

When Sinners Have the Upper Hand

Psalms Series

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Bible Text: Psalm 10

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Few things can vex a saint like seeing a sinner prosper and using his position against the ungodly or the innocent. When you are committed to righteousness as any true Christian is and you love the God of righteousness, you begin to cultivate a sense of right and wrong and it is an injury when that is not honored, that sense of principle of justice. It's no abstract discussion when someone uses their position of influence to harm you and the reality of the situation is that people like this not only will take advantage of you, sometimes they will mock your inability to stop them, to hinder them from using you or abusing you because you don't have the authority to stop them. You don't have the influence, the power, and you're there and you're watching these ungodly things develop and you can't do anything about it. I think about that often as I watch the news of the ever-expanding approval of homosexual marriage in our country.

Well, where do we go, what do we do, how should we think when sinners have the upper hand? Be it in a particular situation or as they dominate the culture and the life and the national discourse as it may be? Our Psalm tonight, Psalm 10, gives us strength and it gives us courage and it gives us the biblical perspective that we need to respond to this in a proper way. It should never leave us discouraged or in despair. Rather, as we said many times, it should cause us to rise up in faith. We should recognize the challenge for what it is. It's an opportunity for God to sanctify us and for us to learn to depend upon him all the more. It is a serious defect for Christians to put their trust in politics to change situations like this. I'm not going to say that it's wrong to do any politics at all or for a Christian to be involved in politics, that is not my point. The question is: where do you run to first and when we run to the Lord first, then our need for politics kind of diminishes probably in direct proportion. But if you would look at Psalm 1:6, I just want to remind you of this principle that we've talked about so many times and I want you to see it again because as we focus on this, it's going to help you have a perspective about all of the Psalms, about the message of the Psalms, if we remember this interpretive guide that was given to us in the very introductory Psalm, Psalm 1. In verse 6 it says the "The LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish."

Psalm 10 is simply an application of that verse. It simply takes that universal principle, that dynamic interpretive light to all of life and it applies it in a particular situation. The

Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish. What we're going to see in Psalm 10 is a direct application of it. So turn to Psalm 10 if you're not there already and we'll begin at that point. This Psalm breaks down basically into two nice sections. The first 11 verses we're going to call the alarm of the godly. The alarm of the godly, where he is stating his concern over the proper conduct of society and he sees it being violated. The alarm of the godly and then point 2 will be the appeal of the godly in verses 12 -18. That gives you a sense of the flow of the Psalm in all 18 verses of it. He is alarmed as this Psalm opens, assuming that it is from David. David is alarmed as this Psalm opens but as he walks through it all, he appeals to God and he ends in a position of trust. What I want to encourage you with, beloved, is this: that is always the process that we can walk through no matter what it is that is agitating your heart. I'm not saying that this happens in a moment of time or as a result of a five-minute prayer but the reality of our Christian position is this: that we have the capacity, we have the knowledge, we have the spiritual power that is necessary so that we do not have to cave into despair and discouragement and alarm at what we see happening around us. God has given us all that is necessary for life in godliness. Look, we don't need a politician to intervene on our behalf in order for us to have peace. Is that really clear in everyone's mind? That is not the Christian position to rely on unbelieving or even believing politicians to rescue us from the despair that we find ourselves in. We do not trust in mortal men. We do not trust in men whose breath is in their nostrils no matter how much the political ads and religious leaders stimulate us in that direction. We have to understand that for what it is. It is an appeal to put our trust in the flesh rather than to put our trust in the Spirit of God.

Now, Psalm 10 teaches us how to do this. Psalm 10 shows us how to work through the difficulties of having wicked people prospering all around us. I've entitled this message "When Sinners Have the Upper Hand" as they are often going to do in this life. What do we do? Well, look, we don't panic. We're not afraid. We don't retreat. We don't join them. We don't trust in man to deliver us. We walk through the situation according to biblical truth and we end up in a position where we are trusting God for his ultimate justice, his ultimate righteousness to be displayed. That is supreme in the Christian position. That is supreme in the Christian view of walking in a fallen world and it's going to become ever more critical for us to think this way and to trust this way because Paul said in 2 Timothy that evil men are going to go from bad to worse. Well, we can either tremble in fright and hide in a corner over that or we can run to the battle, we can stand like men and say, "No, I'm going to display my trust in God in this." We might as well be Christians who trust God, huh? That's what I think.

Now, Psalm 10. The appeal of the godly is preceded by the alarm of the godly. Point 1: the alarm of the godly. As this Psalm opens up, David is crying out over the Lord's seeming indifference to great wickedness. He is discouraged. He is in despair. It sounds like something of the opening verses of Habakkuk 1 where he says,

1 Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?

Here he is agitated as he looks out at the world around him and says, "Lord, things are going haywire. Things are not what they should be. Why is it that you haven't intervened? Why are you letting this continue to unfold? Wickedness and sinful men are multiplying and good, innocent people are being afflicted and there is no one to help them. Lord, why are you standing by silently as that occurs?" And the theme of the afflicted is noticeable in this Psalm. Look at verse 2, "In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted." Verse 12, "O God, do not forget the afflicted." In verse 18, he says, "Lord, you will vindicate the orphan and the oppressed." So there is this concern that is not merely a personal concern to David. It's not that he personally is suffering so much but that he sees others around him who are innocent and yet weak and defenseless, being afflicted by sinful men who are taking advantage of them. His sense of justice is offended and he has cried out to God and after a period of time he says, "Lord, why is it that you're just standing silently by and letting this continue?" There is a presupposition in this opening verse that God has the power at any time to intervene and to put a stop to it and yet when we see wickedness flourish, when we see sinful men predominate and gain further and further control and influence, it is because God has stood back and has let that happen and David is wrestling with that saying, "God, why and how long?"

Then he goes on and describes in detail in verses 2-11 the nature of these immoral men. Martin Luther is quoted as saying about Psalm 10 quote, "There is not in my judgment a Psalm which describes the mind, the manners, the work, the words, the feelings and the fate of the ungodly with so much propriety, fullness and light as this Psalm." When we think about the nature of fallen man, we will quickly quote Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That there is none righteous, no not one." That's an appropriate, good cornerstone view of man to have in our minds. It's a good starting point. What we have in Psalm 10 is an unfolding of the significance of that in the inner and outer man of the wicked. We see how pervasive their depravity is. We see how deep rooted their ungodliness is and this is what is resident in every unredeemed heart. We should not be surprised after we study Psalm 10 to see wickedness coming out of wicked men. There is a reason why their lives overflow with sin and oppression. It's because that's what's dominate their heart. Jesus said that it's "out of the heart of man that come all of the wicked things," Mark 7:20-22. But when we understand the heart of the wicked, then we start to realize that we can expect certain things to unfold and the mystery and the confusion that it would otherwise bring starts to dissipate in the light of spiritual perception and discernment to say, "I understand the nature of man enough to know why it's acting out this way."

So if we have a mature view of sin and what the implications of sin are in the human heart, then we're going to have a better set of expectations about what walking through this wicked world is going to be like. What is it about the ungodly? What can we see? What can we learn about the ungodly, unchristian man as we read Psalm 10? Well, first of all, we're going to see that he's dominated by ungodly thoughts. He's dominated by ungodly thoughts. This is the first notable mark of the wicked, is their hostility toward God. Their hostility toward God. Look at verses 2-4 with me,

2 In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted;

And as it's translated here in the NASB, it becomes a bit of a prayer that God would deal with them.

Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.

It could be translated, "they will be caught in the plots which they have devised." But why is it that they feel the freedom? Why is it that they do this? It's because they have a sense that they can get away with it. Look at verse 3,

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."

As he is plotting and scheming to pursue the afflicted, to take advantage of them, to hurt them, to prosper off of their misfortune, he is spurning God, he has turned away, he is saying that, "There is not a God that can hold me accountable. There will be no eternal consequence to what I am doing. There will be no earthly retribution. I can get away with this." So he exploits and crushes the weak because he has no biblical perspective to redirect his intentions, to create fear in his heart that would otherwise restrain him from pursuing this wicked course. We're accustomed to hearing at least in the world's mind that all men are basically good, that some kind of outward morality will make up for a genuine conversion but that's not true. That's not true. We need to understand the depth of the depravity of the human heart. When men cast aside the true God, when men reject the Gospel of Christ, don't be surprised when eventually in their life they crush others to get what they want or they destroy those who keep them from getting what they want.

There was a double homicide just south of our house last night and the common situation: wife cheating on her husband, the husband tracks her down with the other man and rams his vehicle into their vehicle and murders them both and turned the gun on himself. You may have seen the news about it just today. Just today, that was in the news. James says, "You lust and you don't have. You commit murder." James isn't overstating the case when he speaks that way. This is the case over and over and over again and you and I should have the capacity to hear news stories and recognize the spiritual principles that are in operation. It's not an issue of gun control. That is irrelevant to the discussion. What is happening in those situations are people are lusting, they want something, they desire something so badly that it dominates them and when they can't get it, they go kill somebody in response. That's what is in the unredeemed human heart. Every one of them. That is latent in the rebellious nature of man. Look, if a man is willing to kill God, as it were, by refusing to submit to him, it is no big deal to step across the line and kill another human being, to crush them, to afflict them. We should be under no illusions of the danger that lurks in the human heart. Part of the reason that God has an instituted government when government is doing what it's supposed to do, it's to act as a restraint upon that wickedness.

So we just need to realize that this is what is resident in the hearts of men. It's true of men, it's true of nations because what are nation's but just populations of basically

unredeemed men. And so when we see this kind of oppression, we trace it back, we have the spiritual discernment to trace it back, all the way back and say, "Ah, this is the fruit of an unredeemed heart. This is the fruit of a heart that does not fear God, that sees no consequence to its action and therefore acts to accomplish what it wants no matter who is crushed in the process." They are emboldened because they have convinced themselves that there is no consequence for their sin. And so when unbelievers think that God is powerless, that God doesn't exist or that he is indifferent to stop them, they will act wickedly to get what they want in ways that would shock us in any other setting. They are ungodly. He doesn't seek God. He spurns the Lord. And that's why he can hotly pursue the afflicted. It's because his thoughts are, "There is no God. Why would I do it any other way?" It's kind of frightening. It's sobering and it's just so superficial to attribute it to guns and other things like that. When you do that, you're diverting your attention away from what the real issue is. The real issue is the wickedness of the human heart.

Secondly, what else can we say about the ungodly? Well, here in Psalm 10 they are marked by their ungodly trust. Their ungodly trust. Look at verses 5 and 6, rather than trusting the Lord with the humble, the ungodly is confident that his prosperity will protect him from harm. Look at verse 5, David is assessing them. He is giving a Spirit-inspired analysis of the inner man of the wicked that says,

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.

There is an arrogance about it. There is a lack of fear.

6 He says to himself, "I will not be moved; Throughout all generations I will not be in adversity."

In one manner or another, he is in a position of strength. There is no adversity. There is no opposition. He is not struggling with difficulties at this point in his existence and his mindset is, "I am always going to be like this. I am strong. I am capable of persevering in this. I can maintain this position." And as he goes on and continues to prosper in it, there is no reason for him to think differently outside of the gospel of Christ. Think of the successful executive who crushes people beneath his feet and then drives home to his mansion in his luxury car. That's kind of the picture of what's being said here. Everything about his life suggests that his way is the path to success. There are no immediate consequences to slow him down. There is no one with the authority or influence to answer him, to silence him. He says, "I will not be moved. Throughout all generations, I will not be in adversity."

Only as you come to the Scripture do you find the answer to that that they will eventually find their confidence was misplaced but for the moment, they enjoy the fruit of their sin and it emboldens them, it hardens them all the more. Charles Spurgeon said in a word of warning, "Be humble, O man, for you are mortal and your success will evaporate." So he's trusting in his own power. He's got a godless heart that says, "There is no God." And

his plans and his plots are not hindered by any such trivialities. You know the picture of the man and you also know by your own experience in the world how futile and how easily dismissed it would be for a humble believer to come and speak to him about Christ, to speak to him about the consequences of wickedness. His haughtiness, his pride, the dismissal of God in his heart causes him to dismiss the warnings of the humble as well. To mock and curse them. Well look, beloved, we've just got to be of a mindset to understand that and to be undaunted in the face of it. We understand where this is coming from. We understand why men are like this, because of their earthbound perspective. When we understand, then we are no longer subject to such intimidation from them. Our alarm starts to dissipate as we turn our own trust back to the Lord.

But David is not at that point in the Psalm yet. He's talked about their ungodliness in the sense of their ungodly trust, their ungodly thoughts and now in verse 7 we're going to see their ungodly tongue. The ungodly tongue of the wicked. Verse 7 says,

7 His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.

David says their speech is abusive, intimidating. It is untrustworthy. The question that is underlying his alarm here is, "God, why do you allow this? Why do you as a God of truth and justice allow this to perpetuate? Why do you allow this man to grow in his prominence? Why do you allow him the freedom to afflict those that are weaker than he is? Why is this, Lord? Why do you hide yourself? Why don't you act? Why aren't you doing anything?"

And as we said when we began the whole series on the Psalms, my hope is that some of you who are in that kind of situation find strength by finding your innermost frustrations and fears being expressed and identified in the language of holy Scripture. You have to love the nature of the Psalms, don't you? That are so transparent? The Psalms are so unlike the nature of religious environment all around us where everyone puts on their plastic smile on Sunday and everything's great and fine and we play this charade. I'm not saying here in Truth, I'm speaking more generally because I don't believe our church is like this. But they play this charade that everything's fine and there's no trouble and you go out but inside people are dying. Well, the Psalms don't play this charade. I love the fact that the Bible doesn't go along with that game. There is a transparency in the Scriptures. There is a transparency in the Psalms where these thoughts that at one time or another have agitated us all find their expression and if you identify with the spirit of this Psalm because someone has power over you and is abusing it, Psalm 10 is your best friend.

Well, it moves from ungodly thoughts to ungodly trust and ungodly tongues and into ungodly traps, we could say, in verses 8-10. In a final flourish, David describes the cunning violence of this wicked man. They are like animals stalking after their prey. If you've ever watched a cat going after a bird or watched a bigger animal getting ready to jump on its Sunday meal, you have a sense of what's being described in these next three verses. David says in verse 8,

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. 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. 10 He crouches, he bows down, And the unfortunate fall by his mighty ones.

You have the picture of this man plotting and scheming in secret. You know, one of the things that I thought about, the kind of a modern illustration of this. There are so many of them. The scam artists that will cheat elderly people out of their life savings. Smart, suave, smooth speakers who go after people whose mental capacity is a little diminished. They isolate them and they have them take advantage and sign over documents. I was hearing about something not too long ago where a widow had signed over her savings to such a man as this. That's the idea of this wickedness. Getting people off to the side and then attacking them to take advantage of them. What we see in Scripture is that Scripture is not silent; God is not indifferent to that kind of criminal activity. These men hide themselves to hurt unsuspecting people. They use false pretenses to receive donations after a natural disaster. You've all seen this. A hurricane hits, a tsunami is overseas and all of a sudden there are a multiplicity of new organizations designed to provide relief funds, "Just send us a check." And the money never gets there. That is the mark of this kind of lurking, stealthy wickedness. They think that God doesn't see. They give no thought to the fact that anything could be different.

Look at what they say in verse 11.

11 He says to himself, "God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it."

There is no vertical dimension to their thinking. Proverbs says repeatedly that the fear of the Lord keeps one from evil. When you abandoned the fear of the Lord, when you push God out of your thinking, when you push God out of the society, you might as well understand that you are inviting wickedness to come in. Either the fear of God will reign in a man's heart or the pursuit of wickedness will reign in that heart. And so he is mocked. The wicked has mocked in these first 11 verses everything that you and I hold dear. He is utterly opposed to the things that we find most precious. And David has expressed his alarm over that because in real time, with real people, he's seen real hurt taking place.

Now, if we were to simply leave it there, look out at our world and see the ever-growing prosperity and success of the wicked, if we just left it there and said amen at this point, we would probably walk away as quite discouraged people but this is not a Psalm of discouragement. This is a Psalm of confidence. This is a Psalm of how to respond when you're living in a world like that and, beloved, even more on a very personal level and I have memories of my own past experience kind of percolating in my mind right now of situations where I was under the yoke of men like this a long time ago and nothing that's ever going to be worth repeating. But just feeling the weight of being in a position of

abuse and not being able to do anything about it, not being able to respond. Listen, I want to tell you something, tell you from the Psalm, tell you from sweet personal experience: if you're in that position, stop being discouraged about it. Stop letting it defeat you and take heart. Take comfort and pursue and run after the last half of this Psalm. Run after point 2: the appeal of the godly. Let this Psalm be that which thrusts you into a different spiritual realm. Rather than collapsing in fear or frustration, rather than complaining about how unfair this is, rather than trembling when that person walks down the hall again, brothers and sisters in Christ, let this Psalm embolden you to the kind of courage that is worthy of the man or woman of God that I know most of you are. Those times of oppression are designed and used by God in our sanctification. God uses times like that to teach us to trust him and to call out to him. It is when all of your earthly options, your earthly crutches that you lean on have been kicked away, that you now have the opportunity to in a pure, in a new way, call out to God to trust him and to put your trust in him and watch him deliver you. You're not meant to be a cowering, frightened Christian. That's not what we were created to do. That's not what we were created to be. That's not why God saved us is to be intimidated by wicked people. We are meant to be strong in the face of it. We are meant to turn to God and trust in him.

And I would venture to say that until we learn to do that, the oppression from wicked people will only get worse. I have little doubt in my mind, I have no doubt in my mind, that until the church, the true church of Jesus Christ stops trusting in politicians, that there is not going to be a turn toward righteousness in our country. God will continue to allow the oppression to grow and get worse until we abandon our foolish confidence in men to be the source of our deliverance. It's just the way it is. That's just the way it is. Why would God prosper the church when the church is trusting in men? Why would he do that? Why would he give a sense that, "Yes, this is what my people are supposed to be." Where is the outcry of an appeal to God as opposed to more political action? As long as Christians are trusting in the Tea Party, don't expect God to intervene and change much. There is a sense of discipline that comes on us until we learn to appeal the way that is taught to us in Psalm 10.

Let's see the appeal of the godly. First of all, David calls God to battle against the wicked. Look at verse 12, he says,

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up Your hand. Do not forget the afflicted.

This is a call to battle. He's calling God to battle and saying, "God, lift up your hand." What he's saying is, "God, display your power. Exercise your power against the wickedness that is all around us. Don't forget the afflicted. God, I know who you are. I know that you see these things. I know that you have power to deal with it and so I'm bypassing every human agency and I am appealing to you. O God, display your power in this situation." He's been humbled under the hand of the wicked and he calls on God to intervene.

Then as we've seen so many times in these earlier Psalms, he starts to unfold the reasons, he unpacks in prayer the basis upon which he appeals God to do something. Here in verse

13, what you see is that he is appealing to his concern for the glory of God. He says in verse 13

13 Why has the wicked spurned God?

Why does he act this way, oh God?" It's because,

He has said to himself, "You will not require it."

He says, "God, this is happening. They feel unrestrained because there hasn't been any consequence to it and they've said you're never going to do anything. Well God, that is a violation of your glory. That is a misrepresentation of who you are. God, this is what they're saying. Won't you please act to silence them so that your glory could be restored to its rightful place?" Because in verse 14,

14 You have seen it, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand.

"God, I know you've seen it. God, I know you have the power to deal with this. I'm not trusting in anything else, Lord. I'm just appealing to you. You are my refuge. You are my appeal, God. I beg you to act and to silence this wickedness that we see around us." And he goes on and he says in verse 14, in sweet comforting words. God is so unlike the wicked. The wicked take advantage of the weak. God, in his strength, in his holy character, is the defender of the weak that put their trust in him. We saw that last time in Psalm 9,

The unfortunate commits himself to You; You have been the helper of the orphan.

"God, as I see this oppression, as I see this injustice all around, I see people suffering under the hand of wicked people, God, I appeal to you to act not only for the sake of your own glory but because of who you are. Lord, you help people in exactly circumstances just like this. So God, I'm not asking you to do anything outside of your character. I am simply asking you to be who you are and act like it. Act like who you are. Exercise power according to your righteous character and intervene and silence the wicked and help the weak. God, that's what I'm asking for here." And in verse 15, in the language that sounds very harsh and severe to our ears, he says,

15 Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoer, Seek out his wickedness until You find none.

He's not talking about inflicting physical injury on him, he's using a metaphor saying, "God, break his power. Break the arm of his power so that he's not able to do this anymore. Pull him down from his position. Seek out his wickedness." In other words, "Pursue his wickedness. Deal with him so thoroughly that there is nothing left to be said about it. Use the hand of your power to break the arm of his power."

What you see in these verses is this and I want you to grasp this so that bad news headlines won't dislodge you from your hope, what David is saying here in verses 12-15 in essence is this: the wicked have completely misunderstood the reality of the situation. They think that they can get away with this. They think that there will be no consequences and therefore they pursue their wickedness with all abandon. Their fraud, their sin, their immorality, all of it. They pursue it with abandon because they think there's no consequence. What David is saying in these four verses is, "They are wrong. There are consequences," and the prevailing power of wickedness in culture and in politics cannot possibly be the permanent state of affairs. One day, God will rise up. One day, God will exercise his will and the lights will go on and these rats will scurry until there's nothing left to be found of them. God will bear the hand of his power. He will vindicate righteousness. He will protect those who have put their trust in him. The wickedness of man is temporary. The success of the wicked, the upper hand of the wicked is always by definition temporary because Psalm 1:6, "The Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish," without exception.

When David was writing this, he was seeing it probably mostly from an earthly perspective and thinking about earthly consequences of men being pulled down from their positions. You and I have an even more informed position. God often does that but we realize in the fullness of New Testament revelation that we are waiting for a final judgment of God at the end of time where all of these scores will be settled. When you view it from the proper perspective, you realize that not only do we not fear the wicked, we do not envy the wicked, we pity them and we see their ultimate destruction. We come, as it were, into the house of God. We get a biblical perspective and then we see the world differently.

And having walked through the alarm of the godly, having made his appeal in verses 12-15, you see the end of the appeal in verses 16-18 where he ends once again on a note of confidence that God will prevail. Verse 16,

16 The LORD is King forever and ever; Nations have perished from His land.

God is the King. In other words, God is the sovereign and he is the sovereign from the beginning to the end. There has never been a time where he has sacrificed or yielded his control to wickedness. Wickedness is always operating under the greater sovereign plan of God. God is King forever and ever. Nations have perished from his land. His point here in verse 16 is this: if nations have perished under the hand of a sovereign God, if God can raise up nations and bring them down, then it is no issue whatsoever to deal with individual men as well. The right perspective of sinners, of those who don't know Christ should be one of severe fear, of trembling and astonishment at the doom that awaits them. If they could only have the veil pulled back and God open their eyes to see it with clarity. The outcome for those of you in this room who are rejecting Christ if you don't repent is one of utter ruin and destruction and doom. God can deal with you. God is not hindered by your rebellious attitude, by your indifference, by your refusal to hear the pleas of the

godly ones who ask you to come to Christ. And the more you harden your heart, it does not hinder God at all.

In this moment of clarity about the power of God over sinful, rejecting hearts, let me extend the Gospel to you again one more time: God will receive you; God will forgive all of your sins if you simply repent and put your faith in Christ and abandon any sense that you deserve this. You come to Christ as a beggar saying, "I have been a rebel. I have refused the Gospel all this time but, God, I am finally putting that aside. I ask you, God, to receive me in all of my sinfulness and wickedness not because I've earned the right to ask this but in an appeal to sheer grace and mercy I pray that you would receive me." Don't harden your heart again to that message. Don't stiffen your neck again. The more brittle, the more hard you make your neck, the more vital the snap will be when God is done with it. Soften your heart and come to Christ for salvation because he will receive you still. Don't think you can turn away from the true gospel without consequence. If God can subdue nations and judge them, he can subdue you and judge you as well. Come with the rest of us to heaven, won't you?

Verse 17, David has come to his place of confidence. Look at it with me in the text there in verse 17. Having seen wicked men vaunt themselves over against the weak, having seen them mock those who trust in the true God, now he has appealed, he's remembered the power of God and he says in verse 17,

17 O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble.

In other words he's saying, "God, you've heard my prayer. I have just had audience with the omnipotent of the universe and he has received my prayer favorably. I am no longer afraid. I have a new found, reborn confidence in light of the fact that the true God with true power, with truth sympathy to the humble, has heard me." And he says in verse 17, God,

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.

"God, I am confident in the ultimate outcome now. I remember who you are. I know that you are a friend to the suffering. You are a friend to the orphan, O God. If you are a friend to the most helpless kind of person on earth, then I know that you are going to vindicate my trust in you. You will help them and these men that have terrorized them and taken advantage of them, you will eventually cast them down. I am at peace even though," watch this, "even though the circumstances have not changed."

Beloved, I can't tell you this enough. I've said it a few times over the two or three years that we've been together and I need to say it a whole lot more that God would use these words to strengthen you and help you walk by faith in your sorrows and in your difficulties and in the injustice which afflicts your life: the position of the Christian is such that your circumstances do not have to change in order for you to walk through life

with peace and confidence. God reigns and God hears the prayer of the humble. God protects his children. That is what guarantees the outcome of your life. That is the basis on which he will deal with you throughout all of eternity and it doesn't strengthen your position if your circumstances change, it doesn't diminish them if your circumstances do not change. God is good to his people and if it seems in this moment in your life that that principle is open to severe question, come back to the fact that God will strengthen their heart, God hears the desire of the humble. In the end, God is good to his people and those of us, you and I who trust him for that, beloved, we will not be disappointed. We will not be ashamed. God will treat that trust as a precious stewardship that he will vindicate in the final analysis. We don't have to be alarmed at the success of the ungodly. We appeal to God and we find our confidence and we rest our hope right there. Won't to walk out tonight doing that?

Let's pray.

Our God, we just want to be biblical Christians. We want to trust in you as your word calls us to do. Lord, may we never put our primary trust in men. Whatever we do with political processes in voting and all of that, Father, help us to see that it's secondary to appealing to you. It's secondary to trusting in you, to calling on you, to putting the fullness of our hope, the fullness of our trust in you to overcome the oppression of man, to overcome the broken heart of the suffering. Lord, these things are beyond our power but they are fully within yours and so we ask you to arise. We ask you to lift up your hand. Father, not only to exercise and to vindicate justice in the world around us but lift up your hand, O God, to display the power of the Gospel in the conversion of unbelieving hearts, even some here tonight. God, you are a saving God. God, you sent Christ to be the Redeemer of those who would trust in you. God, only you can open the closed heart. Only you can open the eyes of the blind. Only you can open the ears of the deaf. Only you can loose the tongue of the dumb. O God, arise. O God, display your power for the sake of the salvation of sinners. O God, convert unbelieving hearts. We have no power of our own. We can't manufacture this, Father, through foolish philosophies of ministry. We are completely dependent upon your power, on the power of your Spirit, to do that which we cannot do on our own. O God, arise for the sake of the salvation of the lost that are here even in this room tonight. God, may they behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and put their trust in him.

God, hear our humble desires. Vindicate our plea. Do that which only you can do, not just for people in this room but, God, we ask you to do a mighty power, a mighty work of saving power throughout this region, throughout the state, throughout this country. Father, we ask for your Spirit to work in hearts and bless the preaching of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. David prayed for justice against the wicked and we sympathize with him. Father, in light of New Testament revelation, we ask for their conversion as well and we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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