

“Why Standest Thou Afar Off, O LORD?”

A Psalm of Deliverance

Psalm 10

This psalm and Psalm 33 are the only psalms in the first book (through Psalm 41) without a title given. Psalm 10 could have originally been part of Psalm 9. The reason for that consideration is because it doesn't have a title and it continues the theme of that psalm.

Many of God's children have asked God, "Why?" In times of distress, it seems God is not there. When the ungodly people seem to never have troubles, and in fact, create problems, it seems God's not there. Why? What is it that makes us ask that? Why does it seem the wicked of this earth prosper?

The answer is not given in so many words, but I believe it is implied in verse one. The reason the wicked are what they are, and seemingly prosper, is because God does, in effect, stand afar off – He lets the sin nature take its course in them. The end result will be they'll reap what they sow – either here or in eternity future (or both).

The Geneva Bible note on verse one makes a good comment: "As soon as we enter into affliction, we think God should help us, but that is not always his due time." What we can be sure of is that He is always there for us, and He will deliver in His time.

Deuteronomy 4:7

⁷ For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

Psalm 46:1

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Philippians 4:5

⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

So, what are we to do when all around us seems in despair? The answer is the same today as it has always been – trust God to do what He deems best with the enemies of the cross and be faithful to Him.

This psalm is divided in to two parts – verses two through eleven (2-11) make up the first part and verses twelve through eighteen (12-18) the second.

I. DESCRIPTION OF “THE WICKED” – vs. 2-11

A. His outlook on others – vs. 2-3, 8-10

We need to be careful when we read texts like this in the Bible that we don't apply them too specifically to things we want them to fit. Even though we can make a case to apply the evilness of government and the policies they enact, this is broader than that. This speaks of the enemies of God and His Word, no matter who they are or where they are.

1. He abuses the poor to get ahead – vs. 2, 8-10.

a) By “poor” (עָנִי) is meant the afflicted – “It refers to those who are suffering, in a state of poverty, oppression, misery from various causes...” (Zodhiates)

b) Vs. 2 – they actively make plans, scheme (“devices” – מְזִמָּה) to take advantage of the poor to better themselves. The prayer

by the psalmist is that God would use the very “device” they had devised for the poor against themselves.

- c) Verses eight through ten (8-10) show the depths of depravity that the wicked will go to cause those they deem weaker or inferior to themselves harm and destruction.

The word for “poor” (חֲלָלָה) in verses eight and ten is a different one than in verses two and nine. The only time this word is used in the Hebrew Old Testament is in this psalm – verses 8, 10, and 14). This word means unhappy, unfortunate. “It indicates a person who is the object of a wicked person’s hatred and evil plans” (Zodhiates). Translated as “poor,” this word points to the actions taken by the wicked on the afflicted more than it does on the state of the poor themselves.

- 2. He seeks the praise of his peers at any cost – vs. 3.

B. His outlook on God – vs. 4-5, 11

- 1. He has no desire for God or His will – vs. 4.

Isaiah 59:1-3

¹ Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

³ For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have

spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

Isaiah 59:7

⁷ Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.

Romans 1:21

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Romans 1:28

²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

2. He has no fear of God's judgment – vs. 5.

The wicked consider the poor to be his enemies, and in so doing he can justify his hatred for them, and his actions towards them.

3. He thinks God doesn't care what he does – vs. 11.

C. His outlook on himself – vs. 6-7

1. He feels invincible – vs. 6a.

"He hath said in his hear, I shall not be moved..."

2. He has a great deal of pride – vs. 6b-7.

II. DELIVERANCE FROM "THE WICKED" – vs. 12-18

A. Deliverance comes from God Himself, not other men – vs. 12-13.

Psalm 3:7

⁷ Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Psalm 7:6

⁶ Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

Psalm 9:19

¹⁹ Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

1. Vs. 12 – the word for "humble" (עָנָה) is of the same root as the word for "poor" in verse two. This word, used objectively (where "poor" is used subjectively), refers to those who are suffering, in a state of poverty, oppression, misery, in this case as used here, by the rich and powerful that think they are untouchable and abuse those they feel are beneath them. The word carries the idea of our English word "depressed" because of the crushing force that that oppression has on our mind.
2. The prayer by the psalmist is that God "lift up" His hand against the wicked – speaks of judgment and deliverance.
3. Verse thirteen (13) goes back to verses six and eleven (6, 11) and shows that the wicked thinks he's gotten away with

persecuting the poor – that God doesn't care, and in this case, He won't even seek out, or investigate the wicked for their actions (the sense of the Hebrew for "require" – דָּרָשׁ).

B. Deliverance comes in the form of judgment upon "the wicked" – vs. 14a, 16.

1. Vs. 14a – "Thou hast seen it" – means more than just "seeing" what they are doing – it carries the idea that the sight will result in action.

Proverbs 15:3

³ The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Jeremiah 16:17

¹⁷ For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.

Jeremiah 23:24

²⁴ Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

Hebrews 4:13

¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

1 Peter 3:12

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

2. Vs. 16 – the fact that “the LORD is King” points to the principle of judgment upon those that are His subject and that deserve that judgment. Ultimately, in a final form, this happens at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Jeremiah 10:10

¹⁰ But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

Daniel 6:26

²⁶ I [Darius] make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

1 Timothy 6:15–16

¹⁵ Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

¹⁶ Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

C. Deliverance comes to those who put their faith and trust in God – “the poor and humble” – vs. 14b, 17-18.

“The poor committeth himself unto thee...”
(vs. 14b)

The word for “commit” (עָזַב) means to loosen, and as it is used here it means to loosen

ourselves of all that would distract us from being used of the Lord and leaving it with Him. We are "turning loose" of it.

Psalm 55:22

²² Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

1 Peter 5:7

⁷ Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Give Him the Reins

In the horse and buggy days, a man was driving with his wife along a dangerous road. At a very narrow place the wife became frightened and seized the rein nearest to her. Her husband quietly passed her the other rein and let go. Then more frightened than ever she said, "Oh, don't you let go!" He answered, "Two people cannot drive one and the same horse; either I must drive or you must." Then she gave him the reins and he drove safely past the danger.

Conclusion: God hates wickedness and pride, and although it seems He allows it to go on (which He will at times), He will judge the wicked.

That's the deliverance here. When all the world seems to prosper at our hands, we need to stay true to God and trust Him, for He will see us through.