



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Psalm 94: 1-23

Fall 2023

"Avenge O LORD"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. Our text this morning is Psalm 94. We looked at Psalm 93 last week, which is a brief Psalm; and this is a much longer Psalm. Psalm 94, the psalmist writes,

94 O LORD, God of vengeance,
God of vengeance, shine forth!
² Rise up, O Judge of the earth,
Render recompense to the proud.
³ How long shall the wicked, O LORD,
How long shall the wicked exult? (I think you can think of that in terms of 'triumph'; 'How long will they triumph?')
⁴ They pour forth *words*, they speak arrogantly;
All who do wickedness vaunt themselves.
⁵ They crush Your people, O LORD,
And afflict Your heritage.
⁶ They slay the widow and the stranger
And murder the orphans.
⁷ They have said, "The LORD does not see,
Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed."
⁸ Pay heed, you senseless among the people;
And when will you understand, stupid ones?
⁹ He who planted the ear, does He not hear?
He who formed the eye, does He not see?
¹⁰ He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke,
Even He who teaches man knowledge?
¹¹ The LORD knows the thoughts of man,
That they are a *mere* breath.
¹² Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD,
And whom You teach out of Your law;

¹³ That You may grant him relief from the days of adversity,
Until a pit is dug for the wicked.
¹⁴ For the LORD will not abandon His people,
Nor will He forsake His inheritance.
¹⁵ For judgment will again be righteous,
And all the upright in heart will follow it.
¹⁶ Who will stand up for me against evildoers?
Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?
¹⁷ If the LORD had not been my help,
My soul would soon have dwelt in *the abode of* silence.
¹⁸ If I should say, "My foot has slipped,"
Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.
¹⁹ When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,
Your consolations delight my soul.
²⁰ Can a throne of destruction be allied with You,
One which devises mischief by decree?
²¹ They band themselves together against the life of the righteous
And condemn the innocent to death.
²² But the LORD has been my stronghold,
And my God the rock of my refuge.
²³ He has brought back their wickedness upon them
And will destroy them in their evil;
The LORD our God will destroy them.

Psalm 94: 1-23

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

LORD, we come before You requesting that You bless us in this hour; that we might understand this psalmist, and how it applies to us, and the encouragement that this Psalm has for us in this fallen world in which we live. So LORD, guide us through the Spirit, enlighten our minds, and encourage and comfort us by the things that we have read and what we will study.

We live in very dark times, and very troubling times at this particular time, with war in the Middle East. And we think of that, we think of all that's going on and the sorrow that is occurring right now on both sides of this conflict. And so LORD, we look to

You, the Creator of all things, and ask for Your blessing that You would shine light in the midst of the darkness and the sorrow that is there. You have the answer for it all.

And Your people are there. You have some, not many perhaps, but Your people are there. And I pray that they will speak the truth, and that men, women, young and old alike on both sides of this conflict would be enlightened to the salvation that's in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. May You bring something great and glorious out of something that's very tragic. So we look to You, LORD, for we know You're in control of all things. We pray that You would bring peace to that region of the world—and may it be to Your glory.

LORD, bless us now as we sing our next hymn. Use it to prepare our hearts for this time of study together. We pray that this would be a rich and encouraging time, a time of worship as well as learning. We look to You to bless us, and pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) The Waldensians were protestants before the protestant reformation. They were driven out of France, and they settled in the Piedmont of northwestern Italy. There, in the year 1655, they were massacred by the troops of the Duke of Savoy. It shocked the Christians of Europe. John Milton wrote a sonnet about it, *Sonnet 18*, that begins,

"Avenge O Lord thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold."

Those words, "Avenge O Lord", have been the cry of many over the centuries wherever God's people have experienced persecution and injustice. It's how Psalm 94 begins: "O LORD, God of vengeance, God of vengeance, shine forth!" That's the prayer of this Psalm, which is written in response to cruel persecution and injustice, "They crush Your people, O LORD" (vs5). It's a Psalm of vengeance.

That's really what we all pray, though, when we pray according to Matthew chapter 6, verse 10, in the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done." That will only happen when Christ comes again with the sword, a sword of judgment; and then He will remove the wicked from the earth.

The Psalm is a prayer for the LORD's kingdom to come, for Him to rule. It appears in a collection of Psalms about the kingdom, beginning with the Psalm we looked at last week, Psalm 93, through Psalm 100. And throughout is the refrain, "The LORD reigns." (Psa 93:1). Psalm 94 is a prayer that the LORD, 'Would come, and judge, and reign on the earth'; "God of vengeance, shine forth!" (vs1b).

Now some today, I recognize, might be put off a bit by this appeal to, 'Avenge!' It seems primitive and harsh—'Unchristian!' So we should understand, vengeance is not a heated, personal feeling retaliating out of hate. That's revenge. Vengeance is different. Vengeance is justice; it is punishment for wrongs committed.

No one can witness the scenes that we have witnessed this past week and object to justice. We have legal systems set up to establish justice. But in personal terms, for what we do individually, it is God's work, not ours. The LORD said that in Deuteronomy 32, verse 35, which Paul quotes in Romans, chapter 12, verse 19; "Vengeance is Mine and retribution. In due time their foot will slip." ... "In due time".

"But there's the rub", to quote Shakespeare. That's what tests the faith of the saints: It's "In due time" —in God's time, not ours. Which means that, 'We have to wait; we have to let Him work' —and that's difficult.

You sense that, I think in this Psalm, the writer asks in verse 3, "How long?" It's the concern expressed in Psalm 73 regarding the prosperity of the wicked. The psalmist, Asaph, 'looks around—and they just prosper; and the righteous don't.' They're downtrodden by the wicked.

And so the psalmist Asaph finds his peace in that Psalm in the knowledge of the LORD's faithfulness to His people and His sovereignty over all mankind—over all of the

affairs of life. So he knows, as this psalmist knows, "In due time their foot will slip."
(Deu 32:35).

He began our Psalm with a prayer for that; for justice for those who slaughter the innocent. We see that in the first three verses;

O LORD, God of vengeance,
God of vengeance, shine forth!
Rise up, O Judge of the earth,
Render recompense to the proud.
How long shall the wicked, O LORD,
How long shall the wicked exalt?

(verses 1-3)

In a time of moral and spiritual darkness, when it seems that the wicked and the proud have their way, he asks the LORD to change things—to rise like the sun and bring the light of the new day. His cry for help was urgent; conditions were horrific.

He described them in verses four through seven: Powerful people crushing saints and slaying the helpless; widows, and orphans, and strangers, foreigners.

'Widows, orphans, and foreigners' is almost a formula in the Old Testament for the *defenseless*, for the *weak*. And the Law required that Israel protect and provide for them. These villains were lawless and they preyed on these individuals. They devoured them.

Now it's not clear if these enemies that are referred to here are from within or without. Are they foreign conquerors, or are they ungodly rulers? This fits well with the reigns of many of Israel's and Judah's kings, because many of them were wicked: Ahaz. Manasseh, Ahab—others. Whoever they were, they were godless.

And that's clear from verse 7;
"They have said, 'The LORD does not see,
Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed.' "

Now these people, as I read this, I think were probably what we would call 'practical atheists'. They may have believed God existed, but they have no thought of Him; they give no credence to Him—He was irrelevant to life. They lived as though He did not exist, so they are 'practical atheists'.

And nothing has changed over the millennia since the Psalm was penned. Dostoevsky was right when he put the words in one of the characters in his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, "If there is no God, everything's lawful." Or, "If there is no God, everything's permitted." And we look at our present world and how the moral consensus from, say, a generation ago has been turned upside down; lawlessness and moral confusion are widespread. And it's the result of a denial of objective truth—a denial of absolute truth.

But that's not new. That was the world of the psalmist; "The LORD does not see", (vs7), so there are no consequences for what we do. I don't think they were thinking this out like that, but this is how they were living. 'The wicked', as the psalmist looked at it, 'were having their way in everything.'

But the psalmist wasn't helpless; he could pray and he could preach. He could ask for God's help, and he could speak light into the darkness to expose error and sin. He did that in verse 8,

"Pay heed, you senseless among the people;
And when will you understand, stupid ones?"

That's kind of a bold statement to speak to these powerful people who are treading down the weak and the innocent. Gary Kidner called that, "a counter attack." He didn't debate or concede any validity to the assumptions of these skeptics. He simply dismissed their beliefs as false, and them as foolish.

Now I don't think it's wrong to give arguments for the existence of God; but the fact is, no atheist, no matter how brilliant he may be, can prove God does not exist. His

position is a faith position, (just as ours is a faith position), and I think it's enough to point that out.

But the Scriptures are clear: Everyone knows that, 'God is.' It's in their nature. Paul states that plainly in Romans chapter 1, verse 18; unbelievers "suppress the truth" that is there, and that they know, and that they see around them. And they know from "within themselves", they "suppress" that truth so that they can live the way they want to live—so that they can live in "unrighteousness."

So again, the psalmist is probably dealing with 'practical atheists', not theoretical or philosophical atheists; but either way, he made no apology for his beliefs, and in fact, asserted them boldly. And then, in verse 9 and 10, he exposed the folly of these skeptics, based on the physical condition of man, and God's moral government of the world.

Verse 9,

"He who planted the ear, does He not hear?

He who formed the eye, does He not see?"

Now that's a rhetorical question meaning, 'He, (*the psalmist*), knows the answer.' He's not seeking information, but rather than making a direct statement, he puts it in the form of a question to arouse our interest in it, to focus our minds on it. And so he shows through this rhetorical question the stupidity of thinking that they can get away with anything.

Obviously, at least to the psalmist, the God who created the ear and the eye can both see and hear. Man is made in the image of God. That's the reason that he or she knows implicitly, intuitively, instinctively that God exists. His very nature reminds him of that fact. He or she can't escape that truth because they can't escape themselves. They're made in the image of God; and the knowledge of God, the sense of God is engraved on their consciousness.

'It is the false gods who have ears that cannot hear, and eyes that cannot see' as Psalm 115, (*verses 5&6*), states. God Almighty knows all things and controls all things. He is omniscient, all-knowing. He is omnipotent, all-powerful.

And, that's really the next point in the Psalm, in verse 10, and is addressed with another rhetorical question,

"He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke,
Even He who teaches man knowledge?"

Well, yes He will. So the assumption that God isn't, or that God is uninvolved, that God is irrelevant, is not only foolish, it is dangerous. In the future, at some time, He will answer them with correction. And He has innumerable ways of doing that, innumerable ways of chastening, or correcting, a nation, or a people, or just individuals. They can either learn from that chastening, that discipline or not. And if not, they presume upon His patience—and they will perish from it as a result of it. The LORD will set things right. Deuteronomy 32, verse 35, "Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip."

Everyone lives on slippery ground. It's only God's grace that keeps all of us upright. The skeptic, the doubter, the wicked, are constantly testing the patience of the Lord God. All He has to do is let go for a moment, and they will fall to their destruction. 20 years after committing the slaughter of the Waldensians, the Duke of Savoy, Charles Emanuel II, died at the age of 40. For the Waldensians, who must have cried out, "Avenge, O LORD!", that must have seemed like a long time before the Duke slipped. But in due time he did—and never recovered.

It's true of everyone. That's the warning of Hebrews chapter 9, verse 27. "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." We are "just a vapor", all of us; that's James chapter 4, verse 14. And you find that kind of metaphor all through the Word of God; 'Just a vapor'.

The psalmist wrote that, 'Man's thoughts are a mere breath.' (vs 11). The godless may be confident in their plans and in their statements, as expressed in verse 7, but

their thoughts, their ideas don't last. Their plans don't last. It all comes to nothing. History's filled with examples of that, but in more modern times, Adolph Hitler vowed that his government, the Third Reich, would last for 1000 years. It lasted 12 years, and he died by his own hand, hiding in a bunker—and left his country in ruins. The plans of man fail. God's plans stand. Christ's kingdom will last 1000 years, and then it will be transformed into the new heavens and the new earth, world without end.

In the meantime, the LORD is ruling over all things, and the LORD is ruling over His people, and He even disciplines His people; the psalmist recognized that in verse 12. But unlike the wicked, they're blessed when they receive discipline. It drives them to the Word of God. Verse 12,

“Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD,
And whom You teach out of Your law;”

Discipline is not always to be understood as being for a correction due to some sin that's been committed; it's also for prevention of that happening. It's for keeping the saints from error; and wandering; and from sin; and getting off the right path. And that seems to be the case here. I think that's what the psalmist is speaking of.

It was true of the writer of Psalm 119 who wrote in verse 71,
“It is good for me that I was afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.”

Affliction can cause bitterness, or it can bring remedy. It depends on how we look at it, how we receive it. It depends on one's response to it. And faith determines that.

It's really ‘a presupposition of the beginning assumption’: When we know that God is good, that God is holy, that God is righteous, and reckon it so, and know that all things work well that He plans for us, (works for our good), when we know that joy will come, always, through the trials that we go through—when we understand all of that, we will respond well to the LORD's discipline.

Affliction is a remedy. Who of us, (when we think about it in light of all of this), who of us can't be guilty of envying the wicked and drifting off into worldliness—or adopting the error thinking that God doesn't see and I can go my own way, and there'll be no penalty ... we're all susceptible to that. We're all susceptible to all of the influences of the world. We're weak, and we're susceptible. Affliction often comes to correct that, correct misconceptions, to prove how fragile and false mankind's security is in this world—and that our hope is not here. And it causes us to turn to God's Word for wisdom, for perspective on life, for hope. —Those who do are blessed, even in affliction and by affliction.

The godless, the wicked, may be rich, may be powerful, but the godly are blessed, (which also means 'happy'). This is the word that begins Psalm 1; so this is the word that begins the Psalms: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...", who doesn't follow in the way of the men of Psalm 94. That's the happy person.

He or she delights "in the law of the LORD", (Psa 1:2), the Word of God—all of Scripture. It nourishes the soul; it produces maturity; it gives perspective on life; and it gives us hope now, and for all eternity. That's found in His Word. As a result, the saint is like the well-watered fruitful tree in Psalm 1, (vs3), that flourishes—while the wicked of Psalm 1 and Psalm 94, "are like chaff that the wind drives away." They will be judged eternally.

None of this should be understood to minimize the pain or the grief of affliction. It can be crushing; and I mean for us, for the saints, for the believer. Even Paul spoke of that once; of how he was in Asia and he and his companions were so afflicted, he said, "...we despaired even of life." (2Cor 1:8). He doesn't go into what the afflictions were but they faced many, many hardships from nature, and from enemies; from men, from beasts, from all kinds of things. He said, "We despaired even of life." (ibid).

But as he told the Corinthians, 'It had a purpose.; and it was, 'to keep them from trusting in themselves, and instead trusting in the LORD'; "in God who raises the dead".

(2Cor 1:9). That's the God we look to; that's the God we serve; that's the God we trust, the One who "raises the dead", who's in control of life and death itself. And, he goes on to say, 'the LORD delivered them' —and He's good for His word.

And He delivers us; He gives His people relief. That's the promise of verse 13. These men who 'crush God's people', (vs5), say, 'He doesn't see or doesn't pay heed', (vs7)—but He does. He knows and He sees our plight, and He gives help. God will grant, "relief from the days of adversity," the psalmist writes. (vs13).

That will certainly be fulfilled when the kingdom comes, or when heaven is reached. That will be "relief", and that will be rest forever; 'every tear will be wiped away', 'there'll be no more sorrow or pain.' (Rev 21:4).

But I think this is a promise for the present—during the days of adversity. Adversity typifies life in the world in which we live, this fallen world in which time is out of joint—everything is not right. But in it, God gives us periods of "relief" from the storms of life.

This word, *relief*, may be better translated *quietness*, *inner calm*, *peace*. God gives that to us when we need it. Psalm 103, (verse 14), states that, "He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust." He knows how weak we are; He knows how fragile we all are. He knows everything; He knows our situation. He knows each of us completely: He knows what we need, and He knows when we need it, *quiet*, when we need *peace*—and He gives it in His time and in His way. In verse 19, the psalmist says that when "anxious thoughts" come, (and Satan often stirs up anxiety in God's people), it's then that God gives "consolations"—He gives relief. That's His work; He's the God of all compassion.

But the inner peace comes in connection with God's Word and the revelation that He is reigning and He is working. It's the mystery of *providence*; things work out in an unusual, unanticipated ways, because He's in complete control. And that assures us that He is in control; His providence. That is the assurance that He is good for His promises. If He is omnipotent, and if He is omniscient, if He's all-powerful and all-wise, then we can trust Him for what He promises to do. Nothing can frustrate Him.

And one of those '*quieting promises*' is given next, the assurance that the wicked will not prosper forever. "...a pit is dug for the wicked.", the psalmist wrote. (vs13b). They may be boastful and confident, (and they are), but life is uncertain for them while God's people, even in days of adversity, are completely secure. That's the next assurance, verse 14,

"For the LORD will not abandon His people,
Nor will He forsake His inheritance."

It's one of the great promises of Scripture. The Gospel of Matthew ends, (28:20), with Christ sending His disciples across the world with the assurance, "...and lo, I am with you always." It's Hebrews chapter 13, verse 5, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." And, "Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Heb 13:8). He never changes; He never breaks a promise; He's with us.

And what adds assurance to that here, is that word, *inheritance*. "Nor will He forsake His inheritance." (vs14b). What is God's *inheritance*? It's defined in the first line of verse 14: "*His people*". It's in verse 5. "They crush *Your people*, O LORD, and afflict *Your heritage*." That word, *heritage*, is the same word that's translated here as *inheritance*—the same thing.

All through the Old Testament, Israel is called 'God's inheritance'. That's an amazing thought: Israel's inheritance was the land of Canaan—and God's inheritance is Israel—as is His church today. That gives us great assurance. He values, He treasures His inheritance. It's "the apple of His eye", as the prophet put it. (Zec 2:8). He is not going to lose it; He'll protect it like we would protect our eye.

He will not and cannot abandon us to the wicked of this world: 'a pit is already dug' for them; they will fall into it; their demise is certain. On that, Derek Kidner wrote in his commentary, "In God's economy, the pit is largely dug by the wicked." He's referring to Psalm 9, verse 15, "In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught." It's almost a bit of comedy: I don't think that's the way we're to understand it—but they

spread this net, and they are very careful, and they hide it so no one can see it... and then they forget where it is, step in it—and they're trapped!

Well, that's providence; that's God working out things in just the natural affairs of life. By their own plots, machinations and schemes, wicked men dig their own grave, and they fall into it. Give it time, and in due time, 'their foot will slip.' It's in that way, God gives us relief.

Ultimately though, *relief, quietness, peace* will come to God's people when the kingdom comes. That seems to be what the psalmist promises in verse 15,

"For judgment will again be righteous,
And all the upright in heart will follow it."

The English Standard Version translates this,

"For justice will return to the righteous
And all the upright in heart will follow it."

That day is coming. It's our hope; it's the hope of this Psalm; it's the hope of all the saints—all the people of God.

Still, in the meantime, the wicked were exulting and crushing the saints. And so, in verse 16, the question of verse 3, "How long?" is replaced with, "Who?";

"Who will stand up for me against evildoers?
Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?"

Again, it's a rhetorical question, because he knew the, "Who", 'Who He was' — and it's the One who had already stood with him and strengthened him the lonely times of the spiritual conflict. He describes it in verses 17-19:

"If the LORD had not been my help,
My soul would soon have dwelt in *the abode of silence*." (vs17).

'The abode of silence' is the grave where no one is able to praise the LORD, at least not praise the LORD before the living here on the earth. They do praise the LORD before the LORD's throne; but their voice isn't heard in this world—they're in the grave. And that's the idea: 'If it hadn't been for the LORD, he'd be a dead man.'

So it's praise here for God's goodness and mercy. The LORD delivered him from death, from the hands of these wicked men. He saved him from danger.: He saved him from physical danger; He saved him from spiritual danger.

He goes on to say,

"If I should say, 'My foot has slipped',

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.

When my anxious thoughts multiply within me,

Your consolations delight my soul."

(vs18-19).

This word, "*slip*", (vs18), is the same word as in Deuteronomy 32, verse 35, "In due time their foot will slip." But not God's saints; and the reason is, He keeps us secure. That's His lovingkindness; that's His sovereign grace; His unconditional love for His people. It is His special, personal, particular love for His chosen ones—for all who have trusted in Him.

He keeps us in the faith; He keeps us persevering in the faith. We are to persevere. We're to continue to believe through the difficulties and the trials of life—and we do but only because of God's strength, 'who strengthens us.' (Phl 4:13).

'Perseverance of the saints' is really, 'The perseverance of the LORD with the saints', or 'The preservation of the saints.'

The idea here is similar to that in Psalm 73, verse 2, where Asaph is dismayed, again, by the prosperity of the wicked, (the problem of evil in the world), and said, "My steps had almost slipped." Now it, (*slipped*), is a different word there, from the one that's here—but the idea, I think, is similar. God, in His faithfulness to the psalmist kept

him from slipping. He almost slipped, but he didn't, because of God's faithfulness; it kept him from doing that. Kept him from stumbling because of persecution or because of the prosperity of the wicked. Numerous occasions could cause that. Otherwise he would have become disillusioned and faltered in the faith.

But, 'The LORD held him up, the LORD supported him—and He does that for us. He did it for Paul; Paul wrote about that in 2 Timothy 4, verses 16 and 17, when he was on trial in Rome before the tyrant Nero. "All deserted me", he said. (vs16). All of his friends were afraid to stand with him and support him. They didn't want to be before Nero—they didn't want that monster to see them in connection with Paul. So he was abandoned.

"But," he wrote, "the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued." (vs17). 'He stood with me, and I got to proclaim the Gospel, the truth of God's lovingkindness to the pagans. And then, out of all of it, God rescued me'

We should be faithful—and help, that's what friends do. That's what brothers and sisters do for one another in the faith. That's Galatians chapter 6, verse 2, "Bear one another's burdens..." But where brothers fail, the LORD doesn't. He is faithful, always; He strengthens us, and keeps us from stumbling.

So, we should know that, we should believe that. We are never alone. Life is precarious in every way, physically and spiritually; but the LORD is always with us and will help. —And is always helping, even when we don't realize it.

The psalmist's confidence was in the LORD fully, and the last verses of the Psalm, verses 20-23, express his faith in the LORD and in the LORD's plan of the ages. In verse 20, he recognizes that the light and the darkness cannot mix or have unity. —It's one or the other, 'a throne of destruction cannot be allied with the LORD.'

Verse 21,

"They band themselves together against the life of the righteous
And condemn the innocent to death."

Don't expect in this world we'll get help from this world. Sometimes it does happen, but our refuge is not here; our refuge is Christ.

Verse 22,

"But the LORD has been my stronghold,
And my God, the rock of my refuge."

Those words, '*stronghold*' and '*refuge*', are also in Psalm 46, verse 1 and 7. "God is our refuge and strength." (vs1). "The God of Jacob is our stronghold." (vs7). That inspired Martin Luther, at a time of deep distress and depression that he was in, to write his hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*. That's where the great reformer found his help and safety. It's not in this world, it's in the LORD. And that's now as well; the present for us is now secure in Him.

And the future is victorious. That's the final verse, where the prayer of the first verse becomes a prophecy here in the last verse, verse 23;

"He has brought back their wickedness upon them
And will destroy them in their evil;
The LORD our God will destroy them."

That's a righteous hope: Not that the LORD will destroy people, but that the LORD will destroy evil. That Satan and his minions and all who work to destroy the weak, destroy the truth and the righteous, they will be defeated. Over the millennia of time people have prayed, 'How long shall the wicked exult? How long will they be victorious? How long before the LORD will destroy them?'

I can imagine that many of the early saints prayed that, when persecutors were destroying the church; crushing it and wearing it down, burning Christians in Nero's garden; and throwing saints to the lions. And you can imagine the church in Judea praying that God would judge that young Pharisee, that zealot who was arresting and killing their friends and fellow believers.

But God had something better in mind. He stopped Saul of Tarsus in his tracks on the Damascus road, saved him, made him a new creation, and one of the greatest men to ever live—Paul, our brother.

Now that's grace. It's what the LORD is doing in this time of patience with the wicked. He's gathering His people out of the world, those who will inherit the kingdom and all eternity.

Who knows the wonders that the LORD may perform in this present and near future? *'Avenge, O LORD'. 'Destroy them'*, is righteous because it's a prayer for good to triumph over evil—and it will. And in the midst of what's going on now, He's saving the evil—and that's what we pray for, too.

But that victory is the great hope that we have in the future. This sad planet, bathed in blood and tears, will someday be changed. Light will come, darkness will be removed. There will be glory, and beauty, and joy—that's the kingdom. That's the future—and it's forever. Christ is the victor; and as believers in Jesus Christ, we're in Him and secure.

So the choice before all is clear: Be destroyed by God's justice or be saved by God's mercy. Judgment is coming; the wise flee the wrath to come. If you have not fled to Him, may God give you the wisdom to see your need to come to Christ. Believe in Him who died to save the lost; He receives all who do. So, may you come if you've not.

And may you who have, be very encouraged by who you are and who He is; and what your future is, and what your present is—it's very secure.

(Closing prayer) Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

(End of Audio)