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Main idea: David wants clarity of God's will for him in the here and now—no esoteric theorems or hidden meanings or “feel good” analogies; he wants to know now what to do. He asks God to lead him: *which way do I go? What do I do? What shall I say?* and so forth—what we have all cried to God for at one time or another.

David was dealing with people of ill intent, gossip-mongers, people of evil approach who were waylaying and manipulating him, flattering king Saul while telling falsehoods about David to get him fired from his court position or even killed. David wants the tables turned and for them to get what they are plotting for him. He wants their own words to be their own trap, to be caught in their lies so he will be exonerated. Because they are rebelling against God and his righteous people, David asks God to remove them from his life so they will not cause trouble for others as well. Then, the passionate appeals turn to worship, as he extols God and gives thanks for the ability to know Him and take refuge in Him. He also asks for God's continued protection and Lordship and expresses joy for being in God. This Psalm closes with a benediction for God to bless His godly and give them His protection and empowerment.

Contexts and Background:

People were gossiping and slandering David—perhaps when he was in King Saul's court playing the harp and also when he was gaining military victories. People of bad character were jealous and were saying "David was up to no good" to make themselves look good or to flatter a jealous Saul. These advisers of Saul may have even convinced him that David was trying to steal the throne, feeding King Saul's insane jealousy. This was wickedness. And, it happens today. Even in church, gossip and slander abound. The Bible tells us God hated this for David and hates it when we do this to one another or when people of the world do this to His precious Church. God hates wicked speech in any form, so do not do it; do not spread it—period! If you do, you are wicked—pure and simple (1 Sam., chaps 18-20)!

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

Verse 8: David continues his lament and pleads for God to intervene in his situation. David worships and seeks after God and His direction to lead him down the right path so he will not fail in character or in battle. At the same time, David takes measures to act in wisdom with faith and reason.

- *Lead me.* This is in the form of being a sheep with God as the caring Shepherd who leads His own through the difficulties and enticements of the world to His greener pastures (Psalm 23).
- *Your righteousness.* Here meaning the seeking of God's presence, compassion, and understanding. Because of the relationship of grace we have and that David had with God, we can go into His presence. It is the Lord's presence that guides us in our healthy relationship with Him. The more we know of Him and His principles, the better decisions and discernment we will make and have (Psalm 4:1; 1 Cor. 1:30).
- *Because of my enemies.* These are evil people who dare to challenge God's divine order and have little to no regard for truth and righteousness. This Psalm is also a prayer, and David shows that it is not only OK, it is vital that we go to God first to help overcome obstacles and evil people (Psalm 27:11).

- *Make straight.* Meaning to ask God to help one be righteous. It is the realization, *I can't do this on my own; I need God's intervention and continual guidance.* This is the mark of true discipleship, the result of a God-impacted life, following Him, His precepts, and plan and seeking His purpose for our lives. God is shown as One Who protects His people; therefore, we can and must be dependent upon Him, yet still be responsible for our response to His grace and opportunities. We are to walk God's Way; this is hard to see at times, and somehow, even when one's life is taken, we are safe in Him for eternity (Psalm 25:4; 27:11; 119:1-5, 26-33; 27:11; 139:24; 143:8-10).
- *Your way.* Referring to God's will as a path of safety, as there is no safer place in the universe—no better plan—than to be in His will, no matter what the outcome. This is done as we trust and obey.

Sitting and waiting for your ship to come in while you do nothing is foolish. Even when we trust in God, God wants us to get up, and by adhering to His principles and call with wisdom and Fruit, do something ourselves.

Verses 9-10: Sin produces its own consequences. If you sleep around, you may get a disease; if you drive fast, you may get a ticket. If you try to destroy someone who is innocent, his or her innocence will be found out and you will be the one who is ruined. We are to seek His protection as we also seek to be wise and not sin. We fail when we do nothing or act in sin. When we do the things of God, we enjoy contentment; when we do not, we will be discouraged and depressed.

- *Word from their mouth.* The tongue is an offensive weapon for hostile striking and just as lethal as a sword (Psalm 10:7; 12; 17; 25; 27-28; 31; 35; 41; 52; 54-57; 59; 64:3-4; 63-64; 71; 86; 109; 140-141; Rom. 3:13).
- *Filled with destruction.* This is a character description of the heart of people who are worldly, self-seeking, and evil. They hate to be convicted as they hate truth and will do all they can to disrupt goodness and order even to the point of being self-destructive. They can even rationalize that terror and wickedness are good and beneficial in forwarding their agenda, and will claim they are the ones in the right and that good people are really the ones who are evil. One's sinful action will cause natural consequences and then God's judgment.
- *Open grave.* Meaning the cost of hatred and discord; one's own words and actions are the means for punishment. Here our words of malice, hatred, greed, lies, and deceit will dig one's own grave. Referring to Judgment, in context, one's evil speech will be held to account; it will backfire as gossip usually does, ruining the person's reputation who spreads it and will cause one to be held to account by God (Deut. 25:1; Psalm 49:14).
- *Speak deceit.* From the heart of rebellion comes evil, which will produce words of malice and chaos. Our rebellion against God puts us at odds with God and godliness and sows destruction to society.
- *Declare them guilty.* All people have been "affected" by sin and thus, guilty before God. Here, it refers to their willfully pursuing wickedness and chaos and thus they deserve a more severe sentence of judgment. Thus, David prays for God's justice—for them to be removed from society so their malevolence does not continue to hurt others and disrespect God. We must be careful that when we pray this prayer, our intentions are pure and true and we are not the ones scheming, or we will be the ones who are judged (1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 53:1-3; 130:3;

143:2; Prov. 20:9; Eccles. 7:20; Matt. 7:1-5; Rom. 3:9-20; 1 Cor. 15:42-49; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:10).

- *Their intrigues be their downfall/fall by their own counsels.* Asking God to punish those who persecute you is good and what He wants. This is not seeking revenge; rather, it is an appeal to God to put right the wrongs committed according to His judicial procedures and promises. Make sure that they are truly doing evil, and it is not a misunderstanding or a pride and feelings-being-hurt thing. If the other person is a Christian, he or she is His child too; and if they are not, they need to be, so tread carefully in seeking judgment (Deut 25:1-3; 32:35; Prov. 20:22; Jer. 15:15; Matt. 5:39, 44; Rom. 12:19)!

Verses 11-12: David seeks God's protection, while at the same time is making plans to fight or flight. He does not just do anything; his trust in God is firm and he shows his joy and contentment. He realizes that times of suffering are also times for growth and learning that builds up our faith and future.

- *Take refuge.* Referring to protection, God is being compared to a fort, a safe haven. God is the One we can come to; the sinful one who seeks evil has no place to go (Psalm 91:4).
- *Be glad... sing for joy.* Because our God is One of Justice, we should rejoice; we can be assured that evil people who seem to get away with it now will not!
- *Your name.* This refers to the character of God, and that He is approachable and He protects (Ex. 3:14-15; 34:6-7; Duet. 12:5, 11; 2 Sam. 7:13; Psalm 20:1; 69:36; Prov. 18:10).
- *Shield.* God is being compared to a soldier's shield, or like a bodyguard. God protects His people and deals graciously with them (Psalm 20:1-7; 33:21; 54:1; Prov. 18:10).

David ends up not fighting Saul or his men; rather, he flees, allowing God to intervene when the opportunities arise. So his trust was in God for his care in his situation. When we trust in Christ during tough times, it not only builds our character, it helps us have a deeper faith, a deeper love for God and others, and even to enjoy more confidence and joy in life!

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Do you realize that God is concerned with the things that concern you? Thus, we need to take this opportunity to be led right, to see His precepts and direction and go the way that is best. Allow God to lead you and not your pride. Communicate with Him about your enemies and circumstances so you will know what to do. People want to destroy those who love and honor God; they hate Him and His people. But our God is bigger and greater than anything they can conceive of or deliver to us. We are safe in Him. God will judge them by their own actions, so we can take refuge in Him. We can praise God and be filled with joy and contentment for doing so. God will bless those who put Him first and love Him and His precepts. So, what can I do to pursue the heart of God and have Him guide me? Focus on Christ and He will see you through it. Will your focus be in people—who they are, what they did, what they may do—or upon God who will carry you and see you through? God is in absolute control—not us, not others. Therefore, we can trust Him (Phil 1:12-18; 3:1; 4:4)!

Christian Life Principle: Allow Christ's lead in your life; if not, sin will move on it. Sin produces its own consequences. If you sleep around, you may get a disease; if you drive fast, you may get a ticket. When we do the things of God, we enjoy contentment; when we do not, we will be discouraged and depressed (Rom. 6:23).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What is the first thing you do when something goes wrong?
2. How do you show a passionate relationship with God? What does this mean? How do you feel that God hears us and has compassion on us? How does this strengthen your faith and outlook?
3. God is in control! So, what gets in your way from seeing and feeling this? How does this passage tell us how a Christian can handle adversity, distress, and uncertainty?
4. Why is it foolish for you to sit and wait for your ship to come in while you do nothing? How does your learning and growth in times of suffering and in tough situations help you trust in God?
5. When life is falling apart, how can this Psalm help you? What do you need to learn about not allowing fear or what others may do or not do affect you?
6. How has God's will been a path of safety for you? If it hasn't, how can you see that there is no safer place in the universe—no better plan than to be in His will for you?
7. What do trust and obedience mean to you? Why are people of bad character jealous of people who are of good character? How have you experienced this?
8. How does it make you feel that God hates wicked speech in any form? How can you avoid doing it or spreading it? Do you understand that if you do, you are acting wicked?
9. We do not know what the future holds for us, but God does. How does this fact help you wait, and with hope look for what He will do?
10. What can you do so that your past pains or present tendencies will not get in the way of what is really important?
11. What can a Church do to stop the gossip and slander from happening? What happens when church leadership ignores it?
12. What can you do to let God lead you rather than your pride? How would your communing with Him about your situations and fears help?