

Praise God For His Justice and Righteousness

Bible Background • PSALM 9; ECCLESIASTES 3:16–22

Printed Text • PSALM 9:1–12 | Devotional Reading • DEUTERONOMY 10:17–21

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will CONTRAST God’s justice with humanity’s injustices, VALUE how God listens and responds to our needs, and PRACTICE God’s justice in difficult situations.

In Focus

For years, a group of concerned residents in Rucker Heights fought to remove their complacent village president and his cronies. These officials were re-elected every cycle because no one was willing to put themselves on the line to run against them. However, this time around, the people had enough. Elder Timothy Shields convened a group of homeowners, generating a groundswell of community engagement and activism. From Elder Shields’ example, other leaders emerged so that for the next election cycle, they came together, raised money, and campaigned for change. The president and his cronies had deep pockets, but it was no match for the will of the people. Elder Shields galvanized the community.

As a result, not only did the community rid themselves of an ineffective board of trustees, but they also saw a turnover in leadership for their school boards. The people took back their community, and surrounding communities welcomed the opportunity to partner for the growth of the region. The media took notice of the change in the Rucker Heights community. In an interview, Elder Shields said, “God is a God of justice. When people with one heart and agenda come together, there is nothing we cannot accomplish with His help. It was a long hard road, but we knew this day would come. We had to be the change we wanted to see.”

Why is it important for Christians to lead others in believing God’s justice will prevail?

Keep in Mind

“And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.” (Psalm 9:8, KJV)

Words You Should Know

A. Refuge (Psalm 1:9) *misgab* (Heb.)—A high place, especially a secure height, like a high wall or fortress

B. Humble (v. 12) *’anav* (Heb.)—The poor, needy, and marginalized

Say It Correctly

Satest. SAT-est.

Psalter. SALL-ter.

KJV

Psalm 9:1 I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.
2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.
3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.
4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.
5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.
7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.
8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.
10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.
12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

NLT

Psalm 9 For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Death of the Son."
1 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.
2 I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.
3 My enemies retreated; they staggered and died when you appeared.
4 For you have judged in my favor; from your throne you have judged with fairness.
5 You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked; you have erased their names forever.
6 The enemy is finished, in endless ruins; the cities you uprooted are now forgotten.
7 But the LORD reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne.
8 He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with fairness.
9 The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.
10 Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you.
11 Sing praises to the LORD who reigns in Jerusalem. Tell the world about his unforgettable deeds.
12 For he who avenges murder cares for the helpless. He does not ignore the cries of those who suffer.

The People, Places, and Times

Psalms. Music played an important role in the worship practices of ancient Israel. The psalms were Israel's hymns. Unlike most of our modern western poetry and songs which are written in rhyme or meter, Old Testament poetry and songs were based on a parallelism of thought in which the second (or succeeding) line(s) of poetry essentially restates, contrasts with, or progressively completes the first.

All three forms of parallelism characterize the psalter. Concerning authorship of the Psalms, the superscriptions ascribe 73 psalms to David, 12 to Asaph (a musically and prophetically gifted Levite), 10 to the sons of Korah (a musically gifted family), 2 to Solomon, 1 to Heman, 1 to Ethan, and 1 to Moses. Fifty psalms are anonymous. Biblical and historical references suggest that David, Hezekiah, and Ezra were each involved at different stages in collecting the psalms for corporate use in Jerusalem.

Background

The Psalms were the soundtrack of David's life, and he left them for generations to come to laud over the greatness of God (Psalm 145:4). Psalms 9 and 10 are considered one song, a single acrostic poem using every letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which is believed to support memorization. Together these two psalms express the highs, lows, and highs again of David's posture of trust in God's ability to execute power and justice. This particular psalm is not attributed to a specific event in David's life, but he uses it to lead the worship of the Most High God. David provides the tune for the psalm "to be sung to the tune 'Death of the Son,'" which is believed to be a popular composition of his day. This psalm, as several other psalmists also do in 54 other songs throughout the book, is specially dedicated to the choir director.

What songs do you sing to praise God's justice?

At-A-Glance

1. A Reason to Praise (Psalm 9:1–6)
2. A Reason to Believe (vv. 7–12)

In Depth

1. A Reason to Praise (Psalm 9:1–6)

Opening with adoration is a common theme in the psalms of David. David was a skillful musician and writer who spent intimate time in God's presence. In this hymnal expression of thanksgiving and praise, David opens by acknowledging God's power, which is how he ended the previous song (Psalm 8:9; 9:1–2). He will praise with his whole heart, declare all of His wonderful works, and make his boast in Him. David then illustrates the activity of God on the earth and why God is to be praised.

He experienced numerous victories that he declared were given by the hand of the Lord. In David's lifetime, after numerous battles, the nation of Israel gained prominence because of God's defense and David's submission. We can learn from David how God, in His righteous judgment, administers justice and defends what is right. David reminds his hearers that God upholds and defends His people against wickedness. God is so complete in dealing out vindication that He erases the very memory of those who come in opposition to His people.

How can you call to mind the activity of God in your life as an expression of praise and thanksgiving?

2. A Reason to Believe (vv. 7-12)

David magnifies that the Lord sits on the throne and that He is established forever in righteous judgment. As owner and possessor of the heavens and the earth (Psalm 24:1), God is the one qualified to decide how His creations should live. Further, David expresses that God, without partiality, executes justice toward all the people of the earth with honesty and integrity. He is a shelter for those experiencing trouble and oppression. Here is a promise Christians can stand on: God will answer those who seek after Him. We can trust God in His timing to bring an expected end when we come to Him in prayer and a believing heart (Jeremiah 29:12-13).

David calls on those assembled in worship to sing and proclaim God's activity and deeds, for He is tuned into their cry. The Lord vindicates those who are afflicted and will not forget those who caused harm to the ones He loves.

How can you use the Word of God as your reason to believe in God's timing to dispense justice?

Search the Scriptures

1. How does David approach God in worship and why is it important (Psalm 9:1-2)?
2. How does God rule the nations (vv. 7-8)?
3. How does God care for the troubled and oppressed (vv. 9, 12)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. As we reflect on the history of Black people in America, how did enslaved people hope in God's justice and righteousness to persevere through adversity?
2. What artifacts can we pass on to the next generation so that they trust in God's care for the oppressed and troubled?

Liberating Lesson

"Deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome someday" was the mantra of the Civil Rights Movement. To overcome is not a one-time event, but an ongoing process of transformation. To actualize systemic and systematic change, each generation must pick up the mantle to move toward a just society.

David used our text and other psalms to remind the people of God's faithfulness, power, justice, and righteousness to keep them going in the times of opposition. He turns the people's attention to God's ability to deliver, for He sits on the throne administering justice to those who

trust Him. The call to action for this generation and generations to come is to be God's hands and feet in fighting injustice for the long haul.

Application for Activation

Seek the heart of God for what He wants to do in your community. How can you, your church, or a team of community members reflect God's heart for the troubled and oppressed? Look for opportunities to provide someone or a group of people with hope in God's ability to administer justice on their behalf. You could meet a need, help solve a problem, or hold those in power accountable to be honorable in their decisions on behalf of many. Get involved in a civic or charitable effort that allows His power to work through you and bring Him glory.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

Psalm 9

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune "Death of the Son."

Psalms 9 and 10 were originally one poem with each verse starting with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Some Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) and the Vulgate (Latin translation of the Christian Bible) put them as one single poem in one chapter, whereas the Hebrew text and the Protestant church separate Psalms 9 and 10. It brings a difference in numbering for Psalms 9–146 between translations based on the Vulgate and those based on the Hebrew text.

This psalm, and many others, begins with a title, which provides some information about the context of the song. Even though the information is original to the ancient manuscripts, the King James translation did not include them at first. The line above is from the New Living Translation. The phrase "for the choir director" occurs in 55 psalms and indicates the one the musical direction is intended for. The additional direction "to the tune of 'Death of the Son'" is likely a catchphrase to highlight the tune of a popular song in which the psalm should be sung. Other

psalms have similarly worded inscriptions presumably noting what tune should be used with the words (e.g., Psalm 22, 45, 60).

1 I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

The psalm starts with a thanksgiving to God. The sincerity of the psalmist's gratitude is expressed by the phrase "my whole heart." It indicates that the praise comes from the depth of his being. The Lord would blame some of His people for their lip service: honoring Him with their tongue while their heart is far from Him (Isaiah 29:13). Here David is genuinely expressing his gratefulness to the Lord.

This praise is a result of the wonders God has done for the psalmist. "Marvellous works" is a reference to the extraordinary acts of Yahweh on behalf of His people, Israel. In Exodus 15, the people of Israel sang the mighty deeds of the Lord because He overthrew the army of Pharaoh and parted the Red Sea. These mighty actions, and all other actions the Lord is doing on behalf of His people, must be proclaimed. Failure to do so is nothing other than ungratefulness.

2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

The Lord's greatness and great works bring David gladness and joy. This leads to an expression of praise. The Hebrew term for "sing praise" means to "sing with accompaniment of instrument." Just like today's most joyous worship, Israel used music, dancing, and playing of instruments in their worship. "Thy name" stands for God's character and actions, His reputation among the nations. It was used in corporate worship, during the sacrifice, in praise, blessing, court, writing, and war. Calling God "most High" depicts the universal rule of God. He is above all things and therefore above the enemies of the psalmist. And this is the reason for joy.

3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.

The psalmist gives his reasons for praising God (v. 3). The enemies of the psalmist turn their back in defeat after a confrontation. They stagger or stumble and die like soldiers who flee the battlefield confronted with the supremacy of their contender. The enemies must retreat at the presence of the Lord, which is a consuming fire for his enemies and the enemies of his people (Deuteronomy 4:24). They cannot stand His glorious presence for judgment.

4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

Verse 4 is an explanation of verse 3. As a response to the psalmist's plea, God's judgment fell on the enemies who retreated, staggered, and died. They reaped according to their deeds.

The verdict was in favor of the psalmist and against his enemies. "Right" (Heb. mishpat, meesh-POT) is the case lodged against the wicked, and the word "cause" (Heb. din, DEEN) means judgment.

God's right judgment from His throne shows His multifaceted relationship with people. He has full judicial and executive authority. God is not only a judge; He is the King of kings who sits on His throne to judge the world.

5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. 6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.

The past tense used here is called a "prophetic perfect" which describes future events as if they have already occurred. The Hebrew word used for "heathen" designates people who were not Jews and who were also worshiping other gods. Other translations use the term "nations." These nations who do not know God and worship other gods live in wickedness and oppress God's people.

God's judgment brings destruction on them in such a magnitude that their memory is lost. They are no more remembered. To "rebuke" these nations means to condemn them and bring judgment on them. The rebuke of God is the manifestation of His wrath against the enemy to defend the righteous. To "put out" their name forever is a synonym of total annihilation. The wicked, as well as their cities, were submitted to the same fate. They will no more be remembered.

7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. 8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

The eternal reign of the Lord is contrasted with the ephemeral life of the nations He has utterly destroyed. God is the judge and king forever over the whole universe. This is a source of hope. The knowledge of God's kingship gives two prospects: the conviction that He rules differently from the nations and the assurance of the establishment of His righteousness on earth.

9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. 10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The word for "refuge" is *misgab* (Heb. *mees-GAV*), which means a high place, especially a secure height, like a high wall or fortress. It is used in Psalms as a metaphor for God's protection. The protection of the Lord is assured whether one faces individual oppressors or threatening circumstances in life. Knowledge of the name of the Lord is an expression of the personal relationship established with Him. God does not forsake those who seek Him, but is ever-present for them.

11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

The psalmist, after praising the Lord for what He has done for him and acknowledging His righteous rule as a source of hope for the oppressed, calls on the people of God to join him in praising the Lord. Zion is a poetic name for Jerusalem, which is called to be an earthly manifestation of God's heavenly rule. He is the Most High who rules over the entire universe though He has chosen Jerusalem to be His dwelling place among His people. His "doings" and His marvelous deeds (v. 1) are the same. For His people of Israel, He sent plagues in Egypt, He delivered them mightily from the rule of Pharaoh the oppressor, He parted the Red Sea, He conquered nations and led them to the Promised Land in fulfillment of His promise. His rule over the nations is unchallenged. His people must, therefore, proclaim these mighty deeds to the nations. As Christians, we must also sing praises to our Lord Jesus, who delivered us from our oppressors and gave us new life and hope in His kingdom. The world must hear of His wonders.

12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

God is equally mindful of the oppressed and the oppressors. To make inquisition for blood is to investigate bloodshed. David has said God sits on His heavenly throne and dispense righteous judgment (vv. 7-8). Now, David gives an example of this: He investigates those who shed innocent blood, a thing which He hates (Proverbs 6:17). We can be sure that these people will suffer the just judgment God hands down to them. Likewise, God knows the cause of the oppressed, here called the "humble" (Heb. 'anav, aw-NAV). This word is used frequently throughout the Old Testament to refer to the poor and needy—the marginalized, as we would say today. He hears their cries and gives righteous judgment to them as well, which will lift them up to flourishing.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Where Is Justice?
(Ecclesiastes 3:16–22)

TUESDAY

A Prayer for Justice
(Psalm 7:8–17)

WEDNESDAY

Let Justice Roll Down
(Amos 5:21–25)

THURSDAY

God's Servant Proclaims Justice
(Matthew 12:14–21)

FRIDAY

God Has Executed Judgment
(Psalm 9:13–20)

SATURDAY

Jesus Pronounces Release and Recovery
(Luke 4:14–21)

SUNDAY

God Judges with Righteousness
(Psalm 9:1–12)