

# God's Absence

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Father, you know the state of our hearts and the state of our minds and the state of our wills. Father, you see us perfectly and you see how much we deceive ourselves and how we are confused about ourselves and how we are not aware of our deception or our confusion, but think we are wise.

Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would gently but deeply fall upon us so that we might see ourselves, begin more and more to see ourselves as we really are.

But Father, please do not reveal ourselves to ourselves just in a naked way. But Father, help us to see ourselves and understand ourselves according to your word and by the great work that your Son did on the cross for us when he died for us.

So Father, may your Holy Spirit fall upon us, helping us to see ourselves as we see and hear and understand your word and draw us to Jesus. This we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. Why is God absent so often in our lives?

[ 1 : 1 7 ]     Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? And why is it that not only do many of us experience God's absence as anguish at many times in our lives, maybe some of you who are here this morning are experiencing the absence of God as anguish or as despair, but why is it that often in church on a Sunday morning or in small groups throughout the week, we aren't even sort of allowed to be honest about the fact that we are experiencing some anguish because it seems as if God is absent.

And it's even made worse because it seems that God is absent to us. But when we come on a Sunday morning or maybe we meet our good friend at work or a family member and God seems to be so present to them, yet he seems to be so absent to us.

And why, some of you are wondering, is George even talking about this on a Sunday morning? I'm asking this question because those are the two questions that the psalm that John read just a few minutes ago, they, the psalm, God's word, asks that question.

So it would be very, very helpful to me and to you if you open your Bibles right now and turn to Psalm 10 and let's look at that psalm and see the question that the psalm asks and see how it is that God, in his word, responds to that question.

And if you've forgotten your Bibles, there's always some Bibles here at the front of the church. I don't know if there's always Bibles at that door when you enter. There's something wrong with the mic. Is it just in my ears? Just my ears?

[ 3 : 0 7 ]     Okay. And that's fine. And if, or if you come in that door, there's always some Bibles that we can give you. But Psalm 10, sort of in the middle of the Bible or you can look it up in the index and listen again to how the psalm began.

And the psalm began this way. Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? That's how the psalm begins.

And it means, if you accept as I do, Jesus' understanding and teaching of the Bible, which is that the Bible was ultimately written by God, it means that God is giving us permission to ask this question of him, to say to him, why, O Lord, do you stand far away?

Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? Why are you absent, God? For some of us, this is maybe a very, very profound intellectual question.

For many people in our culture, one of the main reasons why they will not believe in the God of the Bible is because of the existence of evil in the world and God seeming to stand far away at times of trouble.

[ 4 : 22 ] For others, it's not an intellectual question per se, but it might be a very lived question right now that you're going through some type of trouble and God just seems to be hiding or he seems to be very far away.

And the Bible, believe it or not, actually has an awful lot to say about the absence and the hiddenness of God. It's very nuanced and it's very wise.

And this psalm isn't going to cover everything that the Bible says about it, but this psalm raises the question and one sort of form or subset of that type of experience and question and addresses it.

And so this, the very, very first point this morning is this. Because this is in the Bible, this isn't just George coming at it from a therapeutic sense, you know, because I have a degree in pastoral counseling, you know, 100 million years ago and I'm asking some type of therapeutic question.

The Bible raises this question. So here's the very first thing. True faith can include asking the living God honest questions.

[ 5 : 29 ] True faith can include asking the living God honest questions. You know, often in life, stereotypes have, I mean, they're always dangerous stereotypes, but on the other hand, often stereotypes have some truth in reality.

And, you know, it's not a big stretch. Probably many of, maybe some of us here feel the same way, but many of us have probably come in contact with people who say, don't doubt, don't even say that, don't even raise that question.

What you need to do is you need to spend more time in praise. You need to spend more time in prayer. You need to spend more time in church. You need to give more money to God in tithing. You need to spend more time with the poor.

Don't even ask that question. Don't even let it into your mind. Don't even let it start to come to you at all. You just got to push it away and keep going forward. And I've met people like that.

And maybe at some time in my life, I was a person like that. Maybe it'd be one of those things that in heaven, God's going to replay those times in my life that I said something like that to somebody. And I, well, in heaven, I'll get over the shame pretty quickly because I'm in heaven, right?

[ 6 : 41 ] But it probably would be embarrassing. And so it's very, very easy for churches, often the churches that seem to be the most faithful, to say that you're not allowed to ask honest questions.

You're not even allowed to raise the question of why God seems to be absent. But as we see here from Psalm 1, it's in God's word that true faith can include asking the living God honest questions.

So, God has said, we can ask, why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? So what is the Bible saying? Like, how does it handle it?

Well, let's look. Here's how it goes. In arrogance, the wicked hotly pursue the poor, verse 2, let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.

For the wicked boasts of the desires of the soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord. In the pride of his face, the wicked does not seek him. All his thoughts are there is no God.

[ 7 : 44 ] His ways prosper at all times. Your judgments are on high, out of his sight. For all his foes, he puffs at them. He says in his heart, I shall not be moved.

Throughout all generations, I shall not meet adversity. Let's just stop for a second. Let's be honest. This is a very disappointing answer.

Like, if we're honest with ourselves, we were hoping for something better from God. God's word. Now, that's another type of thing that we feel very uncomfortable acknowledging.

But if we're honest, this isn't going anywhere that we want to go particularly. In fact, very quickly, our eyes glaze over, our ears glaze over, our mind glazes over, and we internally are saying, whatever, to God's word.

Whatever. Yada, yada, yada, yada. But you see, here's actually one of the very, very powerful things about God's word. Why am I disappointed?

[ 8 : 59 ] Why am I disappointed by what's happening? I'm going to suggest one of three reasons why we're disappointed. The first reason is because, especially for those of us who are suffering, what were we hoping that would happen?

we were hoping that God would do a miracle so that when we leave this church, our abusive husband, the abusive boss, that we would go home and we would get news that in Iraq, ISIS has been completely and utterly annihilated, and the survivors are building churches and giving money to the people whose kids they beheaded.

And on one hand, we're hoping that when something's going to happen, so that there's a miracle, and at the same time, if we're feeling God's absence, we would get something like Prozac that would come into us and completely and utterly make us feel good.

The other thing some of us are maybe hoping is that God would give us a knock-down, drag-down, guaranteed, block-buster, philosophical answer so we could refute Hitchens and Dawkins and Harris and our boss and our nephew and everybody else, and we could just say, you just read that, that's going to completely and utterly refute everything you said.

Ha-ha! Ha-ha! Or the third thing we were hoping might happen is secret knowledge, that God would give us secret knowledge about what was going on so we could be insiders with God, and the rest of the hoi polloi don't really know what's going on, but I'm part of the Illuminati.

[ 10 : 45 ] I know what's really going on. Now maybe I'm just vastly more sinful than the rest of you, but if when you start to read verses 2 to 11 you realize that your mind is wandering, it's showing that you're disappointed in God, and the Bible in a sense is saying to us, examine yourself.

Why is it that you think that wisdom itself is not wise? See, here's the second point.

When God's word disappoints me, I do not have to kiss my brains goodbye or become cynical. I am being invited to carefully examine God's word and myself.

When God's word disappoints me, I do not have to kiss my brains goodbye or become cynical. I am being invited to carefully examine God's word and myself.

You see, God's word examines us. I can't remember, it was one of the novels I read while I was on holidays, but somebody said that, you know, with Facebook and Twitter and all that, I'm not dumping, okay, Facebook and Twitter and all that stuff, that in our age, what we do is we exhibit ourselves but don't examine ourselves.

[ 12 : 16 ] That we like to exhibit what goes on but we don't like to examine what's going on. And the Bible here, in fact, the beginning of God's answer to this question and what he's going to do in our lives comes from us recognizing that we're disappointed because as soon as we realize we're disappointed, we can start to ask ourselves the question, well, why is it that I'm disappointed in this answer?

Why am I disappointed with where God is going in this? And then I maybe start to realize that maybe I didn't identify one of the three reasons. Maybe your reasons are a little bit different but all of us will probably have something in common which is actually fairly shocking to understand, especially for some of us who are clergy who have been Christians for a long time and it is this, when I come to God's word, I often believe that I am God and I want to see if God's word meets my standards.

And when it doesn't, I'm disappointed. And I never stop, often don't stop to think that I am acting like I am over God's word, not learning from God's word.

In fact, actually, that starts to begin a little bit of an insight into us as to how hard it is for God to actually, that when God hears our question, part of what he's wanting to do is make me start to realize, one moment, do I understand?

Can I understand? Like, even when God starts to speak to me, if I just dismiss and write off what he says, what's going on there? So, in fact, if you think about it like this, like one of the fears that we have, even maybe with what I'm saying about examining God's word when we're disappointed by God, that it's an invitation for us to examine God's word and to have God's word in a sense examine me, part of our innate fear is that God will crush me if I do that.

[ 14 : 24 ] But this passage of scripture doesn't crush us. It doesn't crush us at all. In fact, let's go back to verse two and just pay a little bit of attention, especially for the first three verses about something very subtle that goes on.

Now that we've realized that we're a bit disappointed with this and maybe God's asking me to examine myself as to my disappointment and actually give God the benefit the doubt that maybe he has some wisdom to speak into my situation.

So let's go back to verse two. In arrogance, the wicked, and just remember, I mean, it's just so you know, wicked here doesn't mean really cool, I have to have it.

It means like bad. Okay? It means like rancid meat. One year when we lived in our rectory, Louise and I went on holidays and when we came back, the power had gone out while we were gone and it had been out for several days and then it came on and all of the meat in our freezer had gone bad.

It was rancid. I mean, if you open the freezer up, it would make you gag and that's how you have to understand wicked. Not really cool, I got to have it, I wish I could do it.

[ 15 : 44 ] So in arrogance, the wicked hotly pursue the poor like a sign of being evil and having evil within us is that we pursue the poor to take advantage of them and then the psalmist says, let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.

For the wicked boasts of the desires of the soul and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord in the pride of his face the wicked does not seek God all his thoughts are there is no God.

In the original language, you see that word in verse 4, thoughts, all his thoughts are there is no God and look up to verse 2, the second part, let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.

In the original language, that's the same word. it's the same word. It could be translated as all his schemes are there is no God.

It's actually a very, very clever thing that one of the things that can happen to us as individuals, we might still have a very, very high IQ and we might still be unbelievably good at using language, but what characterizes what's going on between our two ears is scheming, not thinking.

[ 17 : 12 ] In thinking, we want to know. We're curious. In scheming, we want to do something to others in such a way that we come out on top and it's easy for us to have times in our lives where we think we're thinking and we are thinking, but it's not thinking, it's scheming.

And we can be unaware of the fact that that's even going on within us. And in verse 3, it's impossible to be translated properly into English. For the wicked boasts of the desires of the soul and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord.

It's all, it's idol language and worship language and it's as if that there's a state of affairs for what the Bible is calling wicked that there's a type of a worshipping of the soul, worshipping of my own soul and worshipping gain and it's as if that there's a way of me starting to organize my life whereby I not only seek to exalt myself and worship myself, but I want to worship two gods.

I want to worship myself and I want to worship prophet and I believe that there's such a way of worshipping both me and prophet that's going to be good for prophet and going to be good for me.

And so it is that when the prophet is either just getting the final word in the conversation or getting my way in my relationship or getting my way at work or making more money that if I don't get those things happening I'm depressed, I'm anxious, I'm frustrated because it's confounding my idol worship and even, and it's impossible to translate properly into English and when it says and the one for greedy, sorry, in verse 3 and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord it's actually, it's actually in the original language it's actually saying blesses God but in a particular context.

[ 19 : 07 ] It's exactly like what we do if you meet somebody who's stupid or you know somebody maybe at work or in your family they've done something really, really, really, really dumb, okay? And they come into the room after they've done something really, really dumb and you say to everybody look, here's genius.

Okay? So it appears as if you're complimenting but everybody knows in that context you're just rubbing that person's face in it and that's what's trying to be communicated in verse 3 that there's a way for us to so worship other things that what we're saying when we look at God at all is oh yeah, there's God, look how just he is, oh, look how great God is, ha, ha, ha, dummy.

And we might think that we never do that. I'm going to get to that in a second but here's the main thing about these first three verses. Remember, look at verse 1 again, anguish. Why, oh Lord, do you stand far away?

There's anguish. Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? And now look at verse 4, in the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him. All his thoughts are, there is no God.

And the person who says that is happy, not in anguish. Here's the point. I am divided and confused.

[ 20 : 28 ] Sometimes I am in anguish over God's absence and sometimes I consciously and unconsciously organize my world to keep God absent.

I am in anguish and I am in anguish over God's absence and sometimes I consciously and unconsciously organize my world to keep God absent.

And I am not aware of it. You doubt it? When a young man or a man of any age is looking at pornography, does he want God to show up?

When you're telling a lie, do you want God to show up? When you're slandering somebody, do you want God to show up? When you're cheating on your taxes, do you want God to show up?

When you're selling something on Kijiji and you tell the person it's been lightly used and it's two years old and it's actually heavily used and it's ten years old, do you want God to show up? When you're overspending on your credit card to buy things because you're feeling depressed, do you want God to show up?

[ 21 : 56 ] When you read a Bible text and it tells you to tithe and you don't want to do it, do you want God to show up? You see, this psalm is taking us in a very startling direction.

You see, and we'll see it as we go on, at no point in time does this psalm diminish the fact that at times in my life I experience God's absence as anguish.

The psalm is never going to deny that experience at all. and it's never going to deny that it can be a very honest question I ask in my anguish about God.

But now the psalm is starting to force me to examine myself and I realize that I judge God to see whether he's going to meet my standards.

I realize that in fact there's ways in my world and in my life that I organize my time, I organize my career, I organize my family, I organize my thought life, that there's things in my life that I organize in such a way so that God will be absent.

[ 23 : 14 ] And I would experience anguish if he showed up in those times. So it's actually not a very simple question to ask God.

Why do you stand far away? And the Bible starts to have us examine ourselves but not in a way to crush us as the psalm will continue to go on.

You see, he's not blowing off my question. He's going to more subtly continue to probe my desires.

Let's look how he continues to subtly probe our desires. I think we got up to verse 4. Let's look at verse 5. And this, by the way, is going to be something very, very, very shocking to us Canadians in our culture.

The direction that this psalm is going to go is completely and utterly shocking and counterintuitive. Here's how it goes. Verse 5.

[ 24 : 22 ] He's now talking about the person who says there is no God and likes it. It's convenient for my life to say there is no God.

Verse 5. His ways prosper at all times. Your judgments are on high, out of his sight. As for all his foes, he puffs at them, outruns them, blows them off.

He says in his heart, verse 6, I shall not be moved throughout all generations. I shall not meet adversity. That's his motto. That's his organizing principle of his life. That's how his religion is organized.

That's how his spirituality is organized. That's how her secular life is all organized throughout all generations. I shall not meet adversity.

Verse 7. His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression. Sounds hard. We'll get to it in a moment. Under his tongue are mischief and iniquity. He sits in ambush in the villages and hiding places.

[ 25 : 23 ] He murders the innocent. One moment. This is the person who said there is no God? Verse 8 continues. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless. 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. The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might. He says in his heart, God has forgotten.

He has hidden his face. He will never see it. His life is organized around the absence of God. And surely, as this text goes on, it's way over the top.

It's way over the top. One of the unfortunate parts about me being on holidays is that I actually had very few conversations about God because one of the main ways I get into conversations about God is I go to a Starbucks to work on my sermon, and when you open your Bible and work on a sermon in a place like Starbucks, it often provokes different conversations.

And there's this one conversation that I had with a fellow a couple of months ago, and he was talking about how to be spiritual, not religious, was vastly better. Why is it better to be spiritual and not religious?

[ 26 : 38 ] Because there's no God judging you. That's what he said to me. I'm not saying that's what he said to me. And then he said, but it's even better to believe in no God whatsoever. In fact, you can be spiritual without any type of God existing.

It's far better for there to be no God, because when there's no God, that's when prosperity happens. That's when freedom happens. That the more you cast off any notion of your God, the more free you are, the more you will prosper.

That's what he said to me. And I said to him, well, what about the Soviet Union? What about communist China? What about Cambodia? What about Hitler?

He didn't believe in God. Did that bring prosperity? He said, no, no, you have to look at Sweden. And I said, how come it's fair for you to point out to me a Russian Orthodox priest with a \$25,000 watch while he's blessing tanks about to invade the Ukraine as a picture of all people who worship Jesus.

And I can't point to Mother Teresa or a holy person, but when I raise up something against your thought, you're saying, no, no, you're not allowed to look at Hitler and Stalin and Mao, you have to look at Sweden. And his eyes glazed over, he couldn't understand it because it's so deeply ingrained in our culture that spirituality is better than religion.

[ 28 : 05 ] Why? Because in spirituality there's no judgment. God's judgments are out of sight. And that when there is no God, there's peace and prosperity.

But this describes something more like what happens in the Soviet Union. And it's not just secular things. This describes in this text what's happening in Iraq.

because in fact, religion can be organized in such a way to actually keep God at a distance and to deify ourselves. That's what religion does as well. It's what spirituality can do.

In fact, at the heart of that in fact, what often appears as religion and what often appears as Christianity, what often appears as spirituality, what often appears as secular life, is merely a worship of power.

A worship of my power or my tribe's power. power. So it is that a church can be organized in such a way so that when a husband is abusing his wife and the wife complains, the wife is rebuked for not submitting to her husband.

[ 29 : 11 ] That's a worship of power, not listening to the Bible. And so it is that what is it at the heart of listening to Oprah and what is at the heart of Deepak Chopra and what is at the heart of Islam and what is at the heart of so much things is a worship of power.

What is at the heart of the secret is power. Dostoevsky very famously said, and I believe it's never been refuted properly, that if God is dead, all things are permissible.

But what this psalm is saying is something similar but different. What this psalm is saying, and this is my next point, is that if I am God, all things are permissible and the weak cower.

If I am God, all things are permissible and the weak cower. Now you're saying, George, that's just not true of me. Well, first of all, I think it's what the Bible say, not George, but is it not true?

See, the fact of the matter is that there's probably nobody here in this room that has God-like power. We're constrained by, and we're not all evil, by the way, because remember, we're a divided type of person and we do want to do good things and stuff like that.

[ 30 : 41 ] And we do sometimes experience God's absence as anguish. But the fact of the matter is, if we try to, let me tell you, if I try to just boss my wife around and tell her exactly what she would do, do you know how well that would work for me?

Months later, when she speaks to me again, after having very properly refused to do every single thing I tried to boss her around to do, she would help me to examine my conscience in my life.

And so, you know, often we have bosses that push back, we have kids that push back, we have people who push back, but what are we like in our thought life? How would it be if God was to show up and on that screen, I'll use myself, not you, and God was just merely to say, I don't know what it is now, it's coming up to 11 o'clock, 11 o'clock, George, from 11 o'clock yesterday to 11 o'clock today, I'm just going to replay everything that went through your mind.

I'm going to put it up on that screen so everybody can hear, see the images you were thinking of and hear what was going through your mind, how you analyze situations, what you thought about. I'm just going to do that, George, because you know in your mind, that's where you sort of are like God, aren't you, George?

And I'm just going to replay all of the things that you wanted to do and didn't want to do and your reactions to other people and what you said. And George, the congregation won't just do like in your own mind where you have that telling thought, but they still have to be with you because you see, if I actually, if all of a sudden for the last 24 hours I just was every single thing that went through my mind actually happened in real world, people would cower.

[ 32 : 38 ] And all I would think all sorts of things were permissible for me and many of those things that were permissible for me would lead people to cower. And you as you watch it all on the screen would be horrified.

And I actually think I had a pretty good 24 hours. I had pretty worse ones than that. You see, this psalm is trying to bring to us that if I am God, all things are permissible and the weak cower.

It's trying to communicate to me that I often consciously and unconsciously organize my way in such a way to keep God far away. And that I actually think that I will be happier for much of my day and much of my life if God is absent.

And that's who I am. That's who you are. Now, some of you might be wondering, okay, George, I have my time.

Does that mean the Bible is saying that, okay, we all sin, so therefore you can't say anything to the abusive husband? You can't say anything to the person who's kidnapping, part of a kidnapping ring of kidnapping people in a poor country and bringing them to a rich country to be sexual objects for men or women?

[ 34 : 10 ] Are you saying that you can't say anything about what's going on right now in Iraq and Syria? Because I'm a sinner, they're a sinner, therefore we're all sinners, therefore we can say nothing. Is that what the psalm is saying? Not at all.

In fact, the psalm is very, very powerfully working at two levels at the same time without confusing them. Let's look how it continues in verse 12.

It's not saying that we merely say that because all of us have this issue in our lives of thinking like we're God, that we can't say that there's not real evil that's going on that has to be spoken against.

Look at verse 12 and following. Arise. Remember, so verse 11 says, he says in his heart, God has forgotten, he has hid in his face, he will never see it. Verse 12, Arise, O Lord, O God, lift up your hand, forget not the afflicted.



Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, you will not call to account? But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands.

[ 35 : 17 ] To you the helpless commits himself. You have been the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer. Call his wickedness to account. Till you find none.

The Lord is king forever and ever. The nations perish from his land. O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted. You will strengthen their heart. You will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

What's going on here? What's going on here? Here's what's going on. First, my next point. Who is the living God?

He's revealed here. Who is the living God? Helper of the helpless. That's one way we can pray to him. When we pray to the living God, we can say, helper of the helpless.

That is your name. And what is a fundamental part of becoming a godly man or a godly woman? I use the strength that comes from God to help the helpless.

[ 36 : 24 ] Who is the living God? Helper of the helpless. What is a fundamental part of becoming a godly man or woman? I use the strength that comes from God to help the helpless.

So what do we say? If there is a man in here who is abusing his wife, abusing his children, you are doing wrong, you should stop it. If you are a wife in such a situation, you should come and speak to me or should call the office.

You need to deal with that situation and we will support you. What is going on in Iraq? That is completely and utterly abhorrent to the living God that you would kill children who are Christians because they do not convert to Islam.

That is a horrible thing. If you are a slum landlord, what you are doing is pursuing the poor to their hurt and hurting them and you need to stop, you need to repent, it is wrong.

That is what the psalm is telling us that we can save, that we should save. That God gives us strength, it is his earth, even the most mighty emperor, if you look at verse 18, even the most mighty emperor is an emperor in God's earth.

[ 37 : 43 ] He never relinquishes sovereignty. We are always but a vassal who receives from God and we receive our strength not to pursue the poor or oppress them, but to help the helpless.

And here I am going to be very politically incorrect and maybe offend you. Who on all the earth is the most helpless?

helpless, the fetus, the unborn in a mother's womb. No person is more helpless than a fetus.

And what are we called to do who are strength and have power? As in the National Post this week with an article by I think it was Dawkins about how if the baby within your womb is going to have Down syndrome, the just and moral thing to do is to kill that baby?

No. God gives me strength to help the helpless. And we have to say something about the unborn in the womb.

[ 38 : 57 ] And a culture increasingly organized in Canada to keep God absent and as God becomes more absent the weak cower. God. God is going to have to be God. God is going to have to be God.

God is going to have to be God. And virtually every politician in this country is terrified to speak about it and even make the most minute limit. Now I don't say this.

There's undoubtedly in this room today some people who have either had abortions or have helped people had abortions or counsel people to have abortions and I don't mean to pick you out and to demonize you.

I really don't. I really don't. In fact, one of the things you can pray for me every week is that I don't take this opportunity that I have to be up front to try to demonize anybody or to further my own power.

You see, the Bible convicts us of sin not to shame us and drive us to despair, but to turn our hearts to God, to abandon ourselves to God.

[ 40 : 09 ] And the text does this in a very, very powerful and interesting way. Look at verse 13 and 14. Why does the wicked, maybe I might have the wrong, we'll start reading until I get to the right part.

Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart you will not call to account? 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 fatherless. Here's the thing, verse 15, break the arm of the wicked and evildoer. Call his wickedness to account till you find none.

You know, that's actually, for those of us who've suffered under great injustice, it's a very merciful prayer. You see, in this culture where there's three primary types of weapons apart from your fists, there's the sword, there's the bow and arrow, and there's the spear.

And if I am a powerful person oppressing another person, and I pray that that person's arm be broken, I'm not praying that they go to hell, I'm praying that they become weak.

[ 41 : 21 ] And this entire psalm is couched in mercy, that we might heed God and realize our weakness.

And in fact, it goes even deeper. You know, who is it in the Bible who most prominently experienced the forsake, the anguish of God being hidden and far away?

It's Jesus upon the cross. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Who is it in all of the Bible who most completely and utterly typified committing themselves to God, abandoning themselves to God?

It's Jesus. Into thy hands I commit my spirit. I commend my spirit. It's Jesus. Who is it? And, and, well, look at, look at verse 15 again.

Call his wickedness to account till you find none. The image there is like if you watch mystery movies or read mystery novels and you know there's been a murder committed and they bring in the crime scene investigators and they look for the DNA, they look for dandruff, they look for hair samples, they look for everything they possibly can find to get every trace of that which was left behind by the evildoer.

[ 42 : 44 ] And that's that same idea that we want God to pursue every single trace of evil. And what we understand on the cross, well, here's how I put it in the point, if you could put it up, Andrew.

God calls my wickedness to account till he can find no more. And this is what in love Jesus really bears for me on the cross.

God calls my wickedness to account till he can find no more. And this is what in love Jesus freely bears for me on the cross.

And even in these few verses, verses 14 and 15, but you do see for you know mischief and vexation that you may take it into your hands. To you the helpless commits himself.

And actually the original language, the word there is abandoned himself. This psalm, on one hand, it never reduces our call to speak out against evil.

[ 43 : 54 ] It never diminishes that. And it never, not only diminishes us not only speaking out, but doing what we can to help the helpless. As Jeremiah said earlier, to love, mercy, and compassion.

But at the same time, it speaks directly to me at my heart level, at the very center of whom I am, to recognize my helplessness. That I can't, by a mere act of my will, stop myself from ever trying.

Like, I still will continue to organize my life at different times as if God does not exist. And there will be times I don't want God to show up. And I'm helpless to stop that. And the psalm is trying to help me to understand that I am helpless.

And it's saying that I am called, I am invited by the living God. God himself, the living God, invites me to respond to this, not by more religion, not by more Bible memorizing, not by going to church more, not by doing all of these things, but for me to abandon myself to God.

And the cross is an act not only of unsurpassed mercy, but of unsurpassed justice. Here's the shocking thing about the cross.

[ 45 : 10 ] When you put your faith and trust, when you abandon yourself to what God does for you in the person of Jesus upon the cross, that God has in fact looked into the wicked of my life from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death, and he's looked at it until he's found every single trace of it.

And that's what Jesus bears upon himself in the cross. It means that when I accept him, when you accept him as your savior and as your Lord, you are no more forgiven as you enter heaven than you are right now.

Which is why as we're gripped by the gospel, as we're gripped by the gospel, as disciples of Christ, it creates within us the desire to live for his glory.

And use our strength to help the helpless, as we're gripped by the gospel, by how God deals with our helplessness and our rebellion as it grips us.

A normal Holy Spirit-induced desire will be to help the helpless. God bless you. Please stand. Please stand. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

[ 46 : 27 ] Father, you are so kind to us and so gentle with us.

We ask, Father, that your word would enter deeply into our lives and that your word would form us and that we not be those types of different types of soil, Father, that just ignore your word or allow it just to come in for a moment or get choked by weeds.

But, Father, that your word would come into our lives and that your word would bear much fruit. Father, turn our eyes to Jesus. Grip us with the gospel that we might know that we are to abandon ourselves to you alone, who are the helper of the helpless, to you alone, who can deal with all traces of wickedness in our lives, that you alone can deal with that which keeps us separate from you, that you alone deal with this in the weakness of your son's death upon the cross to redeem us.

Father, grip us by the gospel. Make us disciples who live for your glory. And, Father, as we are gripped by the gospel, may it do its proper work in our lives, strengthening us in our hearts to help the helpless.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.