

Psalm 10

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Preacher: Nick Arkas

- [0 : 0 0] Great, let me read for us and then pray for Nick and for us. Psalm 10. Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?
- In his arrogance, the wicked man hunts down the weak who are caught in the schemes he devises. He boasts about the cravings of his heart. He blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.
- In his pride, the wicked man does not seek him. In all his thoughts, there is no room for God. His ways are always prosperous. Your laws are rejected by him and he sneers at all his enemies.
- He says to himself, nothing will ever shake me. He swears, no one will ever do me harm. His mouth is full of lies and threats. Trouble and evil are under his tongue.
- He lies in wait near the villages. From ambush, he murders the innocent. His eyes watch in secret for his victims. Like a lion in cover, he lies in wait.
- [1 : 1 2] He lies in wait to catch the helpless. He catches the helpless and drags them off in his net. His victims are crushed. They collapse. They fall under his strength.
- He says to himself, God will never notice. He covers his face and never sees. Arise, Lord. Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless.
- Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, he won't call me to account? But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted. You consider their grief and take it in hand.
- The victims commit themselves to you. You are the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked man. Call the evildoer to account for his wickedness. That would not otherwise be found out. The Lord is king forever and ever.
- The nations will perish from his land. You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted. You encourage them and you listen to their cry. Defending the fatherless and the oppressed.
- [2 : 1 9] Let me pray for us. And then Nick, over to you. Heavenly Father, we do pray and ask that you would speak to us from your words.
- We thank you that our joyful confidence is that as your word is open, you are by your spirit at work. And we pray that that might be our experience this evening. Help Nick as he speaks. Help all of us as we listen, we pray.
- In Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks, Steve.
- Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Does it ever seem to you that God is absent in your times of trouble?
- That his attention is elsewhere? Maybe you're just not that important to him. After all, God has a universe to run. Is God turning a blind eye to all the injustice happening everywhere?
- [3 : 3 8] It can often feel like that. And indeed, looking at the news every day, there are constant examples of injustice, of the strong praying on the weak.

On Wednesday evening last week, during our prayer meeting, we watched an Open Doors video about the internally displaced people of Nigeria. They're persecuted Christians who have been forced away from their lands and their homes to live in tents.

And they're reduced to protecting themselves from the sun with bits of cardboard. They're far from their homes. And they struggle to find work to earn even a day's food.

Why does God seem far away? So, this is how the psalmist begins, Psalm 10. But before we look into that question, just a quick word on the overall structure of this psalm of lament.

It can be broken down into four sections. The first one is the first verse. The opening cry to the Lord, where are you?

[4 : 54] And the second goes from verses 2 to 11. David is bringing the wicked and their ways before the Lord. And then we have verses 12 to 15, where David calls on the Lord to act.

And he also reminds himself of who God is and what he does. And in the final section, David concludes by declaring more facts about God.

Not only to bolster his own faith and to wait upon him, but also to declare and acknowledge who God is. So, let's start with the first verse.

David is in pain at God's apparent aloofness. Lord, there is so much wickedness. Where are you? Well, spoiler alert, God is not far away.

He's right there with the psalmist. And he's right there with us. In our everyday dealings in life, God seeming to be distant is more a reflection on our own state of being with regards to God than his to us.

[6 : 09] Our unbelief or our lack of faith in God in whatever difficult situation we're in can make us think this way. But for the believer especially, we must never forget Jesus' words in the second half of John chapter 4, which should be on page 1082.

And I'll just read a few verses from verse 15. So, Jesus said, If you love me, keep my commands.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. And jumping down to verse 23, Jesus replied, Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.

My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own.

[7 : 34] They belong to the Father who sent me. So, for the Christian, the almighty, infinite, God of the universe and beyond has made his home in us.

Jesus' words from the Father mean without a shadow of doubt that they come to us. They live with us. They're in us. And you can't get any nearer than that.

So, in the next section, David puts before the Lord, so from verses 2 to 11, he puts before the Lord the iniquity of the wicked that he sees all around him against not only the weak and innocent, but also towards God.

So, let's review some of the qualities of the wicked as exposed by David. They're arrogant.

They're boastful. They're greedy. Proud. They have an enmity to God. They're evil-tongued.

[8 : 47] And they're murderous. And there's certainly more that could be taken from what David's written down. And how does he describe the victims?

They're weak. Innocent. Helpless. Crushed. Murdered. So, we'll next look at the fallacies of the wicked person's view of God.

But it's also worth pausing to reflect whether we are ourselves are guilty of any of these condemnations. What were we like before God saved us through Christ?

We are still works in progress. So, we still fall and we still sin. And even whilst the Holy Spirit resides in us, what things might we recognize in ourselves in this psalm that demand repentance and forgiveness from God?

So, let's have a look at the wicked person's attitude towards God and the lies that they tell themselves.

[10 : 09] They include renouncing or reviling the Lord. Believing there is no God. Believing that they are somehow immortal and invincible.

They believe that God won't see their sin but they can hide their sin from God and also believing that God won't hold them to account.

In verse 3, the wicked man boasts about the cravings of his heart. He blesses the greedy and the unworthy and he reviles the Lord.

And reviles is a strong word. The wicked man pushes God away from his thoughts. His focus is purely on himself and he lets everyone know it.

His mantra is greed is good. In verse 4, we see how the wicked man's pride results in him not having any desire for God.

[11 : 15] His thoughts are crammed full of other things. To quote from Spurgeon's commentary on Psalm 10, he wrote, The only place where God is not is in the thoughts of the wicked.

And this is a damning accusation. For where the God of heaven is not, the Lord of hell is reigning and raging. In the ESV translation, verse 4 ends, All his thoughts are, there is no God.

So in all his dealings, he behaves as if there is no higher power. God's judgments are so far away, he believes that they are in another jurisdiction.

In verse 6, the wicked man deludes himself in thinking no harm will ever befall him. He is self-confident and assured.

And when we're young, it's very common for us to think and act as if we're never going to die, even as we see death all around us. And sometimes that continues as we get older, unless we've been given some kind of terminal diagnosis from a doctor.

[12 : 29] It's very common for us to not genuinely consider our own mortality. We may believe it won't happen to us, or that it's decades or years away.

Ultimately, none of us know when our time is up. In one sense, it's like not knowing the time of Jesus' return. We must live our lives expecting him to return today, but we must also plan ahead sufficiently so that we can live the lives God has given us for his glory.

So we must be ready to meet our maker. We can only do that if we acknowledge our own mortality, our own weakness, our sinfulness, and acknowledge his immortality, his power, his holiness, his goodness, and his grace through Christ Jesus.

There's an irony hearing those that don't believe in God call out to him when something happens that does shake them, or when someone does do them harm. It is a natural instinct to call out and pray to God, even for those that don't follow Christ or try to live a godly life.

In verse 11, the wicked man says to himself, God will never notice. He covers his face and never sees.

[13 : 54] But God sees all. And there's so many Bible verses we could look at. Proverbs 15, verse 3 is one. It says, The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

And in verse 13, as I jump slightly outside the section, the psalmist cannot get his head around why the wicked man should revile God and delude himself into thinking that God won't call him to account.

So the wicked man lives his life basing his actions and deeds, his motives and greed on this sandy foundation of lies, content to ignore God, and treat him with contempt, enabling him to think that his praying on the weak and innocent will be without consequence.

So in the next section, verses 12 to 15, David is calling the Lord to action. Arise, Lord, lift up your hand, O God.

Do not forget the helpless. And he calls on the Lord in verse 15 to break the arm of the wicked man, thus rendering him unable to enact his wickedness and harm on the weak and helpless.

[15 : 20] David reminds himself in verse 14 that God does see the trouble of the afflicted and does consider their grief, that he is the helper of the fatherless.

He reminds himself in verse 15 that God is able to take to account the evildoer for the wickedness that they have tried so hard to conceal. So what are the home truths that David has spelled out so far in the psalm?

Well, that God is not far off because he's everywhere and he is with us. God is aware of everything that happens. He knows everything.

God will hold everyone to account because God is just. And God does care for the afflicted. We read earlier in John 14 that the Holy Spirit makes his home with those that God has saved.

He is with us through affliction and grief. He understands. Let's turn to Romans 8 and I'll read verses 26 to 30.

[16 : 32] It should be on page 1135. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

And those he predestined, he also called. Those he called, he also justified. Those he justified, he also glorified. Paul goes on to write in verse 35, Many a believer suffers at the hands of wicked men.

However, these wicked men are used by God to further his own plans and purposes. The wicked will receive from God what is due to them. God will judge, and there's no way around that.

[18 : 14] We've been going through the letter to the Philippians during our Sunday evenings this term, and one of the main themes is suffering, especially at the hands of men. Sometimes God will let you see the fruits of the suffering.

For example, the Apostle Paul's suffering in chains resulted in the whole palace guard knowing that Paul was suffering, his suffering was because of his faith in Jesus Christ.

And Paul did see the spread of the gospel in his own lifetime. Sometimes God will not let you see the fruits of the suffering. Part of Job's suffering was having the tribe of Chaldeans steal his camels and put his workers to death.

Job lost his family at the hands of Satan, and he suffered much physical pain from Satan too. Whilst the Lord did restore Job afterwards, Job was none the wiser as to why all this suffering happened to him.

Christ himself was beaten up, mocked, tortured, rejected, and executed at the hands of wicked men. In Matthew 27, we read that just as Jesus was nearing death, he called out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[19 : 34] So, here we see God hide his face away from Christ. Christ was completely alone, suffering on the cross. He was separated from the Father's love.

And during that time, he received all the judgment and punishment that's for the sins due to us. He did this for all those that he has called, that he has justified and glorified, as we read in Romans 8.

So Christ knows what it feels like to the max. Thankfully, that wasn't the end. Christ was raised from the dead and went up to heaven to sit at God's right hand.

And he's interceding for us so that our sins are not counted against us, but against his own sacrifice on the cross. So, we're nearing the end of the psalm.

So, we're at these final verses, 16 to 18. David is declaring to all that God is the king forever and ever.

[20 : 41] And we can take heart that our saviour and redeemer, Jesus Christ, is king forever and ever. Amen. And David reiterates that God does hear the desires of the afflicted, that he is a source of encouragement for them, and that he also listens to their cries and laments.

Christ says in Matthew 11, in verses 28 to 30, Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

He defends those without a defender and those under the cough. Christ is our defender, our counsellor, our comforter, our saviour, our redeemer.

And the psalmist looks forward to the day when the nations will perish from his land, and mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror. Christ will return.

[21 : 55] He is our hope in life and death. We look forward to a new heavens and a new earth, where we will be resurrected in new bodies, and through Christ we will be absent of sin.

The wicked will not be present. And as we close, I must mention Christ's command to love our enemies in Matthew 5. It is a difficult thing to do at the best of times, and at the very least we should pray for them in earnest.

Since each of us was once an enemy of God, God desires none to perish, for every day God grants before Christ's return is a day of salvation for someone.

And not just for ordinary I'm a good person because I haven't murdered anyone or stolen anything folk, but also for murderers and thieves and worse.

So, I will finish with these words from Revelation 21. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

[23 : 02] For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. There was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Look, God's dwelling place is now among the people and he will dwell with them. They will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

And he who was seated on the throne and said, I am making everything new. And then he said, Write this down for these words are trustworthy and true. He said to me, It is done.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and end. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. And those who are victorious will inherit all this.

[24 : 11] And I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars, they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

And this is the second death. So take courage. God is with us even when it seems he's not. and when we're going through really difficult times at whoever's hands, whether it's man's hands or nature's.

Thank you. Amen. Thank you, Nate. Let's pray. Father, we do thank you for what we've heard.

We thank you that you're not absent in our suffering. You're not absent from this world of suffering. But thank you that like Nick has told us in the person of the Lord Jesus, you have entered into this suffering world, paid for our sin and bought at great cost a people for yourself who inhabit, will inhabit a remade world where there is no more sickness or suffering or death or grief.

Keep us going until that day. Keep us speaking of you, looking to you, living for you, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.