



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 10

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Introduction

- Because this psalm has no title of its own, and because it shares some similar themes with Psalm 9, some have thought that it was originally the second half of Psalm 9
- There are more reasons to doubt this than to believe it; this psalm rightly stands on its own as a psalm of lament at the apparent prosperity of the wicked
- The main theme seems to be the oppression and persecution of the wicked
- While in Psalm 9 the psalmist speaks about external enemies, in Psalm 10 he writes about the internal enemies who oppress the poor and the orphans, ignoring God's judgment



Introduction

- Some gave it the title of “The Cry of the Oppressed”
- This Psalm concentrates on the "heart" 6, 11, 13, as it declares that the wicked is proud, verse 6
- In contrast the humble heart which is a dwelling place for Christ
- In fact the proud heart has no place for Christ, for it is the throne of Satan, *"He (the wicked) has said in his heart, "God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see."* verse 11
- The pure heart sees God as His beloved Savior, while the wicked and defiled one believes God has forgotten his wickedness and consequently will not judge or examine him



Introduction

- The Occasion: Some see that this psalm was composed in general terms and not for a special historical event
- It represents a cry for help in times of persecution
- This Psalm is convenient for the persecuted, righteous believers suffering tribulation, wherever and whenever they may be
- It also describes the suffering church of Christ and the destiny of her wicked enemies
- But some scholars give this psalm a special historical origin and this could be any of the following occasions
- Saul's persecution of David



Introduction

- An invasion of Canaan by the Philistines
- Concerning Sanballat and other enemies during the Babylonian captivity (Nehemiah 4:1)
- The dreadful persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes at the time of Maccabees
- Some scholars consider that Psalms 9 and 10 express the groaning of the Church under the tribulation of the expected Antichrist, atheism and immorality, that will increase its ultimate sufferings



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Cry of the Oppressed 10:1
- The Characteristics of the Wicked and Oppressors 10:2-11
- God Helps the Oppressed 10:12-18



The Cry of the Oppressed 10:1

- The psalmist is asking why God is *afar off*, as one unconcerned about the humiliations given to His name, and the harms done to His people?
- Why, after delivering His people from their foreign enemies, does He not interfere to protect His true people from their domestic oppressors?
- The psalmist asked a question well known to those who follow God: the concern, the anxiety, over the apparent inactivity of God
- For many of the oppressed, in their pain, make a plea for judgment to be given



The Cry of the Oppressed 10:1

- “*Why ...? Why ...*” Two “whys” of lament
- The question “why” always signals a feeling of frustration or forsakenness
- The psalmist here shows his own impatience and despair
- God’s withdrawing his presence from His people is very significant to them at any time, but particularly in times of trouble
- They cannot bear when He stands *afar off* from them in their troubles



The Cry of the Oppressed 10:1

- They cannot bear when He withdraws His gracious presence from them, and defers help and assistance to them, and does not immediately and directly come and visit them
- They complain and they wonder *Why do You hide in times of trouble?*
- Isaiah said the same, *“Truly You are God, who hide Yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior”* (Isaiah 45:15)
- And so Job complains, *“When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him”* (Job 23:9)
- But God by His infinite essence and power is everywhere, and is never *afar off* from any of His creatures

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- This explains *why* the psalmist was so troubled by the apparent inactivity of God
- He sees the pride of wicked's heart which makes him forget God, despise the poor, and oppress others
- The *wicked* oppresses others either because they oppose or dislike his wicked ways, or that he may have more fuel for his pride or ambition
- The *poor* is the good man, who is commonly poor in this world's things, and is sensibly poor in spirit

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- The *wicked* man is the wicked one, the lawless one, the man of sin, and son of perdition, antichrist, the great persecutor of Christ's poor saints and faithful witnesses
- Ever since he has been in power; and which arises from the *pride* of his heart, he could not bear that any should refuse to pay reverence to him, contradict his will, or dissent from him
- Some understand the words, "*through the pride of the wicked the poor is burned*", or "*the poor burns*", which may be understood either literally, of the burning of the martyrs of Jesus in general or by antichrist which was foretold, that some of the saints should fall by flame, as well as by sword, captivity, and burn

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- Or it can be understood figuratively, of the poor saints burning with grief at the pride and wickedness of the man of sin, and with zeal for the honor and glory of God
- *Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised*, This was the prayer of the psalmist regarding the wicked
- He prays that their deceits be turned back on them
- In other psalms this is a confident expectation (such as Psalm 9:15); here it is a heartfelt prayer
- The wicked are boasting about what they can do in their own power

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- He glories in his very sins, which are his shame, and especially in the satisfaction of his desire, how wickedly he obtains it
- *He blesses the greedy*, As he applauds himself, so he commends others that eagerly pursue and get abundance of gain, though it be by fraud and violence, accounting such the only happy men
- So his judgment, as well as practice, is contrary to God
- Not only that he *persecutes the poor*, but he also sins against God *renounces the Lord*
- St. John Chrysostom comments “The psalmist laments that evil has so prevailed as to be something to be proud of and spoken openly about ... it is shameless ... and has others to applaud it.”

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- Anyone who *renounces the Lord* is sinful
- Yet the psalmist here puts the one who *does not seek God* and the one who does not think about God in the same category as the one who *renounces the Lord*
- Man commits these sins because of *his proud countenance*
- Ignoring God is an expression of our independence and perceived equality (or superiority) to Him
- The wicked will not seek the will of God
- He will not trouble himself to inquire whether they be just or unjust, pleasing or offensive to God

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- But, without any care or consideration, rushes into sin, and does whatever seems right in his own eyes
- This is describing a person who is so caught up in himself that he does not realize a need for God
- This person thinks he has everything under control himself
- Pride goes before a fall
- In verse 5, the psalmist protested to God; not only did the wicked man seem to enjoy constant prosperity, but he did so because God's *judgments are far above, out of his sight*

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- The thoroughly wicked person who neither fears God nor regards man, pursues the way which he has set himself, without deviation
- He is full of lust and unholy desires
- There is nothing to hinder him - no fear of conscience, no distrust of himself, no fear of other men's opposition
- *Your judgments are far above, out of his sight,* He is so blinded with sin, that he cannot see the operations of God's hand
- He insults God and despises men
- Perhaps the psalmist is saying “If only God would demonstrate His judgment to this wicked man, he would change his ways.”

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- This may sound like a complaint against God and in some sense is; yet it should be seen more as complete confidence in God's rule and authority
- The psalmist recognized that the wicked could never prosper unless God allowed it; so he appealed to God to not allow it
- *As for all his enemies, he sneers at them,* The poor saints are looked upon by antichrist as weak creatures, and all their efforts against him and his kingdom are treated with contempt
- He blows upon them, and suggests that he can cause them to fall with the breath of his mouth, or strike them down with a straw or a feather

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- He presumes in his carnal self-confidence to use language which the righteous man uses in faithful dependence upon God, *"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved."* (Psalm 16:8)
- The wicked man, who has always prospered, thinks that his present prosperity makes him secure for the future
- He has no anticipation of coming change; he supposes that his *"house will last forever, and his dwelling-place to all generations."* (Psalm 49:11)
- *I shall never be in adversity,* The wicked man has no thought of dying - he thinks he will be exempt from calamity

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- The psalmist examined and exposed the sins of the wicked man, who is not afraid of his enemies
- There is pride and sin in the wicked man's *heart*, in his *mouth*, and *under his tongue*
- *His mouth is full of cursing*, There is not only a little evil there, but his mouth is full of it
- Of oaths and blasphemies against God; of reviling and insult toward other men, especially those that are good, and those that stand in his way, and hinder his wicked plans
- *Under his tongue*, Alluding to serpents, who have little bags of poison under their teeth; Psalm 140:3

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- The psalmist continued his examination of the wicked man
- Despite the bragging about his wickedness, it seems that he is as cowardly as he is cruel
- *He sits*, Not within the villages, but in the ways leading to them, as robbers used to do
- Key to the nature of this wicked man is secrecy
- *In the secret places*, That he may avoid the shame and punishment of men
- Another characteristic of the wicked man is seen in how he is a persecutor and oppressor, focusing his violence against the weak, *the innocent...the helpless*

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- *His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless*, His eyes will secretly watch, or keep a lookout for them
- His eyes, or that he himself will be hidden, that he may observe the goings of those whom he intends to make his victim
- Instead of being a helper to the poor, he is likely to take every advantage of them, and deprive them of all their rights and comforts
- He is not honorable enough to openly fight those who might effectively fight back
- Most of the dealings of this kind of man cannot take place out in the open; he must hide his evil deeds

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- This is a land of robbers and thieves; we have to be prepared, *"Put on the whole armor of God"* Ephesians 6:11, for every shrub or tree hides an enemy
- Everywhere there are traps laid for us
- The object here in verse 9 is merely to illustrate the thought in the previous verse, by an allusion to a lion and a hunter
- The lion is concealed, but is on the look out, and when his victim passes near his den, he suddenly leaps upon it and captures it
- So it is the wicked man carefully lays his plans and conceals his purposes and is hidden

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- Suddenly he leaps upon his victim, who is taken by surprise and has no power of defense or escape
- St. Augustine says, “By a lion in a den, he means one in whom both violence and deceit will work. For the first persecution of the Church was violent, when by proscriptions, by torments, by murders, the Christians were compelled to sacrifice: another persecution is crafty, which is now conducted by heretics of any kind and false brethren: there remains a third, which is to come by Antichrist, than which there is nothing more perilous; for it will be at once violent and crafty.”

The Characteristics of the Wicked 10:2-11



- The psalmist continues the same metaphor
- The lion squats down and gathers himself together that he may make the greater leap
- He did it all delighting in the thought that God *has forgotten* and would *never see* his wickedness against the poor and helpless
- In addition to the many sins against mankind, the wicked committed a blasphemy against God
- There is a great difference between the pain in the believer who fears *God has forgotten* (Psalm 10:1), and the sinner who vainly hopes and takes false comfort in the idea that *God has forgotten*

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- At this point the psalmist passes from description to supplication
- From verse 2 to 11 he has described the conduct, the attitude, and the very deepest thoughts of the wicked
- Now he speaks to God
- He simply called upon God to *take action*
- He calls on God to remember those who were oppressed and wronged by the wicked
- Lord, this wicked man finds comfort in the idea that You won't do anything against him
- *O God, lift up Your hand*, St. Augustine says, "Let Thy power be made manifest."

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- This verse is the constant cry of the Church
- She will never cease until her Lord shall come in His glory to judge all her opponents
- *Why do the wicked renounce God?*
- The psalmist answered his own question in the next line
- The *wicked renounce God* because they say in their *heart* that God *will not require an account*
- God's long-suffering, instead of leading such a one to repentance, only hardens him in his iniquity

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- Upon further reflection, the psalmist recognized that God *has* indeed seen, because He sees and cares about the *trouble and grief* of the poor and helpless
- Here is the confidence of the psalmist in God's judgments
- Faith triumphs for it rests on the unchanging character of God, Who never ceases to observe all that goes on upon the earth
- He most certainly *will repay* the wicked for their sins
- *The helpless commits himself to You*, They give themselves up entirely into the Lord's hands

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- Submitting their wills to His power, they rest assured that He will direct all things for the best
- God will indeed answer the *helpless* and be the *helper of the fatherless*
- *Break the arm of the wicked*, Break their strength, the instrument of their violence and cruelty
- Deprive them of all power to do harm
- *Seek out his wickedness until You find none*, Until it is all punished; until there has been a full recompense
- The Psalmist looks forward to a time when the wicked will be powerless to do harm

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- David began with almost despair in his *times of trouble*; he ends with calm confidence in the reign of the *Lord* as an eternal *King*
- It ends with a song of thanksgiving to the great and everlasting King
- He has granted the desire of his humble and oppressed people, has defended the fatherless, and punished *the nations* who trampled upon his poor and afflicted His children
- *forever and ever*, Therefore His people's circumstance is never hopeless, seeing He ever lives and reigns to help them, and therefore He will help them in His time sooner or later

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- *The nations have perished out of His land*, Remembering the past victories of God against the cruel enemies of His people gave the psalmist greater confidence regarding the present help of the Lord
- The enemies will be completely destroyed
- *You have heard the desire of the humble... You will prepare their heart... You will cause Your ear to hear*, This continues to express the calm confidence of the psalmist
- God will not abandon the poor and needy, but will help and bless them

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- *You have heard*, God has not permitted His tempted and afflicted followers to pray in vain
- *the desire of the humble*, is contrasted with ‘the desire of the wicked’ in verse 3, which in spite of his boasting is destined to end in disappointment (Psalm 112:10)
- With a wonderful phrase – *You will prepare their heart* – the psalmist reminds us that the spiritual preparation of the heart is a great gift, an answer to prayer, and a mark of God’s blessing
- *You will cause Your ear to hear*, God has an ear to hear the prayers of His people

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- His ears are open to the cries of righteous ones
- He will give an answer in His own time and way
- These words express the faith of the psalmist in God being a God hearing and answering prayer
- *To do justice...that the man of the earth may oppress no more,*
The psalmist ends with assurance of God's *justice* applied to the wicked
- He will put an end to the rage of the persecutors

God Helps the Oppressed

10:12-18



- He is but *a man of the earth*, a man *out of* the earth, and therefore cruel and weak and hastening to the earth again
- Why then should we be afraid of the anger of the oppressor when he is but *man who will die, a son of man who will be made like grass?* Isaiah 51:12
- He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth
- What began with a sense of despair in *times of trouble* has ended with calm confidence in God's *justice* and victory



Discussion

- How can all believers relate to David's cry in verse 1?
- What is possibly the reason that God does not always immediately answer our prayer?
- What does tribulation bring that is beneficial to us?
- In verse 4, what keeps this person from humbling himself to receive the Lord?



Discussion

- How does a wicked life begin?
- What should a Christian do when things are bad?
- What personal reasons might a person have for refusing to believe in the existence of God?