



## Psalms 58-61

**Psalms 58-61**  
**Tape #7184**  
**By Chuck Smith**

Let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm fifty-eight. In this psalm David is concerned and praying about the judicial processes. He could see, already, the beginning of a breakdown of the judicial system. This did progress until God's complaint through the prophet just before Israel went into captivity is that "justice does not issue forth". The judicial system had broken down completely. This is where, usually, the breakdown of a nation begins. If your judicial system breaks down then it follows that the breakdown there filters on out through the rest of the nation. David seeing the beginning of the breakdown of the judicial system was concerned. He prays about it, he cries out about the breakdown of the judicial system.

*DO ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? (58:1).*

The words "O congregation" are rejected by most scholars. The word in Hebrew could be O High One, referring to the judge or another possible with just a little change of a letter would be you dummies.

*do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? (58:1).*

This was the issue that David is going to address in this psalm. The failure for true righteous judgement to be issuing forth.

*Yea, in heart ye work wickedness: ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth (58:2).*

Justice has often been pictured with the scales, the balances. They are weighing the balances, the wickedness, with their own perverted actions themselves. In other words, when a judge does not live righteously he then has a very soft attitude towards those who are doing wicked things.

We had a judge in the Harbor Municipal Courts a few years back who was known as being very lenient with people who drink and crimes committed while a person was drunk. It became so well known that the lawyers would say, "When you go in just tell the judge that you'd been drinking". This particular judge had problems, he was an alcoholic. So he understood well the problems of things people do when they drink. I sat in his court to observe this for several days and people would come in and be accused of these things and they would say, "Judge, I have a drinking problem. I was just too drunk I guess to really know what I was doing". He would sort of slap them on the wrist and say, "I want you to promise that you won't drink anymore and I'm going to suspend your sentence and I'm going to let you go. I'm glad you understand you have a problem. You promise me now you're not going to drink". Then the guy could go again.

We had one of our older dear saints here in the church who was brought in before him on a traffic violation. She wanted to show him some evidence, she just appeared and didn't follow the legal protocol and he charged her for in contempt of court and threw her in the jail for a few hours. Horrible, she's just a sweet innocent old lady in the church that didn't know the court procedure yet he was a very stern and severe tough judge. Had she said sorry sir I had been drinking then he would say that's all right lady let's see it.

So David is complaining that because of their own wickedness they are not judging righteously the evil deeds that are being done. I am deeply concerned with the breakdown of the judicial system in the United States. I wonder how some of the decisions can possibly be called righteous.

My wife was called for jury duty. After a long selection process for the jurors, several days sitting there going through the jury selection, it was a case of two fellows who were living in the Oakwood Apartments. They picked up a guy at the bar, took him over to the apartment and killed him. They stripped his body of watches and everything else. When they were finally caught they had the fellow's watches and they both

admitted to the crime but they both accused each other of killing him. So my wife went through the whole process of jury selection and finally when they were all sitting there waiting for the case to begin, the lawyers went in the judge's chambers and soon came out and the judge said, "The jury is dismissed. There will be no trial. There's not enough evidence to go on with the trial because each was accusing the other of doing it". They each were the only witnesses that they had against each other. The fact that they had the guys watch and the guy was dead in their apartment made no case.

You wonder about that kind of a judicial system when the Civil Liberties Attorneys have taken so many issues to court that the court has a higher predisposition and interest in the civil rights of the offender than the do of the abused rights of the innocent. All of the interpretations seem to tie the hands of the police, limiting of evidence and things of this nature. Everything is slanted towards the accused and the fear of violating their civil rights. The officer didn't say please when he said get in the car thus he violated the civil rights, he treated the prisoner in a dehumanizing way so dismiss him. I can't quite handle that. David was really upset with the breakdown in his day.

*The wicked are estranged from the womb (58:2).*

A lot of times I get on the judicial system. It's not all judges; thank God we've got some good judges that are really interested in righteousness. I love that one judge in Fresno, the dear black brother I don't know how Brown ever appointed him out, he slipped through. I love him, he was requiring some of these guys to go to church and make outlines on the sermons. Of course they stopped him before long but at least he tried.

*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. (58:3).*

This is what is called a slight exaggeration because they are not in their bassinets lying, they can't speak yet. It's really making a reference to there are people who have that wicked bent. It shows it early in life that rebellious spirit and that it seems to be almost an inherent kind of a trait.

*Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely (58:4-5).*

In the Middle East snake charming was a very common thing and it is still practiced in India today. They have their snake charmers, playing their flute and getting the snake to dance. But these are like the adder who cannot be charmed.

*Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD (58:6).*

They think that what David was referring to was that the snake charmers would usually take the snakes that they would have in their baskets and they would break their fangs on the rock or stick. This was done so that if the snake did strike them, there was no fang to excrete the poison. It was a common practice of the snake charmers so they believe that that was what David was saying when he said break their teeth in their mouth unfortunately.

*Let them melt away as waters, which run continually: (58:7).*

You pour out a cup of water in the desert and it just disappears. Let them be blown away.

*when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: (58:7-8).*

Obviously David would like to get rid of them, water that's poured out on the ground, like a snail that melteth. In that desert area quite often on the extremely hot days the snails would just be destroyed and shrivel up within their shells. When I was a little kid we used to pour salt on them and it would them.

You've never done that? It's interesting to watch it's sort of like putting vinegar and baking soda together, they bubble and all and they just melt.

*like the untimely birth of a woman, (58:8).*

Meaning a child that is born prematurely.

*that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath (58:8-9).*

They would use the thorns, many times, in fires for heating the pots and so forth but he's saying that the Lord is going to take them away with a whirlwind.

*The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance [true judgement of God]: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth (58:10-11).*

The day will come when God will judge in righteousness and people will realize that it does pay to live a righteous life. The way the wicked can get by with their wickedness and sin sometimes you say hey wickedness pays.

One of our favorite programs when we were kids was "Gang Busters" they would always say, "Teaching you that crime doesn't pay". That used to be sort of the theme, movies and everything. The bad guys always got caught; the bad guys didn't get away with it. Now the whole thing has changed. The bad guys become the heroes, they get away with it and it would be hard to prove today that crime doesn't pay. It pays many people handsomely. When God judges, man will say truly, there is a reward for living righteously, truly he is a God that judges in the earth and his righteous judgement shall proceed.

The fifty-ninth psalm is a psalm of David when Saul sent men to watch his house, to capture him and to bring him back to Saul that he might be killed. This was early in David's career. He was still quite young, probably in his early twenties or hovering around the twenty-year old mark. Saul had promised to whoever killed the giant could have his daughter as a wife. So David received Michelle, the daughter of Saul, as his wife. In the beginning their marriage seemed to be more compatible. They did have experiences later that caused a very incompatible marriage.

Saul was determined to kill David. David was, at that time, living there in Jerusalem with Michelle. Saul sent the vile men down to catch David in the morning to go in and take him, arrest him and bring him back to Saul where he might be slain. David heard of this plot and so he and Michelle concocted a plan. She let David down over the wall and he escaped and then she took pillows and so forth and put a blanket over it to make it look like he was lying in bed.

In the morning when the guys came into get him she said, "O he's sick, he's still in bed". They went to Saul and said, "He's sick" and Saul said, "Bring him here, carry him in his bed that I might kill him". They went back to get David and found out the ruse and then Saul accused Michelle of being a disobedient daughter in letting David escape and she said, "He told me look let me go. Why should you be dead?" In other words he threatened her life and she couldn't do anything. That night, when they had sent these men and David's life was on the line, he wrote these words.

*DELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me (59:1).*

David is praying for God's deliverance, for God's defense. Deliverance from the enemies, that would be Saul and the men that he had sent out to capture David.

*Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody [bloodthirsty] men (59:2).*

The word bloody is better translated today as bloodthirsty.

*For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: (59:3).*

They were out there in the night waiting for David.

*The mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD (59:3).*

I'm innocent. I haven't done anything against Saul. In fact David was one of the most devoted servants that Saul had. Saul was paranoid; he was sort of a schizophrenic character.

*They run and prepare themselves without my fault; awake to help me, and behold. Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors (59:4-5).*

Be merciful to me Lord but not to them. Now David is describing how they returned at the evening. Evidently they had been watching his house all day and now they have come back in the evening to continue the watch.

*They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog [yelping], and go round about the city. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear? (59:6-7).*

These are crude guys. They are blasphemers guys and are filled with threats. They disregard God saying, "Well who hears?"

*But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defense (59:8-9).*

David again, over and over throughout his lifetime, sought the help of the Lord. Resorted to the lord for his defense against the enemies, placed himself in God's hands. A very wise thing for a person to do. The Lord will defend those who put their trust in him. I have found that if I seek to defend myself the Lord will let me and I have a pretty weak defense. If I just wait upon the lord, he will defend me. I commit my ways to the Lord, David had learned that.

*The God of my mercy shall prevent me: (59:10).*

From being captured by my enemies.

*God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies. Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield (59:10-11).*

Don't just kill them Lord, scatter them. If you just wipe them out people will soon forget but let them be scattered so that they are still around. Scatter them so that people are reminded that how that if you turn against God or God's anointed it isn't a prosperous thing.

*For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak (59:12).*

Again, belching out these threats, cutting with their lips and the sin of their mouth, let them be taken Lord.

*Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth (59:13).*

The God of Jacob rules to the end of the earth.

*And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied. But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast*

*been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defense, and thee God of my mercy (59:14-17).*

As we have noticed in so many of David's prayers, the beginning of the psalm is rather dark and bleak, as David is looking at the problems that he is facing. As David prays his faith is strengthened. So that though the psalm begins with all kinds of terror and fear and apprehension, they always end on a very positive note because he has in prayer changed the direction of his focus. It was his problem that drove him to prayer.

A lot of times as we are facing the problems, we are overwhelmed by the problem and it drives us to prayer. The very fact that we are praying and as we begin to pray, the focus of prayer is upon God. You cannot really pray without focusing upon God. You bring to God the problem but then you begin to focus on the Lord.

As you focus on the Lord, the whole tenor changes and now I see the problem in light of God's strength and God's power. I am not looking at the fact that these guys are surrounding the house, they are out to kill me, there are a bunch of bloodthirsty guys out there in the street waiting for me to come out and they're going to grab me. There is too many of them to really try to escape from them. You have all these terrors that fill your heart so you begin to say, "O God, help me. Defend me Lord. Take care of me. These guys are a bunch of rotten filthy mouthed guys who are going around with all of their filth. Surely God you are going to judge them for what they are and what they do".

As he begins to again get things on God's strength and God's power then the whole thing changes. I know that God's going to get me out of this. I know that God is going to deliver me and "I'm going to sing of your power, yes, I'm going to sing aloud of your mercy in the morning" (59:16). By morning Lord, I know you're going to deliver me from these guys. In the morning they are planning to break down the door, come in and take me but Lord I know that you will deliver me in the morning. "You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble" (59:16). God had delivered David already so many times. "And so unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defense, and the God of my mercy" (59:17). He starts out with this cry of hopelessness and he ends up just singing of the glory of God.

Psalm sixty is written after David's troops had experienced a defeat at the hands of the Edomites. It was the common custom in those days to only record your victories. In the scriptures, we do not have a record of this defeat in the hands of the Edomites. From the psalm, it probably took place in some of the early battles against Edom that finally precipitated Joab coming down with David's army to wipe out the Edomites. They killed in the Valley of Salt some twelve thousand of the Edomites. So it's a prayer of David to instruct and it begins with David's cry unto God because of the defeat that they had experience at the hands of Edom.

*O GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again (60:1).*

David's troops were scattered they were defeated. David attributes their defeat to the fact that for some reason God was displeased with them. The prayer is for God to turn himself again to them.

*Thou has made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh (60:2).*

Using the simile of an earthquake here. They were trembled and broken.

*Thou has shewed thy people hard things: (60:3).*

It's been a tough lesson.

*thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment (60:3).*

David's troops were not used to defeat. David's troops have triumphed over their enemies and to have defeat in battle was an astonishing thing.

*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth (60:4).*

Lord, help us to raise the banner of victory.

*That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth (60:5-6).*

Here's an interesting thing. David is in a dilemma, they've been defeated by the Edomites and their troops have been scattered in this battle. But to what does David turn in the time of astonishment and dismay? He turns to the promises of God in which God has declared his purpose for Israel to dwell within the land. David here does demonstrate a tremendous working knowledge of the scriptures that have been written up to this point of history, basically the scriptures of the Pentateuch. In Psalm one David said,

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the ungodly nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of the scornful but whose delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law does he meditate day and night”

David evidently did indeed meditate day and night in the Pentateuch, the Law of the Lord, the Torah because here he begins to declare things out of the scriptures that God had said concerning this land and the enemies around them. How that God was going to divide the land unto the nation of Israel. So “God has spoken in his holiness and I will rejoice in what? In the promises of God or in the Word of God, I will divide Shechem, and mete [measure] out the valley of Succoth” (60:6). Shechem will be divided among the tribes of Israel and God will measure out for them the Valley of Succoth, Genesis twelve six and Joshua thirteen twenty-seven he is quoting here. He's got a good, good knowledge.

*Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine: Ephraim also is the strength of mine head and Judah is my lawgiver: (60:7).*

God had given promises concerning the tribes of Israel, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah, Judah the lawgiver, “the scepter should not depart from Judah.

*Moab (60:8).*

This enemy nation across the other side.

*Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: (60:8).*

God is declaring that they are going to have power over Moab and power over Edom. However, Edom has triumphed over David's troops, that's why David is going back to what God had promised in order that he find the strength from the promises of the word. We may have an initial defeat but God is going to give us the victory. As he thinks of the word of God and as he looks at the promises of God, the assurance of victory come to his heart.

That's why it's so important for us to have a good working knowledge of the scriptures. When it would seem that things are going against us, things are really going down, if we can turn to the word and the promises of the word we can find hope, strength, help and the assurance. It changes us from an attitude of defeat to an attitude of victory and strength because we know that God has promised us his victory. That's why having the word in your heart is so important because it gives you so much strength in those hours of trial and difficulty, it's the word of God that is our strength and is our stay. So David quotes them and declares all of these things that God has spoken in his holiness and thus he is going to rejoice in the word of God and in the promises of God.

*Who will bring me into the strong city? (60:9).*

That is the city of Petra, the rock city, the impregnable fortress of the Edomites. David is planning to assault that city.

*who will lead me into Edom? Wilt not thou O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man (60:9-11).*

David knew that the only real help would come from God. He's not going to trust in man or man's help.

*Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies (60:12).*

So David gets things in perspective. God has promised and God will lead us. Who will lead us? It will be you God who will lead us into the victory for through you we are going to do valiantly, through you we are going to tread down our enemies.

The sixty-first psalm, as we mentioned this morning, is again thought to be written by David at the time that he had fled from Absalom and had been in exile and found refuge across the Jordan River. He's on the east side of the Jordan River on the east bank and Absalom has moved into Jerusalem. Absalom has taken and shamed David in the eyes of all of the people, putting the tent on top of the house and putting David's concubines in the tent and going openly into David's concubines. He had done this disgrace to his father. David is crying now unto God in the uncertainty of this whole situation. Absalom is in power and in control and David, too old to fight his battles. His men have gone out to help defend against the army that is pursuing David. David prays unto the Lord.

*HEAR my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, (61:1-2).*

David felt like he was at the end of the earth. He was away from Jerusalem, away from that holy city, away from the tabernacle of God.

It's amazing how far off you could feel when you've broken down on the freeway in Santa Ana Canyon at night. Really it isn't that far to Orange from there. But I broke down in Santa Ana Canyon one night and there is just no way that people are going to stop on the freeway to help you. You can turn on the flashing lights and even the highway patrol won't stop. It's amazing how you could feel like you are a million miles from anything. It's a real dilemma. I trust that you don't experience it.

David really wasn't that far away but because of the circumstances you feel like you are a million miles from anywhere, from help. You feel like you are so far from help but it was only a mile to walk to the telephone there in that campground area there but man I felt like I was way out somewhere in the wilderness. David was across Jordan, he was away from home in that unfamiliar territory, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee," (61:2).

The wonderful thing about prayer is that it is not limited to a place. I can cry unto God from anyplace and at anytime. "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." I never have to worry about God being asleep. He's there on guard twenty-four hours a day. His ears are open and attended to the cries of his people. So you can cry to God from anyplace.

*From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: (61:2).*

At this point David's heart was overwhelmed. Overwhelmed because of the problems. His own son who he loves so deeply, his son upon whom he heaps such favors, his son that had now rebelled against his father and was determined to kill his own father, it was just more than David could handle. It was overwhelming to David that his son could have such bitterness and such hatred against him. He is overwhelmed because he had been driven from his home, even driven from Jerusalem and the enemies were pursuing him. It seemed

like the whole movement was with Absalom and against David. The tide of their fickle hearts had turned from David and were following after Absalom and it was overwhelming because David could see no way out of the dilemma.

*lead me to the rock that is higher than I (62:2).*

So many times we are overwhelmed by our experiences of life, overwhelmed by the problems that we are facing and overwhelmed with our circumstances. We cannot understand them nor do we know how to handle them and we just sort of become innervated because of the problem that we face and we can't see any solution.

In the next psalm, and we should probably had taken it with this one, David said, "Truly my soul waits upon God, from him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved" (62:1). Again in verse six, "He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be moved" (62:6). So David in saying lead me to the rock is just saying God bring me to yourself.

The rock that is higher than I, the problem is too great for me to handle. I am overwhelmed by the situation but there is a rock that is higher than I and it is not too great for the rock. He is able to handle the situation, our God is able to deliver, "lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (61:2).

*For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy (61:3).*

Around the walls of the city they always had the towers of defense. The towers were much higher than the walls. It could be that they could throw a javelin to the defender on the wall against the defender. The fellows that were in the towers were higher than the javelins could be thrown. There was that certain safety in the tower but yet you throw a rock from the tower and by the time it hits the ground it is coming down with a tremendous force of gravity giving you a tremendous advantage from those towers. They were the real citadels of strength and God has become the citadel of my strength. He's my shelter; he's a strong tower from the enemy.

*I will abide in thy tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert [covering] of thy wings (61:4).*

Interesting thing, David is away from the tabernacle, he's over on the other side of the Jordan River and his destiny is uncertain right now and Absalom is in rebellion. Absalom's armies are pursuing after David. David is still having come to the Lord and having put things into perspective of God being the rock that is higher than I and being my strong tower therefore I am going to dwell in your tabernacle in a place of your presence forever. The assurance again that David had of God's ultimate triumph over the enemies. "I will trust in the cover of thy wings" (61:4) "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty". That's where I'm going to trust, in the shadow and in the covering of your wings.

*For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name (61:5).*

Tremendous heritage among people Lord who fear you.

*Thou wilt prolong the king's life: (61:6).*

Lord you are going to sustain me. Again, the psalm starts out with the uncertainty but it ends with great confidence.

*Thou wilt prolong the king's life: and his years as many generations (61:6).*

You're gonna sustain me.

*He shall abide before God forever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him. So will I sing praise unto thy name forever, that I may daily perform my vows (61:7-8).*

I'm going to end up singing, I'm going to end up with songs of victory. God will deliver me, God will be with me, God is my help and God is my strength. We need to notice over and over the prayers of David that begin with the problem and the uncertainty of the situation but through prayer David is brought into the position of victory, strength and confidence. That's why we should bring every problem to the Lord in prayer. That's why prayer is such a place of strength for the child of God. That's why prayer will lift you out of the doldrums, out of the spirit of defeat and bring you into the sense of victory as we are assured, even through prayer, of God's help and God's work as we take the situation that we can't handle and place it in God's hands where he can take care of it. I have that confidence that God is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.

I have committed my life, my ways to the Lord. God's able to keep me, keep me as long as he wants me. When I come to that place where he wants me with him he'll still be keeping me. As with David, I'm going to be singing forever the praises of God because I belong to him. Thus the worst thing that could happen to me is that I might get killed. That's not too bad if I'm a child of God. "To be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord" so you see, It's not that bad of deal, in fact it's a good deal.

Put your trust in the Lord; place your life in his hands, the circumstances before him in prayer. Watch how it changes our attitude towards these things, how it takes us from a feeling of defeat and despair into one of victory and song. Now go and put it in practice.

Let's pray. Father how thankful we are for these important lessons that we can learn from the life of David who in his difficulty learned to turn to You and learned to turn the situations to You and thus gained that strength and assurance of victory. Coming Lord before You with tears and dismay, he leaves that place of prayer with singing and rejoicing. May we learn to do the same, casting all of our cares upon You, Lord because You care for us.

Thank You Lord for this heritage that we have, a heritage in Christ Jesus, a heritage in the family of God and being surrounded with people who reverence and fear Your name. Lord, may we continue to grow together in our walk with You, that we might be a light in this dark place. That You Lord, through this church, might bring into this community and influence of righteousness, of justice and of holiness. O God, we see the tide of evil as it seems to overflow. But we thank You that where sin overflowed grace did much more overflow. So Lord we thank You that we can experience that overflowing grace in our lives this night as we go forth in Your name to be Your instrument to do Your will this week, Amen.