

SPECIAL FOCUS: A CRY FOR JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

+ + +

God is just and has authority over all creation. Unfortunately, we live in a world where injustice and wickedness are rampant. The psalmist, like many of us asks, "Why doesn't God do something?" However, we must shift our focus from the wicked to our hope in God. The psalmist knew God as his personal Lord and his powerful God. God sees the injustices and He has the power to change things. As we act to help those who face injustice we must pray as God leads us knowing that we can trust Him to be the source of justice.

Writer Bio

Julie Tilman

serves at the Executive Assistant at Immanuel Baptist Church in Highland, California. She is a graduate of Gateway Seminary. She loves spending her spare time encouraging women in their walk with God.

Dr. Monique Brown, M.D.

adapted this study for the *YOU* audience. She is the proud mother of four children. She is a physician and owner of a medical practice focusing on spiritual, physical, and emotional health. She is an author of *Prepared Purpose-Faithful Follower; A Devotional for God's Disciples and Disciplined Disciple-God's Plan*. She is a leader for the Women's Ministry and the Adult Church at Study at Word Tabernacle Church in Rocky Mount, NC.

A CRY FOR JUSTICE

Leader pages on pp. 130-133

THE POINT:
JOIN GOD IN SEEKING JUSTICE, INCLUDING JUSTICE FOR UNBORN CHILDREN.

PSALM 10:1-4,12-18

¹ LORD, why do you stand so far away?
Why do you hide in times of trouble?

² In arrogance the wicked relentlessly pursue their victims;
let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.

³ For the wicked one boasts about his own cravings;
the one who is greedy curses and despises the LORD.

⁴ In all his scheming, the wicked person arrogantly thinks,
“There’s no accountability, since there’s no God.”

.....
¹² Rise up, LORD God! Lift up your hand.
Do not forget the oppressed.

¹³ Why has the wicked person despised God?
He says to himself, “You will not demand an account.”

+
+
+

¹⁴ But you yourself have seen trouble and grief,
observing it in order to take the matter into your hands.
The helpless one entrusts himself to you;
you are a helper of the fatherless.

.....
¹⁵ Break the arm of the wicked, evil person,
until you look for his wickedness,
but it can't be found.

¹⁶ The LORD is King forever and ever;
the nations will perish from his land.

MEMORY VERSE

**¹⁷ LORD, you have heard the desire of the humble;
you will strengthen their hearts.
You will listen carefully,**

¹⁸ doing justice for the fatherless and the oppressed
so that mere humans from the earth may terrify them no more.

KEYWORDS

No accountability (v. 4)—The Hebrew for accountability (*darash*) means “to seek or inquire.” The arrogant wicked person has no sense of being accountable to anyone for his actions.

Demand an account (v. 13)—The wicked person reviles God

because he does not think the Lord will call him to account for his words and actions.

Entrusts (v. 14)—The term (*azab*) means “to loosen” or “to forsake,” here in the sense of relinquishing and committing oneself to God.

HOW CAN WE JOIN GOD IN SEEKING JUSTICE FOR OTHERS?

There's constant debate about when life begins. Does it begin at the time when the egg and sperm meet, before the child is born, or after the child is born? As Christians, we know that life is a precious gift from God. There's something significant about the period of time when no one can tell that a woman is pregnant. Only God knows this tiny little human He has breathed life into even exists. When that mom goes in for her first doctor's appointment, it's all about the heartbeat. Hearing a baby's heartbeat for the first time is one of the most significant moments in the life of an expectant mom.



God's desire is that every life would be treasured, even those who can't yet speak for themselves. Believers should stand up against the brokenness in our world. Psalm 10 gives us direction on how we should respond to this significant call on our lives.

The Wicked Pursue Injustice //

Psalm 10:1-4

We dive into Psalm 10 with the question that all of us have likely asked at one time or another, Why? The psalmist did not question God's sovereignty or His ability to change the things that are happening in this psalm. He did, however, question what appears to be God's lack of involvement when the wicked are wreaking havoc in the lives around them. C. H. Spurgeon said, "The presence of God is the joy of his people, but any suspicion of his absence is distracting beyond measure."⁹ Much like today, the psalmist lived during a time when it seemed as though evil and wickedness were allowed to run without consequences. There didn't seem to be any protection or justice for those who could not defend themselves or fight back. It is as if this psalm were ripped from the headlines of the local and national news stories we hear almost daily.

The psalmist saw the effect of the wicked prospering in this life, and it seemed they were not being held accountable for their wickedness. There appears to be no justice for those who are being harmed. In asking "why?" the psalmist wrestled with God. He did not get the answer he desired, but rather, his attention was redirected from what he sees around him to who God really is.

This passage gives us a few keys to the mind of the wicked. They are arrogant. The one who is arrogant has an attitude of superiority and behavior that indicates they believe their actions are right. The arrogant are even boastful of the wicked things they do. They are so prideful that they believe what they are doing is acceptable in some way. They take advantage of the weak, they destroy families, they kill the unborn to name just a few of their

THE POINT: JOIN GOD IN SEEKING JUSTICE, INCLUDING JUSTICE FOR UNBORN CHILDREN.

victims. Note that they pursue these victims “relentlessly.” They seem to believe they have a right to do these evil and wicked things.

Ultimately, the most significant of all the characteristics of the wicked is their belief that there is no God. Unbelief is the foundation for their wickedness. Those who do not believe there is a God have no fear of Him. Why should they? To their way of thinking, why would you fear something that doesn’t exist? Therefore, the wicked do as they please because they have chosen to not believe in a God who will hold them accountable for their actions. They have no fear of consequences and no conviction of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is not clear whether the psalmist was one of the victims or if he was just observing how the wicked treated their victims. Either way, his question about the silence of God grew out of the fact that he had allowed his focus to be on the wicked instead of on God. He watched the ways they would prey on those who were weaker or could not defend themselves. He noticed they seemed to commit such horrible deeds while never being held accountable for the actions or the harm they caused.

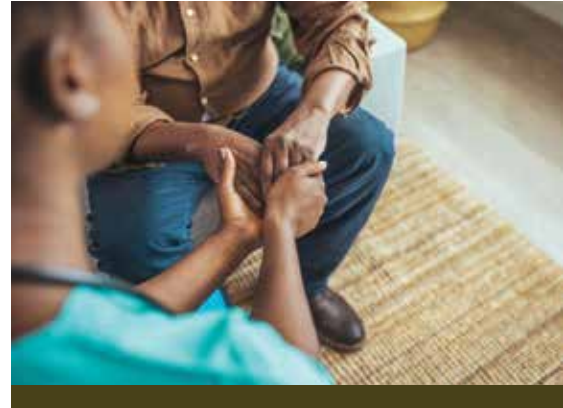
WHERE DO YOU SEE EXAMPLES OF INJUSTICE IN OUR CULTURE?

The psalmist focused most of his attention on the deeds of the wicked during the first portion of this psalm. There are times it seems as though he had lost hope. As we shall see, hope only appeared when the psalmist shifted his focus from the pain of this world to the hope he had in God alone. The shift we see in the psalmist’s heart is vital for us as well! If we focus on the evil that is allowed to continue in this world for very long, we run the risk of becoming cynical. We risk feeling defeated and letting the circumstances around us seem bigger than our God. The other danger is spiritual exhaustion. If we allow the bad news to consistently wash over us, it will wear us down. We can only handle the bad news apart from hope for so long. Don’t focus on the problem. We must shift our focus to the source of our hope which is God. He is the solution.

The Humble Cry to God for Justice //

Psalms 10:12-15

Moving into verse 12, we see a shift in the psalmist’s perspective. Psalm 10 began with the question, “Why?” He felt as though God was far off or was choosing not to see the predicament of those who people were taking advantage of. The psalmist now moved to a plea for the Lord to intervene on behalf of the afflicted, those who are not able to fight for themselves.



DIGGING DEEPER HELPER

The word “helper” (v. 14) is the same Hebrew root as “helper” in Genesis 2:18,20. The term “helper” that was suitable for Adam was not a demeaning term. In fact, it was God saying that the woman was to give the man both spiritual and material assistance. This term is used elsewhere in Scripture regarding God (Ps. 33:20; 70:5; 115:9; 121:1-2). When the term “helper” is used of God in Scripture it always to give both material and spiritual assistance. Hence, the woman that God made for man is the “helper” suitable for him because she was made to assist him in the task God gave him and she is suitable for him because she mirrors the way he worships and obeys God.

Can you recall a circumstance when there was no one else that could help you but God? What did you do?



In verses 12 and 13, the psalmist refers to God three times. Each time, he uses a different word for God.

Lord. In the Hebrew language, this is Yahweh, the name by which God entered into a covenant with His people. He is the “God of the covenant,” and Yahweh is the name used by those who knew him, those who loved him. Here the psalmist is recalling that God had established a covenant with His people. In that covenantal relationship, the Lord would not let the sins of the wicked go unpunished.

God. In the Hebrew language, this was the word El in verse 12 and the word Elohim in verse 13. (El is simply a shortened version of Elohim.) Elohim is the name used to describe God as the God of power. We see a progression as the psalmist recognizes God’s relationship and promises to His people, and His power to carry out those promises. Based on these verses, we see that the psalmist knew that God does see the injustice around him and has the ability to change it.

In verse 14 we see a major shift in the way the psalmist viewed the wickedness around him. The psalmist turned from questions about God’s inaction to affirming that he knew that God sees what is happening. As he proclaimed that God does see all that is happening, he was also reminded that the evil acts committed against the innocent will not go unpunished. However, God’s ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8-9). He punishes when He chooses and the manner in which He

chooses; it is not always immediate. Yet, as the covenant-keeping God, He will respond to evil. For the victims of injustice, such as the unborn child who has no one to cry out to, God sees every part of that baby’s life. The orphans and helpless are not truly without help. God is their help. Those who prey on the innocent, the weak, and the helpless will eventually face His wrath.

WHY IS IT WISE TO LOOK TO GOD FOR JUSTICE?

God is the author of good, and He can’t stand sin. David knows this and is pleading the cause of the righteous people. The thing that separated David from so many others is the humility he had towards God.

God Will Bring Justice //

Psalm 10:16-18

The end of Psalm 10 ends at the polar opposite end of where it started. David declared who God is and what He is able to do with great confidence. He began the passage with despair and questioning, but has moved to understanding and unwavering belief. Sometimes David had to express his feelings so he could get back to the place of belief that was firmly planted in his heart. He recognized that God was listening, and that He hears the cries of those who need help.

The right perspective matters. The reign of the wicked is temporary. The grief and sorrow of today will not last forever. God is eternal. A day will come when all wickedness from the earth will cease. What seems to go unchecked now will one day be brought to light and judged. Justice will come. It will come by the hand of the mighty God who created all. The psalmist was discouraged because he did not see the hand of God at work. However, just because he did not see God’s activity did not mean God was unaware or oblivious. Only when we remember the power of God can we find hope in the world we live in. The psalmist ended Psalm 10 with a proclamation that in the end, those who terrorize will be no more. God alone will reign victoriously.

The psalm ends with praise for who God is and His mighty power. The psalmist proclaims:

THE POINT: JOIN GOD IN SEEKING JUSTICE, INCLUDING JUSTICE FOR UNBORN CHILDREN.

- The LORD is king forever.
- The LORD hears the desire of the afflicted.
- The LORD will strengthen their heart.
- The LORD will do justice.

"Faith that God defends the afflicted and the needy against the tyranny of the wicked was a comfort to the psalmist and the basis for his prayer."¹⁰ The psalmist had lived a life experiencing affliction at the hands of those whom he loved and cared for. God had brought great victories in his life, but he had also witnessed terrible injustice. The hope he proclaimed in this psalm was not empty. It was written from a heart that had known great sorrow but knew he was safe trusting God. When the darkness seemed to close in around him, the psalmist set his eyes on God instead of on the wickedness around.

The psalm ended without allowing the psalmist to see the justice that will come. Yet, based on his understanding of who God is and His sovereignty, the psalmist could conclude that justice will one day come. Even more, he could celebrate and rejoice knowing who God is.

WHAT ROLE CAN THE CHURCH PLAY IN SEEKING JUSTICE?

DID YOU KNOW?

Racial injustice encompasses every aspect of life to include housing and the environment. According to the 2020 Urban Institute report, lower housing equity contributes to less overall wealth for Black and Hispanic households.¹¹ The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report determines that Black people make up about 40% of the homeless population while making up 13% of the US population.¹² The American Lung Association cites EPA research that states that people of color in low-income areas "faced higher risk from particle pollution."¹³ Most victims of the Flint, Michigan water crisis are Black and all of them are low income. From the Michigan Civil Rights Commission: "racism played a significant role in creating the conditions that allowed the lead contamination to happen and in the failure to recognize and address it in a timely fashion."¹⁴

Biblical Truth: Despite the injustices of the world, God is still in control and will right all wrongs (Ps. 43:1; Gal. 6:7).

How does it make you feel to know that these things are occurring?

LIVE IT

What practical steps can you take to seek justice on behalf of others?

The questions the psalmist wrestled with are the ones we too wrestle with. While it is in our human nature to wonder "Lord where are you?" we have a responsibility to fight for justice for unborn children, orphans, and those who cannot fight for themselves. The Lord requires of us to "act justly, love faithfulness and to walk humbly" (Mic. 6:8). Start today by doing the following:

+ + +

- **Pray.** Seek God's protection for those who cannot fight for themselves by praying for them and for those who care for them and minister to them.
- **Learn more.** Seek out a local Christian pregnancy center that is helping moms make choices that honor God and protect their babies. Sign up for their mailing list and participate in opportunities they provide.
- **Change some diapers:** Do you know a mom who is struggling? Ask for ways you can help. Care for her littles so she can run errands. Enlist your Bible study group to provide for their needs.

DAILY READINGS

1. JUSTICE FOR ALL // PSALM 7:9

It is the responsibility of Christians to have the heart of Christ. Part of this responsibility is to show love and compassion towards people. Sometimes that love and compassion shows up in the way you treat others. There are a lot of large corporations that purposely only allow their employees to work just under the amount of hours needed to be full-time employees. They do this so they don't have to offer benefits. Without benefits, people can't afford adequate health care or have time off when they need to care for themselves or family. We must be mindful of how our actions and decisions affect others. Allow the God of justice to lead you.

Lord, please help me to show the same compassion to others that you've shown to me. In Jesus's name, Amen.

2. HIGH HOPE // ROMANS 15:13

There are so many evil things going on in the world. Innocent people are being gunned down in their homes and vehicles. Children are being bullied to the point of committing suicide. People are taking advantage of elderly people and their life savings are being stolen. People are appointing themselves judge and jury and executing people they deem suspicious. It is easy to get discouraged and feel as if things are hopeless. We can be encouraged because we have a God who not only fills us with hope; He fills us with joy and peace as we believe in His power to change things. Don't rely on what you see and hear; rest in the hope of our God who sees it all.

Lord, I will place my faith and hope in you no matter what I see. In Jesus's name, Amen.

3. GOD HEARS ME // PSALM 40:1

Mothers have the uncanny ability to walk into a room of crying babies and know whether it is her own baby crying. Somehow you know the voice of your own child. A loving mother will respond to the sound of her crying child and tend to their needs. God is our loving Father, and He hears our faintest

cries. When God's children are suffering injustices from those with wicked intent; God knows all about it and hears their cries. We must patiently wait on the Lord knowing that He not only hears our cries, but He is also our help. Call out to God knowing that He will hear you.

God, thank you for hearing me when I cry. Please help me to patiently wait for Your help. In Jesus's name, Amen.

4. PROVEN FAITH // HEBREWS 11:6

It is interesting that when you're a child you believe in the Easter bunny and Santa Claus despite the fact that you can't see them. However, as adults, people find it difficult to believe in God because they can't see Him. It's hard to convince them that God can do the things He said He will do. They have hopes and dreams, but they get bogged down in doubt. They have lost the childlike faith they used to have and subsequently don't believe in God who can do all things. Faith in God gives you proof that what you hope for is true. Put your faith in God who is proven to be true.

Lord, please strengthen my faith in You so I no longer doubt. In Jesus's name, Amen.

5. NO EFFORT NEEDED // LUKE 7:1-5

In order to earn a scholarship for college you must meet certain requirements. These requirements may include achieving high grades, high ACT or SAT scores, a convincing essay, and excellent teacher recommendations. You have to put in effort to get the opportunity to win a scholarship. However, God does not need us to meet requirements in order for Him to help us. We don't have to work to earn God's blessings. The Jewish elders thought the centurion's servant could earn Jesus' healing. They told Jesus about the things the servant had done. They didn't know that Jesus blesses us because of grace through our faith in Him. You don't need to earn the blessings of Jesus just have faith that He is able to bless you.

Lord, thank you that I don't need to earn your blessings. In Jesus's name, Amen.