

# PSALM 10

The Septuagint translation joins this psalm with the ninth, and makes them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm, and the scope and style are certainly different. In this psalm,

**I.** David complains of the wickedness of the wicked, describes the dreadful pitch of impiety at which they had arrived (to the great dishonour of God and the prejudice of his church and people), and notices the delay of God's appearing against them (v. 1-11).

**II.** He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people and comforts himself with hopes that he would do so in due time (v. 12-18).

## ~~100~~ PSALM 10:1-11

### THE CHARACTER OF THE WICKED

David, in these verses, discovers,

**I.** A very great affection to God and his favour; for, in the time of trouble, that which he complains of most feelingly is God's withdrawing his gracious presence (v. 1): "*Why standest thou afar off, as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name and the injuries done to the people?*"

Note, God's withdrawals are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially in times of trouble. Outward deliverance is afar off and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off and we therefore want inward comfort; but that is our own fault; it is because we judge by outward appearance; we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

**II.** A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the times perilous, ~~STR~~ 2 Timothy 3:1. he beholds the transgressors and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report, not in a way of vain-glory, boasting before God that he was not as *these publicans* (~~DN~~ Luke 18:11), much less venting any personal resentments, piques, or passions, of his own; but as one that laid to he art that which is offensive

to God and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation of manners. passionate and satirical invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better. This long representation of the wickedness of the wicked is here summed up in the first words of it (v. 2), *The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor*, where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution, the former the cause of the latter. Proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them or will not yield to them they malign and hate with an inveterate hatred. Tyranny, both in state and church, owes its origin to pride. The psalmist, having begun this description, presently inserts a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis, which is an advantage and no prejudice to the sense: *Let them be taken*, as proud people often are, *in the devices that they have imagined*, v. 2. Let their counsels be turned headlong, and let them fall headlong by them. These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

**1.** They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly therefore did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud.

**(1.)** The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. He *boasts of his heart's desire*, boasts that he can do what he pleases (as if God himself could not control him) and that he has all he wished for and has carried his point. Ephraim said, *I have become rich, I have found me out substance*, <sup><3078></sup>Hosea 12:8. “Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a God?”

**(2.)** He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth; for he *blesses the covetous, whom the Lord abhors*. See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons: God abhors covetous worldlings, who make money their God and idolize it; he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them. *The friendship of the world is enmity to God*. But proud persecutors bless them, and approve their sayings, <sup><3913></sup>Psalm 49:13. They applaud those as wise whom God pronounces foolish (<sup><2120></sup>Luke 12:20); they justify those as innocent whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire those as happy, in having their portion in this life, whom God

declares, upon that account, truly miserable. *Thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things.*

**(3.)** He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependence upon him and devotion to him (v. 4): *The wicked, through the pride of his countenance*, that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance (<sup>-3187</sup>Proverbs 6:17), *will not seek after God*, nor entertain the thoughts of him. *God is not in all his thoughts*, not in any of them. *All his thoughts are that there is not God.* See here,

**[1.]** The nature of impiety and irreligion; it is *not seeking after God* and *not having him in our thoughts*. There is no enquiry made after him (<sup>-3550</sup>Job 35:10, <sup>-2416</sup>Jeremiah 2:6), no desire towards him, no communion with him, but a secret wish to have no dependence upon him and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God (that is, will not call upon him); they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but no eye to God in any of them, no submission to his will nor aim at his glory.

**[2.]** The cause of this impiety and irreligion; and that is pride. Men will not seek after God because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them.

**(4.)** He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments (v. 5): *His wings are always grievous*; he is very daring and resolute in his sinful courses; he will have his way, though ever so tiresome to himself and vexatious to others; he travails with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments (what he commands and what he threatens for the breach of his commands) are *far above out of his sight*; he is not sensible of his duty by the law of God nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God. Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, that he never saw God and therefore does not know that there is a God, he is *in the height of heaven*, and *quae supra nos nihil ad nos* — *we have nothing to do with things above us*. Tell him of God's judgments which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and he will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are *far above out of his sight*, and therefore he thinks they are mere bugbears.

(5.) He proudly despises all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain; he puffs at those whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he could baffle them all, and was able to make his part good with them. But, as it is impolitic to despise an enemy, so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath.

(6.) He proudly sets trouble at defiance and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity (v. 6): *He hath said in his heart*, and pleased himself with the thought, *I shall not be moved*, my goods are laid up for many years, and *I shall never be in adversity*; like Babylon, that said, *I shall be a lady for ever*, <sup><347></sup>Isaiah 47:7; <sup><617></sup>Revelation 18:7. Those are nearest ruin who thus set it furthest from them.

2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors. For the gratifying of their pride and covetousness, and in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe, concerning these persecutors,

(1.) That they are very bitter and malicious (v. 7): *His mouth is full of cursing*. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized and cursed, with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice there is commonly a mouth full of curses.

(2.) They are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hidden under the tongue, not to be discerned, for *his mouth is full of deceit* and vanity. He has learned of the devil to deceive, and so to destroy; with this his hatred is covered, <sup><125></sup>Proverbs 26:26. He cares not what lies he tells, not what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he uses, to compass his ends.

(3.) That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means to concert what they intend, that they may the more effectually accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, *he sits in the lurking places, in the secret places*, and *his eyes are privily set* to do mischief (v. 8), not because he is ashamed of what he does (if he blushed, there were some hopes he would repent), not because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account (v. 11), but because he is afraid lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of them. Perhaps it refers particularly to robbers and

highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them and what they have.

(4.) That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against *the innocent*, who never provoked them — against *the poor*, who cannot resist them and over whom it will be no glory to triumph. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power ought to protect the innocent and provide for the poor; yet these will be the destroyers of those whose guardians they ought to be. And what do they aim at? It is to *catch the poor*, and *draw them into their net*, that is, get them into their power, not to strip them only, but to *murder them*. They hunt for the precious life. It is God's poor people that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred for his sake whose they are and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them: *He lies in wait as a lion* that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion that seeks not what, but whom, he may devour.

(5.) That they are base and hypocritical (v. 10): *He crouches and humbles himself*, as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates that the sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, though ever so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs; witness the scandalous practices of Saul when he hunted David. It intimates, likewise, that they cover their malicious designs with the pretence of meekness and humility, and kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to; they seem to humble themselves to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves in their concerns, when it is in order to make them fall, to make a prey of them.

(6.) That they are very impious and atheistical, v. 11. They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness towards man if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles: *He hath said in his heart, God has forgotten*. When his own conscience rebuked him with the consequences of it, and asked how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, he turned it off with this, *God has forsaken the earth*, <sup>2082</sup>Ezekiel 8:12; 9:9. This is a blasphemous reproach,

[1.] Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not, or did not, see what men do in this lower world.

[2.] Upon his holiness and the rectitude of his nature, as if, though he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at, the most unnatural and inhuman villainies.

[3.] Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if, though he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not or durst not, or because he was not inclined to do so. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors hope that God will, in due time, appear for them; for those that are abusive to them are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this psalm and praying it over, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of the oppressors, a tender compassion of the miseries of the oppressed, and a pious zeal for the glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will, in due time, give redress to the injured and reckon with the injurious.

## PSALM 10:12-18

### PRAYER AGAINST PERSECUTORS

David here, upon the foregoing representation of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God, wherein observe,

**I.** What he prays for.

**1.** That God would himself appear (v. 12): “*Arise, O Lord! O God! lift up thy hand, manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world. Arise, O Lord! to the confusion of those who say that thou hidest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for the maintaining of thy own cause, lift up thy hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thy everlasting arm be made bare.*”

**2.** That he would appear for his people: “*Forget not the humble, the afflicted, that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors, in their presumption, say that thou hast forgotten them; and they, in their despair, are ready to say the same. Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken.*”

**3.** That he would appear against their persecutors, v. 15.

(1.) That he would disable them from doing any mischief: *Break thou the arm of the wicked, take away his power, that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared,* <sup>(384)</sup> Job 34:30. We read of oppressors whose dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged (<sup>(271)</sup> Daniel 7:12), that they might have time to repent.

(2.) That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done: “*Seek out his wickedness; let that be all brought to light which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let that be all brought to account which he thought should for ever go unpunished; bring it out till thou find none, that is, till none of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his evil designs undefeated, and none of his partisans undestroyed.*”

## II. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself: “Lord, it is thy own cause that we beg thou wouldst appear in; the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished” (v. 13): *Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?* He does so; for he says, “*Thou wilt not require it; thou wilt never call us to an account for what we do,*” than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God. The psalmist here speaks with astonishment,

(1.) At the wickedness of the wicked: “Why do they speak so impiously, why so absurdly?” It is a great trouble to good men to think what contempt is cast upon the holy God by the sin of sinners, upon his precepts, his promises, his threatenings, his favours, his judgments; all are despised and made light of. *Wherefore do the wicked thus contemn God?* It is because they do not know him.

(2.) At the patience and forbearance of God towards them: “Why are they suffered thus to contemn God? Why does he not immediately vindicate himself and take vengeance on them?” It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors (v. 14): “Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy that thou wilt never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou doest behold it, even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurk in the hearts, of these oppressors; it is

all known to thee, and observed by thee; nay, not only thou hast seen it and dost behold it, but thou wilt requite it, wilt recompense it into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand.”

**3.** He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him: “*The poor commits himself unto thee*, each of them does so, I among the rest. They rely on thee as their patron and protector, they refer themselves to thee as their Judge, in whose determination they acquiesce and at whose disposal they are willing to be. *They leave themselves with thee*” ( so some read it), “not prescribing, but subscribing, to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour as much as their oppressors dishonour thee. They are thy willing subjects, and put themselves under thy protection; therefore protect them.”

**4.** He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us,

**(1.)** As a great God. He *is King for ever and ever*, v. 16. And it is the office of a king to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil-doers and the protection and praise of those that do well. To whom should the injured subjects appeal but to the sovereign? *Help, my Lord, O King! Avenge me of my adversary.* “Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as their King have the benefit of thy government and find thee their refuge. Thou art an everlasting King, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and wilt, by an eternal judgment, dispense rewards and punishments in an everlasting state, when time shall be no more; and to that judgment the poor refer themselves.”

**(2.)** As a good God. He is the helper of the fatherless (v. 14), of those who have no one else to help them and have many to injure them. He has appointed kings to *defend the poor and fatherless* (~~1818~~ Psalm 82:3), and therefore much more will he do so himself; for he has taken it among the titles of his honour to be a Father to the fatherless (~~1818~~ Psalm 68:5), a helper of the helpless.

**5.** He pleads the experience which God's church and people had had of God's readiness to appear for them.

**(1.)** He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies (v. 16): “*The heathen have perished out of his land*; the remainders of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes and goads in the sides of Israel, are now, at length, utterly rooted out; and this is an



encouragement to us to hope that God will, in like manner, break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, who were, in some respects, worse than heathens.”

(2.) He had heard and answered their prayers (v. 17): “*Lord, thou hast many a time heard the desire of the humble, and never saidst to a distressed suppliant, Seek in vain. Why may not we hope for the continuance and repetition of the wonders, the favours, which our father told us of?*”

6. He pleads their expectations from God pursuant to their experience of him: “*Thou hast heard, therefore thou will cause thy ear to hear, as, <sup>(-169)</sup>Psalm 6:9. Thou art the same, and thy power, and promise, and relation to thy people are the same, and the work and workings of grace are the same in them; why therefore may we not hope that he who has been will still be, will ever be, a God hearing prayers?*” But observe,

(1.) In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may we expect his gracious answer, but in this way; so that God's working upon us is the best earnest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for, makes us fit to receive it and use it well, and then gives it in to us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto him for it (<sup>(-171)</sup>Proverbs 16:1) and take that as a leading favour.

(2.) What he will do in answer to prayer, v. 18.

[1.] He will plead the cause of the persecuted, will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them, clear up their innocency, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained.

[2.] He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no further; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken *that the man of the earth may no more oppress*. See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slightly he speaks of him now that he had been considering God's sovereignty.

*First*, He is but *a man of the earth*, a man *out of* the earth (so the word is), sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean, and weak, and hastening to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor when he is but *man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass?*

<sup><6812></sup>Isaiah 51:12. He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth. *Secondly*, God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive (<sup><6810></sup>Revelation 20:3), no more oppress.

In singing these verses we must commit religion's just but injured cause to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will, in due time, plead it with jealousy.