
The Pilgrim's Enthroned Lord

Psalm 9¹⁰

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Who needs a judge?

The court system...

The criminal...

The victim...

The world, the universe...

Who wants a king?

We have an amazing political system; but...

We have a consistent testimony in Scripture that a regency is the Biblical form of government...

The world, the universe has a King...

But what about when the King is the Judge?

Are we so shaped by our American culture and constitution that we have a hard time thinking about God as both King and Judge? What does it mean of the lowly pilgrim just picking his way through the difficulties of life?

A quick note about the text. Like Psalms 3-4, Psalms 9-10 are connected. Many have concluded that they are actually a single song made of two Psalms. There are structure and content reasons for this. I agree that the two are closely connected. Both focus on God's throne as a righteous judge. Both talk about the wicked being judged. In Psalm 9 the wicked outside of Israel are judged and in Psalm 10 the wicked inside of Israel are judged. However, there is enough difference in the way the Psalms would sing to warrant them being two Psalms. I chose to treat them separately and so will focus on the 9th Psalm in our study this morning.

Great music often has more than one movement in it. Each movement is marked by its own melody or harmonic structure. This Psalm has two movements. It has two lovely melodies. Yet the unifying theme comes through so clearly. The first movement is one of praise. The second is one of prayer. And altogether they sing of God on His throne, the throne of judgment.

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Pilgrims Praise God on His Throne**(v. 1-12)**

Pilgrims will sing their praise to God who is on His throne. Our song should open as this one does. We are praising God overflowing with gratitude to God (v. 1). This Psalm is interesting in its structure. But it is imbalanced in its parallelism. Verse 1 and verses 13-14 break the parallelism and stand out on their own

¹ I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;
I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

And

¹³ Be gracious to me, O Lord!
See my affliction from those who hate me,
O you who lift me up from the gates of death,
¹⁴ that I may recount all your praises,
that in the gates of the daughter of Zion
I may rejoice in your salvation.

As I read these two sentences I am struck by two words that resonate in the New Covenant. We are grateful to the Lord and we need grace from the Lord. But this is not just true of this time in history, but has always been true of God's people. Those who truly know the Lord are full of thanksgiving to the Lord because they have depended on the grace of God.

Pilgrims then are a thankful people. We point our hearts towards God with all that He has done for us rolling off our tongues. I hear the Psalmist doing something intentional. He isn't waiting for feelings. He remembers what God has done. He puts himself in God's presence. And he looks up at God and says, "Thank you, from the bottom of my heart."

Personal Praise to the Lord**(v. 2)**

¹ I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart;
I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

² I will be glad and exult in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

Is this ever something we say to ourselves? Do we wait until we are just really happy to be glad in God? Does it take some uplifting, upbeat song or worship or word to bring a surge of upward affections? It seems to me that we often should be grabbing our souls and hearts by their ears and saying to ourselves, "I will be glad in God. I will prize and praise God. I will stop being dazzled by people and money and stuff. I will praise the name of God. I will..." When we lift our hearts to give thanks, to remember, to be glad and exult, to sing praise, then our hearts will be turned away from the lesser things to greatest One. We will lift our worship to the Most High One.

The King's Righteous Judgement

(v. 3-4)

The Psalmist rejoices in the King's righteous judgment on his behalf.

³ When my enemies turn back,
they stumble and perish before your presence.

⁴ For you have maintained my just cause;
you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.

His enemies have been summoned before the throne of God. There in His presence, they are dealt with. They perish. They are brought to an eternal end. Now, this does not mean they are annihilated. They do not cease to exist. They are perish in eternal punishment.

The adversaries, the wicked fall because David's cause is just. They are judged because God is on His throne. The throne of God is both a throne of grace and mercy as well as a throne of judgment and punishment. God's righteous decisions are handed out there. To those He has chosen, there is grace and mercy. To those who have not believed, there is judgment. But because God is righteous and just, punishment is given. The throne of judgment for Christ made it the throne of grace for us. Because this is so, even greater is the judgment awaiting those who spurned the grace and mercy of God and followed on in their sin.

The Judge of those who are Wicked

(v. 5-6)

⁵ You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish;
you have blotted out their name forever and ever.

⁶ The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins;
their cities you rooted out;
the very memory of them has perished.

Why does the Psalmist think in terms of „nations“? In the Old Covenant, God taught us about who He is and what He is like through many themes, images and metaphors. These were all teaching tools. They were dim, shadowy images of the what the real would be. Jesus came and is the substance, the reality which all these portrayed. In this age God is calling out a new people group, a new nation, out of all the nations. The nation of Israel in the Old Testament was a primary way of understanding God's relationship with His people. Israel represented God's chosen people. The „nations“ around Israel then were viewed as wicked, pagan and opposed to God. The New Covenant is not much concerned about political or geographic boundaries but with people groups, tribes, languages, cultural boundaries. From these God is calling out a people who will become the new people group, the new race, the new nation, the new... well, all the newness. So the Bible portrays these unbelievers as Gentile nations standing before God for judgment.

He is anticipating the final judgment. The wicked will be punished in the final day. Justice then is not just now and in this moment. Righteousness

may wait for the eschatological end. All the wicked will be gathered before God. They will be indicted, charged, the evidence presented, declared guilty and sentenced to everlasting punishment in hell. God will do what is just. God will vindicate Himself and thus His people.

This eschatological judgment began one dark awful day in Jerusalem over 2,000 years ago. For God to be just and to justify believers, someone had to pay their price. Someone who was innocent and had no charge of sin against Him. That was the Lord Jesus. The punishment we deserved was poured out on Jesus. In the space of three earthly hours He bore the eternal punishment of His people. And so we go free because the price has been paid.

The Lord's Righteous Throne

(v.7-8)

Though the wicked fall into eternal ruin the Lord rules forever.

⁷ But the Lord sits enthroned forever;
he has established his throne for justice,
⁸ and he judges the world with righteousness;
he judges the peoples with uprightness.

The Psalmist sings again of the the righteous throne of God. The highlight now is on the Lord who sits on His throne and who judges the world. The rightness of God's judgement is emphasized. His throne and judgment for just and right. We are not used to thinking of this as something to celebrate. Somehow in our modern minds it has become religiously incorrect to speak of the present and future judgement of the wicked. It is almost as though these truths about God are to be kept hidden. After all, sinners want a god who will give them everything they want. They do not want the God who will sit on His eternal throne and in righteous justice condemn them. This judgment is for sinners and their sins.

But it is a cause for worship and singing. The throne of our Lord has been established as the place where God will make all things right. How will you stand on that day?

The Stronghold for those who are Trusting

(v.9-10)

The Lord is not only the judge of those who are wicked, but He is also a stronghold for those who are trusting in Him.

⁹ The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
¹⁰ And those who know your name put their trust in you,
for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

The Lord is someone we can go to in times of trouble. He will be a city of refuge, a fortress for those who are oppressed, who live in troubling times. The Lord is someone we can rely on so we trust in Him. He will not leave us. He does not walk away from true saving faith.

True saving faith believes truth about God and rests, trusts in the God of those truths. We are not talking about a generic spirituality. We are not talking about faith in faith. True saving faith is in the God of the Bible. He is known by truth statements about His character and conduct.

Public Praise to the Lord

(v. 11-12)

Now the people of God are called to join in public praise to the Lord.

¹¹ Sing praises to the Lord, who sits enthroned in Zion!

Tell among the peoples his deeds!

¹² For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

Since this is who our God is and what He does, then sing of Him and tell about Him. The entire world needs to know. They cannot repent unless they know. They cannot be saved, unless they hear. We sing and say the glorious salvation that God has wrought. But we also sing and say the dreadful judgments that are to come. God will vindicate Himself. God will avenge His people. God will not forget. Be warned. Repent today.

Pilgrims Petition God at His Throne

(v. 13-20)

God's people are expected to praise God on His throne. We are also welcomed to petition God at His throne.

Depending on grace from God

(v. 13-14)

The tone changes from praising to pleading. We pray depending on God to be gracious to us.

¹³ Be gracious to me, O Lord!

See my affliction from those who hate me,

O you who lift me up from the gates of death,

¹⁴ that I may recount all your praises,

that in the gates of the daughter of Zion

I may rejoice in your salvation.

There is so much here that we resonate with. How we long for God to see our troubles and to bend to our aid. Even when dying seems near, we seek His grace. From the gates of death to the gates of Zion, we rejoice in our God. Whether He delivers us now or delivers later, we will rejoice in His salvation. It is not my physical comfort that holds the attentions of our prayers. Our spiritual progress and praise fills our hearts and loosens our tongues and springs up in singing.

The Wicked who are Judged**(v. 15-16)**

Deep Biblical praying and praising will be grounded in wide Biblical truths. No truth will be seen as dampening our prayers or our praises.

¹⁵ The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
in the net that they hid, their own foot has been caught.

¹⁶ The Lord has made himself known; he has executed judgment;
the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. *Higgaion. Selah*

Do you see the contrasts? The nations sink down under their own weight. The wicked are ensnared in their own traps. But God's judgment is how He has made Himself known. The wicked are ruined by the unending sin they do. The Lord is revealed by the righteous judgment He executes. So, stop and think about that...

Now the music reaches the center, the high point of the second movement of this Psalm.

The Wicked who Forget God**(v. 17)**

¹⁷ The wicked shall return to Sheol,
all the nations that forget God.

The Needy who are not Forgotten**(v. 18)**

¹⁸ For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

This couplet of verses dances around the word "forgot". The wicked forget God. God never forgets the needy. The wicked meet the punishment of God. The needy have the provision by God. Thus the hope of God's people will never be dashed. We will never be embarrassed to have depended on God. He will not forget us. No, never.

The Nations who are Judged**(v. 19-20)**

¹⁹ Arise, O Lord! Let not man prevail;
let the nations be judged before you!

²⁰ Put them in fear, O Lord!

Let the nations know that they are but men! *Selah*

Remember how we said this Psalm is asymmetrical? It is not balanced in each movement. Yet, the two movements are alike in the way they break the parallel. The opening petition is for the grace of God that will move to deliver us. The closing petition repeats the main theme. It asks God to get up and deal with the wicked. It prays that the wicked will be judged and will know their place. "O God. Please move so that the wicked know that they are but human and are not god."

See our praying is to be aligned with the person, purposes and plan of God. We pray for people to be saved. And we pray that the wicked will be dealt with according to God's righteousness.

Reflect and Respond

Well, this wasn't so happy a sermon, was it? Actually the sermon was full of praising and singing and gladness. The real problem is that we were not too happy about it. Now I understand the unbeliever listening to this and thinking to himself, "Wow, really. What a grotesque God and a grumpy people."

So what about the love of God? Where is John 3:16? Give me a deep swallow of the sweetness of God's love. Wait. Here is the thing that is almost totally lost on moderns. *God's love for His Son and His people means that God will judge the wicked.*

God vindicates His own righteousness and holiness when He, for the sake of His Name, punishes the wicked. If God does not judge the wicked, then He is not righteous, just or holy. He is in fact, not a just God.

God vindicates and protects His people when He, for the sake of His love for them, punishes the wicked. If God does not judge the wicked, then He is not loving, good and trustworthy. He is in fact, not a gracious God.

To profess love for the child while not dealing with those who would bring harm is to speak a lie. True love defends the one and condemns the other. We know this, because this is the way of God.

Sometimes we need to praise and pray with joy and gladness over the justice and righteousness of God. It begins with seeing His punishment of Jesus on our behalf. It will one day end when God executes justice against the wicked.

My dearly beloved, rejoice in your enthroned God who will judge the wicked for the glory of His Name.

If you are unbelieving this morning, if you are one of those who will stand before the enthroned God of justice, take heed. Be warned. Today you may plead for His grace and throw yourself on His mercy. Believe in Him. Bow to Him. Call on Him to save you. He will forgive. He will pardon.

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." ⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment." ⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." [Revelation 21:5-8]

If you are thirsty, come.

Notes