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PSALM 93-94

Psalms – Book IV – Series

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Just by imagining the darkness that we experience in our lives during the course of the week. Some more than others, but there's a lot of challenges that we face in our lives that distract us from the Lord. We've got a lot of things and in many cases bad things happen, injustice, poverty, hunger, disease, broken relationships, which cause us then to feel discouraged or sad or anxious or angry.

In the midst of the dark clouds, the lightning bolt shines and we, for a glimpse, get to see what the psalmist is saying here and that's – *The LORD reigns, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength; indeed, the world is established, firm and secure.*

We need that message. We need the lightning to shine into our lives in the dark moments to reveal to us that it is God who is in control. It dawns on us in that moment that Yahweh reigns and it all must be right. Amidst the struggles that we face, God sits on the throne, He orders all the events, He sways the scepter over all, He orders all things according to His purpose. He does not plan or cause the evil that happens in our world, but He's above that and He reigns over all.

Now in the next verse we switch the audience from speaking to the congregation to leading the congregation in worship to the Lord. I think it's the sign of any good worship leader that the worship leader calls people to worship and then leads them into the presence of God. So in verse 2, the focus is God Himself. It says, *Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity.*

When you start thinking about the past and you start thinking about our history of life, there's an awe that come to that.

My son, Josh, who's thirty-some years old, and myself were talking to my mother in the last couple of weeks. She was telling us some of her history about how she and my dad met. We were going over those stories, just reflecting on some of our family history. When I think back on history I'm just amazed at listening to those stories. There's this awe that comes to me that I go, "Wow, that's amazing."

My father passed away. For those of you who don't know, he passed away a couple weeks ago and we had the memorial service this last Wednesday. It was a magnificent service. There was no sermon. Several of his lineage are pastors so we just agreed we wouldn't preach a sermon, we

would just have sharing and testimonies. Lots of testimonies were shared about the legacy that my father left, which was stunning in itself.

My brother, Kent, had put together some of the old movies from when we were kids and he had them going on the screen after the service was over so that we could all kind of watch. I was standing there watching the movie and one of the kids in the family says, “Where’s the sound?” I said, “Those are those 8-mm ones. There was no sound.” “You’ve got to be kidding me! You were around silent movies?” Yeah, I was around.

My dad was rather technologically savvy, so he had these 8-mm films of us fifty years ago and there was no sound. There are some amazing things about history when you think about such things, and then when you think about God, it says there *you are from all eternity*.

You think God was there at the time of Noah and the ark. God was there when David killed Goliath. God was there when the walls fell down with Joshua. God was there in all of those specific situations that we read about in the Bible. And to think that God was there and now He’s here with me, that’s what I need to know. I need to know the Lord reigns and that reigning is so powerful.

I think if we were to summarize this psalm – it’s only five verses long, if you’ve already noticed that. It’s a short psalm, but I think it’s one that draws our attention to the fact that the Lord is majestic, He’s holy, He’s eternal. It’s good for us to be reminded that the Lord reigns. It’s especially important when we read the news.

I want to recommend to you that you not spend a lot of time reading the news. Most of the news is bad news. It’s discouraging. It’s negative. I think we’re attracted to the news in part because we want to know what’s going to happen in our world. But I want to just suggest to you, if you want to know what’s going to happen in our world that you read the Bible. Read Revelation. It’s going to tell you what’s going to happen in our world. Matthew 24. Luke 21. Mark 13. The news is just catching up to what the Bible has prophesied will happen as the world moves on to the final events. *The Lord reigns*.

Verse 3 says, *The seas have lifted up, LORD, the seas have lifted up their voice; the seas have lifted up their pounding waves*. In other words, the seas are talking. They’re giving a message here that we need to listen to. In the same way, all of creation proclaims a message.

So when you watch a sunset, there’s a message there. Do you hear it? When you look at a beautiful flower, there’s a message there. Do you hear it? He’s saying the seas proclaim this, the pounding waves declare it. There’s something about the pounding waves that’s really forceful and powerful.

Is it thirteen or fourteen years that this week is the anniversary of you breaking your neck? Thirteen years ago the Millers and Turanskys were on a vacation in Hawaii. Carrie and I had gone off to spend our February 14th together and then we were going to come back and relieve them. We’d take all the kids so they could spend their February 14th together.

They were body surfing and a pounding wave... whenever I see pounding waves, it rings in my mind because Ed was thrown into the air by this pounding wave, smashed onto the ground, and he broke his neck. Should have died. Airlifted to the local hospital. They stayed in Hawaii longer than we did just so that he could get stabilized before he came back. Thirteen years ago that trauma happened to him.

Now I think about pounding waves, I think of there's a lot of power in the waves. You've just got to know that. When he's talking about pounding waves, he's talking about power here.

Verse 4 says, *Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea.* There's a message whispering to you in the midst of that, and here's the message: *the Lord on high is mighty.* Don't miss it. *The Lord on high is mighty.* He's strong. He's powerful.

Verse 5: *Your statutes, LORD, stand firm; holiness adorns your house for endless days.*

Do you see there it says *your statutes, LORD, stand firm.* There's a firmness about God's statutes that are very important for us to understand.

Young people, you need to catch this. There is a movement in our world today that says basically this: It doesn't make a difference what you believe, it's just you believe something that's important. So even if you share Christ with someone, they might say to you, "Well I believe something different" as if that somehow makes it true. It makes a difference what you believe. In fact, belief isn't the most important thing; truth is the most important thing. It's what we believe that's so important.

It says here *your statutes are firm.* They're set. They're not something that wavers. Belief does not create truth.

I was explaining that to an unsaved man this week. He was saying to me this kind of thing – "I believe something different, and I understand what you believe."

I said to him, "Believing isn't the most important thing. Truth is the most important thing."

He said to me, "Well isn't it like the perception is the reality?" You've heard that before that the perception is the reality.

I responded this way to him. I said, "You know, it is very important to know that perception is reality because the way that people perceive things means that's how they're going to act, that's how they're going to live. But just because they perceive things a certain way, and that's reality for them, does not mean that it's true." I think we're all in the self-evaluation stage of our lives, always checking our perceptions to make sure they match with what reality is.

I'm continually changing my mind about things in life. I used to believe that drinking orange juice was healthy. Now I realize that drinking orange juice isn't healthy. There's so much sugar in it that it's like drinking a Coke when it has an impact on your body. I know now that that is not a good idea for me to drink orange juice. It's not healthy because of all the sugar that's in it. Better to have an orange. That would be a better thing to do. I've changed my perception of reality and adjusted my life accordingly.

I was saying to the guys beforehand, I'd like another illustration about how I've changed my perception or something. Andrew had a great idea. Andrew said, "Here's a reality. As a young person I used to believe that adults can do anything they want." Now he's an adult. He says, "Now I've learned that adults do what they have to do." That's a change in perception. The perception of reality is different now. He's learned something true about life.

I just want to say today that the statutes of God are true and they're firm. Do you see that there? That's what it says. *Your statutes, LORD, stand firm.* They're there. Whether you believe them or not is not the point. They're there. You choose to believe them. You don't believe something that becomes true. People believe all kinds of things. That doesn't make them true. It's God's statutes that stand firm.

Holiness adorns your house. Holiness for God is a characteristic. For us it's a process. We're in process moving toward that holiness in our lives. *Holiness adorns your house.* We don't come to the house of God; we come to the God of the house. We come to Him and we understand who He is and we embrace Him. This psalm helps us gain our bearings to be reminded that the Lord reigns.

The question must be, when we get to the end you just have to ask the question – So what? How does this apply to me? The answer to that question is this: Does He reign in your life?

Psalm 94. As I started reading this psalm, it was very clear to me that this has to do with bullying. I don't choose topics to teach and then find a scripture to teach them on Sunday morning. We go to the word and then out of the word we come to these principles.

I'm thinking this is so great for anybody who's dealing with bullying. And then I realized that this isn't just for young people who deal with bullying sometimes. This is for all of us because we all experience injustice. Bullying is an example of personal injustice that is taking place against me. But we also have this justice meter inside of our hearts, and so when we see unfairness taking place with someone else, we are upset about that.

When we see injustice it may not be from a person to a person, although that's really what's described here is bad people doing things to people. There's also injustice – we see someone who's suffering in poverty, or someone who's overcome by sickness, or all kinds of things that happen. We have this justice meter inside that must be addressed. There's a way to deal with that. I think to be emotionally healthy we need some theological truth. And that's why we enter into Psalm 94.

Notice verse 1. Very important for us to understand this concept in order to have emotional health when it comes to this subject of bullying. *The LORD is a God who avenges.* This is going to require some explanation, but I just want you to understand that's the statement that's out there. We need to know it. *The LORD is a God who avenges, O God who avenges, shine forth. Rise up, Judge of the earth; pay back to the proud what they deserve.*

The justice meter that exists inside of our heart has a desire to balance the scales. When the scales aren't balanced, we get upset inside. In fact a good movie or a good book that we read will often touch this part of our heart. We'll see injustice take place and then we'll want to stay with the movie to see if it gets resolved, or want to finish the book to see how the good guy wins in the end. We have this thing inside of our heart that God created in order to help us address this. So we must be able to address it inside of our own hearts because it does something to us.

In fact, do you remember the story about David caught in his sin with Bathsheba and Nathan comes to him to reveal the sin. Nathan uses a story that appeals to David's justice meter inside of his heart. He says to David, "David, I've got to tell you. There's a man in your kingdom who has only one sheep. And then there's another guy who has lots of sheep. The guy with lots of sheep went and stole the one guy's sheep and he took it to have it for his meal."

David gets really mad because of the injustice that was taken place. "Where is that guy? Let's get back at him."

Nathan says, "You're the man," and turns it around so that David could see that he had done this terrible sin himself.

The problem is that our human hearts are not capable of achieving peace through justice. Really important to understand that. Our human hearts are not capable of achieving peace through justice. Getting revenge does not calm the human heart. It doesn't make a person more peaceful. The churning still continues.

God has a solution when it comes to injustice and we must embrace this theologically and understand it in our lives because there's a point in our lives where our ability to solve the problems stops.

When we're dealing with bullying (and I'm helping young people address this in my counseling practice), there are things we do. We take a stand for righteousness. We try to get help when we can. We report it. We confront the person. We ignore it when that's appropriate. We do all of those things, but there's a point when there's only so much we can do and as a piece of our theology we must understand this other ingredient taught in this passage.

I believe that an approach to bullying is not fully addressed unless you give kids and empower kids with this particular way to address the parts they can't handle. That's what's addressed in this passage. God is the one who ultimately is in charge of justice in the world. I need to entrust that to Him. I'm getting ahead of myself.

Let's go on here. God is the avenger, it says in verse 1 and 2, and you need to feel the pain of this. You need to feel the overwhelming – you need to have empathy for the person who's being mistreated and that starts in verse 3.

How long, LORD. When a person's being mistreated this is how they feel. Maybe you're being mistreated at work or maybe you're being mistreated in a home or by someone else outside of your home. *How long, Lord, will the wicked, how long will the wicked be jubilant?*

They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers are full of boasting. They crush your people – just feel the oppression there. The word oppression is used in a moment. Just overwhelming sense. They crush your people, Lord; they oppress your inheritance. They slay the widow and the foreigner; they murder the fatherless. They say, “The Lord does not see; the God of Jacob takes no notice.”

Sometimes we wish God would move faster and that’s why this first phrase in verse 3 is so important. *How long, LORD?* How long will this endure? We need to empathize with the pain that exists in the plight of the person who’s being treated unjustly.

Sometimes that injustice takes place in a marriage where one marriage partner is treating the other person unjustly. We must have as part of our plan this piece of theology that’s included in God’s word that will equip us fully to address the challenges that we face whenever we’re bullied, whenever we’re mistreated, or when injustice takes place in our world.

So verse 8 is going to start with the solutions and is going to move us toward the part that will give us some take-home steps that we can use here. Verse 8 talks to me. *Take notice, you senseless ones among the people* (in other words, you who need some more information here, you need to understand this so you can grab it in your life. You need to grab this idea).

Take notice, you senseless ones among the people; you fools, when will you become wise? In other words, if you’re only focused on the human revenge that we have then you’re going to miss something. Let me just draw this out for you so you understand.

We all experience hurt in our lives and often the response we have to that hurt is anger, and that anger is because of the injustice that we see in that given situation. We desire then to have revenge from our hearts. That revenge turns into a bitterness that we have in our lives and that makes us an unhappy person.

Often as I’m working with children and addressing this particular issue with them, I want them to understand something important. The anger is a problem because angry people are unhappy people. So we want to start helping them understand that it is not good enough to be able to get revenge. That’s not what you want. You don’t want to become an ugly person.

But here’s why people stay in this cycle. You have to understand why they stay there. Because they’re right. “I am right.” “My brother mistreated me. Therefore I am right to get revenge on him.” “My anger is justified inside because my parents continually favor my brother instead of me.” There’s this injustice that we experience, so people feed this by saying, “I’m right.”

I would suggest that the passage is saying this to us today: It’s not good enough to be right; you also need to be wise. Notice the words in verse 8 – *you fools, when will you become wise?* We need to develop wisdom, not just righteousness. We don’t just want to be right when it comes to being mistreated. We want to be wise in knowing what to do with that. Getting revenge is not the solution.

There are three things mentioned in the next verses I want to point out that I think help us as we take the injustices that we can't manage ourselves. We can only do so much. There's a point where there's a line to cross and if you cross over that line to try to deal with that injustice, you become an ugly person, you become a mean person, your heart starts to harden and bad things start happening inside of you. So you have to know where the line is, and when that line gets there there's something that you need to do. There are three things you need to do in that moment.

The first one is to recognize (that's the word I'm suggesting we're going to use here), you must recognize that there is a God. You must recognize that there is a God.

Notice verse 9. This is what the writer now of the poem or the song is guiding our attention towards. So he says, *Does he who fashioned the ear not hear? It's almost like a sarcastic statement or a rhetorical question. Does he who fashioned the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see? Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches mankind lack knowledge? The Lord knows all human plans; he knows that they are futile.*

In other words, the point here is recognize that there is a God. That's the first thing we need to do. Because when we're able to do that we're able to know that there is a God who is an avenger. That's what verse 1 says. He's the one who's going to be in charge of the justice of the world. So the first thing we do is recognize that there is a God.

The second thing we need to do is believe something about that God. We need to believe about God that He is in control and that He's good. You must believe both of those things. Let me read the passage, verses 12-15, and then I want to explain why those two ingredients are so important.

Verse 12: Blessed is the one you discipline, LORD, the one you teach from your law; you grant them relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked. For the LORD will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance. Judgment will again be founded on righteousness, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

God cares. God is founded on righteousness. God is in control. The reason you need those two concepts that God is in control and God is good are very important.

Now remember this, young people in particular, because if you're going to trust God you need these two things. You must believe that God is good and you must believe that He's in control if you're going to trust Him. Because what good is it if you just have one of those? If you only believe God is good but He's not in control, then you don't want to trust Him. If you believe He's in control but He's not good, you don't want to trust your life to Him. You must believe both of those things. When you believe those things then it opens the door for trust to take place. We must believe that God is in control, that His plans are bigger.

Now look at verse 12. *Blessed is the one you discipline, LORD.* Now it's interesting that he's talking about injustice in the midst of discipline as if somehow the injustice that's taking place might contribute to someone's life, maybe mine. I would like to say that God's goal in life is not

to make us happy. His goal is to grow us. I'm sure you've heard that. I think that's a good thing to be thinking about that God wants to grow us, not just make us happy.

The discipline and training often comes when we're being mistreated. We learn how to respond to the Lord and trust Him more, so I think there is growth that takes place.

But I don't think that I can make that statement here because He uses the word happy here in verse 12, the word *blessed*. That's the word *asher* in the Old Testament. It means happy. That's what it means. *Happy is the one you discipline, LORD.*

It's good for us to make that statement and believe that God isn't here to make us happy, He wants us to grow. There's a very real sense in which God wants us to be happy and He wants us to be happy because we trust in Him, because we're growing, and because we're building the character necessary to handle life.

So we don't want to move happiness out of the picture and say God wants us to be miserable. God doesn't want Christians to be miserable; He wants them to enjoy life. But He's not just going to give us things to do that.

Sometimes we do that with our children. We think if we give them things they'll be happy. When really the goal is to help them have the character necessary to manage the things they have, which is really what happiness is about. So it's fascinating there he uses the word happiness in the midst of that discipline, in the midst of this injustice that's there.

Then notice in verse 13 it says, *you grant them relief from days of trouble*. Well what's going on? Do you see the rest of it – *until a pit is dug for the wicked*.

Sometimes the wicked person and the injustice that they do takes time to develop the retribution or the revenge or whatever. God's timing isn't exactly our timing. We say, "How long, God, is this going to take place? Lord, we want this to end." God doesn't always balance His books at the end of the year. God is a God of justice and He does balance the books, but it often doesn't take place in the timing that we wish it would.

The first thing is we must recognize that God exists, the second thing is we must believe that God is good and that He is in control, and, number three, we must release it to God. I think this has to be a part of our understanding of a solution for bullying in our personal lives.

If you're being bullied in one way or another or as we're teaching our kids that there is a God who's in charge of justice, there's a point when we cross the line when we must take the anxiety, the fear, the upset feelings we have, put them in a suitcase, and give them to God, and let Him be the judge. Because I can't go around in my life, my heart was not designed to carry around the justice of the world or the personal justice of the world to that extent.

I do need to be taking a stand for righteousness. God has called us to look out for the poor. We are on a mission to right wrongs and care for those who are being treated unjustly. That is

important. But there's a point at which that crosses a line and it ruins us, and we must entrust those results to the Lord.

So in verses 16-18 it reads this way: *Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?* I need to release this to God. I need to release to somebody. He's saying who's going to do this? *Unless the LORD had given me help, I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. When I said, "My foot is slipping," your unfailing love, LORD, supported me.*

It's when we feel overwhelmed with "I'm about to slip here," we grab onto what? This is the word we talked about last week that appears so often that's such a delightful word. It's the word *chesed*. The unfailing, caring, merciful, pursuing love of God. The *chesed* of God. *Your unfailing love, Lord, supports me.* I'm about to trip; I need something to hold me up. It's the *chesed* of God that does that.

So here's the result, look at verse 19. *When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.*

In the last verses we have a summary of the contrast between the two plights of evil versus God's solution.

Verse 20: *Can a corrupt throne be allied with you—a throne that brings on misery by its decrees? The wicked band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. But* (and that's the key word there in verse 22, the contrast word that describes what the Lord's going to do and how we respond to Him) *the LORD has become my fortress.* So if you're being bullied there's a place where you can go, where you can find peace and satisfaction because of your relationship with God and who you are before Him.

The LORD has become my fortress and my God the rock in whom I take refuge. He will repay them for their sins and destroy them for their wickedness; the LORD our God will destroy them.

That's the song that the psalmist offers up for us to remind us that life is full of injustice, bad things happen in our lives, and we have a job to do something about that. So we go out and do what we can, but there's a point in which there's a line. Be careful of the line. Because if you cross that line and you personally try to get revenge or you hold onto bitterness in your heart then you become an ugly person, you become a person that is then not relying on the Lord.

So God has given a solution – when you get close to the line, package it all up, put it in a suitcase, give it to the Lord, and allow Him to come back and Him to be the judge of the world and take on that. He has a much bigger heart than we do. He has a much bigger plan than we do. And He can handle the suitcase that we can't handle in our own lives.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] I can't help but think, Lord, that there might be some people right here that are in the midst of the struggle of being treated unfairly. It's a painful place to be. So I ask, Lord, that you

would support them, encourage them, undergird them with your grace and your power and your strength and give them peace, a peace that satisfies because of who you are, a God of justice and a God of compassion. We entrust our lives to you every day and ask you to right the wrongs that exist in our world. Demonstrate your glory, make your light shine. We exalt you because of who you are. We know that you are the God who saves. Make that our mantra inside of our hearts so that we aren't discouraged, we aren't upset, we aren't anxious, we are trusting in you. We exalt you now in Jesus' name, amen.