the peoples of the earth to realize that God is the Judge, not the demonic forces and their wicked human rulers.

Romans 3:23 and 6:23 remind us that we are all sinners deserving of death. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus took our death and paid for our sins. God's judgment fell on Him and God's justice was satisfied. Now we can live for Him despite the wickedness of the world around us.

¹ For more detailed information see Voice of the Martyrs @ www.persecution.com