

Special Focus Session

January 21, 2024

A CRY FOR JUSTICE

Psalm 10:1-4, 12-18

Have you ever been stuck in a bad situation, knowing that someone you love (and who loves you) is able to help you out...but simply won't? It's a strangely hurtful thing. It can leave us feeling frustrated, disappointed, hurt, or even betrayed. In this text, the psalmist is feeling those same things. He sees a dark and sinful world that is desperately "in trouble" (v. 2), yet even God—who promises His presence—seems far away. How can this be? As the psalmist wrestles with these thoughts, three key themes emerge.

Absurdity (vv. 1-4). The first verse is not so much a rebuke of God as it is an expression of the writer's frustration. The psalmist uses the respectful title "Lord" to emphasize the absurdity of his dilemma. His God is Yahweh, the loving, redeeming, promise-keeping LORD. So how is it that He stands aloof from the desperation of His servant(s) and doesn't intervene? To "hide in times of trouble" doesn't mean that God is running away, but rather that He can't be found. The verses that follow express the absurdity the psalmist feels. While God seemingly stands idly by, the innocent are being attacked by the wicked. There is a personal aspect to this psalm, apparently borne by the writer himself, but the applications stretch to other victims, and to life in general. Notice the wicked actions aimed at the innocent: they are relentless; they are pursuing; they are scheming; they are cunning (v. 2). Notice their actions aimed at God: they are boasting; they are cursing; they are despising (v. 3); and they are arrogantly defying Him and ultimately denying Him (v. 4). No wonder the psalmist is upset! The wicked attack God's people and then defy God Himself. How can He simply stand by and let that happen? For reflection: *Some believers say that we should never question God. What does this psalm teach us about that? When is it wrong to question God? When is ok to do so?*

Accountability (vv. 12-15). Verse 4 ends with, "The wicked arrogantly thinks: 'There is no accountability.'" Why? "Because God does not exist." Adrian Rogers used to say, "An atheist can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman!" For one to acknowledge God means one must then be accountable to Him. Hence, it's easier to just deny Him. But the psalmist knows better. His plea to God is threefold. First, he asks for revelation. "Rise up" and "lift up your hand" are pleas for God to demonstrate that He is not standing far off and that He is not hidden in the shadows. They are pleas for God to reveal Himself. Second, there is a cry for remembrance. Verse 12 says, "Do not forget the afflicted." This is an appeal for God's compassion. Third, there is a plea for retribution. Even though verse 15 is metaphorical, the imagery is still quite brutal: "Break the arm of the wicked" and "call the wickedness into account until there is none left" are pretty clear indicators of the indignation the writer feels. It also reveals the psalmist's underlying faith that God is indeed present and will indeed exert divine justice where earthly justice doesn't seem to exist. For reflection: *Verse 14 seems oddly out of place. What do you think is meant by "You Yourself have seen trouble and grief?" When did that happen? Do you see a Messianic hint here?*

Eternity (vv. 16-18). It's interesting that the psalm circles back to the same LORD mentioned in verse 1. There, He was far off and hidden. If a king, then one closed up behind palace walls. Here, He is eternal (v. 16), listening carefully to His humble servants (v. 17), and promising needed help and a just deliverance (v. 18). Verse 18 is meant to be comprehensive. "The fatherless" are orphans; those without security in the present or much hope for the future. The "oppressed" are those forced to submit to people and powers they disagree with and likely despise. Ultimately, the justice of the

LORD will prevail, and the “terror” of oppression will cease. For reflection: *What kinds of oppression exist in our world today? What can be done now—in the present—to alleviate the suffering we see while awaiting God’s ultimate justice?*