

Songs of Summer: Psalm 59

Pastor Carlos

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Let's open our bibles to Psalm 59. It's been a joy for me already this morning to meet some people that are here for the first time, second time, or third time. And maybe you're in that place as well and we haven't had a chance to meet and we're excited that you are part of Watkinsville. Those that have been here for a while know that with the summer months we open our bibles to the Old Testament hymn book, the Book of Psalms and we're in Psalm 59. If you are here as a new attender or here for the first time, we'd love to meet you. I'll hang around here at the front a few minutes after the service and I'd love for you to come in this direction and say hello and I'd love to have your name. If we don't get a chance to talk, the Sunday paper that you received when you came in has a connect card that's a part of that. If you could complete it on your way out of the property today, you'll see some guest service desks and some people there that want to meet you. They want to put a gift in your hand and we hope you'd take the time to do that before you leave. Vacation Bible School is a week away for us. It's a massive event for our church and it has a big impact on our community and it's totally different for us this year because we're not doing it on our property. The construction project has caused us to sort of look beyond what we can do here and, Wild Summer Adventure we're calling it, will be at Oconee county high school starting next Sunday evening. All of you are invited to a hot dog supper there next Sunday evening.

The rest of the week the workers will have meals just before Vacation Bible School. We still need a lot of help. We have seen the numbers increase from last year. We have over 500 kids that are already pre-registered. We expect that there will be kids as well that'll just walk up with their families and register that evening. And we have some particular needs of small group leaders, especially in preschool. We need men and women. Your qualifications to do that would be that you get a background check and you would be breathing. We will be assigned three, four, or five kids to track with for the week. You're not the main Bible teacher, you're not the main craft maker. You're not the main song leader. You are a guide through Wild Summer Adventure and we need your help, men and women. Please see someone in the children's building, signup watkinsville.org, put a note on a gum wrapper and hand it to somebody. We could use you next Sunday afternoon if you have a truck and a trailer that you could bring next Sunday afternoon. We will be relocating tons of furniture and supplies from our children's building to the high school to be able to do Bible school. And so we need help with trucks and trailers next Sunday afternoon. We still need some help with food service during the night. There are lots of places to serve, and it's not about doing an event and getting an award for it. Please just keep remembering 500 plus kids hearing the good news of Jesus Christ and their lives being changed for eternity. Some of you have that very story that your life was changed, you are saved, your sins were forgiven and heaven became your home because of what you heard during Vacation Bible School. It's such a huge week of us getting the good news of Jesus Christ out.

We come to Psalm 59 today and in a lot of ways it's like welcoming a friend. It's like welcoming a friend that we've not been around for a while. You go all the way back to 2007 and we open our bibles for the very first time to Psalm one and we've been taking the summer's, most of them, not all of them, we took off a couple of summers to do a series in Hebrews 11 where we talked about that hall of faith. Another summer we took off, some of you may remember, a summer we called that series the Boys of Summer. We took the minor prophets of the Old Testament and took one each Sunday of the summer to see what the message of that Old Testament minor prophet was. But this is the sixth year in a row that we've been in psalms and we're taking seven or eight psalms a year.

I look forward to the day, Lord willing, I'll stand before you and say, let's open our bibles to Psalm 150 and who knows what year that'll be but we'll see if it happens. Today, Psalm 59. We always memorize a Psalm during the summer and this year I want to ask you to join with me in memorizing the last Psalm of the summer, and that will be Psalm 67. Just make a commitment to memorize. It's a Psalm that has 724 verses. Are you awake on the back row? I'm just checking to see if you're here. It has seven verses. Seven verses. So we've got about 11 weeks to learn seven verses. Psalm 67 is that great Psalm that has the verse in it, "Let the nations be glad" and it's a great psalm to have hidden away in our soul, hidden away in our heart. So start working together on Psalm 67 and on the last Sunday of July maybe we will be able to say that Psalm altogether. Psalm is the hymn book of the Bible. It's the spiritual journal of those who are writing about their walk with the Lord. Psalms, many of them written by King David, some of the psalms written by Moses, some of the psalms written by the lead choir director of that day, Asaph. These psalms were written, many with a backdrop of some event that was going on in their life. Today's particular psalm was written with the backdrop of First Samuel Chapter 19, a story of what was going on in David's life. We know that because of the heading of Psalm 59 where it says that it was a psalm where David was being pursued, where men had been sent to watch his house in order to kill him, and that was the very event of 1 Samuel Chapter 19.

Psalms is attractive to us and ministers to us because it's so straightforward and so honest. When we find our souls in need of council, encouragement, strength, understanding, we read a Psalm and you find any emotion there, the highs and the lows, the pain and the celebration. You find the writer of the Psalm not holding anything back. There's not a temptation too, there's not an attempt to trick God. Sometimes you look at the words and you think, wait, can you say that? Yes. If you're going to be honest with God, you can say that. And David or Asaph or Moses, they say things there that they're just being honest with God and then you have replies from the Lord that we find in our heart and soul that touches something deep in me. That helps me, that strengthens me. It gives me a reason to keep on keeping on. It's a book where the psalms identify the attributes of God.

So much about what we know about God is revealed to us in what we read in Psalms. When we began to praise the Lord for who he is, we find out a lot of those attributes based on what the writers of the songs in Psalms say. And today's Psalm is certainly like that. It's filled with those kinds of attributes, filled with attributes of God. Today when we come to Psalm 59, it is a psalm that identifies for us, calls our attention to the fact that we're in battle, we have enemies, we face opposition and it reminds us that life is not just smooth sailing just because

we know Jesus. Doctor B Grey Alison is one of the greatest men that I ever had the privilege to meet. Doctor B Grey Alison was the founding president of Midamerica Baptist Theological Seminary. Started in our Arkansas and for many years has been in Memphis, Tennessee.

Dr. Gray Alison was a president while Carla and I were there in school. He taught my personal soul winning class, he would refer to us as his children. He loved Jesus. He was courageous. He was small of stature, but he left a massive imprint on the Kingdom of God. He was a world war two bomber pilot. He was given permission to fly his bomber plane home from the battlefield to Louisiana when he left the war. He would tell us that if we ever saw him any day of his life and ask to see his copy of a new testament, if he wasn't able to pull that out of his coat pocket, he would buy us a steak supper. Or if he did, you had to buy him a steak supper. There was no testimony of him ever having to buy anyone else a steak supper.

He died in February of this year at the age of 94. He was a joyful man. The story of his life is that every day he read five Psalms along with whatever other scripture he read. He would read five Psalms. So every month of the year, basically, he would read through the entire book of Psalms. When I think about that, I think that had to be the reason that Dr. Gray seemed to have a song in his soul, it had to be the reason that he operated with so much joy and so much enthusiasm and such a perspective that was contagious. When you're around him you just felt more courageous yourself. You felt like you wanted to tell more people about Jesus just from being in his presence. Today when we come to psalm 59, the goal of these few minutes that I have with you is that we would leave with a song in our soul. What you and I need in the battles that we face in everyday life is the weapon of a song.

The words of a song, the music of a song. The truth of a song. And in Psalm 59 we find out the song of David as he faced opposition. In this psalm, David acknowledges an enemy. In this psalm, he takes inventory of his life. In this psalm, David recognizes who God is and in this psalm he shows us a strategy of victory over the enemy. The first work of Psalm 59 is that he acknowledges an enemy. Let's look at it together.

Deliver me from my enemies, O God; be my fortress against those who are attacking me. 2 Deliver me from evildoers and save me from those who are after my blood. 3 See how they lie in wait for me! Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, Lord. 4 I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. Arise to help me; look on my plight! 5 You, Lord God Almighty, you who are the God of Israel, rouse yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to wicked traitors.[c] 6 They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city. 7 See what they spew from their mouths— the words from their lips are sharp as swords, and they think, “Who can hear us?” 8 But you laugh at them, Lord; you scoff at all those nations. 9 You are my strength, I watch for you; you, God, are my fortress, 10 my God on whom I can rely. God will go before me and will let me gloat over those who slander me. 11 But do not kill them, Lord our shield,[d] or my people will forget. In your might uproot them and bring them down. 12 For the sins of their mouths, for the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride. For the curses and lies they utter, 13 consume them in your wrath, consume them till they are no more. Then it will be known to the ends of the earth that God rules over Jacob. 14 They return at evening, snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city. 15 They wander about for food and howl if not satisfied. 16 But I will sing of your strength, in

the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. 17 You are my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely.

Psalm 59, David has a song in his soul. Now let's acknowledge the enemy. David does that.

He says in verse one he calls out, he says, Lord, deliver me. Protect me, deliver me, save me. He shows us that the enemy has a strategy. I don't know who your enemy is today. My enemy right now is that clock on the back wall. I can just tell you that right now. You cast a look over your shoulder and it says three minutes, I want to tell you you've been deceived, alright, I have more time than three minutes. I don't know who's in charge of the clock this morning, but I need some more time. All right. I don't know who your enemy is. I don't know if it's physical, I don't know if it's emotional. I don't know if you're enemy's spiritual. We face opposition. We find that life comes against us and we learned from scripture that we have an enemy that comes to kill, steal and destroy and David acknowledges that the enemy has strategy. We need to be alert to this. We don't need to be caught off guard and just think we can go through the motions in our days and everything will just turn out right. You need to understand as a child of God, when you wake in the morning, that someone's coming after you. And the decisions you make and the choices you make and the things that you pursue, the enemy is active, wanting to ruin your witness, wanting to steal your joy, wanting to take your life.

King David paints a picture of the enemy who lies in wait, who stirs up strife. Who runs and makes ready. That's a picture of lining up against you. That is a picture of being out in front of you, waiting for you to walk into that trap. The strategy of the enemy according to this Psalm is that the enemy plots evil and the picture of the enemy in this psalm is that the enemy returns over and over and over again. He paints a picture of the enemy as a dog. Now for us in our culture, we view dogs as man's best friend. We celebrate our dogs. We're in a culture right now where every one of us, not y'all, but everyone of us, we're proud of our dog. But in their culture, in that day, you will be hard pressed to find any positive reference to a dog.

It was used by the Jewish people to refer to the Gentiles. It was used as a reference to those that would speak false truth. Here it is a picture of the enemy and it says that the dogs, this enemy, come howling, prowling and bellowing. And there's this strategy of just coming back again and again and again just continuing to bark their attacks. The word there in verse seven there they are bellowing with their mouth's and maybe some translations it's meant to take a little bit of the crudeness out of it because the Hebrew word there is actually translated in places as belching. It is a picture of howling like dogs prowling about the city. There they are belching with their mouths. Just this crude sound of the enemy to paint a picture of the attack and the plotting and the striving of the enemy to destroy and harass a life.

Then David takes inventory of his life. He does it in verse three and four, he says, "For no transgression or sin of mine, oh Lord, for no fault of mine, they run and make ready." Here's what David's doing. He's looking at his life. He said, I've searched my heart and what's happening to me right now, I cannot find that I've caused that. The backdrop of this is King Saul. These events that happened in the background of Psalm 59, he [David] was not king yet. Saul

was king and Saul had become consumed with jealousy toward David. And the people would sing and shout and they would talk about how good King Saul was, but they would follow it up with how much greater David was. This had caused king Saul to become enraged, and he would go through these fits where at one moment David would be soothing him with his harp and the next moment King Saul would be throwing his spear at him. And in this setting of this Psalm, Saul had sent his soldiers. He had sent his men out to find David and kill him. And on this particular night, David was in his home with his wife, Michael, who happened to be Saul's daughter. And when Michael heard that men were coming to kill David, they set a ruse. They went to the bedroom and they took a graven image, image of a god, and they laid it in the covers of the bed and they pulled the covers up over that graven image. And then they took the, they took the wool of a goat, the hair of a goat, and they spread it around on the pillows so that it would look like David was lying in the bed. And when the men came to kill David, Michael said he's sick. And they were bothered by that. And so they went back to Saul and told him that David was sick and Saul was so enraged, he said, "go get him in his bed and bring him to me on his bed and kill him" They go back to the home and by this time David had escaped and he was free. The trick had worked by Michael.

Well, when David looks at this and he sees this pursuit in his life, he's like, Saul is pursuing me and I haven't attacked Saul, I haven't belittled Saul. I've done nothing to demean his name, but yet the enemy's coming after me. Some of you may feel like that today when you face some emotional enemy, some spiritual enemies, some physical enemy where you would look and say, I've checked, I don't know where I'm wrong. I've asked the spirit of God to search me and try me and see if there's any unclean thing in me like David had written other places. It's a good lesson for us to learn that we can be in that position and the enemy still comes ferociously for us. But at the same time I'd ask you to do the checking. Do the inventory. Look at your life and say, Lord, is that true? Is there something I need to confess? Is there something I need to repent of? Is there something I need to deal with, that as a result of, it's bringing in about this enemy in my life?

Some of you may battle day after day after day with worry and you look at your life and you say, I don't know. I can't find any source for this. But you may look at your life and realize that the things that you're watching or the things you're reading, the things that you're eating or drinking, the places you're going, may be the very things that are causing you to deal with the enemy and the way that you're having to confront the enemy. Do the inventory and see what needs to be dealt with there. The third piece of this psalm is a recognition of who God is. King David calls for God's attention. Look at verse eight he says, "But you, oh Lord, laugh at them. You hold all the nations in derision." Just prior to that, verse four and five he says, "Awake, come to meet me, arouse yourself to punish all the nations." By verse eight he gives the reaction of God to the enemy is to laugh. Don't take this as a lack of compassion by God. God doesn't laugh at your circumstances. Please hear that God doesn't laugh at your circumstances. God laughs at your enemy and his laughter is not a sign of uncaring. His laughter is a measure of the battle. It's a picture of how big he is and how strong he is compared to our enemy. Don't give Satan the credit of being equal with God. The New Testament has given us that truth, that greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. And our God is strong and mighty and big and the enemy is real, but in the presence of God, it creates a sense of laughter because of who He is and who the enemy is.

David writes about God, he strings these attributes together. In about six different ways, he describes who God is. He says, God, you're strong. He identifies him and says, "Oh, my strength." Where do you find your strength?

Do you find your strength in your education? Do you find your strength in your training? Do you find your strength in your experience, in your age? David writes, "Here's where my strength is. It's in you, Lord." It's such a great reminder to us that when we face battles, when we face enemies of life, that our first recourse needs to be to go to God and not to our own strength and not our own ability.

He identifies God as strong. He identifies God as a fortress. He says, "For you, Oh God, are my fortress", as a picture of being in a safe place. He identifies God as being one of steadfast love. Hear that. His love endures forever. Steadfast love. He stays with you, as we sang earlier, you are never alone. Verse 11 identifies God as a shield. Verse 13 identifies God as the one who rules over Jacob. It is a picture of sovereignty. David is saying, God is sovereign, He is a ruler. And then verse 16 identifies God as our refuge. Think today with me about who God is in your life as you face an enemy and it's very likely in the ways that the enemy attacks you there is an opposing attribute of who God is. The enemy makes you feel alone. God is omnipresent. The enemy makes you feel like you can't trust anyone. God is faithful. The enemy makes you feel like you're weak and defeated. God is strong. Again and again and again, His attributes become a match for the enemy and stronger than the enemy.

The fourth part of this psalm is a strategy of victory over the enemy and David takes two actions in this psalm against the enemy. Now notice when you read through the Psalm, you don't find David's saying, these men are coming, therefore I must sharpen my spear. It doesn't say I must practice my war strategy. He doesn't say anything about physical warfare. His first reaction, two things he does, he says, I will watch for you. I will watch for you. That's first, look in verse nine, "Oh my strength. I will watch for you, for you, oh God, are my fortress." He's saying, God, I'm going to listen. I'm going to give this battle to you and watch you work. I will watch for you to work.

Early this morning from a friend in our church, I received a text that said, "Pastor Carlos, I just want to remind you today as you preach, that we fight from a winning position." Two things encourage me about that. One was, is that a few weeks ago I preached that in a sermon. The second thing is that a church member would preach right back to me.

We fight from a winning position. You see, the enemy wants to just keep bringing things up and keep bringing things up and keep coming back and keep plotting evil. We watch God work and let him let him work. My life verse has been Proverbs 16:32. It says, "Better as a patient man than a warrior" and it was a verse that God gave me early on. In pastoring it was like there were so many things I just want to go grab a hold of and fix it myself, and guys, just wait. Just wait. As you fight the enemy I want to encourage you to watch for God to work, to let him work. The second thing that King David does is that he sings. He says, I will watch for you, and then he says, I will sing. Verse 16, "But I will sing of your strength." He changes and it almost sounds exactly the same, verse 9 and 10 as verse 16 and 17 but the one phrase that's

different is this, "oh my strength, I will watch for you." And then secondly, "I will sing of your strength. I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning."

Then verse 17, "Oh my strength. I will sing praises to you." Have you thought about that the strategy for you against the enemy is for your heart to have a song. For you to be able to sing the truth of who God is and to sing the praises to God of what he can do and what he has done and what he will do. And King David fights this battle in this way. When he says he will sing, there are some characteristics about his singing. First of all he says, I will sing, then he says, I will sing aloud. Then he says, I will sing aloud in the morning, and then he says, I will sing praises. And in a very practical way, I'm coming to you this morning. I'm saying with your enemies, physical, emotional, spiritual, they're really all spiritual, and the battles that you face, that what we need in our heart and our soul is a song for the morning spoken out loud about the praises of God. Sing, sing aloud.

You can write your own songs, you can find you a quiet place where you don't want anybody hearing. I don't know all that God's doing in this. I know it's real in my life that for the past few months, as I've prayed, the prayers that I pray aloud I see God answer more specifically, more clearly, more abundantly and faster. I know there are times where we have our thought prayers. We're just thinking prayers in our mind and we're praying silently in here, but if those prayers were to just come out loud before God and do exactly what the psalmist says, "Lord, I'm crying aloud to you." God works. And I see this in the Psalm, he could have left it out, but He said, "I will sing aloud." Let your praises ring aloud to the Lord. Sing aloud. And he says in the morning, I think it's so significant because he speaks twice in here of how the enemy prowls in the evening. You ever find yourself waking up and almost from the beginning of the day having to fight for victory. David shows us the way to approach the new day. Sing aloud in the morning. Maybe it's the reading of a Psalm, maybe it's the song you've memorized in your heart and it tells the truth of the Lord. He says, I'll sing aloud in the morning praises. Two areas of God, two attributes of God that he acknowledges here is that he sings of God as his fortress and his refuge. When he sings of God being his fortress, he's speaking of God being his high place. And when he sings of God being his refuge, he's speaking of God as being his hiding place. And can you think of anything more that we need in a battle against the enemy than a high place and a hiding place and that's what God is. This word fortress literally means to place something in a high place where it cannot be reached. Think about that in light of your life today when the enemy comes to try to pick you off, that as you acknowledge that God is your fortress, that you can hide yourself in the cleft of the rock. You can hide yourself in Him, that he'll put you in a high place that you cannot be reached by the enemy. In our house growing up, five kids, and I remember the scene on occasion where you walk into the den or walk into some part of the house and everything that was breakable was now on the fourth and fifth shelf in the house. Nothing down low anymore. It looked like a deer line in a field. You know, everything had just been eaten up to a certain height. I remember holding a broken piece of pottery one time saying something like, this is why we can't have nice things in our house.

David is saying, you know what God will do, he'll move you to a high place where you can't be touched by the enemy. That's a good chance to say amen right here. A refuge, a hiding place. God would take you in the midst of the storm of life, in the attack of the enemy, and the enemy can't get to you cause God's just hitting you with who he is.

It's worth singing about. This morning, I want to ask our band to come and what I want to give us today as a song to leave with. Maybe psalm 59 will lodge in your heart. Maybe the song we sing here at the end will just keep coming up all week long. We have an enemy, but we have a great God. Sing aloud in the morning the praises of God.