

Selected Psalms

1. Psalm 10

Aim: To help us not lose heart when we see the wicked afflicting the humble and helpless.

The complaint of the righteous (vv. 1-2)

What is the psalmist's complaint? (v. 1)

He complains that the Lord is turning a blind eye to those who are afflicted; that when the afflicted are especially in need, the Lord is nowhere to be found.

What does the psalmist identify as the trouble that the afflicted are going through? (v. 2)

The wicked (the ungodly) actively pursue and seek to harm the helpless. They desire to take advantage of them, and to crush them, using any means possible.

Can you relate to the cry of the psalmist? Do you ever personally feel the Lord being "far-off"?

We can feel the Lord is far-off when we pray about things, perhaps the sickness of a loved one, or financial trouble, or being put-down by others, because the Lord doesn't seem to be doing anything.

When we think of our present world can we relate to the psalmist's cry?

We have many parts of the world where there are terrible injustices. We also live in a society where the wicked seem to get away with things, and the innocent seem to suffer. These things can cause us to cry out and wonder what God is doing, and why doesn't He act.

The boast of the wicked (vv. 3-11)

In verses 3 and 4 what do we learn about the heart of the wicked?

The wicked are full of pride, arrogance and greed, and they have no fear of God; indeed, they even convince themselves that "there is no God". Atheism is not a recent phenomenon.

In what way is this true today?

We have many, fuelled by evolution and human philosophy, who openly spurn God and deny Him. Many others spurn God by the way they live for themselves, pursuing their desires with no thought of God.

What are some of the marks of the wicked man in verse 5-11?

They get away with things and prosper and then they boast about it; they speak arrogantly, cursing and deceiving and oppressing those about them; they go out of their way to take advantage of those who are weak for their own gain; they convince themselves that God does not see and are accountable to no one.

The plea of the righteous (vv. 12-15)

Even though the psalmist felt that God was distant, what did he do? (v. 12, 15)

He called on the Lord to break the power ("break the arm") of the wicked, and to help the afflicted.

What does the psalmist remind us in verses 13 and 14?

The boast of the wicked (that God doesn't see) is empty for the Lord sees everything. He sees the wickedness of the wicked and the injustices they commit, and the affliction of those who look to Him.

In Luke 18:1-8 what does Jesus teach us in this parable?

We, like the psalmist, are to continue to appeal to the Lord for justice, even when we feel like giving up. We must never forget that God will bring about justice, but we need to be patient until He does.

The confidence of the righteous (vv. 16-18)

What is the confidence of the righteous in the Lord? (vv. 16-18)

- That the Lord reigns as the sovereign king forever, and will cause the wicked to perish
- That the Lord does care; He hears the humble, He strengthens them and He executes justice for them

What triumphant cry will arise from the heart of the righteous one day? (Rev 15:2-4, 19:1-6)

One day in heaven we will rejoice in our God who will execute His righteous judgment upon the wicked, and vindicate His servants. Even though we may feel the Lord is distant, and doesn't act at times, let us assure our hearts that He will act. Let us persevere, confidently looking to the time when God will judge.

Summary: Persevere & pray, for the Lord sees and hears, and will act to vindicate the righteous.

Selected Psalms

2. Psalm 13

Aim: To encourage us to trust in the Lord even in times of great trouble.

The psalmist's pain (vv. 1-2)

Read vv.1-2. What question does the psalmist keep asking God and why?

The question “How long...?” occurs four times. It is not a request for information, but a cry of anguish and distress. He longs for relief from this time of pain and trouble; and he is desperate for it.

What is causing the pain being experienced by the psalmist? (Hint: there are three areas of pain)

- Firstly, there is pain with God. God is not responding to his distress. He feels that God has forgotten him and hidden His face (v.1) from him, in his time of need.
- Secondly, there is pain within himself. He has sorrow in his heart (v.2). He is plagued by the painful thought that God may have turned away and no longer cares, as well as the burden of facing his predicament alone and relying on his own counsel (v.2).
- Thirdly, there is pain from an enemy, who has gained the upper hand over him (v.2).

What do you think is the psalmist's greatest concern?

All three areas of pain are of concern, and they're all connected, but the possibility that God has forgotten him is the most painful. This is what he mentions first with great emphasis (“will you forget me forever?”).

Can the Lord forsake someone (especially in the OT)? (1 Sam 16:14; Psalm 51:11)

Under the old covenant, God could choose to leave a person (ie, king Saul), when a person failed to repent of their sins. But David, who had a heart after God, and who repented of his sins, always had the Lord with him. Even though he felt that the Lord had left him, the truth is, He hadn't.

Can God forsake us when we are in Christ? (Hebrew 13:5; John 14:16)

We, who are in Jesus and who live under the new covenant, have been given the Holy Spirit, and God has promised to never leave us or forsake us. How blessed we are! Although we may *feel* at times that the Lord does forget us, our feelings betray us. The truth is, He never will – not ever. Even when we sin and grieve God's Spirit, the Lord doesn't leave us, but we won't be enjoying fellowship until we put things right.

Why then does God allow trouble to come upon us so that we feel abandoned? (1 Pet 1:6-7)

God allows pain and trouble so that our trust in Him may be strengthened and purified. In such times, we have no option but to hang on to Him with everything we have.

The psalmist's plea (vv. 3-4)

Although God feels distant, what does the psalmist do? (v.3)

He doesn't give up in praying to the Lord. The Lord is still His God. But he longs for God to show him His presence (“enlighten my eyes”) by delivering him from his enemies and death.

What else does David plead in v. 4?

David does not want his enemies, who are also enemies of God, to rejoice. He pleads for the Lord to rescue him so that his enemies may be silenced and that God may be glorified. Note: If David should be overcome, then the enemy would not only rejoice over David, but over God as well.

The psalmist's trust and praise (vv. 5-6)

In verse 5 what does David express to the Lord?

David expresses how He trusts in the Lord's lovingkindness (mercy). He knows that deliverance (salvation) from the Lord is not dependent on his own goodness, but on God's mercy. David had such confidence in the Lord's mercy, that he rejoices in the midst of trials, in how the Lord would deliver him.

Compare verse 6 with the opening verse of the psalm. What has happened?

Initially, David felt abandoned and overwhelmed with pain and trouble. But now he ends with praise. As he prays, he reminds himself of who the Lord is and His great mercy. David praises God because of what he has done in the past (“has dealt bountifully”), giving hope and confidence for the future.

Are you able to have confidence in the Lord from the way He has dealt with you in the past?

Do you fully trust and depend on His great mercy toward you?

Summary: The Lord will never abandon His children, even though we may feel He has left us at times. He is also merciful and will not allow the enemy to overcome you with despair.

Selected Psalms

3. Psalm 18

Aim: To encourage us to take refuge in and to praise our almighty God who saves His people.

Intro: This is a psalm of David when he rejoices in the Lord and praises Him for delivering him from all his enemies, including Saul. Historically, this psalm is found in 2 Sam 22 - near the end of David's life.

David's Praise: Introduction (vv. 1-3)

What is David's heart like toward the Lord and why? (vv. 1-3)

David so loves the Lord; He sees the Lord as his strength, refuge and protector. Throughout David's life he experienced the wonderful blessing of God answering his prayers and delivering him again and again.

The Lord's deliverance (vv. 4-19)

What is David recounting and what did he experience? (vv. 4-6)

David recounts times in his life when he felt that he was going to die at the hands of his enemies, but he cried to the Lord who always hears him. (cf. how Saul and his army tried to kill David again and again).

How does David describe the Lord's action in vv. 7-15 after He had heard his prayer?

He speaks of the Lord coming down and displaying His great and awesome power over His creation in order to shatter the enemies of David. Consider God's great power: "the earth shook and quaked" (v.7), "fire from His mouth devoured" (v.8), "the blast of the breath of Your nostrils" (v.15). Our God is to be feared.

What did the great and awesome God do for David? (vv. 16-19)

The Lord, in love and mercy, reached down and rescued David from His enemies. With a tender hand the Lord took hold of him. David enjoyed the peace at the eye of the storm, while the enemies didn't.

The Lord's favour towards the blameless (vv. 20-36)

What characterises the person on whom the Lord's favour rests? (vv. 20-24)

The Lord rewards those who walk in His ways and who have a heart for Him (Acts 13:22). Note: God's favour is not obtained by outward actions, but from having a heart that loves and trusts in Him. From such a heart will flow a desire to please Him.

What does the Lord do for those who look to Him? (vv. 25-36)

The Lord deals righteously with us (vv. 25-26); He saves us (v. 27); He gives hope and strength (vv. 28-29, 32); He gives ability for victory (vv. 33-34, 36); and He is our shield and upholds us (v. 35).

In the midst of this section, what does David express about the Lord? (vv. 30-31)

There is no one like the Lord – not only is He the only God, but He is righteous in all His ways (Rev 15:3), His word is faithful and true (Isa 40:8), and He protects and strengthens those who take refuge in Him. The Lord will never disappoint (Rom 10:11).

The Lord's deliverance (vv. 37-45)

With confidence that the Lord heard his cry, how did David face his enemies? (vv. 37-42)

He faced his enemies with boldness and confidence, although previously he had felt overwhelmed and terrified (v. 4) by them. Because of the Lord, he was able to pursue, overtake and shatter his enemies.

Who does David credit his success to and what did his victories result in? (vv. 43-45)

He gives all credit to the Lord for his victories; without Him he couldn't do anything. The victories the Lord gave also caused people to submit to David because of the One who fought for David.

What do we learn in this psalm about the Lord's role and our role in having victory over enemies?

The Lord didn't need David's help (vv. 16-19) to bring about victory, yet He was pleased to make room for him (vv. 37-42), and to use him as His instrument. It's the same with us; God wants to work with us.

David's Praise: Conclusion (vv. 46-50)

What is David's testimony of the Lord, as he looks back over all the Lord's victories?

He declares that the Lord lives (He's alive and real and acts); that He is such a great rock and shelter; that He saves and rescues those who take refuge in Him; and that He is merciful and gracious to them.

What does David's experience of the Lord cause him to do?

It causes him to praise the Lord before all people. How much more we should! Why? (cf. 1 Pet 2:9-10)

Summary: The Lord is to be praised for He is a rock and shield to all who take refuge in Him.

Selected Psalms

4. Psalm 139

Aim: Help us appreciate God’s knowledge and love of us, and what our response should be to this.

God’s perfect knowledge of us (vv. 1-6)

What does the Psalmist say in regard to what God takes an interest in? (v. 1)

God takes an interest in *me*. He knows everyone, but especially *me*.

How does God find out about us? (v. 1)

God “searches” us; implied, is that God spends time examining us. It’s a deliberate act of God so that He might know us intimately and perfectly. How amazing that the almighty God should want to do that!

What things does God know about us? (vv. 2-4)

Everything! He knows all our mundane acts of getting up and lying down; He knows and understands all our thoughts. He knows all our paths. He knows and hears every word we speak, even before we say it. The Lord is “intimately acquainted” with all our ways; we are totally transparent to Him (cf. Matt 10:30).

What response should we have to all this? (vv. 5-6)

We should feel so overwhelmed but blessed that God goes out of His way to personally know us. God does this so that He can have an intimate relationship with us, and personally care for us, if we choose.

What does all this imply in regard to how we live?

God sees everything, so we shouldn’t try and hide things from Him; including our sin.

God’s presence all around us (vv. 7-12)

What do we learn in verses 7 to 10?

There is nowhere we can go, where God is not present (except hell). God, by His Spirit, is everywhere on earth, including in heaven and in sheol (place of the dead). Even if we should try and flee from God (like Jonah did), there is no place where God isn’t (He was even in the belly of the great fish to meet Jonah).

What comfort does this bring to the psalmist? (v.10)

Because God is everywhere, it means that God is always there to lead us and to take hold of our hand when we are in trouble or need God’s comfort and strength (cf. Heb 13:5-6).

What do we find emphasised in verses 11 and 12?

Even when we pass through the darkest hour of our life, God is still with us, and will never abandon us. Even our darkest hour is light to the Lord. He sees, He understands, He knows, and He’s there with us.

God’s creation of us (vv. 13-18)

In what way does God know us according to these verses? (vv. 13-18)

God knows us because He made us. He knows all about our character, our make-up, personality, etc.

So often we can think negatively about ourselves. In the light of these words, how should we think?

We need to appreciate that we are unique and special. As a result, we have no right to put ourselves down. Indeed, our self-worth comes from knowing that we are no accident, but a marvel created by God.

What else do we learn, especially in verse 16?

Our life has already been planned out by God before we were conceived. Even the number of days we would live were pre-determined. Consider also what Paul says in Acts 17:26.

What should our response be to these truths? (vv.17-18)

There should be a sense of awe and wonder for ourselves and others, since we are God’s masterpiece. We should also be so overwhelmed because God is even constantly thinking precious thoughts about us.

David’s response and his passionate desire (vv. 19-24)

Why couldn’t David tolerate the “wicked”? (vv. 19-22)

The “wicked” hate God, but, as we have seen in this psalm, God is good and loving toward us; He made us with care, he knows us and is near us. David was angered that the wicked had no time for God.

David concludes by asking God to deal with Him. In what way? (vv. 23-24)

David wanted God to search his heart and try him, to see if there was anything in his life that may bring sorrow, hurt or grief to God’s heart (like the wicked do). David so desired to please God (Eph 5:7-10).

Summary: Every Christian ought to have a heart like David that seeks to please God (not hurt Him).