

The Praise at Final Victory

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Bible Verse: Psalm 149
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Earlier I read from Psalm 149, and I want to take just a moment to reset the context. We've done this many times, but it is so important to keep in mind. After 145 Psalms showing forth all of the Messianic prophecies in the Psalm, showing forth the trials and tribulations and the sins and confessions of the godly man, the promises of execution of judgment on the wicked and all of the wondrous themes that the Psalms address, kind of a comprehensive worship book for the Old Testament, you come to the final five Psalms and it shows what the goal of all of those other Psalms was, it was to provoke in our hearts a praising of the Lord, the God of Israel, Yahweh the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And let me just remind you without showing you both beginning and end, each of the final five Psalms of the Psalter begin and end with the phrase, "Praise the LORD!" Psalm 146:1, "Praise the LORD!" Psalm 147, "Praise the LORD!"; 148:1, "Praise the LORD"; 149:1, "Praise the LORD!"; Psalm 150, "Praise the LORD!"; verse 6, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!" And it's just very vital to understand the place and the role that these five Psalms play in the entire Psalter, that all of the Psalter has been pointing to this great climax and conclusion, that each of the prior 145 Psalms has been a thread in a tapestry leading us to this this magnificent mural of ascribing praise to the God of the Bible, the Creator of heaven and earth. And so it's not simply that these are praise Psalms that we are looking at, these are praise Psalms in a context that has been arranged to bring this to the climax. The final five Psalms are showing you what the takeaway from all of the Psalms is to be, your heart should respond with praising the Lord. That is the right and natural and only response that can be made to the entire Psalter.

Now, last time we looked at Psalm 148 and we saw that it was a comprehensive call to all of creation to join in this praise; nothing in the created order is excluded from this great call to give honor and glory to God. Psalm 148:1 says, "Praise the LORD from the heavens," and then verse 7 says, "Praise the LORD from the earth." That's pretty comprehensive, there's the earth and there's everything else, and everything that is within them is called to praise the Lord. And as we saw last time, it is ascribed, the command is ascribed to inanimate and animate creation is called to all men, not just the people of God. Everyone, everywhere for all time, past, present and future is under this call and command to honor the God of the Bible. This is, in one sense, the unifying theme of all of creation is that God is to be praised and those who refuse to do so are out of sync, they are out of order with the entire created purpose of everything in creation. And the mere

refusal to honor the God of the Bible, whether someone is a religious person or not, the refusal to honor the God of the Bible is the greatest sin of them all. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind, that that's the goal of the law of God is to love him.

And so the Psalm calls us to this and in that sense sets these final five Psalms set a theme for the entire Bible. It's reminiscent of the close of Romans 11 which let me read that to you, says in verse 36, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." And in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." And we could multiply texts like that. And so as we approach this Psalm, we're immediately confronted with a question of whether our life and our heart is oriented toward this great theme or not. If someone is struggling spiritually in a pattern of sin or reliance on anything other than the Lord Jesus Christ, this is the place where repentance starts is to recognize that more than just a particular kind of behavior is at the root of sin, that sin is found in the ultimate refusal and rejection to give honor to God in all things, which includes not only the praise of our lips but the praise of our obedient lives. And so it's just so comprehensive and wonderful that it goes to all of creation in all manner and all aspects of life.

And so Psalm 148 ended last time, well, it ended long before last week at Truth Community Church, when it was written it ended with this theme in verse 14, it ended with a call to Israel, God's people, in other words, to praise the Lord. Look at verse 14 of Psalm 148 and it leads us and ushers us into Psalm 149. Psalm 148:14, "He has lifted up a horn for His people, Praise for all His godly ones; Even for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise the LORD!" We said last time that the people of God today in New Testament times, the church of God should be leading the parade in giving glory to God and manifesting the honor of his name through our teaching, through our lives, through our witness, through our obedience. We should be leading the parade because this verse 14 is the climax of the call to all of creation; having gone through heavens and earth and all men, it ends on the people of God and say, "You of all people praise the LORD!"

And so in Psalm 149 what we find is this, is we find a triumphant response to the call of Psalm 148 and this is just so magnificent in its glory. In Psalm 149, Israel gives a triumphant response to the call that was made on them at the end of Psalm 148. So you see, in verse 2 where it says, "Let Israel be glad in his Maker; Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King." And this is looking far beyond, far beyond the earthly monarch of the Old Testament nation of Israel. This is looking to the ultimate fulfillment, the ultimate son of David, the ultimate King of Israel is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah. And so this is looking forward, as we will see, looking beyond the psalmist's day, looking ahead even beyond our day to the glory that is to be ascribed to Messiah when he comes to establish his reign on earth. And so you see in verse 2, Israel is to be glad and to rejoice, rejoicing not in circumstances, finding contentment not in the gifts from God, but finding gladness and joy in the person of the Messiah himself, that he himself is the ground of our joy. So critical to understand. So critical and such a clear baseline for us to understand when we get off track spiritually, when we're sullen, when we're discouraged, when we're cold, is to realize that in one way or another we have lost sight of Christ in the midst of our life

and our afflictions, perhaps loving the world in a way that is dishonoring to him. Look again at verse 5 as you see the call to the people of God. Verse 5, "Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds."

And so, beloved, all that I'm showing you right now is the fact that the end of Psalm 148 calls the people of God to praise and Psalm 149 is building on that call, responding to it, expanding upon it, and yet there's something very, very strange to our modern ears, to our biblically uninformed minds that follows immediately after this and it's a great corrective for the effeminate nature of the evangelical church today. You see in verse 6 that the context of the praise in Psalm 149 is not life itself, it's not about anything that's happening emotionally inside of ourselves or anything like that, the astonishing context of this Psalm is that it is military battle, not the joy of church worship. This is so different than what we are used to thinking about. The context of this praise is somehow military battle.

Look at verses 6 through 9. "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations And punishment on the peoples, To bind their kings with chains And their nobles with fetters of iron, To execute on them the judgment written." Wow. This sounds so severe to our modern ears, especially to a generation that has never experienced war in your lifetime. Why would we be celebrating a military victory? How does that fit in with biblical revelation? Well, whatever it is, and I promise that before the night's over, I'll try to explain that to you, whatever the joyful battle is, beloved, it's for the godly ones, it's for the people of God, and that's obvious by the context of the Psalm. Verse 1, Psalm 149, "Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones." Verse 5, "Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds." Verse 9, "This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!"

And so this military battle somehow involves the godly ones in praise and is the grounds for the praise that Psalm 149 is speaking of. Verse 1, again, let me show you, "Praise the LORD!" Verse 9 it ends with, "Praise the LORD!" The bookends of this Psalm are, "Praise the LORD!" In between is a call to the godly ones in a triple emphasis, verses 1, 5 and 9, and we see that there is something about a military conflict that is the immediate occasion of this call to praise. And what is this? How could we summarize it before we get into the text itself? This Psalm is celebrating the joy of Yahweh and his people against the nations. Against the nations. Beloved, whatever else this is, whatever else this Psalm is doing, what I want you to see is that this Psalm is something different. This is distinct. I would venture to say that none of us coming in here tonight if we were asked to give grounds for praise to God, our minds would go to something involving a military battle against the nations, but yet this is the climax of the Psalter. We, beloved, tonight, we're always on holy ground when we come to God's word, whenever we open the word of God and read it, teach it, hear it preached, we are always on holy ground, in some ways more holy ground than Moses when he took off his sandals at the burning bush. But here in Psalm 149, because it is so distinct, because it is so climactic, because the division between the people of God and the enemies of God is so clear and sharp, and the judgment so severe and profound, beloved, we need to understand as we enter into the Psalm tonight that we are on distinctly holy ground in what we are seeing here tonight.

It's a privilege for us to look into God's word and having gone through the entire Psalter to have God to lead us to this text tonight at this time in our lives, and in this time in the life of our congregation, to hear what Scripture has to say about this. And so we're going to break this Psalm into two sections: there's Israel's praise of God, and then the second part is Israel's punishment of the nations. The first four verses, Israel's praise of God, the rest of the Psalm, Israel's punishment of the nations.

And so let's look at our first point tonight: Israel's praise of God. Now, as with the last five Psalms, this one opens with a call to praise. We need not linger over it because we've already made this point. Verse 1, "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song." And we saw last time that Psalm 148 calls on all manner of men without distinction, all men without distinction are called upon to praise the Lord. Look at verse 11 where it says, "Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and virgins; Old men and children. Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted." And so from a mountain top of glory these Psalms call us and beckon us up to the praise of God, and yet it ended with that particular call to the godly ones in verse 14 of Psalm 148, "Praise for all His godly ones." And so what are we left with here? Scripture teaches us that much of the world, that by far the majority of the world rejects its Creator, rejects the Lord Jesus Christ. Our blessed Lord said in Matthew 7 that the path that leads to life is narrow and there are comparatively few who find it. That alone is an arresting and sobering thought, and in such a contrast to the flippant way that people treat religion with a flippant way that even so-called evangelical church treat worship as if it were some kind of casual mannered, some kind of casual activity, worship was some kind of casual activity for men to come and join in as they please, "Come as you are. Give no regard to those things. We're not like your grandmother's church," they like to say, and they just dumb everything down so that it is on the level of the unsaved man. Scripture has nothing to do with that. Scripture calls us up and warns us against the consequences of not worshiping God in the way that he requires.

And so here's the point for Psalm 149 is that those who reject the call to honor God, to follow Christ, to repent and believe in the gospel, beloved, those who refuse the call, something bad happens, the consequences of judgment fall upon them for their rejection. Judgment falls. This is not a matter of indifference to God. Look, it may be and it admittedly is a matter of indifference to almost the entire world. It is a matter of indifference, serious worship and an honoring of the word of God is a matter of indifference to most people even within the so-called evangelical church. But beloved, what you and I must do as we stand on this holy ground here this evening, you and I must enter in sympathetically with the view of God on this. This is not a matter of indifference to God. The entire Psalter is leading to this climax. The word of God and what we're going to see is that all of world history is leading to the climax of the glory of God. You know, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. God takes this seriously no matter what man does with it, and Scripture tells us that when man rejects it, marginalizes it, ignores it, even if it's not in deliberate conscious rebellion, just an indifferent cold heartedness to it, Scripture says judgment falls on them for it. It is a terrifying thing, the Bible says, to fall into the hands of the living God.

Well look, that may not win us friends and influence among ungodly people by saying these things, but don't you see that that's not the goal of our lives, that's not the goal of Christian living is to make ungodly people as comfortable as possible with us and the message of Scripture? That an abhorrent thought. Our goal, our desire, is to be on God's side of whatever it means and whatever it is. Our goal is to do all things to the glory of God and to have his interests ahead of our own, to have his interests ahead of the world. We understand that in this time of grace, we go into the world, we preach the gospel, we invite men to Christ and we do so even this evening. We understand that, but we don't stop doing that. We don't change our aim of the glory of God in order to please men who rejects the message. We have a different loyalty. We are called to a different standard. We are loyal to a King. We're subjects of the Monarch of the universe. And we side with him even if men refuse. And so what we're seeing in Psalm 149 is a prophetic look to the end of time, the end of human time, and Psalm 149 celebrates God's victory over his enemies. And what is it? It's a call on his people out of the world to join in the battle. It calls on his people to celebrate the victory, the triumph of God over Satan, the triumph of righteousness over wickedness, the triumph of Christ over his enemies, the triumph of the gospel over false religion. Beloved, I'll say it one more time: this Psalm is nothing less than a picture of the great final day of human history. That's what this Psalm is.

Now there are two phrases that I want to focus on for just a moment that call for comment. In verse 1 you'll see this phrase "a new song. Sing to the LORD a new song." And then the godly ones that we've already looked at. And so here's just the amazing amazing thing. I just cannot get over the grandeur of the Psalms. I really can't. After 148 Psalms to this point as it's arranged in the in the English Bible, there is a call for more. We've already gone through 148. You would think in a in a carnal way of thinking would say, "Well, surely that's enough." And yet we see in Psalm 149 as it looks back on the prior 148 Psalms, it says all of that's wonderful, keep all of that in mind and now sing to the Lord another one. Sing to him a new one. Add to the praise that has already come before. And beloved, looking at 2,000 years of church history since the coming of Christ, since the death and resurrection and his redemption of his people and the work of the Holy Spirit through the apostles in the book of Acts and everything that followed in the New Testament, and the line of faithful people and faithful martyrs and faithful godly pastors and leaders for the prior two millennia, here we are and we're called to contemplate a new song of our own. Psalm 33:3 says, "Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy." Psalm 40:3 says, "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God." Psalm 96:1, "Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth." A new song. A new song. Keep it fresh. Keep it going. What you have received, take it, be faithful to it, preserve it and amplify it going forward.

And as we turn to the book of Revelation, which I hope to study with you in the year 2023, we see this again and we see it focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at Revelation 5 with me. Revelation 5. In some ways, the book of Revelation is an outworking of what we see in shorthand in Psalm 149. We'll save that for another year, but in Revelation 5:9, actually, let's start in verse 8. "When [Christ] had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one

holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." And what did they do in that great climactic moment in heaven? Well, "they sang a new song," verse 9, "saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'" The new song finds its ultimate fulfillment in heaven as the saints of the ages sing this new song to the glory of Jesus Christ in honor of his work on the cross on behalf of his people and what he had done in forming a people for himself.

Verse 10 of Revelation 5, "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." The saints are going to reign upon the earth. Keep that in mind as we go to the second half of Psalm 149.

Verse 11 of Revelation 5, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands," this is uncountable, living creatures all joining to the praise of God which is exactly what the Psalm says, what the fullness of the Psalter says all of creation is to do. We're seeing a fulfillment in heaven of what the Psalter is calling upon all men to do now.

And so in verse 12, "saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.' And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them." You see, it's the fulfillment that we were talking about in Psalm 148. It finds its climax here in Revelation 5, an incredible unifying feature of the entire theme of the Bible. Across millennia of different biblical writers, there is this consistent theme that is pointing to the climax of history ultimately being catapulted into its realization and its culmination in heaven.

And what's all of creation doing? Middle of verse 13, "'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.' And the four living creatures kept saying, Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshiped." And so we are captivated by what Psalm 149 says seeing its culmination in the book of Revelation.

And so what we see here, beloved, going back to Psalm 149, is this, is that when we come to Psalm 149 the world has been left behind. In some ways this is this is going to be easily misunderstood, but even all of the prior Psalms are being left behind and pointing forward to this great climax. All of creation has been beckoned. Scripture recognizes that not all men will respond. And so there is a particular focus on the people of God in Psalm 149 to give him praise. Beloved, this is why you and I were saved. We were saved in order to give honor to God, to give honor to Christ as his people. He, having bought us and purchased us with his own blood, he, having loved us in and given himself up for us, he, having loved us to the end, he, the object of our highest love and affection. Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. And we give praise and honor to him. We of all people will respond. We gladly submit. We join in the call and it says, "Sing to the

LORD a new song. Praise the LORD!" The people of God run to the front of the battle line and say, "Here I am, Lord. Yes, praise Your great and holy name." It's magnificent.

And so the call is to those that are loyal to God, loyal to the King. You saw in Revelation 5 that the praise is to the person and it's for who he is which is in keeping with what we said earlier about being glad in the Maker, being glad in their King. We're glad in Christ independent of and apart from whatever blessings he may or may not give to us. And so this call in Psalm 149 is a call for joy and musical celebration. Look at verse 3, "Let them praise His name with dancing; Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre. For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation." Now we're going to pause for a moment and just take a little tiny tangent required for by the text and by modern application of it. I want to speak for just a moment about verse 3 where it says, "Let them praise His name with dancing." And that needs a brief comment in our day, lest it be misused and misunderstood today. As one resource says and let me just let you know in advance where I'm going: this is not a warrant to the church today to incorporate modern ideas of dance into its worship and have people parading around with flowing gowns and banners and all of that dancing on the platform on a Sunday morning. That has nothing to do with what this verse is talking about. This verse is not a warrant for that and it's very important to understand that. This is something completely different that has nothing to do with modern dance, and I'm going to cite from a couple of authorities here.

First of all, the International Standard Biblical Encyclopedia says this. It says, "The dancing most often mentioned in the Old Testament occurred when a procession of women celebrated a military victory with music, song, and dance, led by a prominent woman in praise of God and in honor of returning warriors." And so another source, the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, says this and I quote, "While the mode of dancing is not known in detail," speaking about these biblical times, "it is clear that men and women did not generally dance together and there is no real evidence that they ever did. Social amusement was hardly a major purpose of dancing, and the modern method of dancing by couples is unknown" And so it is also significant for us in addition to those authorities speaking to the Bible backgrounds of it, beloved, it is significant to notice that there is no New Testament reference to dance in worship. There are all kinds of references to praying and singing in the New Testament church. If dancing was intended to be a part of the New Testament worship, that would be included in the New Testament. The fact that a different context in the Old Testament speaks about a completely different kind of dancing is no warrant for the practice in the church today. And my answer to those that want to dance in that regard is, say, okay, tell me what military victory you're celebrating. Tell me who the returning warriors are that you're celebrating today? Where are they in relationship to what you're doing? Because that's the Old Testament picture and you see it even here in Psalm 149, so important to recognize, the context is a military victory, and that is not what we celebrate in the New Testament church. We celebrate the victory of Christ won at the cross, we celebrate his conquest as Victor over sin and Satan and judgment, but it's not the kind of military battle that you see described in the Old Testament. And so there will never be a place for dancing on the platform at Truth

Community Church, at least as long as the current elders are in place and I'm the pastor here, and that's the biblical reason for it.

The key thing to see in Psalm 149, now that we've taken care of that little tangent and I've outlined the content for a blog post or something, I guess, I don't know. But you know, people in other places need help on these issues, and so it's important for us to comment on them. The key thing in Psalm 149 is to see why the Lord's people are celebrating, what it is. In verse 4, "the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation." When it says the Lord takes pleasure in his people, it means that he delights in us. So sweet to think about, especially on this side of the cross. As we've said so many times, our Lord Jesus Christ, he is favorably disposed to us. He loves us. He hears our prayers. He works all things together for good in our lives. He loves us and he gave himself up for us. He washes us from sin. He cleanses us. He directs our paths in the ways of righteousness for his name's sake. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. That gives us a sense, the way that the Lord promises that he will by his providence, his providence in our lives, is guided by his loyal love for us, his faithfulness to us and his never-ending mercy on us despite our waywardness, despite our halfhearted prayers, despite our stopping and starting efforts at living a godly life, through all of that, the Lord is favorably disposed to us. He loves us. He keeps us, and no one can pluck us out of his hand.

That's why we delight in him. That's why we praise him. It's because he delights in us. He will bless us. He will forgive us. He will restore us. He will take the things that weigh on your heart tonight, the things that weigh on my heart tonight, the people and relationships that we look at and we groan we say, "Oh, where are they going? What direction is their life going?" Think of the Apostle Paul in Romans 9 saying. and let's look at that, Romans 9 for just a moment, recognizing that there is this aspect of groaning that takes place in the hearts of godly people. In Romans 9, I was thinking about this earlier today so it's fresh on my mind, the Apostle Paul thinking about the unsaved Jews in his day said, "I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." He says, "I look out on my unsaved people, my unsaved fellow Jews, and it grieves my heart that they are cold and hard, and they've got hearts of stone and are rejecting Christ. And I'm mindful of the judgment that awaits them if they persist in that spiritual rebellion." He says, "It just causes me such sorrow when I think about it, great pain." And those of us that have unsaved loved ones or loved ones that are straying from Christ and giving no evidence that they really love the Lord that we love whether it's a parent or a child or sibling or neighbor, you know, and you grieve over that to recognize that even in that grief, that somehow the Lord is going to lead us through that in order to accomplish his purposes and the outcome, whatever the outcome may be, whether they repent or not, beloved, the outcome will be righteous. The outcome will be wise. The outcome will be good because the God who is controlling all the outcomes of everything, he himself is good and wise and righteous, and it could be no other way. And as he globally works out the outworking of galaxies and works out the outworking of

individual salvation in the lives of those that we look at with a heavy heart today, beloved, somehow he is going to work it all out for good. He will not forget to be loving and gracious to you and me in the process, and when it is all said and done, whatever the outcome will be, we will look on the glory of Christ, we will ascribe praise to him and say, "My King, my Master, my Lord, my Savior, He did all things well." And there will be no querying. There will be no questioning. There will be no doubting his wisdom and goodness on that final day. And we will ascribe great glory to him without reservation, without qualification, and with every tear wiped away because the Lord takes pleasure in his people. He delights in us. There is no possibility that the Lord will let the outcome leave us with a broken heart, even if our heart is broken between now and then.

Now going back to verse 4 where in the New American Standard we read, "He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation," most other versions render this term as "the humble ones." The emphasis is not on the trouble that believers have, but rather it's on the nature of believers, what believers are like and what are true believers like? True believers are humbled before the Lord. They are humbled before Christ. They are humbled before his word. They gladly give glory to God rather than seeking it for themselves. True believers, as Jesus said in the Beatitudes in verse 5, true believers are those who are poor in spirit for theirs and theirs alone is the kingdom of God. True believers are those who mourn over their sin and they and they alone will be comforted. True believers are those who in this life and in this time they hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus says they'll be satisfied. You see, Scripture is talking here about the people of God, the godly ones, and it's just giving a glancing look at the fact that these people are marked by humility, not by arrogance, submission dependence on Christ. Love and glory for that person, not boasting in self-righteousness, not hardened in sin, not rejecting his Lordship, but rather humbly bowing before him, recognizing the glory of Christ in advance before it's fulfilled in Revelation 5 with the Apostle Thomas looking on the resurrected Christ, looking on his wounded hands, looking at his wounded side, and seeing in that Christ by faith revealed to us through Scripture, with minds illuminated by the Holy Spirit, looking on the Lord Jesus Christ and without reservation with the fullness of heart looking at him and saying, "My Lord and my God." The humility of a true believer, recognizing one superior to us, the eternal one, the glorified one, and giving him the honor he deserves. Those are the ones that God takes delight in. Those are the ones that will join with him on the final day. Those are the ones that have true salvation and the ones to whom this Psalm is particularly directed. It reminds me of the hymn that said, "Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God." Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God. You don't love Christ? That's your choice. I warn you of the consequences of it. But recognize that the people of God will sing even if you do not. We will not be hindered. We will not be restricted by the fact that the world mocks or rejects it, rejects Christ. We'll look at his word, we'll look at the wounds, we'll look at the glorified Christ. We see him at the right hand of God interceding for us and our hearts will gladly give praise to him.

And so we praise the Lord as we see in the first four verses. Well, let's go to the rest of the Psalm and look at Israel's punishment of the nations. Israel's punishment of the nations. And what the people of God should do as we look at verse 5 is that they should

praise God for the grace that he has shown to them. Verse 5, "Let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for joy on their beds." And "on their beds," that phrase suggests that in the privacy of their own homes the godly ones should be praising him. Where no one sees. Where no one is aware that there is a heart beating with honor for God, that there are lips that are whispering his praise even as slumber descends upon their eyelids. Worship is not merely public, it should be public, but it is also private as well.

And so we're called to join in this glory and praise of God in private as well as in is in public, but it's at this point now in verse 6 that the Psalm takes that militaristic turn. Verse 6, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand, To execute vengeance on the nations And punishment on the peoples, To bind their kings with chains And their nobles with fetters of iron, To execute on them the judgment written." Look beloved, if you see nothing else in this text and even in this Psalm, recognize that this is calling us away from a sentimental view of worship that is just about the way that we feel and having good gooey feelings about God. This is praise in an entirely different context. This is praise at the ultimate vindication of the righteousness of God, and rejoicing in that regardless of how I feel about my circumstances inside. And what you need to see about this aspect of this Psalm and the structure of the entire Psalter is this, this is so glorious, this is the other bookend, Psalm 149 is the other bookend to the bookend that was first put into place in Psalm 2. Psalm 2 and Psalm 149 function as bookends to the other Psalms as it frames the Psalter in this theme.

Go back to Psalm 2 with me because in Psalm 2 you find a warning against the judges of the earth to give honor to God or to face his wrath. In Psalm 2:7, for the sake of time we should really look at the whole Psalm but for the sake of time tonight we'll truncate it. Psalm 2:7, "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.'" The Father is saying to the Son, "I am going to give You the nations and You will triumph over them in the end." And then the call goes to kings in response to that declaration of the Father to the Son. Verse 10, "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" Now look, here's what's happening: in Psalm 2 the warning is given to the nations to honor the Son, in Psalm 149 the opportunity to do that has closed and now the consequences are being implemented. They have rejected the call. They have refused the Son and now, as promised in Psalm 2, his wrath is going to come upon them.

Now, beloved, understand that what we see in Psalm 2 and what we see in Psalm 149 are speaking about the same complex of events, but more importantly for what I'm saying right now is that they are still future to us. This is something that is still ahead in the chronological time clock. This is something still yet to come. Psalm 149 is looking forward to the end of the age when God executes his judgment on the ungodly. Take that in, man, woman. Take that in and realize that what we're reading about here is the

outcome of human history. What we're reading here is the purpose of God in the outworking of all of time and that all human events from thousands of years before the cross and thousands of years after the cross are all working toward this, are all coming together, it's all flowing all of the tributaries of the of the basin of rivers are all joining together just as there are thousands of creeks and streams and rivers that join and flow in on this side of the Rocky Mountains and all join and flow into the Mississippi River and come out there in the Gulf of Mexico, all of them contributing to that result. Beloved, everything in human history is directed toward this same outcome, directing to this point when Christ has said, "Enough of the rebellion. It's time for judgment now." And it rolls the prior 148 Psalms into an announcement of victory. God will reward the godly and punish the ungodly.

Now think about the whole Psalter in what we're considering. This, the closing position of this Psalm in the Psalter speaks of great finality. This isn't only closing the Psalter, this is closing human history. This is closing the end of the age. This is no mere recitation of a past Old Testament battle. This sees the climax of history and the final supremacy of God, the final supremacy of Christ. After this Psalm, in a sense, there's nothing left to be said. Everything is gathered up in Psalm 149 and says, "This is the outcome therefore praise the LORD!" And then Psalm 150, as we'll see next week, just becomes a coda, just becomes a final, Psalm 150 looks back on it all, looks back on the outcome of human history and in adoring worship says, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!" I think it's 13 times in six verses. Psalm 150 looks at the whole summary and says, "Praise the LORD!" Psalm 149 is putting the exclamation point on human history and says, "In light of this, praise the LORD!"

You know, one passage, 2 Thessalonians 1, you need to see this amplified and interpreted by New Testament Scripture as well. We'll read these very quickly without comment. 2 Thessalonians 1:6, "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed for our testimony to you was believed." Paul is saying there is an end time coming where the sheep will be separated from the goats, where judgment will occur. The godly ones will join in that and will be vindicated for their faith in Christ and everyone else will go into eternal destruction. This is the picture, this is the time that Psalm 149 is looking forward to.

Revelation 19. Turn there with me quickly. Revelation 19, beginning in verse 11, as we see the climax at the end of the tribulation. All of the rebellion of man gathered up against the Son of man and what happens? Verse 11, "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war." This is Christ coming in his second coming not in humiliation but in glory, no longer on a mission of peace but on a mission of judgment.

Verse 12, "His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.' Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, 'Come, assemble for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.'" Verse 19, "And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army." Verse 20, "And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh."

It's breathtaking, isn't it? It's sobering, isn't it? Do you see why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom? Do you see why it is such a serious matter to hear the gospel of Christ and what a great crime it is against your own soul to refuse him? Or much, much worse, to having heard the things of the gospel and understood them and outwardly embracing them, to turn away in a final way? Beloved, that is ripe for severe judgment. And so God by his power will decisively defeat his foes at the end of the age, and when he does, the people of God will glorify him for the result and say, "Finally, justice, God's justice is vindicated. Finally, righteousness has been upheld. Finally, all of the blasphemies of men have been silenced, all of the false religion has been banished. The sheep and the goats have been separated and Christ is supreme, and those who are left around him all share in like precious, not just like precious faith for our faith has become sight, and there is unanimity of worship and honor to Christ without any satanic mingling of falsehood in the victory."

Beloved, Psalm 149 is not describing us against our personal enemies in this life, it's so far transcendent beyond that. In one sense, this has nothing to do with our enemies. Psalm 149 is about God's victory over his enemies and he is a warrior and he will win. Now this is not suggesting that the church advances through violence as some in the Middle Ages believed and tried to implement. What this is all describing is our participation in God's final battle against his enemies. We will serve our Commander as he defends his own kingdom. And beloved, it will be a privilege for us to do so. And we will rejoice at his victory because he is our King and we love him, and when he triumphs and when he is glorified and his enemies are vanquished, we rejoice because of the glory it will bring to his great and holy and matchless name.

Now, you and I, we should not be deterred or bullied into silence by those who love a false peace and project a false view that God is a God of love alone, and that he would never do anything like this. Of course he'll do something like this. He says he'll do it in his word. Why would he say that this is going to happen if he didn't intend to carry it out? No, that's just false religion trying to silence the testimony of Scripture and we will have no part of it. You see, beloved, God is holy, holy, holy, and when it's all said and done, God must uphold and vindicate his own holiness and his own justice to be true to himself, and you and I as believers in Christ, he has upheld his justice by pouring out his wrath against our sin on his beloved Son and accepting the sacrifice of Christ as the payment for our sins that deserved wrath on our own head, Christ stood in our stead and took it on himself instead. And so his justice is vindicated by the intercession and the substitutionary atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. But to those who reject Christ, their blood and their sin is on their own head. And God will punish all wrongdoing. He will punish all wrongdoers that have not sought forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

And beloved, they're sober words but they are true words: God will judge individuals like you and me, he will judge nations, he will judge kings who have rebelled against him and all those who have done unrepentant harm to his people. Why is it like that? Because God vindicates his own honor and God loves his own, and in all of that, it circles us back all the way back to Psalm 1. Go back there. I said this when I first preached this Psalm in May of 2014. How does Psalm 1 end? It's just amazing, the glory of the word of God. Verse 5, "the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous." Why? Why must that outcome be true? "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." In that simple synopsis statement at the end of Psalm 1 we see the reason for all of these things. God knows the way of his own and he will vindicate them. He knows their way, and he will bring them safely home to himself. But the wicked, their way will perish. And how will it perish? It will perish in a great climactic battle at the end of the age that we've seen described in Psalm 2, Psalm 149 and in the book of Revelation and 2 Thessalonians as well.

God vindicates his honor and shows love to his own, and so where does that leave us? This judgment is foreordained by the prophecies of God. It must and will come to pass. It is the judgment written. Look at Psalm 149 again with me very quickly here. Psalm 149:9. Kings will be bound, nobles will be bound. Verse 9, "To execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones." The judgment on the wicked is written and the word of God cannot be violated. "Heaven and earth will pass away," Jesus said, "but My word will not pass away." This will happen. And when it does, we'll see the fulfillment of it. And for us to be on the side of the Commander in Chief who will ride in victory, for us it's an honor to belong to him. We have been blessed by grace not only to be brought into the family of God, but to be brought into the winning side of this battle, to be on the side of the outcome of history that glorifies God. You and me, sinful you and me, sharing in the glory that belongs to Christ alone.

God will restore and bless his people. God will defeat evil decisively and completely. Thus, Psalm 149 ends, look at it there in verse 9. In light of all of that, "Praise the LORD!"

Let's pray together.

Lord, we honor Your holy name. We honor the Christ who redeemed us and just, Father, thank You for including us in Your plan. You could have so easily and so righteously neglected us and passed over us. But, Father, for those of us that are in Christ, You chose us for this outcome. You chose us to share in this. What grace, what kindness, what mercy, what love have You shown to Your people. Thank You, Father, and as we think about loved ones who are in rebellion against You, Father, friends and neighbors and coworkers and family, God, we ask You, we think of them by name, mentally and we ask You, have mercy on them, Father. Surely, they don't realize the consequences of their rebellion against You, of turning their back on Christ. They don't know what the consequences are, Father, they haven't heard Your word, they haven't listened, they haven't paid heed to all of the pleadings that have come to their ears through so many for so long. Father, we ask You again for an extra measure of mercy to them tonight, that You would draw them to Christ, including some in this room, walking in sin, inwardly mocking, inwardly rejecting, inwardly hardening their heart one more time. Father, melt all of that by the love of Christ through Your gracious Spirit and lead them, draw them to Christ, that they might be on the victorious side of this great final judgment and join in the great final praise at the end of the age. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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