

"God Is My Defense"

Psalm 59

No further mention needs to be made on the first part of the superscription (title) – we've seen it in the last two psalms.

What we will look to is the occasion given in the superscription for this psalm: "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." This episode in David's life is found in 1 Sam. 19:11-17.

➤ The historical setting

- David had been playing the harp to soothe Saul (1 Sam. 19:9-10). Saul's jealousy had boiled over into violence.
- Saul sent men to watch David's house (19:11) – we would call this "a stakeout," where they were waiting to kill him in the morning.
- Michal, David's wife, let him down through a window (19:12-17) so he escaped.

David was shut up in his own house, surrounded, and unable to move freely. He was "hunted as a dog," seen in the prowling dog imagery in the psalm.

David's enemies were very real, physical enemies with swords and spears, and even though we may not have enemies waiting for us outside our home, we still know what it means to be surrounded. It may look different for each of us: for some, it might be the hostility of an unbelieving world that mocks our faith; for others it might be the pressures and troubles of life that seem to surround us with no escape. And, as we have seen in our "Spiritual Warfare" series, Scripture reminds us that the one behind it all is a spiritual enemy who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

The focus of this study will be on the word “defence” (מִשְׁעָב) as found in verse 9, 16, and 17. It’s the same word translated “refuge” in Ps. 9:9; 46:7, 11; and 48:3, and by the phrase “high tower” in Ps. 18:2. It refers most often to a high, inaccessible place, like a mountain refuge. This isn’t just “defense” as an abstract thought, but God Himself as an elevated stronghold where the enemy cannot reach. David doesn’t just say that God *provides* a defense. He says that He *IS* the defense.

I. A CRY FOR DEFENSE – VS. 1-7

A. The Person sought – “My God” (vs. 1)

1. Trapped in his house, David pleads for God to rescue him from men waiting to kill him unjustly.
2. David pleads with God to “defend” him. This is the same root as that of “defense.” What he begs for at the start of becomes his song of praise at the end (vs. 17).

B. The peril faced – “the workers of iniquity” (vs. 2-7)

These enemies are seen circling like dogs would their prey.

C. The application for us today

1. We face hostility because of righteousness. This is seen in almost every area of our culture today (vs. 3)

Matthew 5:10-11

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and

persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

2. As dogs prowl their prey, the world “prowls” the believer with accusations, misrepresentations, and pressures (vs. 4, 6-7).

1 Peter 4:3-4

³ For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: ⁴ Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:

3. When surrounded, our first response, as David’s was, should be prayer (vs. 5).

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

II. CONFIDENCE IN DEFENSE – VS. 8-13

A. The Person of our defense – “O LORD...God of my mercy” – vs. 8, 10, 17

1. Vs. 8 – “O LORD...”
 - a) To David, the soldiers outside his window were terrifying; but from heaven’s throne, they were laughable.
 - b) God’s laughter is not cruelty – it is the sovereign assurance that rebellion against Him is futile (Ps. 2:4; Ps. 37:13; Prov. 1:26).

Psalm 2:4

⁴ He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Psalm 37:13

¹³ The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.

Proverbs 1:26

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

- What might be intimidating to us never intimidates God. The enemies of truth may appear strong, but in light of eternity their power is empty.

2. Vs. 9 – “God is my defence”

“Because of his strength will I wait upon the” – Whose strength is spoken of here?

- a) Some take it as God’s strength: *Because of God’s strength, I will trust Him.* That’s true theologically, and it fits the second half of the verse: “For God is my defence.”
 - b) However, in the flow of the psalm, it more likely points to the enemy’s strength. David looks at Saul’s men circling his house and says: “Because of their strength, I will wait on You.” In other words, the very power of the enemy drives him to dependence on God.
- ### 3. Vs. 10 (and 17) – “The God of my mercy” (חַסְדִּי) – steadfast love, His faithful, unfailing love for His people.

- a) Here, it’s intensely personal: *my mercy.* The phrase only occurs here in the Old Testament in this exact form. It’s a rare title for God.

- b) David knows he doesn't deserve anything, yet he clings to God's steadfast love and faithfulness as *his* hope.
- c) Vs. 10 – "The God of my mercy shall prevent me [go before me]." Even before David escapes, he knows God's mercy is already "ahead of him."
- d) Vs. 17 – "God is my defence, and the God of my mercy." What David trusts in the middle (vs. 10) becomes what he sings at the end (vs. 17).
- e) For believers in Christ today, this "mercy" (חַסֵּד) finds its fullest expression on the cross.

Ephesians 2:4-5

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

We can claim God as "the God of my mercy" because His covenant is sealed in the blood of our Savior.

Luke 22:20

²⁰ Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, *This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.*

- When surrounded by pressures or hostility, we remember: what defines us is not the noise of our enemies (vs. 6, 14) but the mercy of our God.

B. The power of defense – vs. 10-12

1. God goes before David ("prevent me"), and even His judgment has a purpose: not destroying his enemies instantly, but showing His rule.

2. God's timing in deliverance magnifies His glory and teaches His people to wait on Him.

C. The purpose of defense – vs. 13

"That men may know that God ruleth unto the ends of the earth"

1. God's defense of His people is never just about them – it's a testimony to His reign.
2. Our deliverance is meant to display the sovereignty of God to the world.

III. CONTRAST OF THE DEFENSELESS – VS. 14-15

A. Historical setting:

1. This is the second "dog" stanza, echoing vs. 6-7.
2. The soldiers are pictured circling David's house at night like scavenger dogs – restless, growling, hungry.
3. After God's pronouncement of judgment in vs. 8-13, their prowling is exposed as futile.

B. Empty seeking – they growl but find no satisfaction.

1. Sin promises satisfaction but always leaves empty (Jer. 2:13).

Jeremiah 2:13

¹³ For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

2. The world's opposition to God is restless and ultimately pointless (Isa. 57:20-21).

Isaiah 57:20-21

²⁰ But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ²¹ *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

3. The contrast: God's people rest secure, while the wicked endlessly circle in futility.

IV. A CHORUS OF DEFENSE – VS. 16-17

David is still under threat, but his view of the circumstance has shifted. He's anticipating the morning, not with fear of further attack, but with praise of God's mercy and strength.

A. The song of strength – vs. 16

God's people sing, not because the enemy is gone, but because the Defender is present.

B. The shield of salvation – vs. 17

God is our defense as the God of our mercy.

- The believer's testimony is this: what begins with a cry ends with a chorus – *"God is my defense, the God of my mercy."*

Conclusion:

This psalm begins with David surrounded by enemies and ends with him surrounded by mercy. Twice he declares, *"God is my defence"* (vv. 9, 17), which is the hinge on which the whole psalm turns. The prowling of the wicked may last through the night, but the morning belongs to God's people who sing of His strength and mercy.

For us, this psalm is a reminder that:

- The threats of the enemy are real, but they are not ultimate.
- The strength of the wicked is intimidating to us, but laughable to God.
- The restless circling of the world only proves its emptiness, while the believer rests in the fullness of God's mercy.

So, when you feel hemmed in, pray as David prayed, wait as David waited, and sing as David sang. Your defense is not in your circumstances, not in your cleverness, not in your strength – but in the Lord who is both your stronghold and your mercy.