

Tuesday, July 11, 2023 ■ Read Psalm 94:16–23

Questions from the Scripture text: What has the psalmist wondered (v16)? What effect does the doubling of the question have? What/Who is the answer to the question (v17)? What if this had not been the answer? What was the psalmist himself unable to do (v18a, cf. 16b)? But Whose covenant-love not only stood, but also did what (v18b)? What other trouble was the psalmist having (v19a)? What did Yahweh's comfort do for him in that case (v19b)? About what two things does the psalmist (rhetorically) ask if they can be joined together (v20)? What is the implied answer to the question? What do these evil authorities do (v21)? What has kept them from destroying the psalmist (v22)? What is sure to be the outcome instead (v23)?

When facing unashamed, powerful attackers, what help does the believer have? Psalm 94:16–23 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the Lord often brings us through providence that forces to find Him alone as our help, strength, and joy, so that we will be assured that the future is determined not by our circumstances or abilities but by His character.**

Sometimes, providence brings us through situations in which there is **no help coming from others**. The questions in v16 convey this more intensely than a plain statement would have. We can feel the singer's increasing desperation as he asks with no answer. But, **Yahweh was his Help**. It can actually be encouraging to be abandoned by all others, if the Spirit gives us to discover that, for us, it is enough that the Lord stands by us (cf. 2Tim 4:16–17).

Often, providence brings us to **an end of any help within ourselves**. Again, the way v18 puts it is intense. "My foot slips" is the cry of someone finally giving in after trying to stand. It has just been too hard for too long, and though the slipping of the foot means sure destruction, his strength is giving way. And the answer now is not just that Yahweh Himself is his help, but that His hesed, His covenant-love, is his help. The help comes not merely by miraculous providence, but by merciful providence. It's personal. In the pride of our independence, we would miss an opportunity to see that the Lord isn't just helping us; He is loving us.

Sometimes, we find even that **we are making things worse for ourselves**. In this case, the psalmist's anxieties have been a countless mob within his heart. Again, the Lord's answer is greater even than the problem. His comforts (consolations) do not merely neutralize the anxieties; they fill the psalmist's soul with delight. I hope that you have found this to be the case, dear reader, that when providence (including and especially your own shortcomings) has turned you to the Lord in desperation, the Lord to Whom you have turned becomes a source of soul-pleasure. Thus, believers have found that grievous circumstances may result in deep and lasting spiritual sweetness.

Then, there is also a providence that the vast majority of believers have experienced in this world: **when the wicked are both in power (v20a) and ruthless (v21)**. But, power ultimately belongs to the Lord, and He will not tolerate for long their continuing with Him in it (v20b). He has been with us thus far (v22) and will be with us forever. And this means that however much they think they are destroying others, the reality is that the wicked are hurtling themselves unto destruction (v23).

In what situation have you lacked helpers? In what situation have you lacked strength? In what circumstances have your own anxieties been a multitude of assailants from within you? Who can be your help, strength, and even delight in such situations? When have you found Him to be so in the past? What wicked ones are using even civil and legal authority for evil? What must be their end?

Sample prayer: Lord, You have been our help, when there was no one else who would stand for us. Your covenant love has held us up, when our foot was slipping, and we did not have the strength to stand. Your comfort has delighted our souls, when we were making ourselves sick with anxiety. You are our defense and the rock of our refuge. Indeed, You are our God, and You have taken us as Your very own people. So by Your Spirit, help us to worship You, and receive that worship through Jesus Christ, we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP94B "Who For Me Withstands the Wicked" or TPH94A "Mighty LORD, the God of Vengeance"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. **PLEASE BE AWARE** of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Psalm 94 versus 16 through 23. These are God's words. Who will rise up for me against the evildoers, who will stand up for me. Against the workers of the iniquity. Unless yahweh had been my help. My soul would soon have settled in silence. If I say my foot slips, Your mercy of your way.

We'll hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me. Your comforts delight, my soul. Shall the throne of iniquity which devises evil by law. That fellowship with you. They gather together against the life of the righteous and condemn innocent blood. But yahweh has been my defense. And my god, the rock of my refuge.

He has brought on them their own iniquity. And shall cut them off. And their own wickedness. Y'all they are god shall cut them all. So far the reading of gods inspired and And there were

One of the things that we, Often discover in the psalms, as we Read and pray. Please. Sing and pray these songs and prayers. That the holy spirit has given to us is. We discover what? In god's providence? The life of a believer. In the world of sand and misery is going to be like Even.

Life as someone who's a believer but has our own Remaining sin. One of the things we discover for instance, in verse 16 Is that there are times when it seems like, There's no one to help or when humanly speaking, there is no one to help. Who will rise up for me against the evildoers, who will stand up for me.

Against the workers of iniquity. It's a rhetorical question with an implied answer of that. There is no one. Uh, but it's much more intensely put By use of The figurative language by use of the rhetorical question. Then if he had just said, there is no one to help. By asking the question by doubling the question.

Uh, you are put in the place. Of the psalmist as he looks around as he racks his brain. To figure out who can help him and he's not coming up with anything. And sometimes you'll find yourself in situations. Where humanly speaking, it doesn't seem like there's anyone who can help you, And yet, it's in that situation in which

Yahweh.

Can be your help unless y'all way had been my help. My soul would soon have settled in silence. Because even when you can't think of anyone on earth, even when it doesn't, you can't find anyone on earth to help you the lord. Is still your help. This is something that Paul and second Timothy 4 describes.

Remember when Alexander the copper smith? Opposed him, and he says, At my first defense, no one stood with me. But all abandoned me. Um, May it not be counted against them, but then, in the very next verse, He says, but the lord stood by me. And so, there are times.

In our life and in which the lord and his providence. Withdraws as it were all other helps. So that we are forced to resort entirely. To him.

This is the same not just with other people's help but also with our own strength, If i say my foot slips, You're a mercy though. Yahai Will hold me up, your present. Your steadfast love fold your way. Uh, we'll hold me up. The image again is Is bearing up under some Uh, some burden or Um, Because life depends on him.

Being able to stand and hold his. Position in In the situation. But he does not have it in him. To hold to stand. And his foot is slipping. And the lord. Despite people's. Misuse of the. He will not give you. More than you can bear. He's not giving you what is not.

Um, But common to man, you always provides the way out etc. He is the way out. Your bearing is because of him and in union with him, And did he often gives us things that are the Uh, the for another providential example of what verse 18 is describing when it says my foot slips.

There's nothing left in me even though i'm holding. Uh, i'm holding up for my life, i don't have the ability to continue standing. But the lord has it in him. This is a steadfast love. That holds us up. And sometimes it holds us up onto and through death.

So when we like help from others, when we lack strength of our in ourselves and then verse 19, it's not just that we lack strength in ourselves often, we are our own worst problem. He has attackers on the outside. But there is a multitude there is And invading horde.

Of attackers on the inside in the multitude. Of my anxieties within me. Comforts. Delight my soul. And so, in order to eradicate the multitude of The anxieties that are within him. The constellations of god. The comforts of god. Common. They take on the anxieties. And pretty soon, the the soul that was sick and riddled and full of anxiety.

Has been filled with what instead at the end of verse 19 delight. Your comfort's delight, my soul. And, This gives us. Um, The prescription. When you're thinking about obsessing about a person or a circumstance, or whatever it is, You think about something else? You think upon the lord, You think upon his election?

You think upon the history of redemption? Do you think upon? Uh, his love for you, his faithfulness. It's all of his different attributes. You think upon who christ is and what christ is done. Is active, obedience, the suffering and death as resurrection ascension glory. Is pouring out his His spirit from where he sits in glory.

You think about how he gives life? To the soul and gives faith joins you to Christ. And all of, All that, you know, about who he is. What he has done. And what benefits are coming to you? And his being with you, his spirit dwelling in you. Your union with the lord.

Jesus, you're adoption by the father. And we've just kind of hardly covered. A dozen basic things. And in each of these, there are A bunch of different parts. Suddenly. There are so many things. That are delightful to dwell upon. In. God himself. That you have in every circumstance, things that circumstances cannot take from you.

And suddenly, You are. Remembering Psalm 94-19 which i'm sure the apostle Paul knew and there are many other passages as well but as he's writing second Corinthians chapter 1. Some of these calling god, the The, the father of mercies and the god of all comfort. Who has comforted us?

Uh, with a comfort wherewith, we were able to comfort anyone in any trouble. That's the psalm 90 94 verse 19 comfort. And it doesn't just neutralize anxiety, it. Replaces it with the light,

And so, He himself now has Um, Help and strength. And delight. That is independent of circumstance. Coming from the lord. And he's able to consider the circumstance more. Um, with clearer thoughts, clearer thinking verse 20, So the throne of iniquity which devises evil by law. Okay, so let's not be surprised when evil people.

Are in authority, and making laws. And their laws are opposed to god's law. They foster wickedness and and punish those who are good verse 41 gather together against the life of the righteousness, and they can damn innocent blood. But all authority ultimately comes from god. And so can it be that these lesser authorities in their wicked rule and wicked laws and punishing the righteous and condemning the innocent Giving them the death penalty for being godly.

Like we see in the bible, we see in history. Can it be that this lesser authority will be joined? To god's authority. So they're going to be coupled together. That's what the word that's being translated to fellowship. Here means And the answer is no. I mean, the, the implied answer of the rhetorical question in verse 20 is no, that cannot hold that will not continue.

And if it's not going to continue, which one is going to win, Well, that's a question that Yeah, every two-year-old in the church can answer, who's gonna win? The evil rulers are god. God. And so, This is y'all, it has been my defense and my god, the rock of my refuge.

And the one. Who is already? His help and his strength and his delight. Like we saw in verses 16 through 19. He, of course. Is going to win. And he is the righteous ruler. And those who are lesser authorities are going to be cut off and destroyed. And so he says he has brought on them their own iniquity.

In other words, not just as he going to punish them later. But it is under his rule and under his providence, that he permits Even now for my own good. Them. To express their wickedness and bring upon themselves, the fullness of what they deserve. That they increase. Their wrath upon themselves, the this principle that we see in Romans 12 That.

If your enemy is hungry, you feed him. And if he's thirsty, you give him something to drink. And that the wrath of god that has already upon the wicked, if he is, does not repent. Then that wrath heaps. Burning coals. By his continued and prolonged wickedness. And so, What can christians hope?

And sing. Pray. When the wicked are in power. When they're unashamed and bold when they're brutal and ruthless Well, we can find Not just help and strength, but even delight. In the lord. And we can be sure. Of his good purpose as in what is happening now. And we can be sure.

Of his perfect justice and vengeance and deliverance. And what comes later? Praise god. The word give to you. My dear children to have this not just as theory. But in the that in the moments, when you have similar difficulty, Who would give your heart and your mind to remember by this spirit.

To turn to him and find even delight. As you have also confidence and hope for the future. And strengthen help in the present. Let's pray.

Her father, we're so grateful to you. For your good and wise word and we're Humbled, before you That we ourselves produce. Things like these multitudes of anxiety

that Attack us from within And that we have been so forgetful of you, how unworthy of you will work. Is this forgetfulness is this persisting and anxiety?

It's only thank you for your patience and your loan suffering. We thank you for the wisdom and truth of your word. We thank you. For the providence of bringing us, back to it over and over again. We thank you for the gift of your Spirit that Blessed donation in which You have supplied to us yourself.

For our help for Paying attention to and understanding your word. And now we pray. For your spirits ongoing help and making application of it. In our lives. Our thoughts would be properly governed. That we would turn to you and meditate upon you. Find help and strengthen delight in you.

Lord, the wicked do reign. In many places. In. The society of the nation. Even just some extent in places in the societies of the church. So we cry out and we ask for reformation and revival. But we trust the lord. That, whether this or that comes Your goodness to us.

Your justice and vengeance upon your enemies. That these things are sure. Because they are. The function, the result of Who you are? So we pray lord that you would help us. To have heart and mind can form to your word. We thank you that you have given it to us, even to say, Now we pray that as you give it to us to sing throughout the rest of this week.

And then with your assembly of the lord's day, That your spirit would fill us. And that he would write these words of christ. Upon our hearts and make them to dwell richly in us. For, we ask it in jesus name. Amen.