

PSALM 10

I. BIBLICAL TEXT

A Prayer for the Overthrow of the Wicked.

[Stanza 1]—1 *Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble? 2 In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.*

[Stanza 2]—3 *For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire, and the greedy man curses and spurns the Lord. 4 The wicked, in the haughtiness of his countenance, does not seek Him. All his thoughts are, "There is no God."*

[Stanza 3]—5 *His ways prosper at all times; Your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his adversaries, he snorts at them.*

[Stanza 4]—6 *He says to himself, "I will not be moved; throughout all generations I will not be in adversity." 7 His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression; under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.*

[Stanza 5]—8 *He sits in the lurking places of the villages; in the hiding places he kills the innocent; his eyes stealthily watch for the unfortunate.*

[Stanza 6]—9 *He lurks in a hiding place as a lion in his lair; he lurks to catch the afflicted; he catches the afflicted when he draws him into his net.*

[Stanza 7]—10 *He crouches, he bows down, and the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones. 11 He says to himself, "God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it."*

[Stanza 8]—12 *Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Your hand. Do not forget the afflicted. 13 Why has the wicked spurned God? He has said to himself, "You will not require it."*

[Stanza 9]—14 *You have seen it, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand. The unfortunate commits himself to You; You have been the helper of the orphan.*

[Stanza 10]—15 *Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer, seek out his wickedness until You find none. 16 The Lord is King forever and ever; nations have perished from His land.*

[Stanza 11]—17 *O Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear 18 to vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, So that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.*

II. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

1. LAMENT—ONE OF ABOUT 60 LAMENT PSALMS
2. SPECIFICALLY—IMPRECATORY
3. CONTRASTED WITH PRAISE OF PSALM 9
 - o Some scholars say Psalms 9 and 10 originally were one Psalm

B. AUTHORSHIP

1. ANONYMOUS
2. POSSIBLY DAVID
 - a. If connected with **Psalm 9**
 - b. Imprecatory language and style are like David's laments
3. **PSALMS 10 AND 33**—THE ONLY ANONYMOUS ONES IN BOOK 1
 - o **Book 1 = Psalms 1-41**
 - o **Book 2 = Psalms 42-72**
 - o **Book 3 = Psalms 73-89**
 - o **Book 4 = Psalms 90-106**
 - o **Book 5 = Psalms 107-150**

C. OCCASION—UNKNOWN

D. THEME

1. UNGODLY EVIL-DOERS ARE PROSPERING AND PERSECUTING THE GODLY
2. APPEAL TO THE LORD—TO RESCUE THE AFFLICTED AND PUNISH THE UNGODLY

E. STRUCTURE

1. NO HEADING IN HEBREW BIBLE
 - a. One of 4 Psalms—in Book 1—**Psalms 1, 2, 10, 33**
 - b. One of 35 Psalms—in the whole Book of Psalms
2. ORIGINALLY 11 STANZAS—IN HEBREW BIBLE
 - o **Stanza One—verses 1-2**
 - o **Stanza Two—verse 3-4**
 - o **Stanza Three—verse 5**
 - o **Stanza Four—verses 6-7**
 - o **Stanza Five—verse 8**
 - o **Stanza Six—verse 9**

- Stanza Seven—verses 10-11
- Stanza Eight—verses 12-13
- Stanza Nine—verse 14
- Stanza Ten—verses 15-16
- Stanza Eleven—verses 17-18

3. ACROSTIC PATTERN

- a. Stanza one—verses 1-2—begins with **Lamed**
 - Possibly continues acrostic from **Psalm 9**
- b. The next six stanzas—do not begin with an acrostic letter
 - Stanza 2 = verses 3-4
 - Stanza 3 = verse 5
 - Stanza 4 = verses 6-7
 - Stanza 5 = verse 8
 - Stanza 6 = verse 9
 - Stanza 7 = verses 10-11
- c. Final four stanzas—contain acrostic pattern—of last four letters of alphabet
 - Verses 12-13—stanza 8—begin with—**Qoph**
 - Verse 14—stanza 9—begins with—**Resh**
 - Verses 15-16—stanza 10—begin with—**Shin**
 - Verses 17-18—stanza 11—begin with—**Taw**
- d. The **gap**—between stanza 1 and stanza 8
 1. There are 6 stanzas without acrostic letters
 2. There are 6 letters missing in the alphabet
 3. So—possibly—original Psalm was a complete acrostic with all letters from Lamed to end of alphabet—but Psalm may have been amended before inclusion in canon.

F. TWO BROAD OUTLINES

1. “**PREDATORS AND PREY**”—[BROAD OUTLINE]
 - a. The Psalmist’s **Lament**—verse 1
 - God’s distance—and *apparent* indifference
 - b. The Tyrant’s Boast—verses 2-11
 - The **godless** persecute the godly
 - c. The Victim’s Prayer—verses 12-18
 - Reminds the Lord of His past **faithfulness** in delivery—urges Him to do so again

2. “REJECTING OR TRUSTING GOD”—[BROAD OUTLINE]

a. The Psalmist’s Lament—**verse 1**

- Asks God—why does He not intervene?

b. Those Who **Reject** God—**verses 2-13**

- **Verses 2-4**—say there is no God
- **Verses 5-7**—are obstinate—entrenched in their wickedness
- **Verses 8-11**—think God does not see them
- **Verse 12**—[appeal by the godly—take action, God!]
- **Verse 13**—claim that God will not judge them

c. Those Who **Trust** God—**verses 14-18**

- **Verse 14**—God *does* see what is happening
- **Verse 15**—[appeal to God]—You *will* judge sin
- **Verse 16**—God *is* King—in sovereign control
- **Verses 17-18**—God has heard—and *will* defend His people

III. EXPOSITION

❖ PSALMIST’S LAMENT—**verse 1**

❖ EVIL-DOERS ARE PROSPERING—**verses 2-11**

❖ THE AFFLICTED RESPOND—**verses 13-18**

A. PSALMIST’S LAMENT—**verse 1**

1. WHY DO YOU STAND AFAR OFF, O LORD?

- a. Psalmist is **honest** with God—describes the situation as he sees it
- b. God *seems* to be far away—disengaged
- c. Evidence supporting this perception
 - How can the wicked prosper—if God is really aware and engaged?
- d. This is one residual effect of a sinful world—**discouragement**—even of the godly
- e. It also results from the **influence** of the **wicked**
 1. *They* act like God is far away—and *get away with it!*
 2. How they do this—seen in verses below
 - ▲ God and His judgments are ‘out of sight’—v5
 - ▲ They think they can hide from God—vv8-10

- ▲ That God forgets—v 11
- ▲ That He will not judge them—v13

- f. This perception—is similar to concern expressed in **Psalm 55**
- **Ps 55:1—Give ear to my prayer, O God; and do not hide yourself from my supplication.**

- g. Further implication—from the Psalmist’s perspective
- *If* God were to stand ‘afar off’
 - Not only might he not **see** the evil done by the wicked
 - He also might not **hear** and respond to the prayers of the godly!

2. WHY DO YOU HIDE YOURSELF?

- a. Some commentators say this is not reflexive—but active
- b. If so—it might be “Why do You hide *Your eyes*”
- c. The point is—God is **not hidden**—but God *seems not to see* what is happening

B. EVIL-DOERS ARE PROSPERING—verses 2-11

- ❖ THEY ARE **WICKED**—verses 2-6
- ❖ THEY **PERSECUTE** THE GODLY—verses 7-9
- ❖ THEY ARE **IMPIOUS** AND A **LAW UNTO THEMSELVES**—verses 10-11

1. THEY ARE **WICKED**—verses 2-6

- a. Characteristics of the wicked
 - **Boastful** and **plotting**—with impunity—verses 2-3a
 - **Greedy**—verse 3b
 - **Atheistic**—in practice—‘practical atheists’—verses 3c-4
 - **Prosperous**—but disregarding God’s moral judgment—verse 5a-b
 - **Defiant** in their wickedness—verses 5c-6

b. Verse 2

1. They ‘hotly pursue’ the afflicted
 - Same verb in 7:13—*He makes His arrows fiery shafts*
2. They are ensnared by the very plots they have devised for others
 - Reiterates claim in 9:15-16
 - ▲ Caught in their own net

▲ Snared by the work of his own hands

c. **Verse 3**

1. Stark **contrast**—in how the wicked expresses his priorities
 - a. He ‘boasts’—in his own desires
 - b. He ‘curses’ and ‘spurns’ the Lord
2. He ‘**curses**’ the Lord
 - a. Verb is usually translated ‘bless’ or ‘praise’
 - b. But in this context—it is a euphemism—for ‘curse’
 - c. As when we ‘**bless out**’ another person!
3. He ‘**spurns**’ the Lord
 - a. To belittle—treat with disrespect
 - b. To disrespect and dismiss God—to give Him no regard or consideration at all
 - c. Repeated in **verse 13**—as a question—Why has the wicked spurned God?
4. **Conclusion**
 - a. The wicked person’s god—is what he most greedily covets
 - b. Meaning—what he craves—with his deepest appetite
 - c. The word for ‘heart’ = *nephesh*—his very life-breath
5. NT context

Jas 3:10—*out of the same mouth comes praise and curses*

d. **Verse 4**

1. The wicked ‘does not seek Him’
 - Contrasted with the godly
 - **9:10**—Those **who know the name** of the Lord—are **those who seek** Him
2. There is no God
 - a. Answered in **14:1**—*The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.”*
 - b. Not philosophic atheism—not a denial of God’s existence
 - c. But **practical** atheism
 1. They know God exists—but act *as if* God does not exist

2. Their attitude is dismissive—treat God as if He does not matter
3. This is far more foolish than outright denial!

e. Verse 5

1. His ways ‘prosper’
 - a. This word for ‘prosper’—found only here and **Job 20:21**
 - ▲ Zophar says of the wicked—*Nothing remains for him to devour. Therefore, his prosperity does not endure.*
 - ▲ The means—his **strength** does not endure
 - b. So ‘prosper’ here means—to be ‘strong’
 - c. The wicked—are overpowering—ride rough-shod over others
2. Your judgments are—‘out of his sight’
 - The wicked are so focused on worldly things below
 - That they do look up—and cannot see God’s ways
3. The arrogance—and depravity—of the wicked
 - a. They are oblivious to God’s judgments
 - b. They have sunk so low—God’s ways are too high for them to see
4. He ‘snorts’ at his adversaries
 - a. KJV—“*He puffeth at them*”
 - b. Dismissiveness—hold in contempt
 - c. Modern expression = to ‘blow off’ someone

f. Verse 6

1. I will not be moved
 - Emphatic “I”—smug and proud emphasis on ‘me’
2. Throughout all generations
 - a. His offspring will continue in prosperity—perpetually
 - b. His wealth/power—will pass onto his successors
 - ▲ Enabling descendants to continue their wicked oppression
 - ▲ Implied—this perpetuates the wicked person’s name/reputation

2. THEY PERSECUTE THE GODLY—verses 7-9

a. Characteristics

- **Hostile** speech—bitter and malicious—**verse 7**
- **Murderous** intent—**verses 8-9**

b. Verse 7

1. His mouth is full of curses
 - Not profanity
 - But pronouncing verbal formulas—to invoke powers to cause harm
2. Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness
 - Could mean—he **savors** mischief/wickedness
 - Could reiterate the fact—that his mouth is **full**—of wicked things
3. **Verse 7a**—LXX version—is quoted in **Rom 3:14**
 - Everyone is under sin—both Jew and Greek
 - *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*

c. Verse 8

1. Lurking places
 - Rare word—found only 4 times in OT
 - Meaning—place of ‘ambush’
2. Lurking places—of the villages
 - a. Possibly—places unprotected by walls [not cities]—so—easily attacked
 - b. Possibly—typical haunts of robbers
 - ▲ Like nomadic encampments of predatory Bedouins—who ambush travelers
3. Kills the innocent
 - a. In this context—does not mean those without guilt
 - b. But the **helpless**
4. Eyes stealthily watch
 - a. Picture—like a lion hiding in the bushes—following its prey
 - b. Literally—‘his eyes shelter’ or ‘treasure’
 - c. Meaning—the wicked ‘spies’ upon his prey

5. The ‘unfortunate’ of ‘poor’—word is unique to this Psalm
 - a. vv 8,10,14—it means sad—sorrowful
 - b. v9 below—‘poor’ is a different word—meaning pious/meek sufferer

d. Verse 9

1. Continues word picture of a lion—hiding in its lair
2. Then switches picture—to the hunter—who snares with a net

3. THEY ARE IMPIOUS AND A LAW UNTO THEMSELVES—verses 10-11

a. Characteristics

- Merciless—cruel—in power over the weak—verse 10
- Deny God’s presence and judgment—verse 11

a. Verse 10

1. He crouches
 - Again—picture of a lion—crouched and ready to spring
2. Strong ones
 - a. Possibly—strong companions of the wicked
 - b. Possibly—strong characteristics/powers of the wicked
 - ▲ Like—the strong grip/claws of the lion

b. Verse 11

1. God has forgotten—He has hidden his face
 - a. Here the wicked *admits* He believes that God exists—but simply disregards God
 - b. Reiterates wicked statement—verse 4b—*There is no God*
 - c. But also shows that verse 4b—is practical and not philosophic atheism
2. God has forgotten—means this → God does not care—is not mindful
3. God has hidden His face—equivalent to this → God has shut His eyes

C. THE AFFLICTED RESPOND—verses 12-18

- ❖ **PRAYER**—FOR GOD TO APPEAR AND INTERVENE—verse 12
- ❖ **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** AND **PLEA** TO GOD—verses 13-16
- ❖ **ASSURANCE** OF GOD’S INTERVENTION—verses 17-18

1. **PRAYER** FOR GOD TO APPEAR AND INTERVENE—**verse 12**

- In Person
- Against the ungodly
- On behalf of the afflicted

Explanation of verse 12

- a. Contrast—the resources of—the wicked and the godly
 - Since the wicked say there is no God—they cannot call upon Him for help
 - But the psalmist can call upon the true and living God
- b. Arise
 - Same appeal—made in 3:7—*Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God.*
 - God is not asleep—but a preface to the appeal for God to *act*
- c. Do not forget the ‘humble’
 - Psalmist affirms later—God *will* remember
 - See v17—You have heard the ‘humble’—[same word]
- d. Lift up your hand—exert Your power

2. **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** AND **PLEA** MADE TO GOD—**verses 13-16**

- ❖ **Acknowledgment**—God does see and know—**verses 13-14**
- ❖ **Plea**—for God to intervene—**verse 15**
- ❖ **Acknowledgment**—the Lord is King—**verse 16**

a. **Acknowledgment**—that God *does* know the situation—**verses 13-14**

1. The **wicked** are **wrong**

- a. They say God will not hold them accountable
 - ⤴ God will not ‘require it’ = hold them accountable—**verse 13**
- b. Same verb as 9:12—translated ‘avenges’
 - ⤴ God will not act as the ‘avenger of blood’

2. **Assurance**—God *does* know—and will help the afflicted—**verse 14**

- a. God *has* seen the works of the wicked
 - ⤴ Contrasts with **verse 1**—God has *not* closed His eyes
 - ⤴ Contrasts with **verse 11**—God has *not* forgotten
 - ⤴ Contrasts with **verse 13**—God *will* judge what He has seen

- b. To take into it into Your hand
 - 1. God will take matters into His own hand
 - 2. God will deliver justice by His hand
- c. The unfortunate ‘commits’ himself to You

▲ Commits = completely abandons—lets go—trusts completely

b. Plea—stop the wicked—and eliminate *all* his evil—**verse 15**

- 1. Break the arm = break the power of the wicked
 - Psalmist already asserted—this power *will* be broken—**9:5-6**
- 2. Seek out his wickedness until You find none
 - a. God’s justice will be so thorough—it will obliterate evil
 - b. He will leave no trace of evil—or its effects

c. Acknowledgment—the Lord is King—**verse 16**

- 1. Over all His land
 - a. God has not been dethroned—as the wicked imagine
 - b. God is sovereign over all nations—the whole earth

Dan 7:14—*And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will n ot pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.*

Zech 14:9—*And the Lord will be king over al the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and his name the only one.*

- 2. ‘Nations’ have perished
 - a. ‘Nations’—used in same negative context as
 - ▲ **Ps 2:1**—nations in an uproar against God
 - ▲ **Ps 9:5**—nations that God has rebuked
 - b. The ‘people’—those who did not acknowledge him
 - 1. They have perished in the past
 - 2. Implied—in the same way—they will perish in the future

3. ASSURANCE OF GOD’S INTERVENTION—**verses 17-18**

- a. The prayer has been heard—**verse 17**

- In the past—and *just now*—You have heard
 - You will strengthen the afflicted
 - You will continue to hear our prayers
- b.** You will strengthen their heart
- No more doubts about God standing afar—as in verse 1
- c.** Contrast—desire of the humble—vs—desire of the wicked
- Desire of the wicked = greedy and worldly desires of their hearts—v3
 - Desire of the humble = heard by the Lord—to relieve oppression—v17
- d.** The afflicted will be delivered—**verse 18**
1. The ‘man’ who causes terror—will be stopped
 2. Same word for ‘frail man’—used in **Ps 9:19-20**
 - This ‘enosh’—will not prevail [**Ps 9**]
 - This ‘enosh’—will no longer cause terror [**Ps 10**]