

**Arise, O LORD!**

Psalm 10

Michael Felkins

Grand Avenue Baptist Church

Ames, Iowa

September 7, 2025

Perhaps you have had this experience: You're a follower of Christ, a disciple of Jesus. You love Jesus and you're faithfully following Him, and yet your life gets harder. Then, you notice that those who do not follow Jesus are actually succeeding in life. It seems their lives are easier, and they have fewer problems. Finally, to top it all off, you also notice that they are actually working against Christians and Christ's church. So, it is not that they simply do not believe in God, but they actively work against Christ followers, and you have been one of their victims.

The situation I am describing is a question I have had myself more than once in life. Perhaps you have had a similar experience. This issue I've raised is the age-old question of: *Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper?* This question has troubled God's people for centuries. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah asked this question in Jeremiah 12:1-2,

*Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive? <sup>2</sup> You plant them, and they take root; they grow and produce fruit; you are near in their mouth and far from their heart.*

Psalm 37 essentially asks and answers this question by setting side-by-side the nature of the wicked against the nature and character of God. However, Psalm 10 *addresses this question, but from the perspective of the dynamics of our faith as we suffer at the hands of predatory people.*

So, let's do a quick overview of Psalm 10 and see its connection to Psalm 9. If you were here last Sunday, you will remember that I told you Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 are connected, yet they have differences. Psalm 9 has a superscription at the beginning, but Psalm 10 doesn't. Psalm 9 is an acrostic Psalm based on the Hebrew alphabet to begin each new verse. However, it didn't finish the alphabet. It breaks off, and then Psalm 10 picks up the acrostic but omits the Hebrew letter *daleth*.

Psalm 9 praises the LORD for how He cares for the vulnerable. However, Psalm 10 is a lament that grieves how the wicked have oppressed the weak and vulnerable. Psalm 10 opens with a shocking question that seems to contradict Psalm 9. In v. 1 of Psalm 10, King David says,

*Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*

The exact rendering of the Hebrew phrase "*times of trouble*" appears only twice in the Scriptures. The first one was in Psalm 9:9, when David wrote, "*The LORD is... a stronghold in times of trouble.*" Here, David expresses confidence in God as he endures harsh trials. Yet, now in Psalm 10:1, David appears to reverse course when he says, "*Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*" All of the sudden, his whole-hearted praise and confidence in Yahweh appear to have evaporated because God seems to have hidden His face from him and his people.

As we approach Psalm 10, this apparent change of heart by King David should prompt us to be mindful of the dynamics of our faith in God as we endure mistreatment and even persecution at the hands of the wicked. It helps us consider these times and challenges us to evaluate our hearts as we despair, yet, by faith, hold on to Jesus.

Consider what Psalm 10 teaches us. *It teaches us to have honest, confident faith in Jesus, even when His presence feels hidden and we are enduring mistreatment at the hands of predatory people.* Psalm 10 gives us a biblical path to walk down when we have been mistreated or victimized.

So, let's walk through the eighteen verses in Psalm 10. There are four movements in Psalm 10 that will guide us through the dark waters of being victimized and mistreated by predatory people.

#### I. A Cry of Desolation (v. 1)

*Why, O LORD, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*

As we move from Psalm 9 to Psalm 10, David's heart changes from one of confidence to concern. David's question pierces the soul: "*Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?*" It feels like God has stepped back. There is agony in every word of v. 1.

However, we must keep in mind that David's question arises from a heart of faith and love for God. He wrestled with his faith as he expressed a cry of desolation and despair. David models for us what it means to be honest before the Lord and to pray painful but honest prayers. He may feel the desolation of his situation, but he doesn't despair.

Brothers and sisters, we may go through seasons of struggle and even experience terrible injustice. During these times, God may seem distant. He may seem silent, and we may struggle. Yet, it is during these times that we must learn to pray honest prayers and pour out our hearts to God.

It is not a sin to ask God where He is in our pain. We can ask God this question while at the same time trusting Him to do what is best. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 30:18,

*Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.*

For whatever reason, the LORD chose not to act immediately in David's situation, and he had to wait on Him. He may not act immediately in our situations either.

The LORD certainly didn't act immediately in Jesus' life. Jesus had to go through the storm of the wrath of God so that He could pay the penalty of our sin. There are times when the LORD will not immediately deliver His waiting people. He waits and gives time for us to grow in our faith, to learn to depend on Him, to learn to trust God, and most importantly, to come to repentance of our sin.

Yet, let's consider why David was struggling and asked the LORD, "*Why?*" It was because of what we learn in vv. 2-11. Verses 2-11 paint the picture of the predatory person.

#### II. A Portrait of Predatory People (vv. 2-11)

Verses 2-11 paint a picture of the wicked, or what I am calling predatory people who persecute the people of God. It is these predatory people who cause the people of God to make painful cries.

As we work through this text, when David talks about *the poor, innocent, and helpless*, he is referring to people who certainly fit that category, but in general, he is referring to God's people who are striving to live lives of faith and obedience to God, and yet they are being victimized by predatory people.

Let's consider in detail the portrait of predatory people in vv. 2-11.

First, in vv. 2-7, we see *the pride of predatory people*. Verse 2:

*In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.*

Verse 2 is a vivid word picture of the pride of predatory people. John Calvin said that "*pride is the mother of all wrongs.*" This picture reveals that those who are *arrogant towards God will be heartless towards their fellow man*.

The word *scheme* implies that their wickedness toward the poor and vulnerable is premeditated. So, David prays that they will be caught in the wickedness that they have devised.

Next, in vv. 3-7, we hear *the boasts of predatory people*. First, in v. 3, they boast of their heart's desire while at the same time cursing and renouncing God.

*For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the LORD.*

The phrase “*greedy for gain*” means they employ violence to get what they want. Also, I want you to notice how predatory people use religious language to carry out their sin. The word “*curses*” can also be translated “*blesses*.” Here, see how the wicked reframe their sin and cloak it in religious language. The NIV actually keeps the word “*blesses*” in v. 3 so that it reads:

*He boasts of the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD.*

In other words, his sin has become his religion. It is what he loves and lives for in life.

We will take vv. 4-7 together, for they express *the theology of predatory people*:

*In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”<sup>5</sup> His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them.<sup>6</sup> He says in his heart, “I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity.”<sup>7</sup> His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.*

So, with a smug and haughty look, the wicked believe they will not give an account to God. As they evaluate the fruit of their lives, they believe that God has prospered them. Therefore, God must be with them, and what they are doing is not sinful.

The Hebrew word for “*prosper*” is related to the word “*strength*.” It suggests that they feel “*secure*” in all of their lives, so that when they consider their enemies, they just kind of snort and say, “*whatever*.” They literally blow them off.

In v. 6, we see that they are full of themselves. They feel so secure that they believe they can get away with anything. They think of themselves in a divine sort of way because they believe that they are like God and will *never be moved*.

Finally, in v. 7, their pride has come full circle. Because they feel so secure, their boasts are filled with cursing, lies, oppression, and plans to sin. They have become the embodiment of what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:28-32,

*And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.<sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, [and] malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, [and] maliciousness. They are gossips,<sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,<sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.<sup>32</sup> Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*

Finally, vv. 8-11 paint a picture of the evil actions of *predatory people*.

*He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless;<sup>9</sup> he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net.<sup>10</sup> The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might.<sup>11</sup>*

*He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it."*

Verses 8-9 use three images to describe *predatory people*. Verse 8 calls him a *murderer*. Next, v. 9 tells us they lurk like a *lion* and make plans for the kill like a *hunter*. The characteristic that unites these three images involves a predator that plans and lies in wait for its unsuspecting prey. Then v. 10 tells us the result of this sudden and unsuspecting act of violence that has been carried out – the helpless and vulnerable are destroyed.

Finally, v. 11 describes the conclusion that predatory people draw after they have carried out their evil schemes. They believe that since nothing happened to them, God either didn't see them or He doesn't care, or there really is no God. Charles Spurgeon writes,

*"This cruel man comforts himself with the idea that God is blind or, at least, forgetful . . . [which is] a fond and foolish fancy, indeed."*

We will make more applications in our next point, but what we need to understand now is that it is a mistake to believe that God's silence or slowness to act means He doesn't care or is forgetful. Friends, God is patient and gracious with sinners, even when their sin has a damaging impact on others. He wants to give them every opportunity to turn away from their sin and repent.

The Apostle Paul followed what he wrote in Romans 1 with these words in Romans 2:4-5,

*Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?  
<sup>5</sup> But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.*

*The deliberate slowness of God to act has a double effect. For the righteous, it causes distress in their lives so that they make painful cries to God. However, for [those who have hard hearts toward God], it confirms them in their evildoing.*<sup>1</sup> So, if God doesn't punish you immediately after you sin, don't believe that He doesn't know or doesn't care. Friends, God is kind and patient, and he offers you every opportunity to turn away from your sin and to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith.

The wicked misunderstand God's patience. They believe He is negligent, and so their hearts grow harder and more entrenched in their sin. The righteous, however, recognize God's grace, and they repent and run to Him as their Refuge. The faith of the righteous finds God in their suffering so that it produces endurance, love, and hope in their lives.<sup>2</sup>

### III. A Cry of Reliance on Jesus (vv. 12-15)

As we work through vv. 12-15, it is essential that we understand and feel the misery of living in a world that looks like and is characterized by vv. 2-11.<sup>3</sup> So, as we leave vv. 2-11, let's hear David's cry of dependence on Yahweh even as he struggles to live in this kind of culture.

*Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted. <sup>13</sup> Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"? <sup>14</sup> But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the*

---

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Ash, *Psalms: A Christ-centered Commentary*, 113.

<sup>2</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes*, 103.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 117.

*fatherless.<sup>15</sup> Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none.*

Look at verse 12 because here is the shift in the Psalm. Listen to v. 12 again:

*"Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted."*

Do you sense how David's heart changes as he makes his complaint to the LORD? He used the exact phrase he did in Psalm 9:19 when he made his final cry to the LORD. He said,

*"Arise, O LORD!"*

He doesn't agonize over predatory people. He's not consumed with them. He doesn't continue to focus on them. Instead, he takes his eyes off of them and his pain and fixes his eyes on Jesus.

He longs for evil to be destroyed, so he prays with great concern:

*"God, please do something! Step in and stop this evil! Display Your power by defending the weak and vulnerable. Show Yourself strong!"*

Let's keep going in our passage. Look in v. 15, because his cry gets even bolder:

*"Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer."*

That's a graphic picture of what it means to stop predators. He's asking God to remove their ability to hurt anyone else. He asks God to stop the predator in his tracks. So, we shouldn't sanitize and sanctify v. 15. This prayer is not polite religious words, but a desperate cry of,

*"God, help. God, please do something."*

Friends, when God feels distant, silent, and hidden, the worst thing you can do is stay silent. If you are not careful, silence before God may drift into unbelief because we fall into a pit of despair, despondency, and depression. So, don't be silent before the LORD.

Verses 12-15 teach us two things to do when we feel the LORD is distant and silent, and predatory people rule the day. First, *take your raw questions and turn them into prayers*. When you do this, you're actually exercising faith in Jesus. Prayer helps us to fix our eyes on Christ when we feel He is absent. Friends, don't be afraid to pray like this. God is not offended by your honesty. He invites it.

Second, *go to your Gospel Life Group* and let them know how you're struggling. Ask them to pray with you and for you. Your Gospel Life Group is there to help you as you wrestle with issues that cause crises of faith.

#### IV. A Confession of Faith in God (vv. 16-18)

Now let's look at how David brings this Psalm to a close. Remember, Psalm 10 is a lament and follows that typical pattern of prayer. It raises a question, makes a complaint to the Lord in prayer, and concludes with confidence in the Lord to act. So, listen to David's words because he teaches us how to pray a prayer of complaint to the Lord and yet not falter in our faith.

In v. 16, David says:

*"The Lord is king forever and ever."*

So, immediately after his prayer of complaint, he confesses faith in the Lord. He grounds his confession of faith in the nature and character of Yahweh, *"The Lord is king forever and ever."*

Then in vv. 17-18, David says:

*O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear<sup>18</sup> to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.*

Do you see the movement of this whole Psalm? In v. 1, God seemed far away. By v. 17, David says,

*"Lord, You hear. You will act. You are King."*

That's what David sees by the time he finishes his prayer. He is able to remind himself in prayer that the *Judge of all the Earth* is still on His throne. Sure, evil may prosper for a season, but it will not last forever. God sees. God hears. God reigns and God will act.

Friends, Psalm 10 is a Psalm for times in life when God feels distant and seems hidden. It is a Psalm that reminds us of Jesus' words in John 16:1-4. Jesus knew that there would be predatory people who would persecute His disciples, and he wanted them to be prepared, so He told them ahead of time that these things would happen, so they would not despair and lose faith. Listen to Jesus' words:

*I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. <sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. <sup>3</sup> And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. <sup>4</sup> But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.*

Jesus' words are for us too. He doesn't want us to fall away, and learning to pray Psalm 10 will help us. It teaches us how to pray when we feel like giving up.

Here's how you can make Psalm 10 your own. First, make your opening cry to God. Talk to him out loud and ask Him where He is and what He is doing. Second, have you been burned by someone who wanted to do you wrong? Go to Jesus and describe in detail what was done to you. Were you verbally attacked, humiliated, treated with contempt, or victimized? Tell the Lord Jesus about it. Consider how you may have sinned in the process and remember what Jesus did to save sinners. Third, ask God to act and to help you. Think specifically about the nature and character of God as you pray. Finally, confess your faith in God by turning your suffering into words of hope for yourself and others.<sup>4</sup>

As I was working on Psalm 10, the hymn that came to my mind was William Cowper's hymn, *God Moves in Mysterious Ways*. Cowper wrote this hymn when he was struggling with depression and despair. Listen to how Cowper turned his painful experience into words that helped him and thousands of other believers:

*1. God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform.  
He plants his footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.  
Deep in the dark and hidden mines,  
With never-failing skill,  
He fashions all his bright designs  
And works his sov'reign will.  
Refrain:  
So God we trust in you.  
O God, we trust in you.  
When tears are great and comforts few,  
We hope in mercies ever new,  
We trust in you.*

*2. Oh, fearful saints, new courage take:  
The clouds that you now dread  
Are big with mercy and will break  
In blessings on your head.  
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,*

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 104-107.

*But trust him for his grace.  
Behind a frowning providence,  
He hides a smiling face.  
3. God's purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour.  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.  
Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan his work in vain.  
God is his own interpreter,  
And he will make it plain.<sup>5</sup>*

---

<sup>5</sup> [https://hymnary.org/text/god\\_moves\\_in\\_a\\_mysterious\\_way#google\\_vignette](https://hymnary.org/text/god_moves_in_a_mysterious_way#google_vignette).