

# Jeremiah 12:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

## Analysis

---

This verse opens Jeremiah's complaint: 'Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee.' The Hebrew *tsaddiq attah* (צַדִּיק אַתָּה) affirms God's righteousness as foundation for the complaint. 'Plead with thee' (*riv*, contend legally) indicates formal disputation—Jeremiah brings his case to God's court. 'Yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments.' The prophet requests dialogue about *mishpatim* (מִשְׁפָּטִים, judgments, ordinances, ways of justice). 'Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?' This is the perennial theodicy question—why do the unrighteous succeed? 'Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?' The 'treacherous' (*bogedim*) prosper while the faithful suffer. Jeremiah's complaint anticipates Psalm 73, Job, and Habakkuk.

## Historical Context

---

This is Jeremiah's second 'confession' (12:1-6), following the Anathoth plot. Having just experienced betrayal by his hometown while faithfully proclaiming God's word, he questions why the wicked prosper. This pattern—faithful prophet suffering while apostates thrive—contradicted simple reward/punishment theology. The exile would force Israel to develop more sophisticated understanding of suffering.

## Related Passages

---

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

---

1. How does affirming God's righteousness provide foundation for questioning His ways?
2. What makes the prosperity of the wicked such a troubling theological problem?

## Interlinear Text

---

<b>צַדִּיק</b> Righteous H6662	<b>אֲתָהּ</b> H859	<b>יְהוָה</b> art thou O LORD H3068	<b>כִּי</b> H3588	<b>אֲרִיב</b> when I plead H7378	<b>אֵלַי</b> H413	<b>אֶלֶּיךָ</b> H389
<b>מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ</b> with thee of thy judgments H4941	<b>אֲדַבֵּר</b> with thee yet let me talk H1696	<b>אֶתְּךָ</b> H854	<b>וְעַתָּה</b> H4069			
<b>דֶּךָ</b> Wherefore doth the way H1870	<b>רָשָׁעִים</b> of the wicked H7563	<b>צִלָּהּ</b> prosper H6743	<b>שָׁלֵו</b> wherefore are all they happy H7951	<b>כָּל</b> H3605		
<b>בְּגִדֵי</b> that deal very H899	<b>בְּגָדִים</b> treacherously H898					

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Malachi 3:15** (Evil): And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

**Psalms 92:7** (Evil): When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:

**Psalms 37:1** (Evil): Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

**Job 12:6** (Parallel theme): The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.

**Daniel 9:7** (Righteousness): O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

**Psalms 37:35** (Evil): I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

**Psalms 51:4** (Righteousness): Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

**Habakkuk 1:4** (Righteousness): Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

**Jeremiah 11:20** (Righteousness): But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

**Zephaniah 3:5** (Righteousness): The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.