

God & Evil

Psalm 10

The Bible deals with problems in the real world, and not questions like “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” If you walk with God for any amount of time you will wonder, “Why do you stand afar off, O Lord?” (v. 1). People do evil things in this place where we believe God is in charge. If He is both good and all powerful, how can He allow it? This is called the problem of evil. Apart from Him, there is no answer and really no such thing as evil in the first place. But in Him, there is an answer and a sure hope.

The Reality of Evil

The psalmist does not ignore evil in the world, redefine it, or do evil himself in response. Instead he laments to God, offering a holy complaint: *Where are you? Why are you hidden in times of trouble?* Intellectually he knows where God is—omnipresent—but the way things are going, it feels like He isn’t around. Believing the sovereignty and goodness of God does not turn you into an emotional stump, though it does help keep you from being an emotional wreck. The psalmist cries out in faith. He sees what the wicked do and what they think. In their pride they persecute the poor (v. 2). He boasts of his heart’s desire, blesses the greedy, and ditches Yahweh (v. 3). Notice that the wicked used to be with God. He has a proud face and doesn’t seek God who doesn’t even enter into his thoughts (v. 4). If this guy was a professing Christian, we’d call him a practical atheist. It’s easy for him not to think about God because his mind is on his money and there’s plenty of it, no divine judgment in sight; he sneers at the competition (v. 5). He has completed a risk assessment and knows nothing can touch him (v. 6). Curses, deceit, and oppression spill out of his mouth, troubling and hurting others easily (v. 7). He lurks in local places and murders the innocent. He knows the vulnerable and where to find them (v. 8). The poor are an easy target, so he snares them, keeping a low profile so the helpless can’t help but trip (vv. 9-10). People do not sin this way accidentally. We do what we think in the moment is in our best interest. The wicked does the math, runs the moral calculations, and believes in his heart that God has forgotten, turned the other way, and will never see (v. 11). You can’t simultaneously believe God will judge you and commit the sin that will cause Him to do so. Moral compromise leads to intellectual justification; the mind justifies what the heart desires. This is how intelligent people become so morally stupid, and why guilty people can maintain their innocence so vehemently, as they’ve been convincing themselves for a long time. The psalmist call on God to get up, remember the humble, and know that the wicked are doing these things because they believe He won’t require an account (vv. 12-13).

Where is God?

He answers his own question: “But you have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless” (v. 14). You can feel like God is nowhere to be found, ask Him why He hides, and then confess that He sees everything and it’s only a question of when, not if, He will show up to act. God meets you in your deepest need and darkest hour, God the Father Almighty. There is a heretical theology that believes God is Himself at the mercy of chance, unable to know all things in the future (or theoretically even the present). This is the theology of the wicked (v. 11). God knows the end from the beginning, and the psalm singer wants Him to break the arm of the wicked and stamp out his evildoing (v. 15). God can’t be just and let the wicked keep breaking the arms of the fatherless and widow. He either has to do justice and stop them or let them continue and be complicit in it. Those who want to fight with God will see unnecessary violence in verse 15—“See, this is the just the sort of evil that rules out the existence of a good God”, they say. But think for a moment. If there is no God and we are all advanced primates, what is wrong with breaking arms? If there is no God, what is evil? If there’s

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no moral authority above us and evil is only what I/we do not like, why would the evildoer, especially the one who can get away with it, care? He wouldn't, and in that universe *shouldn't*. There is only a problem of evil if there's a standard to judge good and evil. But if not, everything is relative and who cares? Let us eat, drink, and be merry—and steal, pillage, riot, kill, and take advantage—for tomorrow we die (1 Cor. 15:32).

The End of Oppression

The Lord is King forever; He drove the violent nations out of Canaan (v. 16). He heard the desire of the humble, would prepare their heart to seek Him and cause His ear to hear them, with the result that justice is done for fatherless and the oppressed (vv. 17-18). The just judgment of God is the answer to the problem of evil. He allows horrible things to happen in this world. He let Adam and Eve eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and plunge our world into sin and death. But He won't let it go on forever. If God were only just, He would have declared judgment on us and that would be it—eternal death apart from Him. But He wanted to show mercy. In the cross we see Jesus Christ, the fullness of God, taking on Himself the full penalty of our sins so that we could receive His mercy: “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus, “whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood...to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). God didn't abandon this world but instead sent Jesus to save it. The full effect of this salvation is not here yet, which is why we must be the humble who call on Him. Many Christians see the evil in their day—and there is always evil in every day—and despair. They effectively stop at verse 13. But God has prepared your heart to call on Him to end oppression.