

## Psalm 59

**Title:** God Is My Defense

**Author and Date:** David

**Key Verses:** Psalm 59:9, 16, 17

**Type:** Individual Lament (Complaint)

### **Outline**

- A. The danger: a prayer for deliverance (verses 1-9).
- B. The deliverance: a plea for help (verses 10-17).

### **Notes**

Title: See the notes for the title of Psalm 57. The event “when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him [David]” is recorded in 1 Samuel 19:11-18.

Summary: Psalm 59 is an individual lament (complaint) psalm. It is another “trouble and trust” psalm in a series of psalms extending from Psalm 54 through Psalm 59. In Psalm 59, the psalmist believes that God is his “defense” and that God will help him to be delivered from his enemies (verses 1-2). The enemies are gathered together against him, but not because the psalmist has sinned (verses 3-4). The psalmist wants God to punish his enemies and all other wicked transgressors (verse 5). The psalmist’s enemies are compared to a pack of vicious dogs and they are full of boasting (verses 6-7). God will have the enemies in derision (verse 8) because he is the psalmist’s defense (verses 9-10). The psalmist calls for several curses upon his enemies for their lies and their pride (verses 11-12). He wants them to know that God rules in Jacob (verse 13). The enemies are once again described as dogs (verses 14-15). Like the other psalms in this series (Psalms 54-59), this psalm ends on a positive note of trust. The psalmist promises to sing of God’s power and mercy because God is his defense (verses 16-17).

Verse 1: The psalmist wants God to deliver and “defend” (KJV) him. The ASV reads, “set me on high” (Psa. 20:1; 69:29), which refers to a high defensive position in battle. David believed that God would deliver him (1 Sam. 24:15; 26:24).

Verses 3-4: The psalmist states his own innocence: “not *for* my transgressions, nor *for* my sin” (verse 3) and “without *my* fault” (verse 4). He believes he has done nothing sinful that would deserve the mistreatment he is receiving from his enemies (1 Sam. 20:1; 24:11; Psa. 35:19). Note the three different words for sin in this verse (see the notes on Psalm 32:1-2).

Verse 5: “God of hosts” is a reference to God and his angels. The “heathen” (KJV) or “nations” (ASV) are other enemies besides the ones who personally attack the psalmist. The statement “be not merciful to any wicked transgressors” seems unkind and unloving. However, we must remember the kind of transgressors the psalmist is talking about. He is talking about the hardened, stubborn, unrepentant transgressor (see verses 6-7, and 12; see also Psa. 5:10). Jeremiah spoke in a similar way (Jer. 18:23 and the context of the chapter). For “Selah”, see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verses 6-7: The enemies are graphically displayed as a pack of wild and savage dogs: howling, prowling, and growling (Psa. 22:16). The proud boasting of the enemies is mentioned again in verse 12.

Verse 8: See Psalm 2:4.

Verse 9: “His strength” is a reference to God’s strength. A “defense” (KJV) or “high tower” (ASV; see also verses 16 and 17) is a fortress (NIV), citadel, or tower built on a high place for a defensive position against the enemy (Psa. 9:9).

Verse 11: Verses 11-13 form the imprecatory portion of this prayer. There are a number of curses in these verses that are pronounced upon the enemies. The psalmist says “Slay them not”, because he wants the enemies to live on as a lesson to the righteous.

Verse 12: See verses 6 and 7.

Verse 13: One purpose of divine judgment upon the enemies is to “let them know that God ruleth in Jacob” (KJV). For “Selah”, see the notes on Psalm 3.

Verse 14: There is a contrast between this verse and verse 6. The howling like a dog in this verse is done in misery, whereas the howling like a dog in verse 6 is done in pride.

Verses 16-17: This psalm, like the other psalms in this series (Psalm 54-59), ends on a positive note of trust. These psalms move from “trouble to trust” each time.

## **Questions**

1. What does the psalmist want from God (verses 1-2)?
2. What do the enemies do to the psalmist (verses 3-4)?
3. How does the psalmist describe God (verse 5)?

4. How does the psalmist want God to treat the wicked transgressors (verse 5)?

5. How do the enemies speak and what do they say (verses 6-7)?

6. What does God do to the enemies (verse 8)?

7. What is God to the psalmist (verse 9)?

8. What does the psalmist believe God will do to him (verse 10)?

9. What does the psalmist want God to do to his enemies (verse 11)?

10. What sin do the enemies commit (verse 12)?

11. What does the psalmist want his enemies to know about God (verse 13)?

12. What does the psalmist want for his enemies (verses 14-15)?

13. What does the psalmist sing about and why does he sing it (verse 16)?

14. What is God to the psalmist (verse 17)?

## **Applications for Today**

1. God will deliver his people from their enemies (verses 1-2). What did God do for David (1 Sam. 17:37) and for Paul (2 Tim. 4:18)?
2. It is not always the case that we suffer because of our sins (verses 3-4). Did Job suffer because of his sin (Job 1:1)? Did the Galileans suffer because of their sins (Lk. 13:1-5)? Was the man born blind because of his sin (Jn. 9:1-3)? Why do we suffer sometimes (Mt. 5:10-12; 1 Pet. 4:14-16)?
3. Those who persist in their wickedness will receive no mercy from God (verse 5). What happened to Israel and why (Hos. 2:4)?
4. Some enemies act like dogs (verses 6-7 and 14-15). What warning does Paul write in Philippians 3:2?
5. God is our strength and our defense (verses 9, 16, and 17). Who was Moses' strength (Ex. 15:2)? Who was David's strength (Psa. 18:1)? Who was Paul's strength (Phil. 4:13)?
6. Let us sing aloud of God's strength and mercy (verses 16-17). What else did the psalmist sing aloud about (Psa. 51:14)?