

HOW LONG WILL THE WICKED TRIUMPH?
(SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2020)

Scripture reading – Matthew 5:1-12; Ps. 94

INTRODUCTION

We believe strongly in God's sovereignty.

We also understand that God's sovereignty does not mean that we downplay the presence and work of evil.

We recognize that we live in a world under the curse of sin and under God's judgment.

Jer. 17:9 "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"

There are unspeakable horrors in terms of human suffering and wickedness.

40-50 million abortions every year worldwide.

In our own nation 3,000 babies are killed in the womb each day on average and it is estimated that this same number of children or more, are abused in various ways each day.¹

The Spanish Flu was terrifying killing an estimated 50 million, but think of how this is just about one year in terms of abortion totals.

I don't know how the estimates are done, but it is thought that more Christians died for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in the 20th century than in the previous 19 centuries combined!

What do we do in the face of such evil?

1. Ignore, be irrelevant
2. Fret or worry
3. Seek to take matters into our own hands
4. Follow the call of Scripture to take evil seriously and rest in the Lord's justice.

Take evil seriously. Know that God does even more.

¹ <https://www.worldometers.info/abortions/>

<https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-child-abuse>

I found different numbers for abuse, maybe because of how it is classified.

I have divided this Psalm into three parts. It is not an inspired division, obviously, but it will help us understand the movement and contrasts of this Psalm.

[1] Verses 1-7: The call for God to act and a description of the wicked

[2] Verses 8-15: A call to the wicked and blessing for God's people

[3] Verses 16-23: God defends His people in the midst of battle

[1] VERSES 1-7: THE CALL FOR GOD TO ACT AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE WICKED

This Psalm is like a number of other Psalms which consider the grim subject of evil and how it seems that the wicked get away with their evil.

Psalm 73 is a great parallel Psalm.

I am sure that there are those who are offended that this Psalm cries out to God for justice.

Samuel Johnson said that "**revenge is an act of passion; vengeance of justice.**"²

It is wicked if we seek to take vengeance into our own hands. It is righteous to cry out to God for His work!

The one aspect of evil that especially troubles us is how long it seems that the wicked triumph, as we see in verse 3.

I did a search for the words **how long** in my Bible program.

Just in the Psalms - Psalm 4:2; 6:3; 13:1-2; 35:17; 62:3; 74:9-10; 79:5; 80:4; 82:2; 89:46; 90:13.

There is the presence of evil that troubles us. There is then from our perspective the fact that the wicked seem to run the show.

Verses 4-7 give a good summary description.

The wicked engage in threats and boasting.

They attack and murder the most vulnerable.

² Cited by Boice, 769. I think Boice found this quote in Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*.

Isn't verse 6 a good description of Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers?
And they claim that God does not see or understand.

What is meant by the wicked saying God does not understand?

The verb **understand** here parallels the verb **see**.

The idea is that God is not paying attention. We can get away with our evil.

This is the critical mistake that all sinners make before God because they think they are getting away with their sin.

What if God punished every sin immediately?

There is a certain degree of unpredictability as God brings judgment.

[2] VERSES 8-15: A CALL TO THE WICKED AND BLESSING FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

The verb understand in verse 7 is the same verb used in verse 8.

The wicked believe God does not understand, but they are the ones without sense and proper sight.

The stupid are called to consider.

God's people also must take careful consideration of the rebuke that is given.

Verses 8-10 are spoken specifically to the wicked, but it is good that we consider lest we become jaded by the continued activity of the wicked.

The God who planted the ear, shall He not hear?

He who formed the eye, shall He not see?

He who instructs the nations and teaches man knowledge, shall He not correct?

When you are tempted to think things are out of control, consider carefully God's power in creation!

Is. 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these *things*, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of *His* power; Not one is missing.

God is fully aware of the wicked and that their thoughts are futile, vanity.

This is the word that is used so many times in Ecclesiastes, *hevel*.

In contrast to the vanity of the wicked, God's people are given a blessing and promises.

The blessing can be **painful**, but it is something we need.

The word instruct in verse 12 can have the idea of **chastisement or rebuke**.

Isn't that what you sometimes need?

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Blessed is the man whom God instructs and teaches out of His Law.

Blessed – Psalm 1, Psalm 32, Romans 4 – the blessing that we have because of God's grace in Christ.

Along with this blessing, four additional promises are seen in verses 13-15.

- 1) Relief from the days of trouble.
- 2) The eventual punishment of the wicked (both v. 13).
- 3) The steadfast faithfulness of God (v. 14).
- 4) The final triumph of the righteous (v. 15).

These are wonderful blessings.

But these are blessings that must be received in faith. It doesn't seem like these things are always true.

This is the test of faith and resting in God's promises.

[3] VERSES 16-23: GOD DEFENDS HIS PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF BATTLE

In verse 16 we see that the battle is closer to home than we sometimes want to imagine.

And it also is the case that God's people often seem to suffer just on their own.

Where are those who come to our aid and help?

James Boice connected verse 16 with the testimony of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy.

Paul's testimony in 2 Timothy is challenging for us to appreciate.

Here is Paul the great missionary, preacher, and organizer, and yet as he stands before the power of Rome he does so on his own.

2Tim. 1:15 This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

2Tim. 4:10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica – Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

2Tim. 4:16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

2Tim. 4:17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. **18** And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!

We don't know all the details in terms of the background of Psalm 94.

Obviously, this Psalm is not encouraging us to just do it on our own.

But what an important reminder.

When it seems that you are all alone, it is the Lord who enables you to stand and not settle into silence.

It is the Lord who keeps your foot from slipping.

Who can bring comfort to you like the Sovereign God and ruler of the universe?

So again, we don't want to read this Psalm and say, we just have to go it alone on everything.

But this Psalm is a reminder. Is your trust ultimately in the Lord or are you trusting something else for the help and encouragement you need?

The final verses of this Psalm give a summary and fitting conclusion.

First, we are reminded in verse 20 that the throne of iniquity or wicked rulers are not God's ally.

Clearly what seems to be God's delay in bringing justice is not that God has fellowship with the wicked.

Isn't verse 20 an interesting description?

The greatest evils are accomplished through perverse laws.

Revolutionaries fight against an existing law order only to establish their own perverted system of law and order.

Second, we are reminded again of the presence and activity of the wicked.

We know there will come a day when perfect justice will be meted out in the return of our Lord and the Day of Judgment.

Until that day we know that often God's people will find themselves in horrible situations.

So third, you must always look to the Lord as your defense and refuge.

The Lord will be your defense and refuge.

What beautiful words of safety and protection.

Finally, we have in verse 23 the promise that God will deal with His enemies.

At times we say, how long, O Lord?

We say this knowing that although we don't know God's timing, we can be certain of the outcome!

Take evil seriously. Know that God does even more.

1) How do we pray for justice knowing that we have received mercy?

Not inconsistent, because we are not basing this on our own righteousness.

2) What God calls us to do is not some quick and easy plan that changes the situation 1-2-3.

We are not called to a pointless exercise of faith, but we also must realize there is a great need for endurance.

2Th. 3:13 But *as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in* doing good.

Gal. 6:9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season **we shall reap** if we do not lose heart.

3) How much do we pray as we are directed by this Psalm?

Transition to Communion

Our Lord and Savior suffered alone to atone for sin because of our evil and rebellion.

If God has subdued us in our rebellion, if our Lord has won this great victory, then cannot He continue to defend and keep us?

It is never in vain to rest in Him.

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 365

BENEDICTION – HEB. 12:1-3

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy

that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.