

# PSALMS

## Chapter 94

*The LORD Will Not Forsake His People*

**O LORD, God of vengeance, O God of vengeance, shine forth! 2 Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! 3 O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult? 4 They pour out their arrogant words; all the evildoers boast. 5 They crush your people, O LORD, and afflict your heritage. 6 They kill the widow and the sojourner, and murder the fatherless; 7 and they say, “The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive.” 8 Understand, O dullest of the people! Fools, when will you be wise? 9 He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? 10 He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge— 11 the LORD—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. 12 Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law, 13 to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked. 14 For the LORD will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage; 15 for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it. 16 Who rises up for me against the wicked? Who stands up for me against evildoers? 17 If the LORD had not been my help, my soul would soon have lived in the land of silence. 18 When I thought, “My foot slips,” your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up. 19 When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. 20 Can wicked rulers be allied with you, those who frame injustice by statute? 21 They band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death. 22 But the LORD has become my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge. 23 He will bring back on them their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the LORD our God will wipe them out.**

**Ps 94** An appeal to the Lord, as “Judge of the earth” (v. 2), to redress the wrongs perpetrated against the weak by arrogant and wicked men who occupy seats of power. The psalm has links with Ps 92, but is the voice of the oppressed within Israel (thus not the king), seeking redress at God’s throne for injustices done them by those smugly established in the power structures of the nation. Thus it is unique within the Ps 92–100 collection. (See introduction to Ps 93.) Following a three-verse introduction, the thought advances regularly in five stanzas of four verses each. (CSB)

**94:1–3** Initial appeal to God, the Judge. (CSB)

Ps 93; 95; 96; 97; 99 declare that the Lord reigns! However, the social and political situation seems to say that the wicked reign. Tension between trust that the Lord is in control and agony of seeing injustice and evil prevail dominates the beginning of Ps 94. Worse, that wickedness could very well be from Israel’s religious and political leaders, not merely a foreign power attacking the people. Internal corruption in the highest places has made life oppressive. Ps 94 is a plea for God to repay these oppressors so that justice returns (see p 879); it trusts that God will be victorious and will discipline and care for His faithful people. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–7, calls for God to act; vv 8–11, ridicule for unbelievers; vv 12–16, praise for those who trust the Lord; vv 17–19, the writer’s struggles; vv 20–23, confidence that God’s justice will prevail. (TLSB)

In God revenge is not evil, since it is not based on whim or an unforgiving spirit. God's revenge is simply the just punishment for sin which flows from God's holy nature. God has provided a payment for sin, but those who scorn that payment will have to answer for their own sins on judgment day. (PBC)

**94:1** *vengeance*. In Dt 32:35, God tells of His responsibility to judge and avenge the wicked. This psalm pleads for God to show that righteous judgment so His name and people will be vindicated. (TLSB)

*shine forth* – This is the language of epiphany (see Pss. 50:1 and 80:1). The psalmist desires the Lord to appear in divine splendor to judge the wicked; he wants a glorious intervention to bring an end to all this trouble. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**94:2-4** *proud ... wicked ... evildoers*. Foreign powers or Israel's own leaders, misusing their offices for personal gain. (TLSB)

**94:3** *How long ... ?* Question affirms God's rule on earth but shows the psalmist's struggle as he waits for God to silence the haughty arrogance of the wicked (v 4). (TLSB)

**94:4-7** Indictment of the wicked. (CSB)

The judgment of the ungodly is not due simply to the fact that they have sinned. We all have sinned often. The problem is that they are indifferent to their sin and defiant toward God's call to repentance. They demonstrate their hatred for God by singling out his people for persecution. They prey especially on the weak and helpless. They are confident that they will get away with their sins. (PBC)

**94:4** *pour out their arrogant words...evildoers boast* - They are full of themselves and deny God's attention to what are they doing. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**94:5** *your heritage*. Hbr poetry often takes one line and repeats it with slightly different words to amplify the thought. (TLSB)

**94:5-6** *crush ...afflict...kill. ...murder* – These four verbs in this section rapidly describe evil. And the arrangement of the words underscores the intensity. The wicked were destroying the rights of other people, or depriving them of the things necessary to their livelihood – they effectively crushed them and destroyed their lives. And what is so disturbing to the psalmist is who they destroy; in verse 5 the focus is on the people of God; in verse 6 the focus is on people of God who are vulnerable, the widow, the alien, and the fatherless. In short, they were attacking people that God promised he would protect, that he required the people protect, but since they refused, then only he now would protect. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**94:6** *widow ... sojourner ... fatherless*. Ps 68:5–6 shows that God has special concern for those who are poor, helpless, and vulnerable. He is their Father. Dt 10:17–19 calls for God's people likewise to protect and care for those who are not able to defend themselves. (TLSB)

**94:7** *Jacob*. A synonym for Israel (see Ge 32:28). (CSB)

**94:8-11** Warning to the wicked—those “senseless ... fools.” (CSB)

Of course, the Lord hears, sees, rebukes, knows. These verses denounce the foolish assertion made by the wicked that the Lord doesn't care or know what's happening to His people (v 7). (TLSB)

God's knowledge of every human thought rebukes the false security of the wicked and strengthens the confidence of his people. (PBC)

**94:8** *dullest* – Lacking spiritual discernment (cf 92:6). (TLSB)

*fools* – The word describes them as stubborn and rebellious. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

**94:10** *disciplines*. Keeps them in line by means of punishment (see Lev 26:18; Jer 31:18). (CSB)

*teaches*. Gives him some knowledge of the creation order (see Isa 28:26). (CSB)

**94:11** *The LORD knows*. Contrary to their foolish supposition (see v. 7). (CSB)

Ability to think and reason is a gift from God and is not disparaged here. Rather, the wicked schemes and thoughts of those who rebel against God's wisdom, especially in terms of justice for those in need, are nothing more than puffs of air. Cf 92:5–6; 1Co 3:20. (TLSB)

**94:12–15**† Those whose lives are directed by God's word are the blessed ones (see Ps 1)—contrary to the arrogant expectations of the wicked and in spite of their oppressions. (CSB)

God may not rescue his people immediately, so they can be disciplined and strengthened by testing. (PBC)

**94:12** *discipline ... teach*.† See v. 10. Here the author speaks of God's correcting and teaching his people in the ways of his word. (CSB)

**94:13** *rest* – Inner quietness and peace despite outward difficulties. This rest arises from the confidence that the wicked will be judged. (TLSB)

They gain an inner calmness which will enable to endure until the judgment. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

*pit* – The grave. (TLSB)

The word *sheol* occurs 65 times in the Hebrew OT, is still obscure. Since the derivation of the word is uncertain, the context must determine the meaning in each case.

1. *Sheol* can mean the resting place of mankind's mortal remains (Jb 17:16; Is 38:10).

2. *Sheol* can also mean "realm of the dead," into which all enter who depart this life, righteous as well as wicked (e.g., Gn 37:35; Jb 7:9; Ps 16:10; 31:17; 89:48). In this sense, it is a general term used very much like the English phrase "the hereafter" or "the beyond." The phrase "to go down into Sheol" means "to die, to depart from the land of the living." But it should be noted that when the righteous are said to descend into Sheol, their fate beyond is rarely taken into account. The hope of the pious in the OT is expressed differently (e.g., Ps 73:24).

3. *Sheol* can mean the place where God's judgment overtakes evildoers. In this sense, Sheol receives those who are taken away in God's anger. Korah's rebel band went down to Sheol because they had provoked the Lord (Nu 16:30, 33). Harlots go to Sheol (Pr 5:5). The anger of

the Lord burns to the depths of Sheol (Dt 32:22). According to Ps 49, all people die physically, the righteous as well as the ungodly (v 10), but there is a difference in their existence in the hereafter. The confidence of the psalmist is expressed in the words “They [i.e., the wicked] are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd... But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me” (vv 14–15). Clearly, there is a sharp contrast between the doom of the ungodly and the glorious hope of the believer, who hopes to rest securely in the hands of God (Ps 73). (TLSB p. 792)

**94:14** *people ... heritage*. The Lord will not abandon the powerless among his people to the injustice of their oppressors. Paul may be echoing this verse in Ro 11:1–2. (CSB)

God will not abandon His people (cf v 5). The psalmist firmly believes that God’s justice will prevail, thereby blessing those who follow the Lord’s Law. (TLSB)

**94:15** *will follow it*. Or “with it.” In any event, the author appears to say that God’s judgment will restore justice for the upright in heart. (CSB)

**94:16–19** The Lord is the only sure court of appeal. (CSB)

Personal testimony that the Lord does not forsake His people. (TLSB)

Now the psalmist is confident, but he formerly had fallen from this confidence. (PBC)

**94:17** *land of silence*. Without God’s help the wicked would have silenced the psalmist in the grave, but now it is the wicked for whom the pit will be dug (see v. 13). (CSB)

Place of death. (TLSB)

**94:18** *When I thought*. When he felt he was about to be overwhelmed by the wicked. (CSB)

*foot slips*. Signaling imminent death, indicating the serious nature of the threats to the psalmist. (TLSB)

*love*. Augustine: “See how God loves confession... The moment you begin to slip or waver, confess that slip, that you may not bewail your total fall” (NPNF 1 8:465). (TLSB)

**94:19** *consolations*. Hbr word connected in Is 66:10–13 with the tender image of a mother nursing her child. Augustine: “Many sorrows, but many consolations: bitter wounds, and sweet remedies” (NPNF 1 8:465). (TLSB)

**94:20–23** Confidence that the Lord’s justice will prevail. (CSB)

Because they have been given a responsibility and a trust, rulers will be judged with special severity when they abuse that trust. (PBC)

**94:20** *wicked rulers*. A seat of authority that works mischief. The author speaks of injustice at the center of power. (CSB)

Another rhetorical question. In no way can the God of justice be aligned with those who pervert the legal system against the righteous. (TLSB)

**94:22** Psalmist finishes with one last strong confession of faith. (TLSB)

**94:23** God will silence the gloating arrogance (vv 4, 7) and justly punish those who did such evil. The separation of the just from the unjust will one day happen, and it will have eternal consequences. In Mt 13:40–43, Jesus says the righteous will shine like the sun in God’s kingdom, but the wicked will be left weeping and gnashing their teeth in the fires of hell. (TLSB)

**Ps 94** The psalmist pleads for God to take vengeance on His enemies. Jesus, however, says to pray for our enemies, even love them (Mt 5:43–44). What are we to do? Final judgment will bring vengeance on those who arrogantly reject the Lord. Meanwhile, we pray that all will see the glory of God’s justice in Jesus on the cross, turn from their wicked ways, and join with us in the life of righteousness, which includes caring for and protecting widows, orphans, and others who are helpless and oppressed. • Lord, help us to pray—even for our enemies! Amen. (TLSB)