



A Cry for Justice Psalm 10



Introduction

On Sunday, January 19th, churches around our nation will observe Sanctity of Life Sunday. Therefore, this study guide is going to be a bit different from the norm. This study guide does not cover the preaching passage. That's ok. Our goal is to cover a broader range of material around this particular Sunday.

Psalm 10 focuses on the issue of injustice. Injustices abound in our world related to sanctity of life issues. Planned Parenthood just reported that last year they performed the most abortions ever and received the most money ever from taxpayers. Massachusetts lawmakers are considering a bill to make abortion legal up to the point of delivery...and even beyond. Injustices against life go beyond the issue of abortion — children without parents, an overrun foster care system, homes impacted by violence and poverty, disease, lack of access to water or food or education or health care. There is no shortage of injustices against life in our broken world.

Psalm 10 gives a voice to the worshiper who is tired of it all. This psalm is a lament and a prayer. The emotions in this psalm are strong. So on Sanctity of Life Sunday, we unite our voices around the script of Psalm 10, praying for God's justice to roll like a mighty river.



Study

Structure:

- I. The Victim's Lament (vv. 1-2)
- II. The Tyrant's Boast (vv. 3-11)
- III. The Victim's Prayer (vv. 12-18)



Reflect

The Victim's Lament (vv. 1-2)

Verse 1 is abrupt. Terse. Uncomfortably honest. It may not be a verse we like to read in our psalms, but it is a verse we are well acquainted with in our lives. The psalmist is candid about the horrible situation he is facing. It's an emergency situation with the wicked pursuing him (v. 2a). He asks God "Why" twice! The speaker's frustration is apparent. God doesn't seem to be acting in His normal way.

However, the speaker doesn't give up on God. In verse 2 he still pleads with God to act! "*Let [the wicked] be caught in the schemes they have devised.*" He not only asks why, but also keeps pleading his own petition (let them be caught). Faith is perplexed (v. 1) and yet goes on pleading (v. 2). Note also that the speaker talks *to* God, and not *about* God! This is not some philosophical dilemma. It is a relational one! The speaker does not understand God, but he is still dealing with God, and that is what faithfulness looks like.

These verses apply well to the church's current concerns about sanctity of life issues. We don't understand why abortion and other life-related injustices are allowed to continue (v. 1), and yet we still plead with God to end these wicked schemes (v. 2).

APPLY → What injustices have you seen that have caused you to ask and plead of God as the psalmist did?

APPLY → In what ways does it seem God is absent from those who are victimized?

WRITE → If you could write a brief two-line prayer, like verse 2, in which you plead God to act against injustice, what would you say? Think about it and write it below.

The Tyrant's Boast (vv. 3-11)

The bad guy gets a lot of ink in this section. First, we are told how secure he feels in his wicked schemes (vv. 3-6). Second, we are told of his words and acts of destruction against his victims (vv. 7-10). Third, we are shown his inner defiance against God (v. 11). Why is so much attention given to the tyrant? It has been said that it is a function of this Psalm to make us feel the pain of God's seeming absence (v. 1). The description of the tyrant keeps the pain alive and reminds us that we stand over and against a whole world.

The believer's life is a war, a life-long conflict. Psalm 10 may aggravate you, anger you, or sadden you – but it keeps you from forgetting that your life is always at odds with the wicked. And shouldn't such upsetting reminders drive us to prayer?

APPLY→ Why does the denial of God (v. 4) or the avoidance of God (v. 11) result in the devaluing of life?

APPLY→ What are some present threats against the value of life? Why are these particular threats so dangerous?

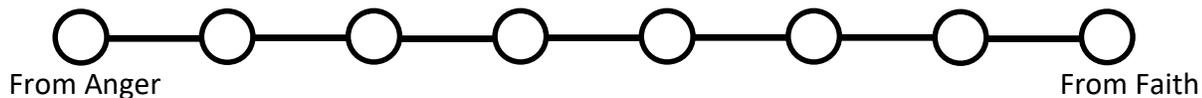
The Victim's Prayer (vv. 12-18)

The psalmist erupts in prayer in verse 12. You need to see it here as well as in your Bible:

"RISE UP, LORD GOD! LIFT UP YOUR HAND. DO NOT FORGET THE OPPRESSED."

This prayer in verse 12 is the structural centerpiece of the psalm. It is the heart of the psalm. As the psalmist pleads the case for God's helpless people, you can sense that he is gathering hope. He finds hope in God's knowledge of their trouble (vv. 13-14). He finds hope in God's justice (vv. 15-16). He finds hope in God's strength (vv. 17-18).

APPLY→ The righteous person has a choice: respond from anger or respond from faith. How do you tend to respond to injustice? Mark your normal response on the scale below.



APPLY→ What are some reasons we might choose to respond from anger instead of from faith when faced with injustice?

APPLY→ What is the difference between "righteous anger" and "sinful anger" especially as it relates to matters of injustice?

APPLY→ How does the gospel inform the way Christians respond to injustice? How should the hope of God's justice inform how you speak on behalf of the vulnerable?

APPLY→ How can you or your group speak up on behalf of the vulnerable, particularly the unborn, sick, orphaned, and elderly?



Connect

Gospel Connections: Christ’s death on the cross shows you how truly valuable your life is. You are loved by God in a measure you cannot fathom. At the cross Jesus executed perfect justice. He *broke the arm of the wicked* so you could be lifted from sin’s oppression. There is no sin in your life beyond the reach of his forgiveness. Jesus suffered the ultimate injustice so that we could be justified, declared innocent and righteous by faith in him.

Whole-Bible Connections: The psalm closes with a request for strength until the tyrants of God’s people are no more. The solution seems certain, but distant. Therefore, God’s people need strength. This is the same lesson Paul learned in 2 Corinthians 12:8-10:

⁸ Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it would leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. ¹⁰ So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and in difficulties, for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Theological Connections: Before his death, Jesus told his disciples, ‘I will not leave you orphans – I will come to you’ (John 14:18). And he did – in his resurrection appearances they saw him again. Yet there may be a sense in which Jesus still says that to his people – when he comes again and brings the fullness of his kingdom and ‘does justice for the fatherless and the oppressed.’ Across this earth wicked man revels in trying to strike terror into Jesus’ people – denying basic rights, torturing and imprisoning them, pillaging and ravaging at will, bleeding them dry, as it were, with unceasing cruelty. Yet these despised people have a firm assurance from their watching King: ‘I will not leave you orphans.’ (Davis)

Praise Connection:

Faithful by Chris Tomlin

Faithful, forever You are faithful
Father to the fatherless
You uphold the one who feels forsaken
You are faithful, God

Faithful, forever You are faithful
Lover of the wounded heart
You defend the poor and the forgotten
You are faithful, God

And I will sing to the maker of Heaven and Earth
God, You reign forever and Your love will endure
Faithful and true is the name of the Lord
You are faithful, God

Faithful, forever You are faithful
Shelter for the fragile soul
You lift us up, You hold us all together
You are faithful, God

You are there in every season of my soul
You are there, You're the anchor that will hold
You are there, in the valley of the shadows
You are faithful, God

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