

Sanctity of Human Life
January 2005

Sermon Outline

Title: The Helper of the Fatherless
Psalm 10:14

Context

There is a general consensus among biblical scholars that Psalms 9 and 10, if not two parts of a whole, are at least related. Psalm 9 is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for God's ultimate triumph over David's enemies and all the forces of evil. Psalm 10 is a prayer of supplication, calling on God to exact retribution on those who oppress the weak and helpless. While the oppressors may have their way for a time, Psalm 10 ends with the confident assertion that God will avenge the harm and the hurt done by them. He will come to the aid of those who are oppressed and cannot help themselves.

I. The plight of the fatherless.

- A. Orphan, originally meant “to be lonely” or “bereaved” (WS1).
- B. Word occurs 41 times in the Old Testament (WS2).
- C. Usually were unprotected and subject to oppression—subject of God’s special protection (WS3).
- D. War, famine and disease were causes for large numbers of orphans and widows (WS4).
- E. Could inherit property or learn skill as apprentice only if adopted (WS4).

II. God is the helper of the fatherless.

- A. God is referred to as both God (Jehovah—YHWH) and Lord (El) in this Psalm.
- B. The name “Lord” refers to Him as:
 - 1. Self-Existent and Eternal (WS5)
 - 2. A God of grace (WS6)
 - 3. Unchangeable (WS6)
 - 4. Faithful in keeping His promises and His word (WS6)
- C. The name “God” refers to Him as strong and mighty, therefore to be feared (WS7 and WS8).

III. What does the helper of the fatherless do?

- A. God sees and considers the actions of the oppressors (CC1 and CC2).
- B. God will administer justice against the oppressors (CC3 and CC4).

IV. What is our responsibility toward the fatherless?

- A. Exercise caution not to mistreat them:
 - 1. Exod. 22:22-24
 - 2. Deut. 24:17-18
 - 3. Prov. 23:10
 - 4. Isa. 1:23-26
 - 5. Isa. 10:1-4
 - 6. Zech. 7:10
 - 7. Mal. 3:5
- B. Exercise opportunities to assist them:
 - 1. Deut. 14:28-29
 - 2. Deut. 24:19-22
 - 3. Job 29:12-13
 - 4. Job 31:16-23
 - 5. Ps. 82:3-4
 - 6. Isa. 1:17
 - 7. Jer. 7:6-7
 - 8. James 1:27

Conclusion

The number of children who are in need of adoption is unknown since no single organization is charged with the responsibility to gather the statistics. Though we do not

know exactly how many await adoption, the number is certainly mind-numbing. Although not every family can adopt a child, there are many who can—and should. Christians, especially, should take seriously the exhortations of God to assist those who are some of the most vulnerable among us—children who are awaiting adoption.

What Can One Person Do?

1. If possible, adopt a child into your family
2. If adoption is not possible, become a foster parent.
3. Volunteer in a Christian organization that provides adult mentoring for children who need a parental role model or look for similar opportunities in the church.
4. Ask your church to start an adoption/foster care information group. The group would be charged with the responsibility to keep adoption and foster care options before the congregation. It would also provide church members with information on adoption and foster care processes.

Resources

Title: The Helper of the Fatherless Psalm 10:14

Bible Translations

King James: Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

New King James: But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief, To repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You; You are the helper of the fatherless.

New International Version: But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.

New American Standard: Thou hast seen it, for Thou hast beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Thy hand. The unfortunate commits himself to Thee; Thou hast been the helper of the orphan.

Holman Christian Standard: But You Yourself have seen trouble and grief, observing it in order to take the matter into Your hands. The helpless entrusts himself to You; You are a helper of the fatherless.

New Living Translation: But you do see the trouble and grief they cause. You take note of it and punish them. The helpless put their trust in you. You are the defender of orphans.

Other Helpful Scriptures

Bible verses about adoption:

Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 10:18; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; Esther 2:7; Job 29:12;
Job 31:16-23; Psalm 10:18; Psalm 82:3-4; Psalm 146:9; Isaiah 1:17; Isaiah 1:23;
Isaiah 10:1-2; Jeremiah 49:11; Zechariah 7:10; Malachi 3:5; James 1:27

Word Studies (WS)

WS1 — Fatherless—“from an unused root meaning *to be lonely*; a *bereaved person*; an orphan.” [James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Hebrew #3490]

WS2 — Fatherless—[The word] “occurs forty-one times. The orphan, generally associated with the sojourner and the widow, is the object of special concern. The quality of one’s devotion is measured by how one treats the widow and the orphan.

Justice is especially due them (Deut. 24:17); if not, the curse of God comes on the congregation (Deut. 24:19) . . . A corrupt society extorts the sojourner, wrongs the orphan and the widow, and expresses contempt for father and mother (Ezekiel 22:7, cf. Isaiah 10:2) . . . Those who mistreat the orphan and the widow are paralleled with adulterers, sorcerers and perjurers in Malachi 3:5. But God himself provides for the basic needs of these unfortunates (Deut. 10:18) and is known as the ‘Father of the fatherless’ (Psalm 68:5 [H 6]). This fact is reflected in the laws that forbid picking up fallen sheaves, or regleaning the vine or the olive tree (Deut. 24:19ff.). Also they along with the Levites receive a portion of the tithes of the produce given every third year (Deut. 14:28f.)” [R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 418—Ref. #934a]

WS3 — Fatherless—“The fatherless are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, generally in association with the widow and the stranger, as typical instances of the unprotected and necessitous, who are, specially subject to oppression, and also to God's special protection.” [D. Miall Edwards, “Fatherless” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Austin, TX: WORDSearch 5 Electronic version, WORDSearch Corp., 2004)]

WS4 — Fatherless— “Orphans, aliens and widows formed the three classes of powerless persons in ancient society. God took special care of these people because of their basic vulnerability, requiring that they not be oppressed and cursing those who did oppress with the threat of becoming orphans themselves. The frequency of war, famine and disease insured that there would always be a large number of orphans. Although they could contribute to the general work force, they would have had to be adopted for them to inherit property or to learn a skill as an apprentice” [Notes on Exodus 22:22-24, *Bible Background Commentary* (Austin, TX: WORDSearch 5 Electronic version, WORDSearch Corp., 2004)]

WS5 — “Lord”—“from Hebrew 1961 (hayah); (the) self-*Existent* or Eternal; *Jehovah*, Jewish national name of God: Jehovah, the Lord. Compare Hebrew 3050 (Yahh), Hebrew 3069.” [James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Hebrew #3068]

WS6 — “Lord”—“It is especially in the name *Jehovah* (Yahweh) . . . that God reveals Himself as the God of grace. This name has always been regarded as His most sacred and most distinctive name. On the basis of Ex. 3:14 it may be said that the name is derived from the Hebrew verb ‘to be,’ and that it serves to designate the unchangeableness of God. It implies the immutability of divine being, but points more directly to the fact that God is unchangeable in His covenant relationship, that He is mindful of His promises and faithful in keeping His word.” [L. Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1933), 59]

WS7 — “God”—“shortened from Hebrew 352 ('ayil); *strength*; as adjective *mighty*; especially the *Almighty* (but used also of any *deity*) :- God (god), × goodly, × great, idol, might (-y one), power, strong.” [James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, n.d.)—Hebrew #410]

WS8 — “God”—“There are certain names which direct attention to the fact that God is the high and exalted One, the transcendent God. 'El and 'Elohim stress the fact that He

is strong and mighty, and therefore to be feared.” [L. Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1933), 59]

Commentary Citations (CC)

- CC1** — “Though men act as if their conduct was not observed, yet thou art intimately acquainted with all they do. The workers of iniquity cannot hide themselves. The idea here is, that although God *seemed* not to notice the conduct of the wicked, and though the wicked acted as if he did not, yet that all this was seen by God, and that he would deal with men according to justice and truth.” [Albert Barnes, *Psalms, Vol. I. Notes on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), 95]
- CC2** — “The fact is that, whatever might seem to be the case, God has seen what is going on and will continue to observe it. In reality, he is not at a distance, not concealed (v. 1), but merely biding his time.” [Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 125]
- CC3** — “‘To give anything into one’s hand’ is equivalent to, into his power . . . or into any one’s care . . . but here God gives (lays) the things which are not to be administered, but requited, into His own hand . . . He is observant of the afflictions of His saints, laying them up in His hand and preserving them there in order, in His own time, to restore them to His saints in joy, and to their enemies in punishment.” [Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms, Vol. I* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 183]
- CC4** — “Eventually God would act and the hand raised in hostility and power (v. 12) would exact requital. Thus the present action of the ‘hapless,’ and the former experience of the ‘orphan’ (both of whom symbolize the afflicted), would not be in vain.” [Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50. Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 125]

Bible Study Guide

Title: The Helper of the Fatherless

Psalm 10:14

This is a suggested Bible study for any size group. The accompanying sermon notes, fact sheet, and PowerPoint® presentation serve as resources as you prepare to lead this Bible study. Answers are provided with the questions when appropriate, but do not be too quick to give the answers. Allow the participants time to talk about the questions among themselves and offer their own thoughts and reflections.

Before class: Copy all of the Scripture references in point four of the Sermon Outline onto individual, small slips of paper. Hand them out as participants arrive and ask them to be ready to read them for the class.

Create Learning Readiness: Using the information in the Context section of the accompanying Sermon and Bible Study Notes section of this Guide, describe the background of the passage.

Say: Today, there are literally thousands of Braes that are waiting for someone to adopt them—to love them and care for them as their own. God has a lot to say in His Word about caring for widows and orphans. During this session, we will discover much of what He says.

Say: The word translated “orphan” or “fatherless” originally meant “to be lonely” or “bereaved.” It was used 41 times in the Old Testament.

Ask: What does the number of these references to the fatherless suggest to us about the level of God’s concern for them?

Say: The fatherless are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament along with widows and strangers because they were largely unprotected classes of people.

Ask: What might have been some of the causes of children being orphaned and women being widowed during biblical times? (war, famine, disease, etc.)

Say: Orphans could not inherit property and could not even become an apprentice to learn a skill unless they were adopted into a family (Read **WS4** in the Resources section of this guide.)

Say: Turn to Deut. 24:17-22. In verses 17-18, God admonishes the children of Israel not to deprive those who were defenseless (Have someone read those verses aloud). Added to this warning are instructions from God on how the people could help those less fortunate than themselves (Have someone read verses 19-22.)

Ask: Given the fact that most people today do not live on farms, how could you and I put into practice what God says in these verses? (Write suggestions on the board.)

Say: God is referred to in this Psalm as both “God” and “Lord.” Each of the names of God used in the Old Testament adds something to our understanding of His nature and character. The word “Lord” has several shades of meaning. First, it refers to Him as the Self-Existent and Eternal One (see **WS5**). He has always been and will always be. There was no beginning to His existence and there will be no end to His existence. Also, nothing outside of Himself caused Him to exist.

Say: The word “Lord” refers to three other things: (1) He is a God of grace, (2) He is unchangeable, and (3) He is faithful in keeping His promises and His Word (see **WS6**).

Ask: Imagine for a moment that you are an orphan. In what ways would those characteristics of God be a comfort to you?

Say: The name “God” refers to Him as strong and mighty (see **WS7**). He is also the One who is exalted above all others (see Isa. 6:1) and superior to man (see **WS8**).

Ask: What would those characteristics mean to someone who was defenseless?

Say: David says that those who oppress the fatherless think that their actions go unnoticed by God. But that is a big mistake. God sees it all and takes special note of it for future action on His part. (Read **CC1** and **CC2**.)

Ask: What should this say to us about our own sinful actions?

Say: Not only does God see what the oppressors do, He also will avenge the wrong suffered by the oppressed (read **CC3** and **CC4**). Note that God doesn’t necessarily take immediate action. The retribution may be some time in coming. But it is certain.

Say: There are many verses of Scripture that tell us about our responsibilities to the fatherless. (1) We are to exercise caution not to mistreat them and (2) we are to exercise opportunities to assist them. As you came in, I handed out several pieces of paper with Scripture references on them. I’m going to ask you to read the verses I gave you and tell which category they fit into. (Note to facilitator: some may fit in both categories.)

On the board, make two columns. At the top of one column write the word “Caution.” At the top of the other, write the word “Opportunities.” Ask participants to read the following passages (note: the order has been mixed): Exodus 22:22-24; Deut. 14:28-29; Ps. 82:3-4; Prov. 23:10; Job 29:12-13; Isa. 1:23-26; Job 31:16-23; Isa. 10:1-4; Isa. 1:17; Zech. 7:10; Jer. 7:6-7; Mal. 3:5; James 1:27.

Say: Since no single organization is keeping track of how many orphans there are these days, we really have no way of knowing how many there are. But the number is certainly great. Not every family can adopt a child—but many can and should.

Ask: Do you think it would be possible for your family to adopt a child? Why or why not? (Allow for responses.) What changes, both positive and negative, would an added child make in your family?

Ask: What are some other options open to those families who cannot adopt? (See What Can One Person Do? in the Sermon Outline section of this guide.)