

Dear Friends,

Psalm 70 records a highly unusual example for many of us, actually praying for the Lord to "Reward" our enemies, enemies to our faith and to our God, according to their shame. I am convinced that this kind of prayer might do far more good than our shouting about how evil "They" are or what awful things "They" have done. Assuming our accusations are wholly factual, are we shouting our complaint to the ears of someone who has the power to judge and to control these people? Almost certainly not. David includes a number of similar prayers in the Psalms. These Psalms were the Old Testament "Hymnal." Old Testament worshipping Jews sang them in their gatherings to worship God. If you could sing any hymn of the 150 the next time you meet in worship, would you be the person who called out "Psalm 70"? Would you think about actually singing this Psalm in church?

If we truly believe our God is the righteous Judge of all humanity, why do we not regularly pray these words?

And, while you are praying, pray for the Lord to strengthen and to bless the first-line care-givers whose lives and strength are being stretched to the breaking point in this season. Pray for those who are hanging onto life by a thread, or whose loved ones are hanging by a thread, people who are far past the empty claim that the virus is all a hoax. You can't say it is a hoax when your loved-one is on a ventilator or in an induced coma because of it. Lord be kind and merciful to all these people. Give them strength and grace to endure, and bless them to survive.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

God also "Rewards" the Wicked

Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha. (Psalm 70:3)

Psalm 70 is a prayer of David with the sub-title, "To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance." I suspect this prayer is not similar at all to any prayer you've prayed in a very long time, if ever. I'll provide the complete Psalm for our study and review. As you read this Psalm, think about its requests of the Lord. Have you ever prayed a similar pray? Ever? Indeed, David brings to our remembrance a neglected reality that many sincere believers in our present season have forgotten.

Make haste, O God, to deliver me; Make haste to help me, O Lord. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame. That say, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying. (Psalm 70:1-5)

We tend to pray much for ourselves. We also periodically pray for people we know and love. How often do you pray regarding wicked people, especially for the Lord's judgment to be inflicted against them? How do we react to news that people are unfriendly, or even hostile, to us and to our faith? Most often, we complain quite loudly to other people. This reaction confuses me. Do you honestly believe that other finite humans can neutralize, or even judge and punish these people? Still others live from one conspiracy theory to the next, and they habitually shout quite loudly about their latest conspiracy, often something that has far more substance in their imagination than in verifiable facts. Does the world hate God? Sure does. What's new? It hated Jesus even more. Do ambitious and unscrupulous politicians hate Bible believing Christians? (They often pretend to be Christians when the pretense will gain favor or votes for them, but, in the trenches of their jobs, they seldom show anything other than hostility toward Bible believing Christians. In fact the adjective, "Bible believing," becomes the kiss of death for many politicians who view that term as a code word for radical extremist) And, yes, they

eagerly work to manipulate any disaster of any kind for their advantage. Again. What is new about this? This is their traditional *modus operandi*. When did they do differently?

We read this or similar Psalms that voice Bible, and therefore inspired, prayers, but we read them with a puzzled mind. "Oh, I would never pray such a prayer." If God approves it by putting it in His Book, why not? You'll complain to the wind about "Them" and all the evil things "They" are doing to persecute Christians, actions that will gain nothing whatever for you or for your faith, but you refuse to take the very matter of your complaint to the Lord and ask Him to do what He considers right and righteous toward them. If they are half as evil as you claim they are, they more than deserve His righteous judgment. You can't do a thing to take them down. God can easily neutralize them, but you feel justified in shouting your frustrations about them, and yet refuse to do what Scripture teaches you to do, pray for the Lord to deal with them according to His righteous judgment. I simply do not understand this strategy.

Let's list in order the specific judgments David requests the Lord to send against these wicked people. First, we should clearly identify in our minds who these wicked people are. No, they are not members of "That other" political party or social group. How does David describe them in this Psalm?

1. They "*seek after my soul.*" They are anti-Christian in terms of moral values and lifestyle.
2. They "*desire my hurt.*" They consciously and aggressively desire to do Christians collective and/or personal harm.
3. They consciously look for failures in Christians. They keep you and all Christians they have reason to observe under a spotlight with a magnifying glass. The moment they see the slightest slip or non-Christian word or action, they will shout from the housetop, "*Aha, aha!* I told you. All Christians are hypocrites."

Sadly, in our culture, many professing Christians will blindly vote for these very people every time they run for any political office because they belong to "The Party," with no regard whatever to their moral values, much less their attitude toward the Christian community.

As believers, we can only make decisions regarding what we can do and strive to honor moral, Biblical, Christian values in the people and issues that will receive our votes. We can't control what others do. I am registered in a political party so that I can vote in elections. However, I vote for the man or issue that I regard as closest to Biblical values, regardless of political affiliation. And, if you reviewed my checkbook for decades back, you wouldn't find a single check payable to either of the leading political parties in our country.

However, this Psalm enlightens us regarding something we should have been doing through our entire profession of faith, but few of us have considered, much less practiced. Now let's examine in sequence, David's specific petition for the Lord to intervene and counter these wicked people and their influence.

1. *Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul.* Remember. We are asking the Lord to intervene and bring these results into their wicked designs against the Lord and His people. Instead of succeeding, pray for their schemes to crumble into public exposure and shame. When decent people see first-hand what these people tried to do to harm sincere, Bible believing Christians, and all because of their faith, pray for the Lord to so expose their sin and to enlighten their witnesses that people will reject them vigorously.

Instead of boasting their success, pray for the Lord to defeat them schemes and leave them baffled and confounded, embarrassed and humiliated that their twisted intentions were shouted from the rooftops and rejected.

2. *Let them be turned backward, and ?put to confusion, ?that desire my hurt.* Like the scheming Haman

in the Book of Esther, pray for the Lord to impose His righteous judgment so that the very gallows by which they hoped to hang godly people and godly behaviors shall be the gallows on which their wicked ambitions are hanged.

3. *Let them ?be turned back for a reward of their shame.* Whether for good or bad, a “Reward” in some way or another relates to what a person does. In this kind of prayer, believers are not lifting their hands, only their voices in prayer. They consciously get themselves out of the way, not into the spotlight, and pray for the Lord to put these people and their wicked schemes into the spotlight and into His judgment hall. Pray for the Lord to “Reward” them righteously for their wicked designs.

In addition to praying for the Lord to judge these wicked people and to expose their twisted, sinful intentions, and to “Reward” them appropriately for their conduct, David now turns his prayer to a positive vein. In the prayer that has gone before, take careful note. David did not lift his sword or his voice against these people. He did lift his voice in prayer to the Lord. Why are we often so reluctant to pray such prayers? Such a prayer in no way means that you strike out to do this person harm. Every petition David prayed turned the wicked people and their evil intentions over to the Lord and asked Him to actively confront and judge them. If we study and learn the lessons Scripture teaches us, the more we try to muddle in such matters, the more the Lord quietly sits back and shows us just how futile our own efforts are. And the more we quietly take these matters—and people—to the Lord on our knees, the more He steps into the situation and deals with them and with their wicked ways.

It is my observation that, when sincere believing people follow their passions instead of their faith, they slowly and increasingly neglect their faith and their God, shouting louder against “Them” and venting their confusion and frustrations, not growing their faith. If we follow the example of this Psalm, once we take the people and issues that attack our faith to the Lord, what should we do next? David answers our question.

1. *Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee.* It is difficult (How about impossible?) to growl and shout our opposition to “Them” and simultaneously seek, rejoice, and be glad in our God. Know it or not, we make a choice in such matters. Invest our mental, spiritual, and emotional energy in “Them,” or in our God. Presently we live in a good season to memorize Habakkuk 3:17-18, and to repeat it to ourselves daily. Instead of fretting over COVID-19, spend more time in Scripture and prayer, and trust the Lord to care for you through the ordeal.

2. *And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.* The more we focus our words on “Them” the more we, in fact, magnify “Them,” and not our God. We can only truly magnify our God by speaking to Him and about Him often. If you examine a person’s checkbook and analyze where most of their money goes, you will learn what they regard as important in their minds. The same applies to their mouths. If you examine their words, spoken or written, and analyze the topics they invest most of their time and energy discussing, you will learn what they regard as important. Consciously work daily to keep your voice, spoken or written, on this theme that echoes your love of the Lord and His salvation, “**Let God be magnified.**”

3. *But I am poor and needy: ?make haste unto me, O God.* In all our God-focus, we invariably come to realize how much we need the Lord, so following this example from David leads us to confront and to confess our needs to the Lord. The more we face our true limits and weakness the more we are inclined to go to Him for our help.

4. *Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying.* Finally, our confronting our personal deficiencies of faith and faith-walking will lead us to this prayer for the Lord to help us, and to deliver us, both from our adversaries and from ourselves.

I am convinced that believers in the God of the Bible intensely need to reacquaint themselves and their

prayer habits with this lesson from David. Regardless what the broken, unbelieving world around us does or says, the more we refine and invigorate our faith into the Biblical model the greater our fellowship with the Lord will become. And, according to this prayer example, the more our God shall answer our prayers and involve Himself in our lives.

Elder Joe Holder