

The Lord is King

Zina?" Karen said over the walkie talkie.

"Yes?" Zina asked as she pushed her large and cumbersome housekeeping cart down the long hallway.

"210 and 247 will be ready for check-in within an hour. Do those rooms first, and quickly."

Zina sent a quick affirmative and picked up her pace. Zina's job at the hotel was hard work, and didn't pay a lot, but it was all the single mother had been able to find.

The housekeeping staff weren't a friendly bunch; Zina didn't know if it was because of the high turnover rate or the spirit of competition between them. Karen had once been on the housekeeping staff but had been promoted to housekeeping manager a few months back, largely as a result of a couple well-placed lies.

Karen always overloaded Zina with work, probably because she didn't respond in anger like the others. Zina had asked for better, reasonable hours. She had also asked for advancement opportunities. She didn't receive either.

Zina's earbuds played gospel music so she could worship and pray while working. She knew the Lord loved her, saw her, and heard her prayers.

As Zina pushed her cart to 247, she knew had less than twenty-five minutes to finish the room. She prayed for strength to do her job well. In her worship time, Zina felt the Spirit of God comfort and enable her.

- 1.** *What's a situation in your life where you desperately needed God, but felt He was far away?*
- 2.** *What are some small ways you saw God reminding you of His love, even if the problem itself was taking a long time to resolve?*
- 3.** *How would you encourage someone who felt like they didn't need more Bible knowledge, but just needed to feel that they were loved?*

LESSON FOCUS: Know that God sees your affliction and cares.

Destroy the Wicked/Help the Afflicted

Psalms 10:12–15 KJV

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.

14 Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none.

Psalms 10:12–15 NIV

¹² Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God.

Do not forget the helpless.

¹³ Why does the wicked man revile God?

Why does he say to himself, "He won't call me to account"?

¹⁴ But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;

you consider their grief and take it in hand.

The victims commit themselves to you;

you are the helper of the fatherless.

¹⁵ Break the arm of the wicked man; call the evildoer to account for his wickedness

that would not otherwise be found out.

In the first half of Psalm 10, the psalmist provides a description of the wicked man's schemes and injustices. The psalmist builds his case for why God must intervene. He boldly addresses God: "Arise, LORD!" This is a way of asking God to act in his present circumstances. Up until this point, God has appeared indifferent to the situation of the afflicted. To the psalmist, it looks like God is not hindering their schemes. It seems like, under God's rule, the wicked are prospering.

The psalmist specifically asks God to "lift up [His] hand" (v. 12). This is a request for God to decisively intervene. God seemed idle, but now His hand is needed to support and uplift the afflicted. The psalmist continues by saying, "Forget not the humble" (v. 12 KJV). Saying

“forget not” is another way of asking God to remember. When God remembers in the Bible, it is never only a cognitive action. Remembering is the basis for action. The psalmist wants God to remember the helpless and to reverse their circumstances.

In verse 13, the psalmist addresses the apparent challenge the wicked man poses to God. It seems like the wicked person is living as if God is powerless, as if there will be no justice and order. There is no immediate answer to this challenge. The wicked continue unpunished and unhindered, even though God’s reputation is at stake.

But God will act on behalf of His afflicted people. Contrary to how it may appear, God does see the plight of the helpless and afflicted. God sees them, and He is aware of their situation. He considers their grief and takes it in hand. God is not apathetic and uninvolved in the pain of His people. He is intimately involved and affected by it. The psalmist describes God as the “helper of the fatherless.” In Scripture and in ancient times, the fatherless are often considered some of the most marginalized people. Without the protection of a father, they were especially at risk of exploitation.

The psalmist asks God to “break the arm of the wicked man” (v. 15). The arm represents his power and schemes. The arm is pivotal in battle, as it holds the spear or sword. When an enemy’s arm is broken, their power is not only fractured, but their ability to cause harm is also reduced. By asking that God would render the wicked man powerless, the psalmist is praying that justice would be served.

4. *According to the psalmist, of what attitudes is the wicked man guilty?*

5. *How does this psalm describe God’s attitude toward those who are helpless?*

6. *In what specific ways does the psalmist want God to act?*

God Is King

Psalm 10:16–18 KJV

16 The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.

17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

Psalm 10:16–18 NIV

¹⁶The LORD is King for ever and ever;
the nations will perish from his land.

¹⁷You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted;
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,

¹⁸defending the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror.

As the psalmist nears the end of the psalm, he expresses confidence in God's ability to act. He says, "The LORD is King for ever and ever" (v. 16). There is no end to God's rule, and nothing can limit His power. The wicked think that they are operating outside of God's rule and do not have to give any account, but their time is limited. They will not get away with their actions under a God whose reign lasts for ever and ever.

The result of God's kingship is that "the nations will perish from his land" (v. 16). This is referring to what will happen in the future, a judgment that God shall render on proud kings and rulers who stand against Him. At first, this may seem like a puzzling statement. In the Old Testament, people outside of Israel were sometimes called simply "the nations." They are frequently depicted as those who—unless redirected by God or by His people—do not live in a way that brings honor to the creator. As a result, they have no lasting place in His land. Even though Psalm 10:16 describes a future judgment of the nations, many other Scripture passages also give a glimpse of the blessings that God plans to show to all people (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 61:11; Ps. 72:17). In the end, the psalmist expresses

confidence that God has heard his plea (vv. 17–18).

The psalmist gives no less than four ways that God demonstrates concern for those oppressed by the wicked. First, God hears their “desire” (v. 17). What is this desire? They desire to be seen by God. They don’t want God to forget their plight (compare v. 12). They want God to “break the wicked man’s arm” (v. 15), putting an end to the oppression they are experiencing at his hands. While the wicked man boasts about his evil cravings (v. 3), it is the longings of the afflicted that God actually regards (v. 17).

Second, God encourages them (v. 17). In Hebrew, this phrase can be translated literally as “strengthen their hearts.” God is not simply cheering from the sidelines or giving inspirational speeches. God is active behind the scenes, working to strengthen them internally.

Third, He “[listens] to their cry” (v. 17). This echoes God’s response to the Israelites while they were captive in Egypt. Of their sufferings, God said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers” (Ex. 3:7). When God sees His people’s afflictions, He acts to deliver them.

Fourth, God defends “the fatherless and the oppressed” (v. 18). These are the most vulnerable people. It is consistent with God’s character that He desires to care for them. According to verse 18, He defends them against the “man of the earth” (KJV). This is another way of describing the oppressors and their worldly thoughts. With God on the throne, the evildoers’ time and power are limited.

The psalmist is asking God important “why” questions. Why does God seem far away? Why do the wicked appear to be escaping punishment? The psalmist responds by trusting that God sees and will act to save His people in their time of trouble.

7. *What is the basis of the psalmist’s trust in God?*

8. *What actions does God take on behalf of the afflicted?*

An Ocean of Love

A father and his young daughter were on one of those “get away from it all” cruises. The father had thought the trip would be good for the two of them after the sudden loss of his wife. Though both openly expressed their intense sadness, they also tried to spend some time telling stories and reliving all the good memories.

At one point, as they were huddled together on the deck of the ship and trying to cope with the unrelenting grief of their loss, the little girl asked her father, “Daddy, does God love us as much as Mommy did?” At first, the father didn’t know what to say. But he knew he couldn’t side-step his daughter’s question.

Pointing out across the water to the most distant horizon, he said, “Honey, God’s love reaches farther than you can see in that direction.” Turning around, he said, “And God’s love reaches farther than you can see in that direction too.” Then, the father looked up at the sky and said, “And God’s love is way higher than the sky.” Finally, he pointed down at the ocean and said, “And it’s even deeper than the ocean.” After hearing her father’s description, the girl looked up into her father’s eyes and responded, “Oh, just think, Daddy! And we’re right here in the middle of it all!”

In the middle of our helplessness, God is there. In the middle of our trouble and grief, God is there. Even in the midst of our oppression, God is there. For whatever we face, we are right here in the middle of His love.

9. *What situations or circumstances in life have helped you grasp how wide, long, high, and deep is the love of Christ (see Eph. 3:18–19)?*

10. *Have you ever experienced God’s presence amid overwhelming grief? When?*

11. *How might your life be altered if you believed that you are in the middle of the immense ocean of God’s love?*

Pay It Forward

Has anyone in a store or restaurant ever given you a free drink? In school, did a teacher allow you to turn in your work late without penalty? Did a family member ever patiently listen while you complained about work? Did a police officer let you off from a speeding ticket with a warning? Our lives are full of grace that we take for granted. A test of our understanding of grace is whether we show it to others.

► *Who in your life right now would you say is really struggling with something? Maybe this isn't the person who has the worst problem, in your mind. It could be someone who is suffering in silence over something that others don't consider important. Ask yourself, "How can I build trust so that this person is willing to talk to me about it?" Today's psalm doesn't give you a "right" answer to share, but you can remind your friend that God sees.*

KEY VERSE

LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear. —Psalm 10:17 KJV

You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry. —Psalm 10:17 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of January 6 through January 12

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Revelation 19:11–21—Faithful and True.
- Tue.** 1 Chronicles 29:10–20—God Gives Strength and Power.
- Wed.** Isaiah 52:1–12—Our God Reigns.
- Thu.** Psalm 47—Shout Joyfully to God.
- Fri.** Philippians 2:1–13—Exalted through Obedience.
- Sat.** Mark 4:35–41—The Wind and Sea Obey Jesus.
- Sun.** Psalm 93—Robed in Majesty.