Psalm 94 — When Anxiety Attacks

1.0 Introducing Psalm 94

- Placed among the theocratic psalms (Psalms 93–100), Psalm 94 deals with the problem of wickedness. As King, it is a righteous God’s responsibility to execute justice.
- On Wednesdays, according to Rabbinical tradition, Psalm 94 was read in the post-exilic Temple. The Greek Septuagint supplied a heading: “A psalm of David for the fourth day of the week.”
- This psalm reminds us that believers in Old Testament times often suffered for their faith (Hebrews 11:35-38).
  ✓ “We are more than conquerors in our afflictions, not by avoiding them.”— John Piper, Don’t Waste Your Life (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 92 (commenting on Romans 8:37).

2.0 Reading Psalm 94 (NAU)

94:1 O LORD, God of vengeance,  
              God of vengeance, shine forth!
94:2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth,  
              Render recompense to the proud.
94:3 How long shall the wicked, O LORD,  
              How long shall the wicked exult?
94:4 They pour forth words, they speak arrogantly;  
              All who do wickedness vaunt themselves.
94:5 They crush Your people, O LORD,  
              And afflict Your heritage.
94:6 They slay the widow and the stranger  
              And murder the orphans.
94:7 They have said, “The LORD does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed.”

94:8 Pay heed, you senseless among the people; And when will you understand, stupid ones?

94:9 He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?

94:10 He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke, Even He who teaches man knowledge?

94:11 The LORD knows the thoughts of man, That they are a mere breath.

94:12 Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, And whom You teach out of Your law;

94:13 That You may grant him relief from the days of adversity, Until a pit is dug for the wicked.

94:14 For the LORD will not abandon His people, Nor will He forsake His inheritance.

94:15 For judgment will again be righteous, And all the upright in heart will follow it.

94:16 Who will stand up for me against evildoers? Who will take his stand for me against those who do wickedness?

94:17 If the LORD had not been my help, My soul would soon have dwelt in the abode of silence.

94:18 If I should say, “My foot has slipped,” Your lovingkindness, O LORD, will hold me up.

94:19 When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul.

94:20 Can a throne of destruction be allied with You, One which devises mischief by decree?

94:21 They band themselves together against the life of the righteous And condemn the innocent to death.

94:22 But the LORD has been my stronghold, And my God the rock of my refuge.

94:23 He has brought back their wickedness upon them And will destroy them in their evil; The LORD our God will destroy them.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 94

3.1 Outline

I. Petition for Divine Action (vv. 1-7)
II. Proclamation of Divine Knowledge (vv. 8-11)
III. Promise of Divine Presence (vv. 12-15)
IV. Provision of Divine Deliverance (vv. 16-19)
V. Promise of Divine Recompense (vv. 20-23)
3.2 Notes

- **v. 1 “vengeance”**
  - “Vengeance” consists of the Lord Himself avenging wrongdoing.
  - See the messianic relationship in Isaiah 61:1-6.

- **v. 2 “shine forth”**
  - OT writers reserve this terminology for theophany (the appearance of God). God’s presence will resolve the problem of wickedness.
  - See Deuteronomy 33:2 and Psalm 50:2.

- **v. 2 “O Judge of the earth”**
  - When justice seems absent, the cry is for God Himself to provide it.
  - See Genesis 18:25; Psalm 82:8.

- **v. 2 “Render recompense to the proud”**
  - This theme forms an inclusio with which to frame this psalm (vv. 2 and 23). It is the theme of the psalm.

- **v. 5 “Your people . . . Your heritage”**
  - Note the inclusio with verse 14. The injustices specifically target the Lord’s own covenant people whom He cannot abandon.
  - Compare Psalms 28:9 and 78:62, 71.

- **v. 6 “widow . . . stranger . . . orphans”**
  - Care for these vulnerable individuals is at the core of true faith.
  - Compare Psalm 146:9 and Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:17, 19-21; 27:19; James 1:27.

- **v. 7 “The LORD does not see”**
  - Wicked people reject the truth that God sees all and knows all.
  - This attitude and mindset is at the heart of practical atheism.

- **v. 8 “senseless . . . stupid”**
  - Psalm 92:6 employs the same two words. See the notes for Psalm 92.

- **vv. 9-11 Divine Omniscience**
  - Three rhetorical questions expect an affirmative answer.
  - Indeed, God even knows an individual’s thoughts. No evil can be done in total secrecy—God sees and will judge accordingly.
    - See Proverbs 20:12.

- **v. 11 “a mere breath”**
  - “Breath” is the same word as “vanity” in Ecclesiastes.
See quotation of this verse in 1 Corinthians 3:20 and the reference to the concept in Romans 1:21.

- **v. 12** “Blessed is the man... Your law”

- **vv. 13-15** Divine Promises
  - God promises that the righteous will find rest from adversity and He promises to punish the wicked (v. 13).
  - God, in His loyal love, will never abandon the righteous (v. 14; cf. Hebrews 13:5 with quote from Deuteronomy 31:6, 8).
  - Righteous judgment will ultimately be executed on the wicked (v. 15).

- **vv. 16-19** The Psalmist’s Experience
  - Asking who will come to his aid (v. 16), the psalmist testifies concerning the deliverance the Lord had supplied (vv. 17-19).
  - “Consolations” (v. 19) is used in Isaiah 66:11-13 to describe the comfort a nursing infant finds in his/her mother.
  - See 2 Corinthians 1:3-5.
  - The psalmist speaks of the supreme “delight” (a rare verb; see Psalm 119:16, 47, 70) he has in the comfort that the Lord provides when “anxious [disquieting] thoughts” (only here and 139:23) fill his mind.

- **vv. 20-23** Divine Justice
  - The Lord is no ally to wicked rulers who harass, oppress, and destroy the righteous and the innocent (vv. 20-21).
  - The righteous, like the psalmist, trust the Lord for protection (v. 22).
  - The Lord will execute the wicked in the midst of their evil deeds—their just recompense (v. 23).

### 4.0 Singing Psalm 94

**O Lord, Thou Judge of All the Earth**

*(Tunes: “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” or “He Leadeth Me” or “Sweet Hour of Prayer” or “And Can It Be That I Should Gain?”)*

1 O Lord, Thou Judge of all the earth,  
To Whom all vengeance doth belong,  
Arise and show Thy glory forth,  
Requite the proud, condemn the wrong.

2 How long, O Lord, in boastful pride  
Shall wicked men triumphant stand?  
How long shall they afflict thy saints  
And scorn Thy wrath, Thy dreadful hand?

3 The widow and the fatherless  
They slay, and helpless strangers smite;  
The faithful God they do not fear,  
They say the Lord will not requite.

4 Be wise, ye fools and brutish men;  
Shall not He see Who formed the eye?  
Shall not He hear Who formed the ear,  
And judge, Who reigneth, God most high?
5 The Lord will judge in righteousness, From Him all truth and knowledge flow; The foolish thoughts of wicked men, How vain they are the Lord doth know.

6 That man is blest whom Thou, O Lord, With chastening hand dost teach Thy will, For in the day when sinners fall That man in peace abideth still.

7 The Lord will not cast off His own, Nor His inheritance forsake; Just judgment shall at length prevail, And upright hearts shall courage take.

8 Who will arise for my defense Against the wicked in the land? Against iniquity and wrong What main for me will valiant stand?

9 Unless the Lord had been my Help, My life had quickly passed away; But when my foot had almost slipped, O Lord, Thy mercy was my stay.

10 Amid the doubts that fill my mind Thy comforts, Lord, bring joy to me; Can wickedness, though throned in might, Have fellowship, O Lord, with Thee?

11 The wicked, in their might arrayed, Against the righteous join their power, But to the Lord I flee for help, He is my Refuge and my Tower.

12 Our God, the Refuge of His saints, Will fight against iniquity; Avenger of the innocent The Lord omnipotent will be.

— The Psalter, 1912

5.0 Praying Psalm 94

- Give justice to Your people, Lord. [vv. 1-5]
- Thank You, God, for seeing everything that happens to me. [vv. 7-9]
- Father, teach me from Your Word. [v. 12]
- Thank You for never forsaking Your people. [v. 14]
- Teach me to delight in Your comfort when my mind is troubled. [v. 19]

6.0 Applying Psalm 94

- Take trouble and persecution to the Lord in prayer.
- Count yourself blessed when God disciplines you.
- God will never abandon His people.
- Delight in God’s comfort when troubled by disquieting thoughts.

“The whole psalm reads like a commentary on the teaching of Psalm 1 and on the theological issues which that psalm raises.”