

Where Are You, Lord In Time Of Trouble?

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[0 : 00] there are practical atheists. I don't believe there's any real atheists. Honestly, do not. There are those who claim to be atheists.

And there are those who live like atheists, as if God does not exist. And here we have somebody describing themselves as an atheist. Basically, the wicked person.

Notice in verse 4, all his thoughts are, there is no God. Again, verse 11, he says in his heart, God, if there is a God, excuse me, he is forgotten.

He has hidden his face. He will never see it. So I can do whatever I want. Verse 13, this is the wicked man renounces God and says in his heart, you will not call me to account.

I can do what I want and you won't touch me. So David experienced the same thing that we experience in our day.

[1 : 04] Why does God permit this? Why does it seem like God stays far off when wicked things happen, when evil happens, when victims, vulnerable victims, are trampled and crushed and taken advantage of and hurt?

So it offends. It offends our innate God-given sense of justice. And oh, the victims, the victims are the innocent, the poor, the helpless, the fatherless, the orphan, the vulnerable.

How can it be? How can it be? Why, oh Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

So here we are dealing with, David brings up in Psalm 10, the problem of injustice. And where is God? And so we want to look at how David responds to this.

It's a good model for how we respond to it. But as always, as New Testament Christians under a new covenant, we want to ask the further question, how does the Christian take this?

[2 : 31] How does the Christian pray this? Do we pray the same way that David prayed? How would Christ pray this, in other words? Is it different?

It's still the same feelings. Still the same injustice. How do we then respond? We have injustice in our day. We see it all the time. We're reminded of it all the time.

The innocent are trampled. There is injustice. Often it seems unchecked. So how do we respond to this?

So we're looking at Psalms of lament, Psalms of protest. Psalm 13, last week we looked at Psalm 13. It was more of a personal protest.

How long will you forget me? How long will you hide from me? While I have sorrow in my heart, while my enemies are against me. And we saw in that Psalm how David first vents his frustration.

[3 : 36] He vents his complaint to God. He pours out his soul, his feelings. And then he begins to plead for God to bring light in his darkness.

And then he's enabled to renew his faith. In six quick verses, he deals rightly with frustration, with anger, with complaint, with feeling like God is not there.

And so he does the right thing. Instead of pushing it in or instead of telling others, he tells the Lord. He just tells the Lord. Questions the Lord. And through that process is enabled to get out and to then renew his faith in the Lord.

So here is a little different. Psalm 10 is not a personal. It's more of a community thing. More of a society kind of lament. Look at what's going on around us.

Where are you, Lord? The wicked are prospering. And where is God? Why is he not doing anything? Is God not concerned?

[4 : 48] Does he not care? And what's the point? What's the point of doing good if good simply suffers?

Only the good die young. Right? So David is voicing this for us.

That we could voice as well in our own day. So how do we deal with injustice? How do we deal with this wrongness that the wicked prosper?

And God seems to have pushed himself back to stand apart. So as we see Psalm 10, what David does is two things.

One in verses 1 through 11. First he takes his protest, his anger, his complaint. He takes it to the Lord. Instead of taking it to others or pushing it within, he takes it to the Lord.

[5 : 51] He vents it. Just like Psalm 13, he's venting it. He's pulling it out. He's just pouring out his soul. And then we see in verse 12, now he begins from 12 to the end, the second half of the Psalm, he begins to pray.

Well, he's praying. The whole thing he's praying, he begins to petition, to request of the Lord to act. To arise and to lift your arm and go to it.

Make this right. So it's more of a prayer of faith. But again, notice this process. We saw it last week even in the New Testament with Jesus dealing with his own issues.

This is the same process in the Old and the New Testament. We first, we pour out our soul. We vent. We give it to the Lord.

Whatever you want, whatever language you want, we take it to the Lord. He already knows what we're thinking. We just get it out to him. And here, in this case, his first response is pouring out his complaint of injustice before the Lord.

[7 : 05] His anger, his frustration of injustice. As he sees what's going on, he pours that out before the Lord. And I think it's key.

He's doing it to the Lord. This is all a prayer. He's speaking to the Lord. Notice verse 1. Why, O Lord, do you? So he's addressing the Lord. This is a prayer.

Even though it's in the form of a complaint. Or a protest. He does it to the Lord, not to others. What good does it do to do that to others?

Now, we can commiserate together. We can talk about that. That's not wrong. But it's not going to necessarily help me. Because others can't do anything about it.

So I'm going to go over their head. I'm going to go to the one who can do something about it. But first, I get that out. So in this first response, first, let's look at his protest in verse 1.

[8 : 07] And then we'll look at his formal complaint in verses 2 and following. So his protest in verse 1 is a couple of questions.

To God, why are you standing far off? Why are you in the distance? Are you aloof? Have you pulled back? Is this where America is today?

Has God just kind of pulled back? Is he leaving us to ourselves now? He's done that to other nations. Look at history. There's the rise of Rome and the fall of Rome.

Rome had it together. They had a democracy. They had order. They had peace. What happened? Every society in the world has a rise and a fall.

Are we on the down? It looks like we're on the down swing of things. What's going on? Why are you standing off?

[9 : 10] Why are you pulling back? Why do you hide yourself, he says? Literally, why do you cause yourself to be hidden? So in other words, God's not just passive. He is actively pulling himself back.

Why do you cause yourself to be hidden? Why do you stand back during these times? Particularly times of evil. When you're most needed. Why would you do that?

So these are honest questions. These are questions we ask. God, why? It doesn't seem right. It's not right. So here he identifies the particular problem, the particular trouble.

Verse 2. It's the wicked. And notice he uses that phrase several times in this psalm. The wicked, the wicked, the wicked. The criminal. And it's not just that the criminal, it's about his pride.

In arrogance, notice verse 2. In arrogance. It's not just the wicked pursue the poor. But in arrogance, the wicked hotly pursues the poor.

[10 : 17] Oh, let him be caught in the schemes that they have devised. It's not just an impromptu. He's schemed. He's plotted. He's thought this out.

Verse 3. It's not just arrogance. But verse 3. It's boasting. He boasts. The wicked boasts of the desires of his soul. The one greedy for gain renounces the Lord.

Again, pride. Verse 4. In the pride of his face, the wicked does not seek God. All his thoughts are, there is no God.

He's an atheist. Or practical atheist. There is no. He thinks there's no God.

I mean, there's no evidence from his worldview. And so the complaint, verse 5, is, Lord, his ways prosper at all times.

[11:25] He prospers. He prospers. Your judgments are on high, but they're out of his sight. Those are just lofty thoughts.

Those are wishes of church people. They don't touch me. As for all his foes, he puffs at them. His ways prosper. He doesn't know God's judgment. He's confident in verse 6. He says in his heart, I shall not be moved throughout all generations.

I shall not meet adversity. He's confident. He has come to the point of acting with impunity. I can do whatever I want.

I'm smarter than the others. Devised ways to profit. And then what kind of wickedness does he do?

[12:29] Notice verse 7 to 11 describes him as a predator. His mouth. His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression under his tongue or mischief and iniquity.

But notice this, verse 8. What does he do? He sits in ambush. The villages and hiding places.

Murders. The innocent. His eyes.

Not just his mouth, but his eyes. What does he look for? What kind of prey does he look for? His eyes stealthily watch for who? The helpless. He lurks in ambush like a lion in the thicket.

He lurks that he may seize the poor. He seizes the poor when he draws them into his net. And the helpless are crushed. Sink down and fall by his sight.

His victims are innocent, helpless, poor, fatherless. He's the strong going after the weak.

[13:41] The vulnerable. You see, he follows an evolutionary worldview. Survival of the fittest.

Our world has an evolutionary worldview. Now, in an evolutionary worldview, there is no logical place for justice, for mercy.

Because to survive and to progress, to evolve, the strong must beat out the weak. You must trample. You must do what's best for you.

So that comes out in our culture. Came out in David's day. Strong survive. They prey on the weak.

When you say, okay, wait a minute, Pastor.

But on our day, our culture also has compassion on the weak and the vulnerable and the orphan.

Where do they get that? Well, they don't get it from their worldview.

[14:46] They steal it from us. They get it from their own innate, God-given image of God.

Knowledge of justice and mercy.

See, there's still God. An image of God in them. But they, like this person, yeah, there's no God. We just evolved.

Yeah, lots of evidence for that. So he lurks like a predator. He sets a trap. He crushes. In verse 11, it appears like he gets away with it.

He says in his heart, God has forgotten. He has hidden his face. He will never see it. I can do whatever I want. That's why they keep going.

Okay, so that's the lament. We hear that. We see that. That's the thinking involved. That's the motivation involved. That's the means involved. So I want to ask the question, how does a New Testament believer understand wickedness in the world?

[15:49] So how do we, how shall we understand it? How do we look at it from a biblical, God-oriented view? Yes, there is wickedness in the world.

How do we look at it? How are we to understand that? How do we answer this question of why is God far off? Why does God seem to hide his face?

Okay? So we go to Romans 3. Here's Paul's worldview. So David sets up a view in Psalm 10 that has got categories.

There is the wicked person that goes out here and there are the victims who are oppressed. And then there's David who's crying for righteousness.

Right? There's categories. We can feel like we enter into that. We can see that. We can see, okay, I see others who hurt others. I would call them the wicked. The ones who prey on the vulnerable.

[16:51] I would say, yeah, they're the wicked. Not me. Right? Not me. I'm not like that. I don't do that. There are the victims.

Gosh, they're innocent. At least they don't deserve that. Okay? So there's categories. We think in terms of categories. Romans 3, Paul has one category.

And he gets this worldview from the Psalms. So it's not a new worldview. So Romans 3, beginning verse 10, he says, quoting, None is righteous.

No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. Wait a minute, Paul. Don't some do? No, not even one, he says.

[17 : 57] When you define what good is, no, not even one. Their throat. Now this begins to sound like Psalm 10. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive.

He's talking about everybody. Well, I thought that was the wicked person. They use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is on their lips. Their mouth is full of curses.

That's Psalm 10. And bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. No, that's the wicked person. You're talking about everybody's swift to shed blood?

In their paths are ruin and misery. The way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. That's Psalm 10.

That's the wicked person. Paul is saying, that's everybody. Come on, Paul. Now here's Paul's standard.

[18 : 55] He says, we know. He goes on here in Proverbs 3. We know that whatever the law says. So here's his standard, the law. How do you judge who is right and who is wrong?

Who is good and who is bad? Well, the law. God's holy, righteous standard is the law. Okay. Okay, we have to have a measure, right?

We can't just decide, okay, you know, God grades on a curve, doesn't he? I mean, I love the teachers that grade on a curve because, you know, I'm just not that smart and I need a little grace. I'm not really bad at it. So God's like that, right? Doesn't he grade on a curve? Law. Black and white. There's the line.

Nice and clear. So we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law. Who's under the law? Well, the Jews were under the law, that law. And according to Romans 2, we're all under a law.

[19 : 58] We all have a conscience. We all know, have a sense of right and wrong. So we're all under that kind of law. So why is there a law? He says, so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

That's the purpose of the law. The law is not to save you. The law shows you what is right and wrong. And ultimately, what it's going to show you is you're wrong. You're wrong. Read the whole Old Testament.

How did the Jews do with the law? How'd they do? I mean, they had all the advantages. How'd they do? Fail, fail, fail, fail, fail, fail, fail, fail, fail.

Tried hard, really meant it. Fail. Even in Jesus' day, we have the Pharisees who are really try harder guys. They are really sincere at being right.

Not right, being right with God. And they fail. Big time. Because they thought it was all external.

[21 : 07] And Jesus said, man, your heart. Your heart's dark and black. So fail. So that's what the law says. The law shows that we're failures and we're accountable to God.

We don't like that, but that's the truth. And Paul goes on. For by works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. Nobody can justify themselves before God.

Since through the law comes knowledge of sin. That's why there's the law. So that we know that we are sinners. No flesh will be justified in his sight.

Since through the law comes the knowledge of sin. But now, now things are different when Jesus comes. But now, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

I can't get righteousness from the law because I fail the law. So I need to get righteousness in order to be right with God. I have to get righteousness from somewhere else. In other words, it's going to have to be a gift because I can't earn it.

[22 : 08] It has to be somebody from someone who has righteousness and can give it to me. So now, the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

Through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. So nobody can get their own righteousness. They must get it by a gift. By one who has, in one place, taken all of our wrong and sin and paid the justice price for that. And then taken our sin and given to us his righteousness.

And now, by an act of grace and gift, I can have a relationship with God. So here's one answer to our question.

Why does God permit evil? Why is God standing far off? Why does he permit this to go on? Well, because we're all rebels.

[23 : 21] And we're all wicked. And we're all evil. Now, that sounds offensive. I'm not wicked. Well, how do you measure wickedness? Well, when I compare myself to the really wicked person, I'm not wicked.

That person's really. So I get that. Yeah. There are degrees. We're not all the worst that we could be. Some get to that point, don't they? Some lose their conscience.

Conscious. Not conscious. Conscience. Thank you. There's an N in that word. Conscience. Right? It's seared and whatever.

There's something really demonic going on there. But if the standard is holy perfection, none of us can do that.

None of us can do that. So in that sense, we all not only fall short. Remember back in Psalm... What was that Psalm we were looking at?

[24 : 22] 32. When we looked at Psalm 32 a few weeks ago, remember he talked about three kinds of sin. He talked about sin of falling short. And he talked about transgression, where we make conscious choices to cross the line.

That's rebellion. And then he talked about iniquity, the twisted stuff where it kind of goes further. We all have degrees of that. And David himself confessed he had all of that.

He didn't just fail. He was also a rebel. He was a big time rebel. And at times he was twisted. And as God is gracious to reveal that to us, to see that we are, yeah, compared to you and your standard, yeah, I am.

That's our first step to healing. But so the first answer is why does God permit evil? Because we're all rebels. And if God is to act against evil, he would act against all of us.

So if God did not stand back, we would all be dead. We would all be gone. It'd be like flood time again. Remember God did that once.

[25 : 37] Genesis 6 through 8, he did that once. The world had gotten so evil, so violent, so wicked that he wiped it out. With the exception of one family.

And some animals. We remember the animals for some reason in that story. Which, you know, we're glad for. Great. Did the dinosaurs make that boat?

Or did they, I don't know. Zebra, I mean, the unicorn missed the boat. I've seen a Far Side cartoon where the unicorn's standing on the shore. Oh, was that today? You know, they missed the boat. Anyway. But God said, I'm not doing that again. So he's waiting. And the reason that he's waiting against punishing all evil immediately is because he's merciful.

Because some of those evil are ones he's going to rescue and save. And that's you and me. We get to be the Noah.

[26 : 40] And the Noah's wife. And the Noah's sons. And I want to be the zebra. Okay. Knock on. So as evil prospers and many suffer, we pour out our hearts to God.

That's one thing. That's still, I think, the Christian thing to do. As evil prospers, we still go to God and pour that out. So then there's a second thing that he does in verse 12.

He begins to pray. He begins to have a prayer of faith. Misleading, I said he begins to pray. He's been praying. He changes the kind of prayer.

Now it's more of a request. Now it's a pleading. He says in verse 12, Arise, O Lord, O God, lift up your arm. He begins to plead with God to act.

So his second response becomes a prayer of faith. Asking for justice. Trusting in God's way. By the way, it's a prayer of faith.

[27 : 42] So he's asking God to act. Not himself. He's asking God to act. He's trusting in God's way, not man's way. See, often our response to injustice is we want to act too.

And that's part of our God nature. To act against injustice. That is a righteous anger against injustice. We want to act.

There are some acts we can do as long as they are acts conforming to how Jesus would respond. Call it out. Yeah, call it out. Help the helpless.

Absolutely help the helpless. Protest. Yeah, protest. Strike them down.

No. Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. You wait for me to lift my hand. So not man's way.

[28 : 46] Man's way naturally is to strike. To hit back. To seek revenge. No, our way is ask the Lord to work.

We can intercede on behalf of the helpless. Forget not the afflicted, Lord. Forget them not. I'm going to go help them if I can. Okay. So he turns his focus now to God.

He's been focusing on his complaint. Now he turns his focus to God and begins to request. Three quick requests. Look, they just kind of come one right after the other. Arise, O Lord. O God.

Lift up your hand. In other words, take action. Take your hand and put it to use. And do not forget the afflicted. And then in verse 13 sounds like he's complaining again.

Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, you will not call to account? But I think in the context of his request, it is, Lord, arise, lift up.

[29 : 51] You hear him saying this, close his mouth. Don't let him keep saying, you will not call to account. Go call him to account, Lord.

Show that he's wrong. And then verse 15, he has a couple more prayers. Break his arm. Break the arm of the afflicted and the evildoer. Call his wickedness to account.

Break his arm. In other words, break his power. The arm is a symbol of power and strength. Break his strength. Break his power. I think we can pray that. Lord, these wicked people, break their arm. Break their power. Break their control. Break their power. Call them to account. Bring justice to the afflicted. And then notice what he does.

In verse 11, he has complained that, you know, the wicked person says in his heart, boasts in his heart, God has forgotten. He's hidden his face. He will never see.

[30 : 49] Look what he says in verse 14 as he's now turned to faith. Now he remembers something. Wait a minute. It appears that God doesn't see.

It appears that God is not looking. But he says, verse 14, but you do see. You do see. I know you see, Lord.

You see everything. You have seen it. And you are taking note of mischief and vexation so that you may take it into your hands.

See, he's remembering. They think you don't see. But in reality, here's the real thing. You do see. You do take note. You will take it into your hands. The helpless can look to you.

Verse 14. And you've always been the helper of the fatherless. The vulnerable. And in verse 16, he reaffirms his faith.

[31 : 51] So notice his progression now. First 11 verses, he pours out his complaint. He puts out before the Lord what is on his soul, what angers him, what vexes him.

He gets that out. And he identifies it. This is what bothers me, Lord. That's good.

He does that to the Lord. Then he begins to talk to the Lord about doing something. Now he seeks justice. But at the same time, notice here, verse 16, he's trusting in God's way.

He's asked God to act. Now he says, okay, verse 16, the Lord is king. The Lord is king forever.

It doesn't appear like he's king. If he's king, wouldn't he just be? No, he is king. He does it his way. He has his reasons. He is king forever and ever.

[32 : 55] The nations perish from his land. Well, that's true. We're how many thousands of years into history. Nations perish from his land. He's still there.

He's still sitting king. He'll still be sitting king long after America's gone. He's sitting king. Yahweh is king and always will be.

And here's our hope, verse 17. Oh, Lord, you hear. Literally in Hebrew, you have heard. You have heard. He always hears. He has heard the desire of the afflicted.

He hears when they cry out to him. And here's the hope. You will strengthen their heart. You will incline your ear to them.

You'll not just hear it as a sound, but you'll direct your hearing to listen to them. You will incline your ear to their plea. Why? To do justice, verse 18.

[33 : 57] You will do justice to the fatherless, to the orphan, and to the oppressed. Ultimately, why? So that man who is of the earth, that's interesting what he calls it, man who's of the earth, man who's of dust, literally.

Man who's just from dirt, may strike terror no more. Here's this dust creature terrorizing people for a while, and it's real terror to other dust people.

But from God's perspective, it's dust people. I want to be on God's side on the end. So again, we ask the question, how does a believer handle injustice?

So why? We get it. Okay, it's really out of mercy that he withholds his justice. He's a merciful God.

Say a good God wouldn't allow. No, a good God allows it so that those evil people can come to him.

Yes, he's a good God that he lets me who has broken his laws to come to him.

[35 : 16] That's why he... In Revelation, I think we're going to go there next. Not confirmed yet, but that's what... In Revelation, because it's so vivid there, it talks about the souls under the altar.

And they're crying out, how long, oh Lord? How long? When will you take vengeance on us? Lord, they killed us. When will you do that? And he says, I hear you.

Just a little bit. Hang on. Just a little longer. Why? Because there's other people like you out there that I'm still bringing in. And I'm not going to end it before I bring everybody in.

That's why. It's how long. He's merciful. But I'll tell you, Revelation does end with justice, justice, justice, justice.

When he comes. And it's described as the wrath of the Lamb. Here's an ironic picture for you.

[36 : 24] Wrath of the Lamb. The one worthy to do the justice. It is full and final. Verse 18.

To do justice. So that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more. So how does a believer handle this injustice?

Here's how Peter describes it in 1 Peter 3. He reminds us that we're followers of Christ. We're called to suffer for righteousness. But here's how he says it.

1 Peter 3.10. Whoever desires to love life and see good days. Now, that's pretty much everybody, right? Whoever desires to love life and see good days. Anybody want that?

If that's what you want, then let him keep his tongue from evil. Don't be that wicked person. And his lips from speaking deceit. That's what the wicked person does.

[37 : 26] Let him turn away from evil and do good. Let him seek peace and pursue it. Okay, be a priest. Okay, I think most people would agree with that.

Yeah, that's good. Why do that? For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. And his ears are open to their prayer.

But the face of the Lord. Interesting. Eyes, ears. Now the face of the Lord. Face of the Lord is against those who do evil.

That sounds like a threat. It is. And now Peter goes to apply this.

Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? If you do good, what would...

But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you are blessed.

[38 : 23] You are in a blessed place. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled. But in your heart, honor Christ the Lord as holy. Always being prepared to make a defense to everyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you.

Yet, when you make that defense to those who ask you, do it with gentleness and respect. Don't beat them up. You know something they don't know.

Don't beat it over their head. Gentleness and respect. They're not where you are. They're where you used to be. Gentleness and respect. Give them a reason for your hope.

What made a difference for you? Having a good conscience so that they... So that when you are slandered... And by the way, you will be slandered. When you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.

Because ultimately they see that you are without blame. For it is better to suffer for good than... If that should be God's will, and it usually is, than for doing evil.

[39 : 29] Why? Why do we do this? Peter adds, for Christ also suffered for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous.

That he might bring us to God. Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. So how do we handle world of injustice and evil?

We walk upright. How we talk. How we act. What our intentions are. We follow Christ in this.

And if we suffer, we're blessed. And if we're reviled, we give an answer that honors the Lord with gentleness and respect. And why is it that we don't strike back?

Because Jesus didn't strike back. And we're to follow him. He had a right to strike back. He did not.

[40 : 28] So that he might take our place. Is God hidden in troubled times? It seems like it, but no. He is king forever. He is with us. He is always near. He will strengthen our hearts. And there will be a day when he makes all things right. When evil is held accountable.

And when the saints will rejoice. We look forward to that day. In the meantime, hey, if God wants me to go through things, if God wants me to suffer, so that at some point in that suffering, I have a witness to tell others of him, okay.

Okay. Because somebody suffered to be able to tell me. Right? I'm eternally grateful for those witnesses before me.

May we be those kind of witnesses as well. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the Psalms that are so honest. So open.

[41 : 49] Thank you that they teach us how to talk to you. That it's not religious language. It's just pouring out our soul. Asking honestly for you to work and move and change us.

And we see, Lord, through the Psalms that as we pour out ourselves to you, you even through that prayer begin to change us. Begin to renew us.

Begin to reaffirm our faith. So we thank you, Lord, for that open access we have to you. Thank you that in Jesus Christ we can come to you with all our stains and all our issues.

issues that we don't have to clean up before we come. We just come so you can clean us up. So we thank you, Lord, for this. Give us wisdom in these days, Father, where we are dealing with things that are tension and upset and revolting and rioting and epidemic and unknown future.

some hope, some not hope. We hear different voices. So help us to hear your voice. In all this, we pray in Christ's name.

[43 : 09] Amen. Amen. Amen.