BibleProject

Psalms 3-8 E3: Psalm 5: David Pleads His Case

Official Transcript

Speakers

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Credits read by audience members: Dean, Karina, and BibleProject team member Marco

[Series Recap and Overview of Psalm 5 (0:00 – 15:21)]

[BibleProject theme song, “Defender” by TENTS]

Jon: Welcome to BibleProject podcast. We’re in a short series looking at a bundle of Psalms that all work together, Psalms 3 through 8. As we read these Psalms, we keep in mind the story of David who’s on the run from his son Absalom who’s staged a military coup against him. This is explicitly the heading of Psalm 3, but through literary connections, we’re invited to see that this entire bundle of Psalms live in that story world. In Psalm 3 and 4, David is full of hope about his coming vindication and rescue. But Psalm 5 takes a turn. It’s the morning, and David has a different tone.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] Some moments in a crisis, you trust. Other moments in a crisis, you feel like you’re not sure if God’s going to be on your side. So how do you talk to God when you are struggling to trust that he’s with you?

Jon: In the ancient world, kings and judges would set up near the city gate in the morning to hear disputes from people and administer justice. And David, in this Psalm, is approaching God like such a judge.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] David is saying, “You are my king. I’m going to come to you in the morning, prepare my case, and you’re going to hear from me.” It’s sort of like David’s legal case, and it unfolds kind of like an argument.

Jon: In his argument, his case has three parts. First, he reminds God of God’s own character. “You’re not a God who delights in wickedness and evil behavior.”

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] Ancient Israel really locked in on this idea: There’s one supreme God and source of all beings, and that one is the very essence of goodness and justice. That’s a foundational belief in the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Second, David reminds God about their relationship.

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] “I’m somebody who you made a loyal-love promise to. And because of your abundant loyal-love, I know I’m going to reenter your house and bow down, worship you in your temple.”

Jon: Third, David calls out his enemies. He says their words are crooked, their insides are filled with death, their talk is smoothly deceptive. And David petitions God to judge his enemies and cast them out. And so is this a model for how we should pray?

Tim: [audio clips from the episode below] Any prayer that I pray to God about “Bring justice on my enemies,” I have to also do the flip and be like, “*But I’ve also been the enemy to other people*.” And so really, in asking God to bring justice on somebody, I’m asking God to sort out this whole, complicated human mess. And I’m a part of it.

Jon: Today, Tim Mackie and I talk about the case that David makes before God in Psalm 5. And if you want to follow along with us in this Psalm, Tim’s translation is linked in the show notes. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.

[Musical break: BibleProject theme song, “Defender” by TENTS (2:49 – 2:55)]

Jon: Hey, Tim.

Tim: Hey, Jon.

Jon: We’re going to read Psalm 5.

Tim: Mhm. We are going to.

Jon: Great.

Tim: What's going to happen? [laughs]

Jon: [chuckles] Actually, I don't know. [chuckles] But we will read Psalm 5.

Tim: We're going to read Psalm 5, and then whatever happens is going to happen. We're in a series that will be as long as it needs to be, slowly going through the Psalms.

Jon: Yeah, that's right.

Tim: Mhm. But going through in bundles that are—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: In other words, we're going to try and meditate together on groups of Psalms—

[BibleProject theme song, "Defender" by TENTS, fades out]

Tim: —that I think are designed to be connected together with how the scroll of the Psalms is put together.

Jon: Yeah. So we're in a bundle of Psalms 3 through 8.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Which is actually the first—Psalms 1 through 8 is a bundle—

Tim: [chuckles] Yeah.

Jon: —and we're looking at just 3 through 8, which is part of that bundle.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And that itself is part of an even *bigger* bundle that goes from, you know, Psalms 3 all the way forward to 18.

Jon: Okay, we're not getting there in this series.

Tim: Later. We'll get there later.

Jon: We'll get there later. [laughs]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: All right. So we'll address that later. But right now, we're in Psalms 3 through 8. We've seen that 3 introduces us to: This is a Psalm "of David." "*Le*David."

Tim: [chuckles] "To," "for," "about," or "by" David. [laughs]

Jon: [Tim agrees throughout] Yeah. And it's hyperlinked to the story of David being, like, ousted from Jerusalem, his son trying to take over as king. He's now out in the hills of Gilead. He, the next day, is going to have to battle his son. So he's out on the run. He's publicly shamed. He is preparing his crew for the battle. And that's the hyperlink for Psalm 3. But then we also appreciated that that story world continues on into Psalm 4—

Tim: Exactly. Yeah.

Jon: —where David really establishes his trust in Yahweh and that he will be vindicated. Do we need to say more about Psalm 3 and 4 to get into Psalm 5? What else should we be thinking about?

Tim: [Jon backchannels throughout] Yeah, Psalm 5 is also going to connect to this moment that registered the two-day extent of this drama with Absalom's rebellion. So in the story, 2 Samuel 16 to 18, the rebellion and his exile is on day one. Then there's a night. Then he wakes up, we're told, at sunrise the next morning, and then the battle unfolds. And his quote unquote "victory"—you know, because his son's defeated and the military coup is squashed, but his son is killed in the battle, which breaks his heart. It's a disaster. So Psalm 5 is located in the morning of day two.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: So Psalms 3 and 4 were all about going to bed and trusting that "I'll wake up tomorrow" and that "You're going to be with me."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Psalm 5 registers, like—

Jon: It's morning?

Tim: It's morning time. And so he went to bed praying—David went to bed praying, trusting God. Psalm 5 is then about him waking up.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: And maybe—I think the overall tone of this poem is—this is going to be David's attempt to persuade God to be on his side. [chuckles]

Jon: Oh.

Tim: This is a poem of persuasion.

Jon: Hmm. Which is weird because the last Psalm was David, kind of—

Tim: Mmm. Mhm. Pretty confident.

Jon: [laughs] Yeah.

Tim: Like, "*You're with me, God, and I know it*."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And "*Hey, you bad guys who are running me out of town, you should know that God's on my side*."

[Jon and Tim chuckle]

Jon: Yeah. [chuckles]

Tim: That's, yeah, not quite the tone. Psalm 5 is a—

Jon: Not the same swagger?

Tim: No, Psalm 5 is a "*Hey God, you should listen to me because here I am in the morning, and you're going to hear from me right now.*" That's basically part one. [laughs]

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: [laughs] That's verses 1 to 3. Then the center of the poem is verses 4 through 10. And basically, the main point here is "*Hey God, I know that you're not a God who appreciates treachery and murder and, just, wickedness in general, right?"*

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: "*And well, you did say that you would lead me as your chosen one to, like, be your person. So probably you should treat my enemies as the guilty ones in this scenario, right?*"

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: [chuckles] That's the middle of the poem. It's persuasion.

Jon: Okay. Hmm.

Tim: And then at the end, then he's like, *"Okay, if you do that, God, then we're going to have a party and celebrate your name when you save us."* That's the shape of Psalm 5.

Jon: Hmm. Okay.

Tim: Mhm. "*Listen to me, I got something to say. Here's what I have to say: You should defeat the bad guys.* [laughs] *And if you do*"—part three—"*we'll have a party afterwards*."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's a poem of persuasion.

Jon: Interesting.

Tim: And remember, I think the larger frame of the Psalms is: We're getting into the inner life of God's anointed one, and through their highs and their lows, their failures and successes—some moments in a crisis, you trust. Other moments in a crisis—

Jon: You plead?

Tim: —you feel like you're not sure if God's going to be on your side. So how do you talk to God in a way when you are struggling to trust that he's with you? And I think Psalm 5 gives us a window into that.

Jon: Hmm. Interesting.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: If this is kind of this—you know, a bundle, and we're in the, like, narrative day and then night and then day of David on the outs, it is a little jarring for the first two poems to be like, "*I trust*."

Tim: Yeah, "*You're with me*."

Jon: Just full-on trust. "*I'm going to sleep well*."

[Tim laughs]

Jon: And he wakes up—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: —and he's like, "*All right, is this for real?*" [chuckles]

Tim: Yeah, yeah.

Jon: [laughs] "*Is this really going to happen?*"

Tim: Yeah. But actually, that's pretty realistic, though.

Jon: [chuckles] That's—that's true. That is.

Tim: Who doesn't know that?

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: Like, in any relationship where you trust a person, and sometimes you still feel vulnerable because trusting is vulnerable, isn't it?

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So this Psalm gives room for—mmm, what's the—what's what the dad with the sick child says to Jesus? Like, "I believe."

Jon: Mmm. “Help my unbelief.”

Tim: “Help my unbelief.” That’s a way to think about Psalm 5.

Jon: Hmm. Okay.

Tim: Should we read it? Let’s just do a reading.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It’s longer than any of the ones that have come before.

Jon: Yeah, it is.

Tim: Mhm. So I’ll let you perform a reading.

Jon: Okay. “For the leader; with the flutes. A psalm of David. [pause] To my words give ear, Yahweh. Discern my groaning, pay attention to the voice of my cry-for-help, my king and my Elohim, for to you I pray. Yahweh, in the morning you will hear my voice; in the morning I get ready for you and I will watch. For you-yourself are not an Elohim who delights in wickedness; badness can not reside with you; the crazy-arrogant do not stand before your eyes. You hate all doers of disaster, you bring to ruin speakers of lies. A man of bloodshed and deception Yahweh detests. But me-myself, in your abundant loyal-love, I will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in fear of you. Yahweh, lead me in your righteousness because of my enemies; make straight before me your way. For there is not anything upright in his mouth; their inside is destruction; an open grave is their throat; with their tongue they make smooth. Treat them as guilty, Elohim; let them fall because of their plans. Because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you. But let them rejoice, all who take refuge in you for an age, let them shout for joy, for you spread protection over them; so let them celebrate in you, those who love your name. For you yourself bless the righteous, Yahweh, like a shield you surround him with favor.” [pause] Cool.

Tim: [inhales] Totally. [chuckles] So we talked about the three parts of the poem, then you just gave a reading of the poem. As always, what stuck out on that reading?

Jon: I think that one thing I’m noticing is that because we’re bundling these together and I’m still in this story world of David on the run, it does really help me read this Psalm.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, yes.

Jon: Like I don’t feel lost or just feel, like—kind of like, “*Huh? What? What’s going on?*” It—the narrative frames it for me in a way.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. That’s great.

Jon: That's helpful.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: [Tim backchannels throughout] So when he talks about the evildoers, like, I could think of who he's referring to. When he talks about, like, "I'm going to enter the house and bow down in the temple," like, it feels much more rich about him, like, reentering—

Tim: *"I'm going to get to go back."*

Jon: *"I get to go back.*"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "*I get to go home.*"

Tim: Yeah, exactly.

Jon: So that's, I think, just nice. Just right off the bat, it's just nice that the way we've been doing this really helps me. But yeah, so you drew attention to: In the middle, it's just David being like, "*Okay, God, this is how you roll, right? You don't like wickedness and arrogance and people who do disastrous stuff.*"

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: Like: "*We're on the same page, right?*" [laughs]

Tim: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah, right. It's persuasion.

Jon: And—it's persuasion.

Tim: It is. It's rhetoric. Well—

Jon: Hmm. Or is it just him [exhales] just retelling that to himself so he doesn't get distracted? Is it—is he persuading himself or is he persuading God?

Tim: Okay, that's a good—that's a good—yeah. The middle of the poem, which is in verses 4 through 10, begins by saying—with David making a statement about God. Like: "Hey, you're not the kind of God who, like, delights in evil, are you? Right? That's not who you are. Here's something I know about you. Nothing that's bad can make its home with you, reside with you. The arrogant can't stand before you"—right? He starts making all these statements about God's posture towards violence and deception and evil.

Jon: Yeah. You're supplying the "*are you,"* though. The: [questioning tone] "*Are you?*"

Tim: No. I'm saying, "*You are* . . ." David is saying to God: "This is who you are."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So: “If that’s who you are”—

Jon: Yes.

Tim: Then verse 7 shifts: “Now here’s who I am.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “I am somebody who is going to go back to your temple because of who you are, because of your loyal-love.”

Jon: Right.

Tim: So: “Here’s who you are. Here’s who I am.” So then the second half of the middle, verses 8 through 10, then turns back into requests. “God, lead me in your righteousness. Listen, the bad guys are exactly the kinds of people who are everything that you’re against. Didn’t we already establish that?”

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: “So if they are what you are against, then you should”—verse 10—“treat them as guilty, cast them out.” So that whole movement of thought: “Here’s who you are. Here’s who I am.” [pause] “So here’s who my enemies are.”

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: “So here’s what you should do to them.”

[“Church Pews” by Lofi Sunday feat. Oly.Lo and WISDM fades in]

Jon: Mhm. Yeah.

Tim: That’s—that’s basically—

Jon: And you’re saying: Why would you be telling this to God— [exhales] you’re saying there’s a persuasive element to it?

Tim: Ah, yes. Okay. Let’s go back to part one.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: This is cool.

[Musical break: “Church Pews” by Lofi Sunday feat. Oly.Lo and WISDM (14:51 – 15:21)]

[David Stands Before His King and Judge (15:21 – 29:20)]

Tim: So verses 1 through 3 are part one of the poem. And it begins with—there’s seven verbs in this opening part.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: Of course there are. “To my words give ear, Yahweh, discern my groaning . . .” That’s a cool little symmetry.

[“Church Pews” by Lofi Sunday feat. Oly.Lo and WISDM fades out]

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: “To my words, [pause] give ear. Discern [pause] my groaning.” It’s a nice little chiasm.

Jon: Hmm. Okay.

Tim: The verbs are in the middle.

Jon: “*My words are groaning, and you’re going to discern with your ear*.”

Tim: Yep, that’s right.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yeah. “. . . pay attention to my cry for help, my king and my Elohim, for to you I direct my prayer.” Mmm. That’s interesting. “My king.” We’re calling God “my king.”

Jon: Oh. Yeah.

Tim: But David’s a king.

Jon: Yeah, I guess I’ve gotten used to that, but this is the first time in this bundle that David’s referred to God as king.

Tim: It's really interesting. God is not called "*my* king" very often.

Jon: Oh, it's not?

Tim: Mhm. I'll show you some examples. So like, it does happen, but my point is that—

Jon: It's not common.

Tim: It's pulled out for a specific use.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: So God is called "my king" four times in the Psalms, and then a fifth time he's called "our king" in Psalm 89.

Jon: Oh. Okay.

Tim: But this is the only time in the poems of David where he says, "my king." All the others are poems connected to other people. God is called "king," just "king," in the Psalms, lots of times.

Jon: But still, not, like, too many, right?

Tim: Yeah, not too many. It's about, like, eight times. So here's what I wanted to say is: It must mean something here. Why is David calling God "my king"?

Jon: Right. Especially in light of the fact that the goal here is for David to become king.

Tim: Yeah, his kingship is what's in question because of Absalom's rebellion, for sure. Also, this little line, "my king and my God," is the center of the center of part one of the poem here.

Jon: Ohhh. Okay.

Tim: [Jon backchannels throughout] So everything around it is basically "Yahweh, listen. Pay attention. You're going to hear from me." And at the center is "my king." And then verse 3 is about how: "Yahweh, in the morning, you're going to hear from me. In the morning, I'm going to get ready for you, prepare for you, and I will watch." What's this language about? This is so interesting. So this word "prepare" or "get ready," it's the Hebrew verb *'arakh*. It's used of what the priests do with the wood and the animal when they set—arrange the altar.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Right? In the morning and evening sacrifice, they're preparing—

Jon: Okay, the sacrifice.

Tim: The sacrifice, yes. But then this word “prepare” is also used a number of times about preparing a legal argument when you go step before a judge.

Jon: Mmm. It does have that feeling of like: “*May I enter the courtroom and address you, judge?*”—

Tim: Yes. Yep.

Jon: —kind of feel.

Tim: Yeah, this verb appears a couple times in Job, Job 13 and Job 23, to talk about how: “I’m going to prepare my case and go to God and tell him why he needs to answer me.”

Jon: Ahhh. Mmm.

Tim: And so then the idea of “I’m going to watch” means “I’m going to prepare my case. I’m going to go stand before somebody and then wait for them to respond.” And this is in the morning.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah.

Tim: So I think—

Jon: But why is that important that it’s in the morning?

Tim: Ah, because it’s in the morning that people would gather at the city gates to meet with the king of the city, and the king would hear arguments and disputes.

Jon: Oh. A *king* would come out and listen to disputes?

Tim: [excited] Yes. Yeah, check this out.

Jon: Really?

Tim: Jeremiah chapter 21, verse 11. This is what God says to the house of Judah. “Hear the word of Yahweh, O house of David. This is what Yahweh says, ‘You should bring about justice in the morning—justice—and deliver the one who has been seized from the hand of the oppressor.’” So justice is for the morning.

Jon: Hmm. Oh, interesting.

Tim: Mhm. 2 Samuel 15:2—and this is the hyperlink that actually really got me.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: “*How is it that this whole thing with Absalom got started?*”

Jon: Okay. [chuckles]

Tim: “Absalom”—2 Samuel 15, verse 2—“the son of David, he would get up early in the morning and stand beside the road at the city gate. And anybody who had”—

Jon: And this is where you would do these kind of hearings?

Tim: Yes. Anybody bringing a legal dispute to bring it before the king for justice, Absalom would call to him and say, “*Hey, hey, where are you coming from?*” And the person would say, “*Oh, you know, I’m an Israelite*.” And he would say, “*Sorry, the king doesn’t have time for you today, but I’ll listen to you*.”

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: “*Man, I wish the king would bring justice here in Israel. What’s he doing in his palace?”* And—

Jon: And this is where he started the propaganda?

Tim: [excited] This is how he started the coup.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Was standing at the city gate in the morning—

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: —saying, “I’ll bring justice for you.”

Jon: Mmm. Oh, interesting.

Tim: Isn’t that interesting?

Jon: Wow.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: So it’s not—the king wouldn’t necessarily be there, but you would be bringing it for the king?

Tim: For the king, and—but ideally, he’s there.

Jon: Ideally, the king is there.

Tim: The king is the judge.

Jon: But the king is the ultimate judge. You got to imagine that a lot of mornings he’s got other things to do. But people are there on his behalf?

Tim: Oh, yeah, he could appoint judges or elders.

Jon: Right.

Tim: Remember, this was Moses's problem—

Jon: Right.

Tim: —that his father-in-law helped him with, because he was standing there all day hearing people's disputes.

Jon: The court hearings were in the morning.

Tim: But you start in the morning.

Jon: You start in the morning.

Tim: [laughs] Yeah, totally.

Jon: Do you only do it—is it the morning and then the afternoon we're off?

Tim: [Jon agrees throughout] I don't know. I just—there's these texts—there's a couple texts in the Hebrew Bible that talk about gathering at the city gate where the king would hear the disputes and then render justice to people.

Jon: Yeah. I love it.

Tim: Yep.

Jon: "*Let's get up, let's have a little breakfast, and then execute some justice*."

Tim: Yes.

Jon: That should be our morning routine.

Tim: So part one of Psalm 5, David is saying, "You are my king."

Jon: Mmm. "So I'm going to your court."

Tim: "And I'm going to come to you in the morning, prepare my case, and you're going to hear from me."

Jon: Mmm. And then, "I'm going to watch"?

Tim: [laughs] Yeah.

Jon: Meaning: "I'm going to wait for how you're going to respond"?

Tim: "I'm going to wait for how you're going to respond."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: Yep. And then all of a sudden, then, why the center of the poem has this persuasive—

Jon: Ohhh, I see.

Tim: "*I'm needing to persuade God*"—

Jon: Okay. [chuckles]

Tim: It's sort of like David's legal case.

Jon: Yeah, interesting.

Tim: And it unfolds kind of like an argument. It's so interesting.

Jon: Hmm. Yeah. Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. I came across this in a Psalms commentary I'm really enjoying by a German scholar named Dieter Böhler. And [chuckles] at this point, he cites a really cool kind of parallel example from a Babylonian source. [chuckles] So the famous code of King Hammurabi—

Jon: Mhm.

Tim: —by famous, I have no idea how famous it is—

Jon: Yeah, I guess in, like—

Tim: [laughs] —outside of Bible nerd circles. [laughs]

Jon: [laughs] —Bible nerd circles—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: —it's famous.

Tim: So Hammurabi was a Babylonian king from the early second millennium, I think, like 1800s BC. And he made this large pillar full of all of these laws that he has said to have given to the people, and a lot of them read similar to many laws in the Torah. But at the top of the pillar is a little carving and a story. And so it's a picture of Shamash, the god, seated on a divine throne, who's passing a scepter to Hammurabi—

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: —who has come in the morning—"Shamash" means "sun." So it's Hammurabi coming in the morning at the rise and seating of the sun to receive rulership and justice. And then the rest of the pillars saying, "*And here's what he gave me, all of this wisdom embodied in these laws*."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: It's kind of cool.

Jon: That is cool.

Tim: So it's sort of like David is putting himself in this kind of slot of "*I'm the king, but really I need to go to my king and appeal for justice*."

Jon: Mmm. Okay. I love that.

Tim: Yeah, it's a cool image.

Jon: Okay. So that's the opening.

Tim: So imagine David coming before the divine throne at the city gate for justice. That's the little—

Jon: Yeah. Yeah, the—like the divine city gate?

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. You know, actually, it's just now occurring to me in the moment: Think of—there's a couple parables about [excited] prayer—*whoa*—that Jesus teaches about—it's like going before a judge. It's one of the parables of, like, the persistent widow—

Jon: Oh.

Tim: —who keeps going to the judge saying, "Give me justice. Give me justice."

Jon: Mmm. [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: And then Jesus says, "Certainly, I tell you, that judge is going to bring justice for her just because she keeps coming before him every morning."

Jon: Oh. That's fascinating. Again, you're reading this as a prayer manual. And I love that. There's something here. Because I'm tempted to just be like, "*God knows what God knows. God's going to do what God's going to do."*

Tim: Oooh. That's good. Yeah.

Jon: "*And so I'm going to keep it short and sweet, and I'm*"—you know—"*I'm just going to just trust*."

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: And I think behind that is kind of a belief too that, like, God's a little emotionally absent maybe from me.

Tim: Mmm. Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: And—[pause] I've been thinking about this a lot actually. That—that I do believe God loves me, but I kind of also have this belief that God's just like—there's other things he could think about.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: [laughs] He's not—you know? [chuckles]

Tim: [chuckles] Yeah, yeah.

Jon: And—

Tim: Mmm.

Jon: So—hmm. This persistence of, like, "*I'm going to tell you things you know God, but* [pause] *it's going to move the needle*."

Tim: Remember that part in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is talking about prayer? And he's saying, "Listen"—like—"ask your Father for what you need. He knows what you need even before you ask."

Jon: Yeah. Right.

Tim: It's a little riddle. Because my first response—

Jon: Yeah. And he wants to give you good gifts.

Tim: My first response to hearing, "Listen, God knows what you need even before you ask," is to say: Well, why do I need to ask?

Jon: Yeah. Or the ask could just be like, "*Hey, God, you know*. *All right*." [laughs]

Tim: Yeah. Totally.

Jon: And then we're done. [chuckles]

Tim: But in Jesus's mind, God already knowing *is the reason* why you need to ask. Isn't that interesting? That's how he sets it up.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: "Ask your Father who loves to give good gifts *because he knows* what you need [chuckles] even before you ask him."

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: [laughs] That is a riddle.

Tim: It's totally the opposite of what I would think. And that's the point of that parable of the widow, the persistent widow, is: There's something about persistence. And actually, what Jesus says is, "Man, if that's how that city judge will respond to that persistent widow, how much more will your heavenly Father who's not like a stingy, hard-to-persuade judge. He loves you." So yeah, maybe it's: If I show up every day asking, I

usually do that in a scenario where I think somebody's holding out on me and I just have to keep showing up.

Jon: Oh, sure.

Tim: It's like staying on hold—

[Jon laughs]

Tim: [Jon laughs throughout] —for, like, the call to your insurance. [laughs] You know—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: [laughs] —something like that?

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: You know?

[Jon laughs]

Tim: Right?

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: It's crazy how long you have to sit on hold. But the logic here is: Show up every morning because God loves you. And there's an—

Jon: And he knows.

Tim: —opportunity there.

Jon: What's—[pause] what's the opportunity?

Tim: Hmm. [pause] Well, I think it's probably for deepened intimacy.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: If I go every morning, and every morning I deepen my trust in the one who loves me and already knows, then you're basically just hanging out together. [laughs]

Jon: And it's—there's something there about the character of God that that's an invitation. It isn't: "*Hey, I've got things to do. Stop coming*"—

Tim: [laughs] Yeah. Totally.

Jon: Like, "*I got you*."

Tim: All right.

Jon: [Tim agrees throughout] It's: "*I want you to come over and over and over because I know I got you*. *There's something here for us in this persistent* [chuckles] *interaction*." I don't get it. I don't think I get it completely.

Tim: Hmm. Yeah. I kind of—I got there from connecting Psalm 5 to the approach of the widow before the judge. But that's in—

Jon: Yeah. You're saying this whole middle section is David—

Tim: David's case.

Jon: It's David's case.

Tim: Yep.

["Hilltops" by Lofi Sunday feat. Jk Beatbook fades in]

Tim: And he brings it in the morning. Jesus says, "Bring your case *every* morning"—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: Wow. Hmm.

Tim: —"and your Father will never tire of you showing up."

[Musical break: "Hilltops" by Lofi Sunday feat. Jk Beatbook (28:41 – 29:20)]

[David Makes His Case (29:20 – 52:57)]

Tim: So let's ponder the center of the poem.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: It's long. It's a big section. We kind of previewed it already. So he begins by saying, "God, here's who you are."

Jon: Mhm.

["Hilltops" by Lofi Sunday feat. Jk Beatbook fades out]

Tim: This is a similar style of persuasion that Moses had in his intercession in the golden calf story. We've pondered that in the past.

Jon: Yeah. Yeah. "*You made this promise. You're the kind of God who makes good on his promises*."

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. "*So you can't destroy these people*."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: "*Even though they might deserve it right now, you can't do that.*" And God is persuaded. God says, "*Yeah, that's right*."

Jon: Yeah. "*And you'll look bad if you do it*."

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: [chuckles] Oh, yeah, that's right. "*The Egyptians will think that you're just a fickle God like one of their gods*."

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. So this has a similar feel of, like: "Here's who you are, God." I think persuasively, it's sort of like: "*Right?*"

Jon: That's why you're adding the—that.

Tim: "Aren't you the kind of God who"—

Jon: Okay.

Tim: That's—yeah, I guess—you're right. Thanks for naming that. I am trying to bring out the persuasive technique.

Jon: Yeah. I see it now.

Tim: So: "You are not a God who delights in wickedness."

Jon: Because there are gods maybe that—

Tim: Oh.

Jon: —you know, they kind of revel in the chaos.

Tim: Thanks. Oh, man. I'm being reminded of this in an interesting way. I am rereading Homer's Iliad right now— [laughs]

Jon: Oh, wow.

Tim: —in the evenings.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And wow, man, to live in that world—

Jon: Yeah. Poseidon.

Tim: Yeah, Zeus and Apollo and—yeah, man, these gods are treacherous. They'll turn their back on you.

Jon: Mmm. And they kind of enjoy that they could be treacherous?

Tim: [Jon backchannels throughout They can be hired through a really good-smelling sacrifice to go trick your enemy. That's—I'm at a moment in the Iliad where Zeus is leading on an army general to go attack a city when Zeus knows that he's actually going to strengthen the enemy and bring about defeat. But he's like lying to this army general, sending him dreams about how he's going to have victory, but actually, he's going to get defeated. So if that's your view of the gods, you know— [laughs]

Jon: Mmm. Yeah.

Tim: [laughs] —that's a pretty terrifying world to live in.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: The most powerful beings in the cosmos can't be trusted.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's a scary world to live in.

Jon: Yes. And it'll kind of make you ruthless.

Tim: Mmm. [pause] Mmm. Yeah. You got to look out for number one in that kind of world.

Jon: Yeah. Be more cunning than even the gods.

Tim: Yeah. Ancient Israel really locked in on this idea—I think historians call this part of the birth of ethical monotheism— [chuckles] there's one supreme God and source of all beings, and that one is the very essence of goodness and justice. That's a foundational belief in the Hebrew Bible.

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: So “You’re Elohim, right? That means you don’t delight in wickedness.” So it’s three things: “You don’t delight in wickedness. Badness can’t stay with you. The crazy-arrogant can’t stand in front of you.”

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So it’s three ways of talking about how, you know—

Jon: How he relates to wickedness.

Tim: Exactly. Yeah. Oh, yeah, of course— [laughs] there’s seven bad things in this.

Jon: Really?

Tim: Yeah. Totally. Yes. So there’s badness, *ra‘*. There’s wickedness, *resha‘*. There’s the crazy-arrogant. That’s number three. Number four is the “doers of disaster.”

Jon: Oh, it goes on.

Tim: “You hate doers of disaster, you detest the speaker of lies, and you also detest the man of bloodshed”—that’s number six. And then: “. . . of deception.”

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: That’s seven.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So—ah, part one was seven words of “*how I’m going to pray to you. Now here’s seven ways of being a destructive human that you are opposed to, God*.”

Jon: Hmm. Okay.

Tim: Mhm. That’s part one of the persuasion. “This is not who you are.” Verse 7: “Here’s who I am. I’m somebody who you made a loyal-love promise to. And because of your abundant loyal-love, I know I’m going to reenter your house, go and bow down, worship you in your temple.” You appreciated this, being able to connect this back into the Absalom rebellion story.

Jon: Yeah. “*I get to go home*.” I mean, this could be a prayer of just, like, “*I get to go to the temple. This is part of what I do*.” But when you’re on the outs, and it’s a homecoming, it just feels even more special.

Tim: Yeah, I agree. Yep. Yeah. So “Based on who you are, God, and who I am”—verse 8 kind of turns to pivot. Now he starts making requests here in the center. “So Yahweh, take me on a journey.”

[Jon chuckles]

Tim: “Make my path straight in your righteousness because”—

Jon: “The way that you do right by people.”

Tim: “The way that you do right by people, would you lead me that way? Because I’ve got a lot of enemies, people who are trying to kill me right now. And speaking of my enemies, well, here’s a way to think about them.”

Jon: [laughs] Yeah. Okay. [chuckles]

Tim: And then verse 9—

Jon: This is—this is wonderful.

[Tim laughs]

Jon: I wanted to talk about this.

Tim: Yeah. “There’s not anything upright—”it’s—the word’s, like, standing up straight. “*nakhon*.” [the verse uses the feminine form *nekhonah*]

Jon: Okay.

Tim: —“in his mouth.” “You can’t trust anything they say.”

Jon: Hmm. “Nothing that is said from”—

Tim: “Them is straight.”

Jon: And it’s a “his.” It’s a singular?

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. Yeah. So we’ve gone from “my enemies” to—

Jon: Just one—

Tim: Yeah. *An* enemy.

Jon: Kind of personified into one enemy.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: Okay. And what this person says can’t be trusted. It’s not upright.

Tim: They don’t say anything straight.

Jon: Okay. Yep.

Tim: Yep. So that “saying” is what you send out into the world in terms of your words.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: What you next get is, like, images of inside.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: So what they speak outside is not straight because—

Jon: Of what's inside.

Tim: What's inside of them is just *havvot*. Just—

Jon: *Havvot*?

Tim: Just "ruin."

Jon: Hmm.

Tim: Everything falling apart. And then the word for inside, *qerev*, if you just flip the letters of *qerev* around, you get the Hebrew word *qever*, which is of a grave, where you bury a dead body.

Jon: Hmm. Oh, and you can kind of see how those words are related.

Tim: Yeah, because—to be put in the grave—

Jon: Inside the ground.

Tim: —is to be inside the ground. So, "Their inside is destruction, their *qerev* is destruction, and a *qever* is their throat." So the thing that—

Jon: Yeah. Mmm.

Tim: The thing that is—

Jon: The funnel.

Tim: The funnel between their inside to putting words outside—

Jon: Mmm. Is a grave.

Tim: Is a—it's just dead. It's death. [exhales] What an image.

Jon: So [laughs] the inside is destruction.

Tim: Mmm.

Jon: *Havvot*?

Tim: *Havvot*. Mhm.

Jon: And then what comes out is something that just is unstable. You can't trust it. And it funnels through—

Tim: Yeah, their throat.

Jon: —just death.

Tim: [exhales] Which leads to the last line.

Jon: Very provocative.

Tim: ". . . and with their tongue, they make it look all so smooth." So—

Jon: Ohhh, okay. So this is a little riddle in the way that someone who is this—[chuckles]

Tim: Yeah, megalomaniac.

Jon: This—yeah. When you interact with their words—

Tim: Mmm. You can't trust their words.

Jon: [Tim agrees throughout] Like—you can't trust their words. They're going to make it sound so good. But it's being churned up from an inside of destruction. It's funneled through [laughs] death, and it is unstable. But it's going to—man, it feels smooth.

Tim: It's smooth, which is a fascinating image. Slippery. You could also translate it "slippery."

Jon: Oh, slippery. Okay.

Tim: Like a slick surface.

Jon: Ohhh.

Tim: So like, it's easy to think, like: "*Oh, I can walk on that*." And all of a sudden— [Tim makes a slipping sound]

Jon: Ohhh.

Tim: —you walk on that, and— [Tim makes a slipping sound]

Jon: You're sliding away.

Tim: You're sliding away. You're slipping and falling down. But they make it look smooth. Smoooth.

Jon: Ohhh.

Tim: It's such a fascinating metaphor in Hebrew. It's a regular one, to have smooth words. It appears in the Proverbs a lot too.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Or to be “smooth of tongue.” It’s usually an image of deception.

Jon: One thing I’ve noticed in the Psalms is how, like, precisely descriptive sometimes the Psalms get about how wicked people are.

Tim: Oh, yeah.

Jon: And it almost feels cathartic of like—

Tim: Mmm. Mmm.

Jon: —“*Let me just, like, be really clea*r”—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: —“*how horrible these people are being that are—like, who are injust.*”

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Now, this is so important. This is why—we’ve talked about this before all the way back in Psalm 1. The Psalms, like the Proverbs, often deal in these moral binaries.

Jon: Right.

Tim: So this poem’s making a clear binary. There’s “me”—

Jon: Yeah. [laughs]

Tim: —who is somebody who’s your loyal one. So “We’re good.” And then there’s “them.”

Jon: Yeah, [jokingly] the disgusting, evil people.

Tim: But then the narrative—the Absalom narrative—

Jon: Right. [chuckles]

Tim: [Jon agrees throughout] —that these poems are set within complicate all that because the reason David’s son is rebelling against him all the way back is because of David’s own negligence and folly, and ultimately leads back to the deception and murder that he perpetrated with Bathsheba and Uriah. So David is also—he can act like one of these guys. So what do you say? The words make it feel like we’re talking about people in these binary categories. But the Hebrew Bible is also trying to problematize that and to say, “*Listen, like, anybody*”—

Jon: “*It’s not that simple*.”

Tim: —“*can act like any of these ways*.”

Jon: Yeah. God’s chosen one can.

Tim: "*God's chosen ones are also, like, among those who have an open grave for a throat and whose inside is destruction. It's all of us*." Anyhow. That's just good—good to —

Jon: Yeah, no, it's good. And you're just—and so I'm appreciating that reading—you know, one of the pillars is meditation literature. And you're saying: When you see a hyperlink, and you see a bundle of poems, just keep that narrative world in your head—

Tim: That's right. Yeah.

Jon: —and keep finding that as bearing. And that's actually helpful for us to appreciate the binary, but then to problematize the binary.

Tim: There you go.

Jon: It makes this next verse, you know, like, [exhales] a really dangerous verse to pray, you know?

Tim: Yes.

Jon: "Treat them as guilty. Let their plans fall apart. They rebelled against you."

Tim: Mhm. "So cast them out."

Jon: "Cast them out. They rebelled against you." [laughs]

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: And [pause] you know, like you just brought up: Well, David is a guilty guy. He's done a lot of things.

Tim: Yeah. And what's happening to him in this moment? He is being cast out of Jerusalem.

Jon: Yeah. [laughs]

[Tim laughs]

Jon: So it's like [chuckles] the "Be careful what you pray for" kind of thing a little bit.

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. His whole life fell apart. It's almost like he is experiencing the answer to this prayer, on one level, that God is bringing about in his life.

Jon: Is there some naivety here happening or some aloofness of David—

Tim: That's a great question.

Jon: —or is he aware of this?

Tim: I think that's how we felt when we were meditating on Psalm 3.

Jon: Yes.

Tim: About like: It seems like he's still kind of attached to his power and his kingship.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: This is what I love about the honesty and complexity of David's character in the Hebrew Bible, is—this is a good example, Psalm 5, verse 10. David is experiencing himself now what he is asking God to do to his enemies. [laughs]

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Because he became an enemy to Bathsheba and Uriah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And so—mmm. I like that: Be careful what you pray for.

Jon: We've been in a habit now of: Let's read this messianically.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: So Jesus is the upright one, the righteous one, and the one who can enter God's temple.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. He said, "It's because of your abundant loyal-love that I'm going to be able to go back to the temple." Mhm.

Jon: Yeah, it's a grace.

Tim: "Not because of who I am, but because of who you are." Mhm.

Jon: Yeah. And so there is—we can approach God and be like, "*I know I'm in the right, and I know that you're for me*." There's also something we're now reflecting on—

Tim: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

Jon: —a little bit dangerous, of being like: "*God, take care of those enemies*."

Tim: Mhm. Yeah: "*You are for me, and you're against my enemies*."

Jon: [Tim agrees throughout] "*Take care of all the people who are, like, causing destruction, and let their plans fall apart*." It's kind of like—like, sometimes you might pray that and then step back, and go, [pause] "*Ohhh, maybe that's why I'm experiencing*"—

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Jon: [chuckles] —"*something I've experienced*."

Tim: Yeah. Yes. God's character is what David says it is. He is opposed to destructive ways of being human. And so much of the wisdom of the Hebrew Bible is saying God's primary way of responding justly to human evil and corruption is to bring the consequences of those decisions back on our heads.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And that God is not unjust in doing that. And that I might actually find that what I pray as consequences for my enemies might just find its way back sitting in front of me, [chuckles] you know, because of the things I've done that I'm blind to.

Jon: Yeah. This is why I feel like it's much safer to pray, you know, "Forgive my enemies." Not easier, but safer, you know?

Tim: Yeah. Yeah.

Jon: And I just think of Jesus saying, like, you know, "Forgive"—

Tim: Yes.

Jon: —"because you're forgiven."

Tim: [Jon agrees throughout] Totally. And maybe that's part of what it means to pray the Psalms then as a follower of Jesus, the Messiah, Son of David. Is there a place for us before God to just be honest and to just say, "*God*"— [exhales] like: —"*what this person did to me is wrong. I know you're opposed to it*."

Jon: Yeah. And we're going to experience that a lot in the Psalms.

Tim: Yes.

Jon: [Tim agrees throughout] We're going to see a lot of these moments where it's just like: "*Just please vindicate me from just this, just, horrible injustice*." [pause] You know, I want to recognize I live in a pretty privileged moment in time in my place. I'm buffered from a lot of injustice, like, hitting me hard. But man, it doesn't take long for me, if I'm paying attention, to see how much injustice there is and how *horrible* it is when someone suffers because of someone else's, just, evil.

Tim: Yeah. Mmm. And when there is no city gate to go to. There's no judge who's going to vindicate them because the system's broken. Yeah.

Jon: And so when I read these lines with that perspective, it's just like: [somberly] "*Yes, please come judge, God.*" Like: "*Bring justice*."

Tim: That's great. That's right. And that, historically, is how these Psalms have functioned for followers of Jesus who are suffering under extreme injustice. And that is an *important* value that these Psalms have. I do think that that value needs to be

balanced with another value, which is saying that any prayer that I pray to God about [chuckles] like, "Bring justice on my enemies," I have to also do the flip and be, like: "*But I've also been the enemy*"—

Jon: Speck in the eye.

Tim: —"to other people." And Jesus really wanted his followers—yes—to say, like: None of us is as innocent—maybe in one situation I haven't done anything wrong, but I have been the wrongdoer in some other situation. And so really, in asking God to bring justice on somebody, I'm asking God to sort out this whole complicated human mess.

Jon: And I happen to be a part of this whole complicated human mess.

Tim: And I'm a part of it.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And I think that's what Jesus is inviting us to face when he's saying, "*How about this? What if you all just fundamentally decide to stop killing your enemy, to pray blessing, and forgive your enemy? And what if I, as the Messiah, chosen one, take all the consequences to the bitter end on your behalf so you can stop having to bring them on each other?*" I think that is what it would mean to see Psalm 5 messianically. But that's complicated. It's not a simple way to read this Psalm.

Jon: Mhm. No. And it doesn't flatten out, I think, the observation of the invitation here—is—there's an invitation to approach God and to say, "*This is who you are. This is who I am in Jesus*." And: "*Please, will you rescue me from injustice?*"

Tim: Mhm. That's right.

Jon: Like, that can just be a mode of prayer.

Tim: Mhm. That's right.

Jon: A persistent mode of prayer.

Tim: Yeah, that's good.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: That's good. Before we move to part three of the prayer, I just want to draw attention to some cool design features of the middle. So the first thing when David was saying, "Listen, here's who you are. You're a God with whom badness, *ra'*, cannot reside." It's the word "to go"—like, to move in with somebody and to live with them.

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: It's the exact opposite of what he says here at the very end of verse 10, which is, "Hey, because of the transgressions that these people have committed, cast them out, exile them."

Jon: Oh. Okay.

Tim: So it's these oppositions of—

Jon: Mmm. "Invite them in"—

Tim: "Invite them in—evil cannot, like, come be a roommate with you." So the flip side is "Cast them out."

Jon: Okay.

Tim: So on the biggest frame is about—of the middle is about being in God's presence and then being cast out of God's presence. And then right here at the center of Psalm 5 is all the stuff about going into your temple.

Jon: Mmm.

Tim: [Jon backchannels throughout] So it's a cool, like, balancing structure of the middle that it begins and ends with the idea of either being in God's presence or the cast out, exiled. And in the center is this hope that "I'm going to get to go into your temple." It's a cool—it's not identical vocabulary. What I'm saying is, in terms of themes and imagery, this is an Eden template here. In the garden, outside the garden, wanting to return to the garden. Also, notice this emphasis on the *words spoken* by David's enemies. "They speak lies," in verse 6—

Jon: Yeah. Oh, okay.

Tim: —connected to the slippery tongue, you know, here.

Jon: Yeah. Okay.

Tim: So just the middle of the poem has this cool kind of—

Jon: Chiasm there.

Tim: Yeah, kind of a concentric shape all moving around the center.

Jon: Which is the temple.

Tim: Which is about going into the temple.

Jon: And the journey to the temple.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah, in the middle. Yeah. I just thought that was kind of cool.

Jon: [Tim backchannels throughout] Mmm. That is cool. Just one thing that stood out to me is kind of right here in the center: We got the temple and then the "lead me," and then the line, "Make straight before me your way." It kind of just struck me as an interesting way to say that because I would imagine it would say "*Make my way straight*," right?

Tim: Ohhh, yeah. That's good. Yes. Yeah.

Jon: And so like, "*I—I could go many different ways"*—you know—*"direct my path to make my way straight*."

Tim: Yeah. Mmm.

Jon: But the prayer is, "Make straight before me *your* way."

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: What's—what's going on there?

Tim: Oh, that's good. Oh. I think—yeah. Well, I think in asking it, you can almost intuit it. I can— [laughs]

Jon: I don't—

[Tim laughs]

Jon: No, actually. I don't think I am intuiting it.

Tim: Well—

Jon: God's way. God has a way.

Tim: God has a way.

Jon: God has a path.

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: There's the path.

Tim: [Jon backchannels throughout] Yep. So "I've got to move forward here. My enemies are chasing me. I've got to move. So lead me. Make *your* way straight for me. I could go a lot of ways. I don't know which one is your way."

Jon: "So can your way be simple?"

Tim: "Can you make it straight?" Yeah. "Can you show me your way?" Hmm. Maybe this is where life as a path and "forks in the road" as decisions comes together with the

imagery of God's word is like a lamp, you know, lighting my steps, or God as like the teacher instructing you what road to take. I think we're living in that metaphor.

Jon: Yeah. Okay.

Tim: But that's a great—thank you for observing that. It's *your* way.

Jon: Well, is "straight" about being a good or right path as a straight path, where, like, a wandering path is a bad path?

Tim: Yeah. It's harder.

Jon: It's a harder path.

Tim: It's harder. I would rather take the most direct, straight level path.

Jon: And "Your way is straight." But he's asking God to *make* it straight.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: So I guess, in my mind, that makes me think—

Tim: Oh. Hmm.

Jon: —the metaphor isn't that God's way isn't straight, so "Please, can you make it straight?" That doesn't seem to be the case. But I like what you're saying, which is like, "*Okay, I'm walking on the path. I want to make sure I'm walking on your path, and can you just make it really clear?*"

Tim: Yeah.

Jon: "And there's going to be forks in the roads, and can you just, like, make that clear?"

[Tim laughs]

Jon: And I almost—you know, if a fork in the road is like a test—

Tim: Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: —you almost imagine the prayer of Jesus here being like, "*Can you just not give me tests right now?*" [laughs]

Tim: Oh, that's a great observation.

Jon: [chuckles] "*Can you just make this really straightforward for me?*"

Tim: Yeah. [pause] Yeah. "Don't lead me into the test. If you're"—

Jon: Like, "*Don't lead me into a fork in the road that I'm going to screw up.*"

Tim: That's right. That's right. Yes.

[Jon laughs]

Tim: “And if you choose to do so, please deliver me from the evil one.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Yeah, that’s great. “*Go easy on me*.”

Jon: Is that part of this “make straight for me”?

Tim: That’s a great observation. “Make straight your way before me.”

[“Coffee Crash” by Lofi Sunday feat. Me & the Boys fades in]

Tim: “*You can—I want you to lead me. It’d be really cool if it wasn’t a crooked path*.”

Jon: “*If it was an easy path to follow*.” [chuckles]

Tim: “*If it’s easier rather than more difficult*.” You’re right. Psalm 5, verse 8. “*Go easy on me*.”

[Jon laughs]

Tim: “*I want you to be my guide, but it’d be cool if the path isn’t too hard to figure out*.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: Mmm.

[Musical break: “Coffee Crash” by Lofi Sunday feat. Me & the Boys (52:38 – 52:48)]

[A Response of Preemptive Joy (52:48 – 1:03:25)]

Tim: All right, part three of the poem. So part one: “Hey, God, you’re my king and judge. You’re going to hear from me in the morning, hear my case.” Part two: “Here’s my case. Here’s who you are, God. Here’s who I am.”

["Coffee Crash" by Lofi Sunday feat. Me & the Boys fades out]

Jon: "Here's who my enemies are."

Tim: "Here's who my enemies are. So make straight your way in front of me, and cast out my enemies." Part three is all of a sudden, just, like a—

Jon: It shifts focus.

Tim: It shifts focus to how God's people will celebrate when he protects them. So: "Let everyone who takes refuge in you"—that's important, that—to take refuge.

Jon: Hmm. That's from Psalm 2.

Tim: Yeah, that's the first time since Psalm 2 that phrase—it's the same word.

Jon: Okay.

Tim: [Jon backchannels throughout] So there, people were taking refuge in the son of God. Here, it's people taking refuge in God. [pause] This is cool, verse 11: "So let all who take refuge in you *rejoice*." That's the opening sentence. The last sentence is: "Let all those who love your name *celebrate in you*." So "those who take refuge in you" are parallel to "those who love your name" and they can "rejoice and celebrate in you." So it's got a—"in you" appears in both.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: And then in the center are "for an age," "forever." "Let them shout for joy, for you spread protection over them." And I don't know how to represent this: In Hebrew, the phrase "forever" or "for an age" and then the phrase "over them," they're spelled with the same Hebrew letters—

Jon: Oooh, it looks very similar.

Tim: —just flipped around. Yeah.

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: *Le'olam* is "forever," "for an age," and *'alemo* is "over them." So all of verse 11 is a cool little chiasm in terms of, like, repeated words, and so on.

Jon: It looks like "celebrate" and "rejoice" are very similar-looking words too, or at least they start the same.

Tim: Yeah. Mhm. Yeah, and they are synonyms in meaning: to rejoice and to celebrate. Basically: “People who are loyal to you and trust you to protect them—you’re going to protect them, and then they should celebrate when you do that.” So it’s kind of an interesting way of how this is—the role that part three is playing here. Which is: “In the morning you’re going to hear from me.”

Jon: [laughs] Mhm.

Tim: “Here’s my case.”

Jon: Mhm. And then: “How am I going to respond?”

Tim: “And now, everybody who you protect and trusts you, man, they should party when you come through for them.”

Jon: [chuckles] Yeah.

Tim: Yeah. And then verse 12 comes along with this really confident kind of assertion of trust. “You bless the righteous, Yahweh. In fact, you surround them with favor that acts like a shield around them.”

Jon: Mmm. This feels similar to the other two psalms that preceded—

Tim: Oh, yeah. It ends with a note of trust.

Jon: That it’s—yeah, it’s that note of trust. And also the shield coming straight from Psalm 3.

Tim: Ohhh, yes. Oooh, actually, this is a bigger shield.

Jon: Oh, this is a different shield?

Tim: Yeah, the shield was a *magen* in Psalm 3. This is the *tsinnah*, which is like the big—the one you can hide—like, full-on hide behind kind of thing. It’s *tsinnah*.

Jon: [chuckles] Oh, nice.

Tim: Mhm.

Jon: So at the beginning, he opens, “I’m going to bring my case, and then I’m going to watch.” And I guess that was to watch how God responds?

Tim: Mhm. I think so.

Jon: The end, he doesn’t say, “Okay, now I’m just waiting for you to respond.” He’s just like, “Yeah, no, I’m going to party.”

[Jon and Tim laugh]

Tim: [chuckles] Yeah.

Jon: Like, “Let’s rejoice. Let’s celebrate. I’m not waiting for a response. I’m just like”—it’s that preemptive joy that you’ve talked about before, which is like, “I just trust that you’re going to come through, and so I’m going to celebrate.”

Tim: Yeah. You know what? Yeah, you’re right. These are future verbs. I’m just kind of—

Jon: Oh, is it?

Tim: Yeah. I’m just appreciating—

Jon: Oh, okay.

Tim: They’re imperfect verbs in Hebrew, but they most typically referring to incomplete action or action that will be done in the future. “You *will* protect them.” “You *will* bless them.” “You *will* surround them like a shield.” In other words, it’s saying: “Let those who take refuge in you and love your name rejoice even if your protection of them hasn’t happened yet.”

Jon: Yeah.

Tim: “But if they trust that your protection of them is coming, they should rejoice now in the present in light of what you’re going to do in the future.” Which actually makes sense—that makes better sense of the poem as a whole because he’s waiting for God to respond to his—

Jon: Yeah, God hasn’t responded in this poem.

Tim: Right. Yeah. So here David is like the persistent widow that Jesus talks about—

Jon: Mmm. [chuckles]

Tim: —showing up, making a case, but also trusting God’s character that God’s going to be true to who God is. And so “Me and my crew, we’re going to party in the present, trusting that you will protect us in the day to come.” And all of this is set within the Absalom narrative still.

Jon: Right. In that narrative, they’re waking up, they’re getting ready for battle.

Tim: Yes. Yeah. That story begins with David dividing his soldiers into three groups. Mhm. Yeah.

Jon: It’s like a bit of a rally cry moment for them too, which is what this ends on.

Tim: Mhm. Yeah. And you know, reflecting back, Absalom kind of launched his coup by standing in the city gate in the morning—

Jon: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

Tim: [Jon agrees throughout] —with smooth words, smooth tongue. He deceived. He deceived the Israelites, saying he would be a better king. And so I think the thing that's striking me right now is this paradox of prayer and asking God to help me and going through the exercise of making my case before God, while all the same time, knowing that God is for me, with me, he loves me. Like, that seems like a paradox. Why would I try and persuade somebody if I fully trust who they are?

Jon: Right. Yeah.

Tim: But apparently, there can be value in kind of pouring out your desires and your processing before God, and that that's a part of what prayer can be.

Jon: Mmm. That's really helpful for me because—like I mentioned, because I have so much faith that God is for me—I think I really do—that could lead me to go, "*I don't need to bother God*"—

Tim: Ohhh, yeah. Hmm.

Jon: —or it seems, like, out of place to come and kind of petition God, and I don't want to mistakenly bother God. And you're saying this is an invitation to hold what feels like a paradox. Like, "*Yeah, God is for me. God wants to give me good things, and he wants me to ask for them*." [chuckles]

Tim: Yeah. Yeah. Think—look at part three: "You *will* protect, you *will* bless, you *will* surround with favor those who take revenge in you." So why do I need to go make my case every morning before God if I believe that that's who he is towards me? But this poem is like: "*Do all of those. Believe those things and make your case before God*"—

[BibleProject theme, "Defender" by TENTS, fades out]

Tim: —"*every morning."* And that's valuable.

Jon: Hmm.

[Musical break: BibleProject theme, "Defender" by TENTS (1:00:47 – 1:00:50)]

Jon: Thanks for listening to this episode of BibleProject podcast. Next week, we're going to read Psalm 6. We're going to find David again in a valley of despair, pleading for God's mercy in spite of his failures.

Tim: [audio clips from Psalms 3-8 E4: Psalm 6: Cries for Mercy from the Grave] We're going to be talking about sickness and death, about the grave and Sheol and the underworld. So Psalm 6 is a prayer for when you're at the end of your rope, and you really don't feel like there's going to be a tomorrow worth experiencing.

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[Phone beep]

Dean: Aloha, my name is Dean. I'm from Oahu, Hawaii.

Karina: Hi, my name is Karina, and I'm from Phoenix, Arizona. I first heard about BibleProject when I was in elementary school. I use BibleProject for my personal Bible study, as well as to have conversation with my family and friends.

Dean: I use BibleProject when we gather together families in homes to be equipped to grow in faith and confidence that they can disciple their kids.

Karina: My favorite thing about BibleProject is the way that it stimulates conversation and allows us to dig deeper into God's word.

Dean: My favorite thing about BibleProject is the spirit of humility that they have in everything that they do, that it's not about BibleProject, but really about what God is doing through his word.

Karina: We believe the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus.

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Dean: —on the BibleProject app and at bibleproject.com.

[Phone beep]

Marco: Hi, my name is Marco. I'm originally from Argentina, and I'm part of the Strategic Relationships team. Argentina is pretty diverse in its geography. Very hot, very dry. And then you have the south, Patagonia, which is a lot of mountains, a lot of snow. And it was really cool, as a child, whenever the rain came, it would rain for hours. Most children are scared of thunder and big storms, but I love them. There's a whole team that makes the podcast happen every week. For a full list of the people involved, check out the show notes wherever you stream this podcast and on our app. *Nos vemos*!

[BibleProject theme, "Defender" by TENTS fades out]

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