

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
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Psalm 59 — A Song to a Different Tune

1.0 Introducing Psalm 59

- After three psalms (Psalms 56, 57, 58) to the tune of “Al-tashheth” (“Do Not Destroy”), Psalm 59’s postscript indicates a different tune: “Shushan Eduth” (“Lily of Testimony” or “Lilies’—A Testimony,” see 59:16).
- Psalm 59’s background is 1 Samuel 19:11-12, which contains a number of verbal ties to the psalm.
 - ♦ “watch” (1 Sam 19:11; Ps 59:9.
 - ♦ “morning” (1 Sam 19:11; Ps 59:16.
 - ♦ “tonight” (1 Sam 19:11) and “evening” (Ps 59:6, 14)

2.0 Reading Psalm 59 (NAU)

59:1 A Mikhtam of David, when Saul sent *men* and they watched the house in order to kill him.

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Set me *securely* on high; away from those who rise up against me.

59:2 Deliver me from those who do iniquity
And save me from men of bloodshed.

59:3 For behold, they have set an ambush for my life;
Fierce men launch an attack against me,
Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD,

59:4 For no guilt of *mine*, they run and set themselves against me.
Arouse Yourself to help me, and see!

59:5 You, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be gracious to any *who are* treacherous in iniquity. **Selah.**

- 59:6** They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
And go around the city.
- 59:7** Behold, they belch forth with their mouth;
Swords are in their lips,
For, *they say*, “Who hears?”
- 59:8** But You, O LORD, laugh at them;
You scoff at all the nations.
- 59:9** *Because of his strength I will watch for You,*
For God is my stronghold.
- 59:10** My God in His lovingkindness will meet me;
God will let me look *triumphantly* upon my foes.
- 59:11** Do not slay them, or my people will forget;
Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield.
- 59:12** *On account of* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips,
Let them even be caught in their pride,
And on account of curses and lies which they utter.
- 59:13** Destroy *them* in wrath, destroy *them* that they may be no more;
That *men* may know that God rules in Jacob
To the ends of the earth. **Selah.**
- 59:14** They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
And go around the city.
- 59:15** They wander about for food
And growl if they are not satisfied.
- 59:16** But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength;
Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning,
For You have been my stronghold
And a refuge in the day of my distress.
- 59:17** **O my strength, I will sing praises to You;**
For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me lovingkindness.
- For the choir director; according to Shushan Eduth.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 59

3.1 Outline

- I. God’s Protection (vv. 1-10)
 - A. Petition for Deliverance from Enemies (vv. 1-5)
 - B. Dangerous “Dogs” (vv. 6-7)
 - C. Expression of Trust (vv. 8-10)
- II. God’s Loyal Love (vv. 11-17)
 - A. Petition for Destruction of Enemies (vv. 11-13)
 - B. Deprived “Dogs” (vv. 14-15)
 - C. Expression of Trust (vv. 16-17)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “Set me *securely* on high”
 - Literally, “set me up high from those rising against me.”
 - This same root word occurs as a noun (“stronghold”) in vv. 9, 16, and 17.
 - It is one of the key words and themes in this psalm.

- **v. 2** Chiasm
 - **A** Deliver me
 - **B** from those who do iniquity
 - **B'** from men of bloodshed.
 - **A'** And save me
 - The focus is on the enemies and their character.
 - David describes his enemies in seven ways:
 - ✓ “my enemies” (v. 1a)
 - ✓ “those who rise up against me” (v. 1b)
 - ✓ “those who do iniquity” (v. 2a)
 - ✓ “men of bloodshed” (v. 2b)
 - ✓ “they . . . set an ambush” (v. 3a)
 - ✓ “fierce men” (v. 3b)
 - ✓ “[they] launch an attack” (v. 3b)

- **v. 5** Names of God
 - “LORD God of hosts”—God is commander of all the armies of heaven and earth. Compare Psalm 24:10.
 - “the God of Israel”—God has a special relationship to His people Israel.
 - Compare “O my God” (v. 1), “O LORD” (v. 3), and “O Lord, our shield” (v. 11).

- **v. 6** “They return at evening, they howl like a dog”
 - “Here are masses of wild dogs, not domestic animals but such as live around the cities. During most of the day they lie about, sleeping; in the evening, as the night is falling, they begin their hunting forays and move in packs from garbage heap to garbage heap; their menacing howls can be heard throughout the city.”—Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. by Linda M. Mahoney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2005), 90.
 - In the repetition of this refrain (vv. 14-15), the wicked are depicted as unsatisfied, their arrogance replaced by hunger.



- **v. 8** “laugh at them”
 - See Psalm 2:4.
 - See Psalm 37:13.

- **v. 11** “Do not slay them, or my people will forget”
 - David did not want his enemies to be destroyed in an instant. People too easily forget when trouble disappears quickly.
 - “God allows evil to flourish for a times so that we might learn from it. We can see that evil is short-lived. We can learn that sin carries the seeds of its own destruction in itself. We can know that judgment does come upon the wicked in the end. If God did not permit evil, we would never learn any of this and would not grow by it.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), 2:492.

- **v. 11** “That *men* may know that God rules in Jacob”
 - Divine justice is a testimony concerning God’s presence and favor.
 - When David faced Goliath, he made a similar declaration (1 Sam 17:46).

- **v. 11** “Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down”
 - These words (together with those of 68:1) apparently inspired part of the second stanza of the British national anthem:

O Lord our God arise,
Scatter her enemies
And make them fall;
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
On Thee our hopes we fix,
God save us all!

- **v. 17** “I will sing praises to You”
 - This second refrain results from changing one letter in the Hebrew:
 - ✓ “I will watch [*smr*] for You” (v. 9)
 - ✓ “I will sing praises [*zmr*] to You” (v. 17)

- **v. 17** “lovingkindness”
 - This is the word *hesed*, meaning “loyal love” or “steadfast love.”
 - It is fitting that this psalm conclude with that significant word and concept.



4.0 Singing Psalm 59

Protect and Save Me, O My God

(Tunes: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past,"

"Am I a Soldier of the Cross?," or "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks")



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| <p>1 Protect and save me, O my God,
From foes that seek my life,
And set me high, secure, above
The rising tide of strife.</p> <p>3 Behold their wickedness, O Lord,
To help me, O awake;
Lord God of hosts, Thou, Israel's God,
Arise, and vengeance take.</p> <p>5 O God, my Strength, on Thee I wait,
To Thee for refuge flee;
My God with mercy will defend,
Triumphant I shall be.</p> <p>7 Let wickedness that raged in power
Now rage in impotence;
But I will glory in Thy strength,
My Refuge and Defense.</p> <p>9 To Thee, O God most merciful,
My thankful song I raise;
My Might, my strong, secure Abode,
I will proclaim Thy praise.</p> | <p>2 The workers of iniquity
Against me lie in wait;
Though I am innocent, O Lord,
They gather in their hate.</p> <p>4 My enemies with deadly rage
Renew their fierce attack;
They think the Lord will not regard,
But Thou wilt turn them back.</p> <p>6 O God, our Shield, let wickedness
And pride be put to shame,
Till all shall know that Thou dost rule
And all shall fear Thy Name.</p> <p>8 When all the night of woe is past
And morning dawns at length,
Then I shall praise Thy grace, O God,
My Refuge and my Strength.</p> |
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- Author unknown

5.0 Praying Psalm 59

- Father, keep me safe from criminals and those who would harm me or my family. [vv. 1-2]
- Come quickly to bring final judgment upon all nations. [v. 5]
- Thank You, for being steadfastly and lovingly loyal to me. [v. 10]
- O Lord, may all the earth know that You are King. [v. 13]
- O God, how I praise You for being my strength and my refuge. [v. 17]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 59

- Those who trust in God will triumph over their troubles.
- Sometimes justice waits so that we might remember how evil sin is.
- Only when God is our strength, are we truly strong.