

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study guide is to facilitate the study of Psalm 10 as a supplement to the sermon. It is based on my (Michael's) study and meditation on the psalm. This handout can be used for personal study or community group conversation. (I hope you join a group!)

PSALM 10:1-18 ESV

1 Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? 2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. 3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD. 4 In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God." 5 His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them. 6 He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity." 7 His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity. 8 He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; 9 he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. 10 The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might. 11 He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it." 12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. 13 Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"? 14 But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. 15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none. 16 The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land. 17 O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear 18 to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

STRUCTURE

- I. Lament about God's inaction toward the oppressor (10:1-11)
 - a. Desperation of the Psalmist (10:1)
 - b. Nature of the oppressor (10:2-11)
 - i. Arrogant invulnerability (10:2-6)
 - ii. Covert cruelty (10:7-11)
- II. Petition for God to act against the oppressor (10:12-15)
 - a. Petition for God to act (10:12)
 - b. Lamentation that God has not yet acted (10:13)
 - c. Affirmation that God does act (10:14)
 - d. Stronger petition for God to act (10:15)
- III. Affirmation of God's providence toward the weak (10:16-18)
 - a. Only God is eternally sovereign (10:16)
 - b. Our sovereign king defends the weak (10:17-18)

GENERAL COMMENTARY:

Psalm 10 was almost certainly a companion to Psalm 9, with the two being originally conjoined. I say this for the following reasons: (1) This is how it is portrayed in the Greek Translation of the Old Testament, commonly called the Septuagint; (2) Psalm 9 begins an acrostic poem (each verse began with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in immediate succession), but Psalm 10 completes the acrostic; (3) Psalms 9 and 10 address the common theme of injustice.

Despite their common origin, Psalms 9 and 10 vary greatly in mood. Psalm 9 is primarily celebratory of God's justice, while Psalm 10 is a lament about man's injustice. Both psalms contain elements of lament, and both contain elements of celebration, but the mood in both is different. One application for us in this is that we must maintain a proper balance of lament and celebration. If we are too mournful about injustice, we lose heart; if we

are to triumphalistic, we ignore it. We need the whole Psalter to become whole worshipers. In fact, even within Israel's laments, there is always a return to celebration, lest we lose heart.

Regarding the internal structure of Psalm 10, it begins with a question that makes a statement. The Psalmist feels as though God is far away and hidden (10:1). In the subsequent verses we find out why: because of the oppressor. There are many kinds of evil, but oppression is the abuse of power. Verses 2-11 offer a character profile of the oppressor; not much has changed in three thousand years.

Verses 2-6 and verses 7-11 both end with the internal speech of the oppressor: "He says in his heart, 'I shall not be moved...' (10:6); "He says in his heart, 'God has forgotten'" (10:11). This repetition marks an internal division between two halves of the oppressor's character profile. The 10:2-6 half focuses on his arrogant invulnerability. Notice the theme of pride: "arrogance" (2), "boasts" (3), "pride of his face" (4), "as for all his foes he puffs (scoffs) at them" (5), "He says in his heart, 'I shall not be moved... I shall not meet adversity'" (6). The second half of the character profile spans from 7-11, and it focuses on the oppressor's covert cruelty. Observe the secrecy behind his cruelty: "deceit" (7), "ambush... hiding places... stealthily" (8), "lurks... ambush like a lion in his thicket... lurks... draws him into his net" (9). The oppressor does not just abuse his power to crush "the innocent" (8) and "helpless" (8, 10) and "poor" (9); he also does so secretly. On the surface, he is prosperous and popular. In truth, he is a snake and a scoundrel. The reason we need this character profile is so we can identify abusers.

Coming back to the broader context of verses 1-11: verse 1 begins with the question, "Why do you hide yourself?" while verse 11 ends with the internal speech of the oppressor: "He says in his heart, 'God... has hidden His face, He will never see it.'" Because of this "bookend," I view verses 1-11 as belonging to the same section: a lament about God's inaction toward the oppressor. The bookend helps us see that both the Psalmist and the oppressor view God as hidden. The conclusions they settle on are very different, however. The oppressor sees God's apparent hiddenness as a reason to be cruel; the worshiper sees God's apparent hiddenness as a reason for prayer.

The prayer/petition section begins in verse 12 and ends in verse 15. The first and last verse are both a prayer for God—who has thus far seemed inactive—to act decisively. The petition in verse 15 is stronger than that verse 12. Furthermore, the question of verse 1 is repeated, but rather than giving way to lament, it leads into strong affirmations of God's goodness (14). All of this points to a growing confidence in God—the result of lamenting in faith.

The Psalm concludes with an affirmation of the everlasting sovereignty of God's goodness—which He directs toward the care of weak and vulnerable people—in contrast with the temporary oppression of men and nations. The Psalmist's hope is realized gradually as God has, throughout history, brought oppressors to justice. Where is the Roman Empire? Or the Assyrian Empire? One by one, they crumble, as do individuals who perpetuate abuse.

Nevertheless, there will always be oppression until Jesus returns. Only then will God's defense of the fatherless and the poor and the helpless be made perfect. Only then will "wickedness" be called "to account till you find none" (10:15), and until "man who is of the earth may strike terror no more" (10:18).

In the midst of widescale abuse of power, we should learn from the Psalmist how first to respond. When we go to Him with our laments, prayerfully processing our pain with Him, He gives us hope that one day He will act. And He gives us wisdom to know that His apparent hiddenness is not reason to live as we please (like the oppressor), but rather, to pray.

Historically, Psalm 10 has been interpreted as a typological foreshadowing of the Antichrist:

- Spurgeon: "There is not, in my judgment, a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the works, the words, the feelings, and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fulness, and light, as this Psalm... This Psalm, therefore, is a type, form, and description of that man, who, though he may be in the sight of himself and of men more excellent than Peter himself, is detestable in the eyes of God; and this it was that moved Augustine, and those who followed him, to understand the Psalm of ANTICHRIST."
- E. W. Bullinger: "These two Psalms (9 and 10) are linked together by an irregular alphabet running through, and thus combining the two... The figure tells us that we are to connect these two Psalms together... and that their subject is one: viz.: 'the man of the earth' (10:18), the Antichrist; whose days, character, and end they give." Bullinger then notes that the Hebrew phrase "times of trouble" occurs only in these two places (9:9; 10:1), and that it refers to the reign of the Antichrist.

VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY:

1 Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

—The opening questions perform the following functions:

- They label the genre of the Psalm: it is not a thanksgiving psalm (Ps. 100) or royal psalm (Ps. 72) or wisdom psalm (Ps. 73) or Torah psalm (Ps. 1). It is a lament.
- They depict the intense emotion of the Psalmist.
- They issue a complaint to God.
- The combination of complaint and intense emotion prompts God to action. It is like a screaming baby. Parents learn to discern the difference between “fake crying” and true desperation. The latter gets parents running. True desperation, when we bring it before God, moves Him in the same way.
- It is not the trouble itself, but the hiding of God’s face that causes consternation. Is this true of us? Or is our frustration really just rooted in bad circumstances?

—The Israelites grumbled in the wilderness, and it was sin. How is this different?

- There is a world of difference between complaining about God and complaining to Him. Complaining about God condemns Him to justify ourselves—like Job (Job 40:8). Complaining to God—even if it is a complaint about His perceived inaction—lays open our hearts before the only One who can comfort them.
- Lament Psalms, by their very structure, show us how to complain to God the right way. First, we complain. We don’t pretend all is well when it is not. God would rather hear from the “real me” than the “me” I think I should be. Second, we petition. We ask God to do something about our problem. This petition might be intermixed with some sort of affirmation—almost like a pep-talk for the soul—that God is not as absent as He seems. Finally, we praise. We praise Him for His past interventions; we praise Him in faith for a future intervention.

—“O LORD”: by invoking the personal name of God, Yahweh, the Psalmist’s complain comes across as ironic. He complains of God’s distance, yet addresses Him personally.

—When God seems absent, Spurgeon says (in his commentary), “The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire, and the Son of God is always walking in the midst of the flames when his holy children are cast into them.”

2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. 3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD. 4 In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God." 5 His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them. 6 He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity."

—Every verse in this section pertains to arrogance (see general commentary above). Why do “abuse” and “arrogance” so naturally link arms?

- Vertically, because the oppressor “curses and renounces the LORD” (3); because he “does not seek Him” and thinks, “there is no God” (4); he imagines that God’s judgment is “out of sight” (5); he thinks he can act with impunity (6).
- Horizontally, because “boasts of the desires of his soul” (3)—that is, he thinks more highly of his fleshly cravings than the good of others; he “puffs at” his enemies with dismissive contempt (5).
- If we are proud toward God, we will be proud—and cruel—toward people. Everything begins with our friendship with God. God’s friends are humble, contrite, broken-hearted. Because God’s friends are humble-hearted, their hearts break for those in humble circumstances. Rather than proudly distancing themselves from the hurt of others, they draw near. Romans 12:16: “Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”—again, pride distances us from the lowly; humility draws us near to them.

—Kidner: “Perhaps he protests too much: his blasphemy (3) and his repeated assurances to himself of his impunity (4, 6, 11, 13) betray a basic disquiet.”

—“hotly pursue” (2): the oppression of the wicked against the weak is relentless. It is not just a pursuit, but a hot pursuit, a high-speed car chase that stops at nothing.

—“let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised”:

- This can be translated as “they will be caught” (footnote, NASB). This translation makes more sense contextually, since the petitions come later in the Psalm.
- The point would be, then, that evil will get its deserved payback in time.

—“desires of his soul... one greedy for gain”: these two phrases describe the same thing. All of us have “evil desires” (James 1). But oppressors are driven by these. “their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things” (Phil. 3:19).

—“in pride of face, the wicked does not seek Him; all his thoughts are, ‘there is no God’:

- The abuser is a functional atheist, living as though God is not real.
- “pride of face”—what does the Psalmist intend by commenting on the face of the abuser?
 - Pride in the heart manifests in the face.
 - Spurgeon: “A brazen face and a broken heart never go together.” In contrast, broken people break for broken people.
- Spurgeon: “See the effect of pride; it keeps the man from seeking God. It is hard to pray with a stiff neck and unbending knee.”
- This Psalm often emphasizes the thoughts and internal speech of the wicked:
 - *4 In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”*
 - *6 He says in his heart, “I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity.”*
 - *11 He says in his heart, “God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.”*
 - *13 Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, “You will not call to account”?*
- Why does the Psalm speak so much of the thoughts of the wicked? Wickedness starts in the heart. Abusers fire their cruelty upon mankind from the cannon of an proud heart. Laments protect our hearts from this pride. They are the very act of humbling ourselves before a God who is “king forever and ever”—even in our suffering. In humbling ourselves, we maintain hope in God and broken-heartedness for hurting people; we thus become the solution, not the problem.

—The victims of the abuser are “the poor.” The “poor” are commonly sung about in Israel’s hymnbook. The Hebrew word (ani) used in Psalm 10 can be translated as “poor” or “needy” or “afflicted” or even “humble.” Some (out of many) examples:

- [Psa 9:12, 18 ESV] 12 For he who avenges blood is mindful of them; he does not forget the cry of the afflicted. ... 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.
- [Psa 10:2, 9, 12 ESV] 2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. ... 9 he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. ... 12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted.
- [Psa 12:5 ESV] 5 “Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the LORD; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.”
- [Psa 14:6 ESV] 6 You would shame the plans of the poor, but the LORD is his refuge.
- [Psa 34:6 ESV] 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.
- [Psa 37:14 ESV] 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose way is upright;

—The same word in Psalm 10:2 (ani) can be found in Zechariah 9:9, which is the famous passage about Jesus riding into Jerusalem, “humble (ani) and riding on a donkey.” Thus, the word can even take on a spiritual sense, much like “poor in spirit” (cf. Matthew 5:3).

—At times, David refers to himself as poor (“this poor man cried,” Ps. 34:6), even though he was wealthy. It seems, then, that the word has a broad range of meaning. It means not just “poor, financially,” but “poor, circumstantially,” and even “poor, spiritually”—which is to say, humble.

—Why are the Psalms so obsessed with the poor?

- To worship God is to love the poor. God so identifies Himself with the poor (Pr. 14:31: “whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker”) that to identify yourself with God is to love the poor (financially, circumstantially, spiritually).
- Even more fundamentally: worship comes from a place of being poor in spirit. Israel’s hymn book is a hymn book of the poor. It is the worship of those who feel, deep in their souls, a sharp dependence upon God. To not feel such for God is to sever the nerve of worship. We worship from a heart of holy desperation.

—“your judgments are on high, out of his sight”

- The Psalmist affirms that God judges. He knows that God only **appears** to stand far off.
- For the wicked, God’s delayed judgment emboldens.

- Kidner: "the earthbound man is too engrossed at ground level to see what is hanging over him."
—"his ways prosper at all times":
 - This seems to be half-observation and half-complaint. How can God "stand far away" while the proud oppressor abuses the wicked—and prospers? It can be disconcerting to observe that God allows abusers to prosper while the weak—who cry out to Him—get weaker. The problem is not new.
 - His prosperity comes not by hard work, but clever exploitation.
 - The Bible does not deny that the wicked sometimes prosper, "but trouble is in the income of the wicked" (Pr. 15:6). Regardless of how much they prosper now, their end is eternal impoverishment (cf. Ps. 73).
- "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity":
- The proud oppressor echoes the cries of the faithful, albeit for different reasons: "He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be moved" (62:6). The Psalmist finds his security in God—my rock, salvation and defense. The wicked find security in many things besides God, but especially Mammon—prosperity (5) and never meeting adversity (6).
 - "throughout all generations": the wicked abuser imagines that even after he is gone, neither he nor his descendants will pay the price. This makes me think of Ravi Zaccarias. He took his secrets to the grave, but not only did he have to face the Almighty; his children must bear the rotten shame of his last name.

7 His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

—Verses 7-11 mark a shift in the Psalm. Having depicted the arrogant invulnerability of the oppressor (10:1-6), he now shifts to a related theme: his covert cruelty (10:7-11).

—The actions of the abuser can be traced to his words. When Mark Driscoll was abusing his flock as an oppressive bully, the warning signs were everywhere. He said things like, "There is a trail of dead bodies behind the Mars Hill bus, and by God's grace, it'll be a mountain by the time we're done." Few paused to ask, "Why is a pastor of sheep talking about killing sheep 'by God's grace'?" Driscoll's mouth was filled with oppression because his actions were oppressive.

—Kidner: "One of his chief weapons is the tongue, whose varied techniques of intimidation and confusion are suggested in the long catalogue of verse 7."

—Trapp: "Cursing men are cursed men."

—"under his tongue": that these are not just in the mouth, but under the tongue, speaks of deceit. The "mischief and iniquity" that ultimately fill the air now lurk beneath the tongue like a soon-to-pounce predator.

—What floors me about this verse is how it is applied in Romans 3: 9 *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." 13 "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." 14 "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 in their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." 19 Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

- Scholars note that Romans 3:14 quotes the Greek translation of Psalm 10:7.
- The reason this floors me is that what David applies to wicked oppressors, Paul applies to all of us. We tend to think, "That abuser is so terrible"—and rightly so—but we who are "poor in spirit" must refuse to point the finger only at others. In a way that does not, even slightly, diminish the sin of the oppressor, we must in the same breath be willing to admit that we too are sold under sin apart from Christ. It is not just Adolf Hitler who is condemned before God. Apart from Christ, we all are. Some are more wicked than others, but "every mouth" is "stopped" and "the whole world... accountable to God" (Rom. 3:19-20).
- All of us have a mouth that is too often filled with curses and bitterness.
- The effect of Paul's quote on our soul should be that we refuse to become judgmental, even toward the wicked. There is nothing wrong with identifying their behavior and warning against it; these are good things. But as soon as I judge another, I elevate myself, and assume his own proud posture. Pride places me on the path to becoming the abuser I now judge.

8 He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; 9 he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. 10 The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might.

—On the covert cruelty of the abuser, see the general commentary above. Not only is he oppressive, but secretive.

—“villages”: not fortified cities.

—“helpless”:

- This Hebrew word can only be found here in Psalm 10. Kidner: “The pathetic state of his victims is shown in the reiterated word ‘hapless’ (‘helpless,’ ESV) or ‘poor wretch’ (NEB), found only here (10:8, 10, 14).”
- The term depicts one who is so completely down-and-out, he is without defense. The proud abuser lurks, and then seizes him. Because he is poor, nobody cares.

—The oppressor does not fight fair. He picks the weakest people, and if that wasn’t enough, he sucker-punches them. He does this not just once; abuse is his lifestyle.

—On a practical level, when I hear that someone has cruelly abused one person, I always doubt that it is just one victim.

11 He says in his heart, “God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it.”

—The repetition of verse 6, where the oppressor speaks in his heart about God, indicates the conclusion of the second stanza, and the movement to a new thought in verse 12.

—The Psalmist poetically portrays two contrasting responses to God’s apparent “hiddenness.” All of us must deal with this. The wicked respond to God’s apparent hiddenness by behaving as though He will never judge them. The righteous respond by lamenting it, praying for God to intervene, affirming what we know to be true, and celebrating God’s goodness even when it appears otherwise.

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. 13 Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, “You will not call to account”? 14 But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. 15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none.

—Kidner: “The why is still unanswered; so is the call to God to arise (12); but the trouble can be faced, for it is not faced alone: thou dost see (14).”

—Verse 12 begins the petition section of the Psalm. It starts with “Arise” and concludes with “Break the arm” (15).

—In between these two petitions, the Psalmist reasons about God’s disposition toward the oppressor. He leads with a question in verse 13, which matches the original questions in verse 1, only this time he has reached his conclusion: “you do see... you note mischief....” (14).

—“Arise” petitions God for intervention to replace His apparent distance. It addresses Him as though He is asleep—which reflects the Psalmist’s emotion, but not the reality of the situation, as we see in verse 14. The petition encourages us to pray in accordance with our feelings, to pour our hearts out before God like Hannah (see 1 Sam. 1).

—“lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted”:

- “lift up your hand” could be a request for God to physically act against the wicked by inflicting harm (see 2 Sam 20:21; Sheba lifted up his hand against King David), but I don’t think that is most directly the thought of the Psalmist here.
- The parallel to this expression is “forget not the afflicted.” The prayer for God to lift His hand is the manner in which He is asked to remember the afflicted.
- We see the word “hands” in verse 14 to match the word “hand” in verse 12. It is the same Hebrew word (yad) in each verse. God lifts His hand in order to take into His hands the “mischief and vexation” of the wicked.
- Hands are agents of activity. As a figure, they communicate God taking justice into His hands—for the oppressed, against the oppressor. Whether or not physical harm is included in this, we can’t say with certainty. We can infer, however, that the oppressor will suffer at the “hand” of the God of justice.

—“But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation”:

- The wicked has been saying that God does not “see” his mischief (11), but God does see—and takes “note.”

- This latter expression that God takes “note” makes me picture the names of every oppressor and abuser, spelled out on a list, along with all their wicked deeds done in secret. One day—either in this life or the next or both—abusers will pay a price far heavier than any “benefit” they received in their heyday.
 - “vexation” can be translated “provocation” or “indignation.” The fiery, raging mischief of the oppressor will one day meet the fiery wrath of God.
- *to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless.*
- This is why the Psalms are so focused on the poor and needy! They are the ones who commit themselves to God. Those who feel desperate cry out to Him; those who proudly strut never cry.
 - “helpless”: again, this word appears, which only occurs three times in the Bible, and all of them in Psalm 10. It communicates the utter extreme of helplessness.
 - “have been...”: God has a history of helping the weak and needy.
 - “helper of the fatherless”:
 - Who could be more helpless than an orphan? And who could be more cruel than the abuser of orphans?
 - The word “fatherless” occurs also in verse 18.
 - Other Psalms that speak of orphans and the God of orphans:
 - [Psa 68:5 ESV] 5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.
 - [Psa 82:3 ESV] 3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
 - [Psa 94:6 ESV] 6 They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless;
 - [Psa 146:9 ESV] 9 The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer

- This is not a request for God to literally snap bones; it is a request for God to break the power of the wicked.
 - His prayer for intervention is a prayer for the protection of the innocent through the breaking of the abuser’s power. As long as the abuser has power, the innocent suffer. It is not until he is powerless that the abuse will cease.
 - The parallel expression—“call his wickedness to account till you find none”—envisages intervention *as judgment*. This can be fulfilled in time, as God topples the thrones of wicked men; it is fulfilled at the end of time, when God finally judges the earth and ends oppression forevermore.
 - Ross: “This may not seem like an appropriate prayer for New Testament believers; nevertheless, if believers pray for the LORD to come quickly, they are calling for him to come and judge the world and remove wickedness entirely.”
 - While it is never appropriate to pray for revenge (Matt. 5; Rom. 12), the Psalmist is praying for God’s justice. There is probably a fine line here. If I have been personally wronged and pray for justice, there is a good chance I’m actually praying for revenge. I should tread carefully. For me, the safest “justice” prayer is, “Let your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
- Spurgeon: “It is not a little worthy of note, that very few great persecutors have ever died in their beds: the curse has manifestly pursued them, and their fearful sufferings have made them own *that* divine justice at which they could at one time launch defiance.”
- Herod died because he was struck down by an angel and eaten by worms (Acts 12); it is testified by history that death visited him suddenly and in excruciating pain. We can say the same for many biblical villains: Agag, Jezebel, Haman, Judas, and many more.
 - We can also say the same for other historical villains: Mussolini was shot, Hitler committed suicide while on the run, Saddam Hussein was hung, Osama bin Laden was blasted with machine guns in his hideout.

16 The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land. 17 O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear 18 to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

- The Psalm concludes with an affirmation of God’s justice, which lasts eternally, and man’s oppression, which will end shortly.
- In times of lament, it is important to remind ourselves of what we know to be true, even if it appears otherwise.

—It is not just that Yahweh will one day be king; He IS king, forever and ever. Against all apparent evidence—the gross abuse of hapless orphans while abusers grow rich—God is king, even over oppression. —Yahweh has always been king over the whole earth, but Jesus became the “mediatorial” king over earth. This means that Yahweh-in-the-flesh, Jesus, fulfilled God’s original desire to rule the earth through man (Gen. 1:26-28).

—How can the Psalmist celebrate God’s sovereignty over suffering? Because a day of judgment is coming, after which suffering will cease.

—In the beginning, God created a world free from suffering and oppression, but sin cast us into the world we now live in. Therefore, God sent Jesus to reverse the curse of sin. He did not end suffering immediately, but He absorbed the worst of it, and He rose above it. Today He reigns, alleviating oppression through His hands and feet—the church. One day, He will return, and His reign will be uncontested.

—“you hear the desire of the afflicted”: He doesn’t just hear our prayers, but our desires.

—“you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear”:

- These are the two things we need while waiting on an answer to prayer. We need God to strengthen us while we wait, and we need God to incline His ear.
- As King, God hears the desires of the afflicted and strengthens them. He is not like the abusers who use their power to destroy. God has far greater power, yet He uses it to bless the weak.

—“to do justice.... So that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more”:

- People don’t like to talk about the judgment of God, but the Psalms celebrate it. A world without justice is a terrible world.
- There is justice in the world, but it’s a mixed bag since abusers still roam the streets. There is coming a day when only perfect justice will reign, though.
- The transition between our unjust world and the perfectly just world to come is marked by a Day of Judgment. Just like a doctor resetting a broken bone, God’s “reset” of this broken world will require some sudden shifts. We can’t have the world to come without a Judgment Day.
- E. W. Bullinger and others interpret “man who is of the earth” to be a typological pointer to the “man of sin” (2 Thess. 3), the Antichrist. It seems that a case can be made for this since the Psalm ends on an eschatological note—with the nations perishing and God bringing final justice.
- “man who is of the earth” establishes a contrast with God, who “is king forever and ever” (16) and whose “judgments are on high” (5). Even the most powerful abusers are just dust—and to dust they will return.