

# When Rulers Are Corrupt

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Psalm 82 under the title "When Rulers Are Corrupt" and this is something that applies throughout the world and is, therefore, a great text for us to look to as we try to understand something about the nature of the world around us and what the future holds in the sovereignty of God.

Let's look beginning at verse 1 and I'll read this eight verse Psalm to get us started.

1 God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. 2 How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked? Selah. 3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. 5 They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are shaken. 6 I said, "You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High. 7 Nevertheless you will die like men And fall like any one of the princes." 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is You who possesses all the nations.

We're all familiar with the sense of frustration that comes as we watch the world unravel around us. We've all felt the sense of injustice as rulers and those in authority abuse what's been given to them either for their own gain or to advance ungodly agendas, and it seems like things are spinning out of control. Well, this Psalm is a great place for us to come as we seek to live godly lives in the midst of such ungodliness, it's a great Psalm for us to approach as we try to discern what's happening in the world around us, and it reminds us that God is over all and that one of the primary titles of our Lord Jesus Christ is that he is King of kings and Lord of lords; that people on earth who have authority do not exercise that in an ultimate sense, that they are all under the hand of God and that he will one day bring them to an account for how they have used the positions of responsibility that have been given to them in his sovereignty and this fascinating Psalm is a warning to them. It is a warning to those who abuse authority. It would be a great Psalm to preach to a joint session of Congress, it would be a great Psalm to preach to a state capital audience because with their authority comes a great accountability before God and this is the pattern of God as he gives authority to men, coming with that opportunity that they have, comes also a final accountability that they will render to God at the final day.

It is like with those having spiritual authority. James 3:1 says,

1 Let not many of you become teachers, brethren, for you will face a stricter judgment.

And I think about that verse quite often in this role as pastor that the Lord has graciously allowed me to have. There is opportunity that comes with it but there is a great accountability and it brings a sense of fear and trembling to my heart every time that I step up to be able to do what I do here. But the only point that I'm making in that is just by way of comparison, that in the spiritual realm there will be greater accountability for those who hold positions of leadership, positions of teaching, and what we find is on the world scene those who hold positions of authority will be brought to account by God as well.

So let's look at this Psalm and at the first point, and really just in the first verse, we could title our first point this way, that God rises in his court. God rises in his court and look at verse 1 with me. Psalm 82:1 says,

1 God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers.

This verse is picturing God leading a convocation, an assembly of those having earthly authority, leading an assembly of kings and calling them to account, and there is an interpretive problem right from the very beginning of this Psalm here in verse 1. The word the NASB translates as "rulers" is the word that is usually referring to the one true God, Elohim, and here it is literally translated, it could literally be translated "gods." In other words, God takes his stand in his own congregation, he judges in the midst of the gods, and many of you will have a marginal note in your Bible that says it literally could be translated as "gods." And the ESV and the New King James version translate it as "gods." NASB here reflects an interpretive decision that I'll explain in a moment, reflecting an interpretive decision to call it "rulers" to indicate that it's reflecting and referring to earthly rulers in this context. NASB makes those interpretive decisions from time to time, sometimes more often than NASB proponents care to admit, but that's another point. I've just been dying to say that for about 20 years in pulpit ministry and I finally had a good opportunity to do so. I love the NASB translation, it's about the only version I've ever preached from but that is a true statement which I just said.

Now let's move into untangling that question, the word reads "gods" and yet we know there is only one true God, what's up with this use of the word "gods" here in this verse? "He judges in the midst of the rulers," literally, "He judges in the midst of the gods." What's up with that? Well, Scripture leads us to a pretty sure understanding, I believe, that it's referring to earthly rulers and I'll explain that to you.

First of all, in the context of the Psalm, you'll see that the Psalm is referring to judging. In Psalm 82:1, it opens up with the concept of judging, "He judges in the midst of the

rulers," and it closes on the concept of judging, in Psalm 82:8 it says, "Arise, O God, judge the earth!" It's an inclusio, it begins and ends with judging and that gives us a sense that the idea that is being promoted here in this Psalm, the theme of the Psalm is about judging.

Now, some will say that maybe this is referring to angelic powers, gods in the sense of angelic powers or demonic powers or even pagan deities have been suggested as a possible interpretation, but this theme of judgment of judges and justice is ruling in the Psalm, no pun intended, but it just happened that way. It's a ruling theme. If you look at verse 2, it says, "How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked?" In verse 3, "Do justice to the afflicted and destitute." So as you read the Psalm in context and take this word "gods" in the sense, you realize that somehow the context is pointing to those who are acting on earth, not in the invisible realm, they are acting on earth in the visible realm among men.

Now, you say, "Well, that may not be entirely persuasive to me," but there is a clincher that comes from the lips of the Lord Jesus himself, if you'll turn to the Gospel of John 10, Jesus refers to this Psalm and does so in the context of making a point about his own deity. In John 10, beginning in verse 34, and let me just remind you that one of the most critical principles of Bible interpretation is to let Scripture interpret Scripture and that's why we spend so much time when passages are difficult to go to other passages of Scripture to bring other biblical themes to bear, and you always interpret difficult passages by the ones that are more clear and we try to let Scripture interpret Scripture. Here in John 10, you have an opportunity to let the words of the Lord Jesus help you interpret what is meant in Psalm 82.

Look at verse 34 with me now in John 10:34, and actually I'll go back a little bit to set the stage. Jesus had just said in John 10:30, he said, "I and the Father are one." He is indicating that he and the Father share a common essence and that is a direct claim to deity, as you can see by the way that the Jews responded in verse 31, "The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?'" In other words, "I have not sinned before you, on what basis, on what principle of justice are you about to try to execute Me?" "The Jews answered Him," in verse 33, they said, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." So they say, "You are claiming to be deity. That is blasphemy because there is only one God." And Jesus responded to their accusation in this way, he said in verse 34, "[He] answered them, 'Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods?'" Verse 34 quoting from Psalm 82:6.

Now that seems like an odd statement and an odd thing for Jesus to say but it's not that difficult to unravel exactly what the meaning is that he is driving at here. Here in verse 34, Jesus is making the point as he says in verse 35, "If he called them gods," little "g," "to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)," in other words, this term "gods" was applied to men who exercised divine authority back in the Old Testament. He's saying there was a reference made to them, these were men to whom the

word of God came, the word of God came to the men of Israel, it came to the prophets, it came to the earthly rulers who exercised authority in the nation of Israel. They were mortal men who carried a divine title, he says as he explains what Psalm 82 was speaking about. Scripture uses the word "gods" to describe mortal men who had authority from God. If he called them gods, back then in the Old Testament, "how do you say that I am blaspheming because I said that I am the Son of God?" And his point is this, he says, Christ is saying that he, meaning Christ, he existed before time began and he was present before the Jews in his day as the true Son of God. Now, he says, "If I claim deity for Myself, if I claim the title of God for Myself, how can you say that I'm blaspheming simply by using that word when that word, that same word was applied to mortal men in Psalm 82? You shouldn't object," he tells the Jews, "because I'm using this term to refer to Myself because this term was used to refer to earthly rulers back in the day. So don't judge simply by the use of a particular vocabulary term, judge by righteous judgment, judge by reality, and see that the use of this term is not improper and that it is not proper for you to think that I am blaspheming simply by using that title." And that is the point. He's saying that, "Because this word was used applying to mortal men in Psalm 82, therefore it's not inappropriate and it is not blasphemy for it to be used in reference to Me." So he applies the term and helps us see that he's referring to earthly rulers, not to anything else and we take that and let that guide our understanding of Psalm 82.

Now, all of that helps us to see that earthly rulers are in view here. The context in Psalm 82 is a reference to judges and justice and referring to injustice on the earth. Jesus' words help us understand that he is referring back and seeing earthly rulers in view to whom the title "gods" was applied. Now let's just think through this for just a second. In what sense were they gods? That's a very bold term, isn't it, to speak of rulers in that way, and it's referring to it in this sense: that God is the one who established those men with their authority. They exercise authority only by the prerogatives that God had given to them and in their limited sphere, they were acting as his living representatives, they were representatives of God in their position of authority and, therefore, in a sense, the term "gods" is used to refer to the fact that they are exercising authority in a smaller realm, in a smaller sphere, in a way that represents the way that God exercises his authority over all of the universe. So it's just a recognition of the fact that they have God-given authority and when they act, there is not an earthly court of appeal above them. They have a final authority within their realm, is the idea here.

Now let's back away from that difficult interpretive decision for just a moment and recognize something about the nature of the world in which we live. This is very very basic. Secular rulers have legitimate authority within their realm. God established them. Jesus recognized the authority of Pilate within his realm in John 19. Paul affirms the authority of government in Romans 13. So there is a legitimate exercise of authority. Government is part of the common grace of God given to men and part of its function is to restrain the evil of men and give an authority to punish evil and to restrain evil by the authority that it exercises. Government has a legitimate place and it is our responsibility to submit to them as Scripture makes very clear and so we have to have that perspective on government even when it is unjust and even when it seems to be unfair, we have to

recognize that its position and its role of authority is established and God and that means that we exercise our lives in deference to it.

Now, all of that, however, is not the point of Psalm 82. The point of Psalm 82 is a very august, it is a very holy, it is a very fear-inducing scene recognizing this: that those who have been given authority in an earthly realm are one day going to give a final account to God for the way that they have exercised it and Psalm 82 is a picture of what that will be like. God has now gathered all of these rulers together and whereas they exercised authority for those under them, whereas they had authority for a time and did what they wanted to do with the authority that they had, now they are the ones coming under the authority of the final authority, they are now the subjects of rule, and that rule is coming from God and God is about to assess them for what they have done.

Let's go back to Psalm 82:1 and refresh ourselves as we look at it.

1 God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers.

So there is this dramatic scene that has been established, men who had authority now are under authority; men who judged those who came to them with their disputes and their difficulties now find themselves on the receiving end of judgment, and it is a fearsome, dramatic picture and God is going to bring judgment against them for their corruption. That leads us to our second point for this evening. First of all, God has risen in his court, he takes his stand, and he is now going to judge in their midst, and now secondly, God indicts the rulers in his court. He indicts the rulers in his court and the Psalmist is now going to speak on God's behalf against those who have been assembled.

Now, I think that implied in this is something that is fearsome in and of itself. Corrupt rulers, godless rulers, would not voluntarily come into God's court in order to receive judgment. They are there under compulsion. They are there against their will. They're not there because they love God, they're not there to celebrate his praises, they are there as the unwilling subjects of God's verdict against them for the way that they have exercised their authority and now an indictment comes against them, the tables have been turned, now the shoe is on the other foot or whatever other kind of cliché like that that you want to apply to this. Now they are on the receiving end of what they used to give, however, it is different in this sense, because when they were exercising their authority, they were doing so corruptly, they were exercising their authority to the advantage of those who would give them bribes or who were otherwise connected to them. Now they, by contrast, are on the receiving end of a righteous judgment from an impartial holy God and what we find is that God is not pleased, God is not amused.

Look at verse 2 and this indictment comes. Picture, if you will, you are one who has had authority, you are one who no one could appeal above to you, I think of our United States Supreme Court in this realm and there's no higher court of appeal in our country than them in legal matters, and we always talk about them as being the final court of appeal. Well, biblically speaking, that's really not accurate because there is one above them and

they will give an account themselves to the God who put them in that position of authority, and the greater the authority, the greater accountability that will come to them. And when we think of what our own Supreme Court did in the recent past in redefining God's institution of marriage, to take it into places of homosexual unions that God never intended, that God never authorized, and yet by a vote of 5-4 they established and said that marriage in this country will not be what God intended, it will be what we declare it to be, oh my, oh my, overturning Genesis 2 for the sake of whatever was motivating them in the time, for the sake of unrighteous litigants before them, in order to give validity to that which God condemns as sin, understand that this ruling that now governs the 50 states of America is a temporary injustice against the law of God and the ones who have ordered that to be implemented upon our country are going to be part of an assembly like this where God turns and indicts them for their ungodliness and that will be of massive consequence to them and they will find themselves no longer the final authority but under the authority of God and being indicted for their godlessness, being indicted for their sinful judgments, being indicted for their overturning of the order of God.

So picture, if you will, them no longer in their black robes but rather sitting in the defendant's chair in the court of God and this is pronounced against them, verse 2,

2 How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked?  
Selah.

And the "Selah" tells us to stop and think about it, which is what we've tried to do here in what I've been saying over the past few minutes. The tables are turned. The situation is reversed. The judge is now being judged and he is in a position where he has not been accustomed to be. Not all judges are corrupt. I have a friend who is a judge in California who is a most godly man and I just want to acknowledge that. Carlos just happened to come to my mind and I wanted to just qualify for that, but here God is addressing ungodly rulers and what's happened is this and what they are being indicted for is this: they received their authority from God, God had delegated authority to them, but they were violating it. They were not using the authority given to them by a righteous God in a righteous way, rather they were violating it with unrighteousness. Here in the context of this Psalm, here in the context of this Psalter of Israel, perhaps primarily directed at the rulers of Israel, but here is the charge against them: rather than showing loyalty to the God who had set them in their places of responsibility, instead they were helping wicked people against the weak. They were siding with the wicked rather than defending those who were being oppressed, and this is a theme that is found elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Look at 2 Chronicles, if you will, 2 Chronicles 19, beginning in verse 5. Here Jehoshaphat is appointing judges in the land and,

5 He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city. 6 He said to the judges, "Consider what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD who is with you when you render judgment. 7 "Now then let the fear of the LORD be upon you; be very

careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe."

So this principle is established that there is a holy responsibility, a vertical responsibility before God that should animate and motivate everything that they do in the position of authority that has been given to them, and yet now in light of that principle from 2 Chronicles 19, knowing that this is the way that God views those to whom he has given authority, now look at the indictment, now the payment comes due in verse 2, "How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked?"

Beloved, that will be a fearsome verdict, that will be a fearsome indictment to respond to when God is bringing his judgment upon them to recognize that it will silence them; that there is no answer to this question; there is no defense to it. Suddenly they are defenseless before the God who gave them their authority and in verse 3, he calls for repentance. Verse 3, he calls for repentance and he says,

3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.

This is what they should have been doing all along, they should have been exercising God's principles of justice, they should have been doing this and exercising judgment without partiality, exercising judgment in favor of those who were being oppressed by those who afflicted them, but they did not do that. So here we see a call to repentance, a furtherance of the indictment against them, indicating that this is what you have not done. Rather than vindicate the weak and fatherless, rather than doing justice to the afflicted and destitute, you have done the opposite. You have not rescued the weak and needy. You have not delivered them out of the hand of the wicked. So this is a call for them to repent and rather than help the wicked, they should have been delivering the oppressed from their clutches.

Now, this was the pattern of God in establishing authority that it would be, in part, to protect those who are weak and vulnerable. The commentator, J. J. Stewart Perowne, says this and I quote, "It is persons such as these who, most of all, need the protection of the judge. Their very existence depends on his integrity. The orphan who has lost his natural protectors, the humble who have no powerful friends, the poor who can purchase no favor, to whom shall they look but to God's appointed judge? Where are they to turn when they don't have the resources to defend themselves? Where are they to turn when they don't have political connections in order to give them relief from those who are acting unjustly against them? And if the rulers are unjust and do not uphold righteousness before them, they have nowhere else to turn. In an earthly sense, they are completely abandoned." And the indictment reminds the rulers that this was never the position that this should have ever gotten into. You are not to rule corruptly. You are not to favor the wealthy. You are to exercise judgment with impartiality. But they hadn't done that and now the time of reckoning had come.

Why do rulers do this? Why do they act unjustly? We get an explanation in verse 5. It says,

5 They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness;  
All the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Why do we see corruption in our rulers? Why do we see such injustice playing out in the midst of worldly affairs? It's because they do not know, they do not understand. It's because they walk about in darkness. Them, themselves, are corrupt. They are corrupt from within. They are filled with ignorance. They are filled with spiritual darkness and what we need to understand as we see corruption in the world around us, as we see corruption in our leadership, as we see injustice reigning as it does, that that sinfulness that comes from their leadership is simply a symptom of a greater sinful, culpable rebellion within their own inner man and that has dire consequences for the world. Because our leaders are corrupt, then we are left with a corrupt society that follows and it is all traced back to the ultimate vertical rebellion of man against God, and when leaders are corrupt, the consequences are great. And I would just say that, drawing a parallel to the spiritual realm, the realm of the church, is that we find that to be so true in the spiritual realm as well, don't we? When a pastor is corrupt, when spiritual leaders are corrupt, the consequences of that permeate throughout those who follow them and the consequences reverberate far beyond the corruption of the leader himself.

So there are consequences to leadership, there are consequences in the spiritual realm, and there are consequences in the social realm, and we just see how miserably broken it all is as we contemplate it. And what are those consequences in the social realm being addressed here by Psalm 82? Look at the end of verse 5 with me where it says, "All the foundations of the earth are shaken." In other words, God appointed these leaders to uphold the moral order that he had established for the world and they have violated it, and the consequences are that the foundations of the social order are shaken. Instead of peace and stability, there is conflict and violence. When law and order fail, the vulnerable feel the effects of it and the consequences spread far beyond anything that others would have intended at the time.

James Montgomery Boice said this in 1996, a few short years before he went to heaven, and he said this. It's a rather extended quote but I think it's very helpful, so bear with me as I read it. He said this, "A government that does not acknowledge God and try to govern according to the responsibilities he has laid down will inevitably succumb to the three perils. First, ignorance. It will not perceive what is happening or what to do about it; events will outstrip its ability to cope. Second, inept action. When it does act, it will operate 'in darkness' and its programs and policies will be ineffective. Third, the foundations of common life will be shaken." Continuing his quotation, "Our courts, public schools, and even government itself, are in turmoil, and it is increasingly unsafe even to walk on our streets." He was saying that some 22 years ago. It has accelerated exponentially in a way that even an insightful man like James Montgomery Boice could not have anticipated during his lifetime. How much more as he looked at the courts and public schools and the government being in turmoil? This was before 9/11 and the fall of



the Twin Towers. This was before the Supreme Court decision redefining marriage. This was before Columbine in Colorado. This was before mass murder in public places has become so common. And what we're seeing is that for a thinking person who watches this unfold, we realize that what's coming true in our day before our eyes as we sit here tonight is the shaking of the foundations of the social fabric of our very lives.

We literally do not know, we literally are not sure when we are gathered in a public place that there will not be some maniac who opens fire and kills people all around us. It happened just in Cincinnati just a few weeks ago, didn't it? It hits really close to home. It hit close to home to my friends in Thousand Oaks when so many people were slaughtered at that recent shooting that took place there in the midst of the wildfires that were taking place as well. And on and on. You could recite the examples. There is so much of it that you just can't even keep track of it all. You start to forget where Sandy Hook was. And on and on it has gone and what we see is the outworking of the corruption of the world around us, the foundations of the earth are shaken, the foundations of social order are shaken and we trace this back to the failure of leadership to be godly, we trace it back to the operation of leadership that violates the principles of God as they exercise their authority, and it's not just them that feels the consequence of it, we all feel the consequence of it and we are in an unstable environment and Scripture warns us to anticipate the fact that evil men will proceed from bad to worse, 2 Timothy 3:12.

Well, a couple of things that I would say about that. One is for us to be mindful of the fact that that breakdown and this shaking of the foundations of common life should be a call, should be an urgent impulse in the hearts of men everywhere to flee to Christ for refuge, to flee to Christ for salvation, to flee to Christ for security because there is no security in this world. There is no security to be found in our public order any longer. We are vulnerable and yet that vulnerability can become a spiritual opportunity for us if it causes us to seek Christ as he is revealed in the word of God. We seek him as a result of that and it teaches us something else, doesn't it? It teaches us as so many different heart-wrenching events do, either on a social level or at a personal level, to do not put our hope in this world that is around us.

Tomorrow, I believe it is, that we will have a national day of mourning for our former President George Herbert Walker Bush, we are reminded that even the mightiest of them all will die eventually. From the highest heights of their power, their end is the same as the common man sitting in the pew with us here today. I'm speaking of us all as common men. Aren't many noble amongst us, and that's the way it is with the people of God. But the ultimate outcome for those who hold the highest position of authority, even if they live 94 years, is going to be the same as it is the rest of us and they are just passing vapors on the stage of human existence who play their part for a time but then they're gone. I say this in sympathy to the man, send sympathy to his family, but we need to see through these things and realize the transient nature of our existence and the unstable nature of the world in which we live, that the corruption of our leaders is simply going to lead to further instability down the road, and to make that the motivation that we have, if you are not in Christ, to turn to him in repentance and faith that you, yourself, might be saved from the calamities that are to come. And for those of us that are in Christ, to realize that

there is no reason for us to grip this world tightly, but rather to remind ourselves day by day that our hope is in the Lord, as we sometimes sing, "My hope is in the Lord who gave Himself for me," and to not rest our hope, not set our affections, not set our aspirations on what this world will bring us because eventually it's all going to be gone in the end. The foundations are shaken and it will be that way on this earth until our Lord returns to establish his kingdom.

So what we see here in Psalm 82 is an indictment against rulers but also a wake-up call that goes to the rest of us to reject here within the church, the body of Christ, that the body of Christ should reject those voices even within the professing evangelical church that want to focus our attention on political matters. Don't we see that there is no hope in that, that our hope must be in Christ and not in the political institutions around us? How is this going to come out well? It is not where we set our hope. So the Psalm is directed against unjust rulers but it also echoes over to us who are not in those positions of authority and to realize that there is no hope for us on this earth; that our hope is in Christ and in a world that is yet to come that will be ushered in by a righteous King and not by those exercising delegated authority who pervert it and twist it to their own ends.

So we get our worldview informed by Psalm 82 and now as you move on to verse 6, judgment is declared against them as the indictment unfolds. Verse 6,

6 I said, "You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High. 7  
Nevertheless you will die like men And fall like any one of the princes."

And here in verse 6 we see the use of the term "gods" to say, "You had authority that was given to you, in your realm you were like a god in that you were the highest authority for a time within your realm. You were delegates. This was given to you as sons of the Most High but now the time of judgment has come. You will not hold this position forever." In fact, it says in verse 7, "You are destined to die like any other ordinary man. While you were over men for a time, you are destined to die like a man." And again, I say it with great sympathy but it just happens to be providentially the timing in which we gather together, we will mourn the loss of a President tomorrow, with all due respect to the former President, the highest head of state for the United States from the years 1989-1993, and all of the prior authority that was given to him in his political career, what was the end for him? He died just like the rest of us. He gets a little more trappings for his funeral, a little more national attention than any of us will ever get, but he died just like any other man. And when we see it from that perspective, if we step into the shoes of these rulers for just a moment on the receiving end of this indictment, "you will die like men, you will fall like any one of the princes," we realize that this elevated authority that was given to them didn't deliver them in the end, it didn't position them better for judgment, it doesn't exempt them from the common fate that we all will share in. They acted in God's name and by his authority, they held a derivative stamp of divinity by the authority that they carried, they administered law and judgment just like God does universally, and here's the thing, beloved, in the midst of their responsibilities, in the midst of their earthly temporary elevation, the high dignity and power of their office gave the appearance that they were above others, that they were above those over whom they

exercised authority. Isn't it true? Again, I'm not picking on the former President, it's just a matter of timing, and by all accounts he was a decent human being, a gracious, decent human being, and so I'm not singling out former President Bush except for the fact that the timing of it just coincides with what we're preaching on here today, but he had Secret Service detail, motorcades, Air Force 1, Marine 1, thousands under his authority that were to do his bidding, could speak to the nation, he could send troops into war, far above common man for a time, so it would seem, but there's a sense in which it was an allusion, and what I mean by that is it was temporary. It didn't put him in the realm of a different reality, he like all leaders before him, the 40 Presidents before him, although Carter still survives, they were mere humans who died like all other men, and in time others will come after them to replace them and their exit off the world stage will be in a casket. They will die just like other men.

What are we to draw from this? What are we to think when this happens? We're to step back and to see beyond the eulogies, to see beyond the ceremonies when a leader passes away, and to recognize that the only enduring authority is found in the God of the Bible. Only God survives and only God reigns over generations and beyond generations, and God in his capacity, God in his essence, God in his sovereignty has not abandoned his righteous rule. Forgetting former President Bush now in what I'm about to say, God has not abandoned his righteous rule and what he does when men with authority abuse it, use it to their own advantage, violate it with their own corruption, what is God doing in the midst of this? He is patiently tolerating their wickedness while he works out his purposes through it, but in the end, he will bring judgment to them. In the end, they will give an account. In the end, they will not get away from it. In the end, it will be shown that they were as much subjects of the sovereignty of God as anyone else who lived on the face of the earth. Look at it there, again, in verse 7, "Nevertheless you will die like men And fall like any one of the princes."

Back in 2004, my family and I had the opportunity to visit the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum when he was lying in repose after his death. I remember it vividly. The traffic at the exit to get to the museum was backed up for miles. No one minded. It was a somber moment. Everybody realizes we were, you know, to be in California, living in California at that time and to have the opportunity to have just a small part in the national mourning event like that, it was, you know, time was irrelevant at that point. I remember so very vividly stepping into the main lobby, for lack of a better term, of the library. President Reagan's casket was there. The Honor Guard was standing at the corners of the casket and you walked around the circled velvet rope for maybe about 30 seconds. As I recall, there was this hushed silence as we did that. We walked a circle around that casket, that flag-draped casket with the stunning appearance of the Honor Guard standing at attention looking inward at that casket, and you circle around, I remember thinking at the time just the magnificence of the position that he held, the leadership. He was a world leader, a genuine leader, and he was reduced to a casket. He was gone. This was after 10 years of Alzheimer's on top of it. This verse did not come to my mind at the time. I was not familiar in that degree to Psalm 82 at the time, but even a man like Reagan found that he died like men. He fell like any one of the princes.

So you and I, as biblical Christians, we look at these men in their position and while we respect their authority, we don't fear them in a craven way because we see through it all. We recognize that their end is going to be just like ours and that our ultimate fear and our ultimate trust is directed toward God alone and to no one else, and that we view these men with authority from that perspective, that they are passing, and that they, themselves, will give an account to God for what they have done.

Now as you come to verse 8, you come to the third and final point of the Psalm and it's this, it's that God, himself, is called to judge. God, himself, is called to judge. What, then, do we do as we see this, as we deal with the problem of corruption in leadership, corruption in every level of our political system and the world around us? There's a reason why we understand the term Banana Republic, that elsewhere in the world that people exercise authority in despotic ways and what do we do, then? What do the people of God do in light of that while they're waiting for God's judgment to come? What do we do? Where is our hope and what is our prayer and what is our view of God in the meantime? The Psalmist concludes by crying out to God for justice. Look at what he says in verse 8, he says,

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is You who possesses all the nations.

He closes this Psalm with a prayer recognizing and feeling the effects, feeling the weight of the corruption of the world leaders that he has just indicted in the first seven verses of the Psalm, and he looks beyond the earthly situation, he looks beyond the horizontal matter and he looks up and he remembers who God is. He remembers the fullness of his sovereignty. He remembers the fullness of his willingness to hear the prayers of his people and he looks to God who in righteousness, who in sovereignty, is able to do exactly what he is about to ask him to do and he says, "God, arise! God, come forth! God, judge the earth!" It is a cry for righteous judgment. It is a cry against the corruption of the world that lets the foundations of social order be shaken. And it is a cry for God to do what he alone can do, to take his universal authority and exercise it; to call men to account; to restore righteous order to the things that have been disordered by the sin of man. "God, arise! Judge the earth! Come back!" And we realize that ultimately all men, even the greatest leaders among Gentiles, will give an account to him.

Honestly, I say weird stuff like this because I know it's never going to happen, but I would love, I would love to have 30 minutes in the United Nations to speak to world leaders on this text and to call them to the fear of God and to call them to repentance from their wicked ways, and to tell them, to warn them that even the greatest leaders in the world will give an account to this God; to call them to repentance and to offer them the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that he came to save everyone who would believe in him. Even wicked world rulers can find salvation in Christ because he is a Savior of the world from the greatest to the least. Everyone who believes in Christ can find forgiveness of their sins but you must repent and come to him in order to find that.

In the meantime, for those of us as the people of God who sometimes groan under the oppressive weight of a wicked society, we look at verse 8, we see the Psalmist praying, "Arise, O God, judge the earth!" appealing to his sovereignty over the nations for him to do that, and we realize as we continue to read through Scripture as we go into the New Testament, we find similar themes animating the prayers that are given to the saints to pray. As Jesus instructed his disciples to pray in Matthew 6:10, "Your kingdom come," that prayer is an assault against the world order. It is an expression of utter dissatisfaction with the nature of existence in this fallen world. "God, I am praying against all of this. I stand separate from it. I stand apart from it. I look on it and see how wrong and what a violation it is of Your order and of Your righteousness and of Your holiness. And God, I pray that You would intervene, that You would supernaturally intervene into world affairs and establish Your kingdom. I pray for nothing less than the return of the righteous King, the Lord Jesus Christ, to establish His kingdom on the earth. That's what I pray for, O God." Not simply the earthly matters of my personal existence. Christ teaches us to pray in a different order, in a different realm, on a different magnitude, to seek with expectation, to seek eagerly, to seek expectantly, to seek desiringly the coming of Christ to return to earth because we don't like this corrupt way that things are going. "Thy kingdom come," we pray. "God, arise and judge the earth!"

Scripture ends with a prayer in Revelation 22:20, "Come, Lord Jesus." A longing for something better. A longing for the real righteous King, the one who we know personally individually as King, as Lord and Savior. We want to see that realm that he exercises over us expanded universally. "Judge the earth! Exercise Your dominion over it all!" And as we see these things, we start to realize that there is a transforming effect and a transforming impact on the very way that we pray, looking beyond daily existence, looking beyond that, although that's part of natural understandable prayer, but not stopping there but saying, "Lord, I'm looking beyond life as I know it for the coming of a kingdom that You have promised." And we ask God to intervene.

There's one other aspect as I bring this to a conclusion. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 2. As we start to grasp something of the magnitude of these issues, that those who are in authority will ultimately give an accountability to God themselves, as we recognize the consequences of their rule on the nature and order of society itself, then it should humble us in obedience to Scripture to remember that they are the proper objects of our prayers, not our resentment.

1 Timothy 2:1,

1 First of all, then [the Apostle Paul says], I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

Here also in this verse seeing that when kings are exercising and abusing their authority in an ungodly way, that tranquility and quiet living is not the nature of existence. So we appeal to God to work in and through those kings in order to keep social order in a

peaceable way so that we are able to live a quiet peaceable life, seeking godliness for ourselves and for those around us, and we make that an aspect of our praying, recognizing that God is working through kings even to accomplish his purposes.

So we who see these truths, recognize the need to pray, "God, come back and while You're delaying, work through our leaders in order to accomplish Your will. Work through our leaders to restrain their actions in a way that allows us to live the quiet godly lives that You have called us to live in Christ."

Bow with me in prayer.

*Father, the magnitude of these issues is staggering to our minds because what we have read and what we have seen is nothing less than the fact that the God to whom we prayed just now is the God who is over everyone who has ever held authority throughout the history of time. You are over our current President. You are over all of our national, state and local leaders and they exercise their realms of authority with a reality that one day, Father, they will give an account to You for what You have given to them. We realize that's a fearsome thing, even if they do not, and we pray for their salvation. We pray for the salvation of our President, Donald Trump. We pray for the salvation of those who serve in Congress. We pray for the salvation of leaders at every state and local level.*

*For those few who know Christ and are brothers and sisters in Christ with us, Father, we pray that You would sustain and keep them in their realms of authority and that they could be alight in the midst of the darkness. Father, we pray that as these various people exercise their authority in different ways, we pray that You would so work that we might lead a tranquil and godly life, a quiet life with dignity. Father, and as we see the fraying of the social fabric around us, as we see mass murder as a routine act of sinful men in the midst of our daily lives, Father, and we realize just how much fear that brings to the hearts of people who do not know You, we ask You to exercise Your sovereignty to restrain it. We ask for wisdom for those who are responsible for maintaining order and we pray that they would do so and that You would help them as they do.*

*And Father, for those of us that have Christ, that have a living hope within our hearts, give us grace that we might be those who could make Him known in our respective spheres of responsibility and our respective spheres of relationship, Father, that in these desperate times, the stability and the tranquility of our hope would be that which You would use to speak to the hearts of those who do not know Christ and that they would see the opportunity while there is time to flee from their own godlessness, to flee this wicked world and to come to Christ for their salvation. Father, the matters are urgent, the matters are transcendent, they are so far above us in weight and seriousness and we recognize how inadequate we are for the task at hand. Father, we're inadequate for the task of living our own lives. How are we ever supposed to sort out world events and sort out matters of a fractured world order? We can't do it, Lord. We are weak. We are helpless. We are ignorant, ourselves.*

*So we appeal to You who know all things, You who have no limit to the strength to accomplish Your will, and we ask You to arise and judge the earth. We ask, Father, for the coming of Your kingdom. We ask for the soon hastening coming of our Lord Jesus. We long for Him but while He tarries, Father, in your appointed time table, restrain evil in the world around us, restrain the corruption of our own flesh. Sanctify us in the truth, perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish us in Christ and against the adversary that we might lead righteous lives during the time that You have appointed to us and that we might humbly point everyone to whom You give us opportunity to the same Lord Jesus, the One who saved us will save them also, Father, help us to make that known. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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