

“With Praise into Battle”
Psalm 149
(Preached at Trinity, January 26, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. While the previous psalm was a charge for all of God’s creation to praise Him, **Psalm 149** draws our attention to God’s people in particular—to the congregation of the saints. The word for “saints” is similar to the Greek word ἅγιος in the NT. It is referring to those who are holy. The NAS translates it “holy ones.” It refers to those who are Godly. All attention in this psalm is drawn to God’s holy people. The word for “congregation” refers to the assembly of God’s people. The Septuagint uses the word ἐκκλησία which is the word for church.
2. We have to be cautious in how we approach this psalm.
 - A. We find the wonderful rejoicing of Israel in their Creator, the one who raised them up and formed them as His own people.
Psalm 149:2 KJV - "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."
 - B. We find Israel rejoicing in being God’s own unique possession.
 - C. And we find Israel as warriors marching forth against the foreign nations that did not know God.
Psalm 149:1 KJV - "*Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand*"
Psalm 149:7 KJV - "To execute vengeance upon the heathen, *and* punishments upon the people"
3. Israel, however, was only a foreshadow of God’s covenant promises upon the Church in Christ. This psalm is joyously sung by Christ’s church. But **Psalm 149** is unique and distinct for the church.
Franz Delitzsch issued this warning: “The New Testament spiritual church cannot pray as the Old Testament national church here prays. Under the illusion that it must be used as a prayer without any spiritual transmutation, Psalm 149:1-9 has become the watchword of the most horrible errors. The praying Christian must transpose the letter of this Psalm into the spirit of the New Covenant.”
 - A. Our “new song” is unique for the church. Six times in the psalms we find this expression of singing a new song. It speaks of new hearts and the new creation brought about in the New Covenant. It is a new situation as the old has faded away.
 - B. The warfare of the church is not conducted with the sword and the shedding of blood.
4. I want us to read this psalm tonight through the eyes of the New Covenant and the experience of the Church. I’ll divide the psalm into two sections:
 - I. The Church Triumphant – **Verses 1-8**
 - II. The Church Militant – **Verses 6-9**

I. The Church Triumphant – Verses 1-8

A. There is an air of jubilant praise in this first half of the psalm

1. It is corporate praise sung in the public assembly for God has blessed His church.

Psalm 149:1 KJV - "Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise in the congregation of saints."

2. There is no air of individualism in this psalm.

Verse 2 - "Let Israel rejoice"

Verse 2 - "let the children of Zion be joyful in their King"

Verse 3 - "Let them praise his name"

Verse 3 - "let them sing praises unto him"

Verse 5 - "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds."

3. There is a celebratory tone with the words "rejoice" and "joyful" and "praise." Israel's praise was expressed differently than the church. Some have used **Verse 3** as a proof text for liturgical dance.

- a. The Church doesn't use Old Covenant temple worship as its model for worship. Our worship is patterned after the synagogue worship prevalent in the New Testament with an emphasis on preaching and teaching and the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
- b. The dancing here is most likely referring to the dancing that accompanied military victories.

Exodus 15:19-21 KJV - " For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea.²⁰ And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. ²¹ And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

B. The New Covenant church *should* be characterized by jubilant praise

1. In our worship we are celebrating our glorious redemption. The Lord's Table is a remembrance of our great Redeemer.
We have been delivered from sin and death
2. We worship our great Redeemer who sits victoriously upon His throne.
3. We too rejoice in the knowledge and experience that God delights in us.

Psalm 149:4 KJV - "For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation."

- a. This is the privilege of God's people
- b. Through justification we are no longer cursed by our sins.
- c. Through adoption we have become a part of God's own household. He loves us as a father loves his children. He pities us with kindness and mercy.

4. God has changed us from the wickedness of pride to the grace of meekness and humility.
Psalm 149:4 KJV - "he will beautify the meek with salvation."
 This is the wonder of our salvation. The proud will never come to Him but God has humbled us. It is the humble that God blesses with salvation. The NT teaches this over and over
Matthew 5:5 KJV - "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."
Matthew 19:30 KJV - "But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first."
1 Peter 5:5-6 KJV - "be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. ⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time"
5. We rejoice that God has blessed us with the grace of humility.

II. The Church Militant – Verses 6-9

- A. Israel was often in a state of war
 I title this sermon tonight "With Praise into Battle."
 1. From the beginning Israel fought for survival and as evidence of being God's separate people.
 2. God continually fought on Israel's behalf.
Joshua 10:11 KJV - "And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, *and* were in the going down to Bethhoron, that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: *they were* more which died with hailstones than *they* whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."
2 Chronicles 20:15 KJV - "And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's."
 3. We can also see this battle mode as Israel returned from captivity
 The builders of the wall labored with their swords upon their sides.
Nehemiah 4:18 KJV - "For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me."
 4. The psalmist reflects this valiant warfare
Psalm 149:6 KJV - "*Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand"
 5. In **Verse 9** the psalmist declares that executing vengeance upon the wicked is the honor of the saints.
- B. The church is also in a perpetual state of war
 1. The Apostle Paul often used the warfare analogy
 - a. Paul exhorted Timothy:
2 Timothy 2:3-4 NAU - "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

- b. He referred to Epaphroditus as a fellow soldier
Philippians 2:25 NAU - "But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier . . ."
- c. Elsewhere he wrote:
1 Timothy 6:12 NAU - "Fight the good fight of faith"
1 Timothy 1:18 NAU - "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my* son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight"
2. But our warfare in the New Covenant has taken on a new dimension
Our war is chiefly a spiritual war
Ephesians 6:12 NAU - "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*."
 - We are in a war against doctrinal error
 - We are in a war against worldly philosophies
 - We are in a war against sinful behavior, our own flesh
 - And Satan is continually assaulting with the design of leading us away from Christ
3. Our spiritual warfare demands different weapons. Swords and guns have no value in our war. Tanks and bombs are totally useless
2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NAU - "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ"
- C. The Christian soldier fights fiercely but with meekness and humility
1. We must not be contentious and confrontational
 2. We must not be quick to defend our own rights.
 3. We must manifest meekness and gentleness as we defend the kingdom of our Lord.
 4. Our battle is completely different from the standards of this world. This world demands competitiveness. The virtues of meekness and gentleness have no place in this competitive world. If some deprives you of honor, rank, position, or goods you are to react swiftly and forcefully.
This isn't the way of our Lord's Kingdom
- D. The Christian soldier fights with meekness but he battles valiantly and fearlessly and without compromise. Our two-edged sword is always in our hand.
1. Christianity is not for the faint of heart – We are commanded to count the cost. The Christian life is difficult!
Paul's words to Timothy -
2 Timothy 2:3 NAS - "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

2. Our generation is marked by weakness, softness
 - a. You can hear it when difficulty comes – complaints and whining.
 - b. 150 years ago they had no electricity, no AC, no TV
Limited pain relievers, no antibiotics, no cars or airplanes, no telephones, no supermarkets – lots of hard work.
Most worked 6 days a week resting only on the Sabbath.
No one expected an easy life
 3. Unfortunately, many Christians today have been influenced by our hedonistic society. We lust for pleasure – the good life. Many Christians today will not be inconvenienced. They are not faithful laborers. They are not valiant warriors. They tend to flee every time they are faced with difficulty.
 4. Christianity has never been described in this manner. It has always been a hard life.
Throughout history men and women have suffered greatly for their faith. Thousands and thousands of Christians have died simply because of their faith in Christ.
2 Timothy 2:3 NAS - "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."
- E. Discipleship demands that we behave like men – with courage and boldness (This applies also to ladies as it applies to the Christian life)
1. Joab before the Assyrians:
2 Samuel 10:12 KJV - "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good."
 2. **1 Corinthians 16:13 NAU** - "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."
 3. William Barclay – "As a sentinel, be ever on the alert. When under attack, stand fast in the faith, and yield not an inch. In time of battle, play a hero's part. Like a well-equipped and well trained soldier, be strong to fight for your King."
 4. We must stand our ground. We must overcome temptation. We must stand in opposition to all that would bring dishonor to our Lord. We must be resolved maintaining our integrity.
We must do what we know to be right to the honor of our God.
Our mantra must be "No compromise!"
- F. Our strength is not our own
1. Such strength does not come naturally
 2. Paul never pretended that his strength was his own
He knew his weakness
1 Corinthians 2:3 NAU - "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,"
 3. The man who marches forth in his own strength doesn't realize his own helplessness – he will be smitten with fear and then failure. The battle fought alone is the battle lost.

Conclusion:

1. This is a psalm for the saints. It is a psalm of praise. It opens and closes with Hallelujah. It is filled with jubilant praise to the God who has set us apart and who takes pleasure in us.
2. It is also a reminder to us that we have not yet entered into our rest. This is a psalm of praise as we charge into battle. We must be courageous and stand firm in the face of opposition. And we must remember that the God who takes pleasure in us will also equip us to go into battle. We must continue to put on the full armor of God and hold forth the shield of faith and remember that our two-edged sword is God's powerful Word.