

January 5, 2025

“The Lord is King”
Lesson 1

Psalm 10:12-18

Intro

We begin the middle unit of our winter quarter with the theme “Our God Reigns”. Today’s lesson deals with Psalm 10, which describes God in ways that show His attention to His people. Psalm 10 is seen as being connected to Psalm 9. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the two psalms are put together as one, instead of being split like they are in ancient Hebrew manuscripts and in our Bibles.

Mark Twain once said, “Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.” Twain is known as a cynic and a pessimist, but his point here has some merit. People are inconsistent in their displays of goodness. But God is not like humanity; He is consistently the same, which includes the area of acting in ways that are good. God consistently seeks and desires the good for all of His creation. God acts in ways to help His creation, which this psalm address.

Psalm 10:12-18

1. vs. 12: Three requests are made to God here, going from the general to the specific

First, the author (David) asks God to “arise”

Then he asks God to “lift up your hand”

Finally, he asks God to “not forget the helpless”

All of these requests stem from a similar place: God’s help and role as a divine warrior

All of these are asking God to avenge / correct a wrong done against them by another

Ps. 97:17-18 reminds us that God “will never forget the needy”

When someone is suffering, there can be a feeling of being forgotten, of being abandoned

A cry like this usually comes from the one who *is helpless*; they need God’s help and ask for it

2. vs. 13: The wicked is described here as a person who “reviles” God – who speaks abusively to God

The person “says to himself” – he is seeing himself as beyond accountability to another

Connected to the “helpless” of vs. 12, it seems this wicked person is harming them

He says that God “won’t call me to account”

So he knows he’s doing something wicked, but feels he won’t have to answer for it

So whether he’s ignoring or exploiting the helpless, either one shows contempt for God

3. vs. 14: The wicked in vs. 13 might think they are free and clear, but this verse tells us differently

It says God sees the “trouble of the afflicted” and that he considers their grief

The writer knows this about God, that He sees and therefore cares about the afflicted

This verse focuses on the results of the wicked person’s evil actions

God takes these things “in hand”, meaning he provides for the oppressed by His hand

Again, this shows God’s concern and care for those who are mistreated

Helpless people realize that God is all they have, so they “commit themselves to You”

Those who cry out to God will find He hears and willingly aids them

We are called to mirror God’s attitudes and actions, so we are to care for the hurting also

4. vs. 15: This verse asks God to punish the evildoers; here the request is to “break the arm”
This isn’t asking for physical breaking of a person’s arm
The idea of the arm is that it carries power; think of “the long arm of the law”
To break the arm means to break the power, to make that person powerless
The second half of the verse says to “seek out his wickedness until you find none”
This suggests that God’s punishment will lead to change on the part of the wicked
God’s cleansing of sin is so complete that there is none left to be found

5. vs. 16: God’s actions fall into three categories: He creates, He rules, and He redeems
This verse acknowledges His kingship
Psalms 93-99 dwell on this aspect of God repeatedly
The psalms call on us to remember that God is the only ruler
He says that God is king “forever and ever”

The second half gives an idea about coming events for Israel
After Israel split into two kingdoms (Israel and Judah), they were taken over by others
First the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, and then the Persians
There are other “nations” in the land that God wanted for His people
For these nations to “perish from his land” indicates that their time will have an end

6. vs. 17: God hears and sees all, but there is a difference in the desires of humans
Some desires are wicked, as shown in vs. 13; see also Ps. 78:29 and 31
Some desires are holy and good in God’s sight; see Ps. 21:2 and 38:9
God here is hearing the desires of the holy that they be relieved of evil oppressors
The word “humble” in the NASB is “afflicted” in the NIV
The word used there in Hebrew is the same translated “helpless” in Ps. 10:12
God hears the prayers and cries of those who are humble in heart

7. vs. 18: As with vs. 14, God’s actions are a model for Christians to imitate
Here, He *defends* the fatherless and the oppressed
Both of these groups have no one to stand up for them; they are vulnerable
God’s people are called to defend (help, protect, care for) people in this situation
Note that God’s actions cause a change in the wicked
“Mere mortals will never again strike terror”
This could mean they repent and change, or that God strikes them down
Either way, the promise is there that God will take care of the evildoers

Application: Psalm 10 speaks of the God who helps. This is a fundamental truth about God: He is neither distant nor indifferent. His level of concern for suffering humanity exceeds our own. His interest does not ebb and flow like that of the pagan “gods”. Realizing and confessing that God is a helper leads to great confidence. It comforts us in difficult times; it equips us always to lead holy lives. It helps us remember that no human, however wicked, can ultimately destroy us or separate us from God’s love and care. It makes us aware that we serve a trustworthy God who aids those in need. But we are called to love others as well, our brethren and our enemies. We cannot claim help for ourselves but then deny it to others. God’s help to another may come, and many times does come, through our hands.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that You are the God of the orphan, the widow, and the oppressed. As Your people, help us to be attuned to the needs of the weak and vulnerable in this world. Use us in Your work of overcoming evil. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.