

FPFWC Christian Development



Called to Praise God

October 2021

Fall Quarter

October 9, 2021

Lesson #2 – Praise For God’s Ultimate Justice

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Psalm 9:1-12

ICE BREAKER –

1. What causes you to shift from distracted, half-hearted praise to focused, whole-hearted praise?
2. How would you counsel someone who feels forsaken by God?
3. How should a believer handle their fears and anxieties?

Key Verse: He shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.—Psalm 9:8

LESSON BACKGROUND

Found in Book I of the Psalter (see Lesson Context of lesson 5), Psalm 9 is one of several alphabetic acrostics scattered throughout the psalms (other examples: Psalms 119; 145). An alphabetic acrostic is one in which each verse, stanza, or other pattern of lines begins with a successive letter of the alphabet. In English, this would look like:

- Line 1 begins with a word that starts with A,
- Line 2 begins with a word that starts with B,
- Line 3 begins with a word that starts with C, etc.

This technique helps with memorization. But sadly, that help is usually “lost in translation” as alphabets vary among languages.

The acrostic format that begins in Psalm 9:2, below, continues into Psalm 10. This suggests that these two poems were originally one. From the standpoint of content, this makes perfect sense: Psalm 9 focuses on God’s deliverance of the righteous, whereas Psalm 10 dwells on God’s judgment on the wicked. For the psalmist and throughout much of Scripture, these two concepts go hand in hand. God’s justice entails both lifting the oppressed and lowering their oppressors (example: Proverbs 10:30).

Two other factors further suggest that these two psalms were originally one: (1) Psalm 9 has a beginning superscript that introduces the psalm, whereas Psalm 10 lacks such a feature, which all other psalms in Book I have except for Psalms 1 and 2; and (2) Psalm 9 ends with the term “Selah.” That is likely musical notation that indicates a pause in the recitation of a song. As a result, the old Greek translation of the book of Psalms combines Psalms 9 and 10 into one psalm. (This results in the numbering of subsequent psalms to differ from that of our English translations of the Bible until Psalm 147, which is split into two psalms.)

LESSON COMMENTARY

Psalm 9: A Meditation on God's Justice: God as the Vindicator of the Righteous

Regarding the heading of this psalm, see introduction to Ps 4. The word **Muth-labben** occurs only here. If taken as a literal Hebrew phrase, it means “on the death of a son” (perhaps Absalom, 2Sm 18:33). Or it could be a word for a musical instrument. The meaning is unclear. It is helpful to take the meaning of “death of the Son” when read in context with the exaltation of the Son of Man in Ps 8:5, and in fact the writer of Hebrews indicates that the death of the Son resulted in Him being crowned with glory and honor and providing salvation for His people (Heb 2:8–9). The theme of Ps 9 is God's reign in Zion, the location of the kingdom of the messianic Son; thus, reading and understanding Pss 8 and 9 together is most helpful (Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 316–317).

Pss 9 and 10 together are written as a modified acrostic, with the stanzas beginning with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Moreover the two psalms share certain parallels in structure, phrasing, and themes that suggest both were composed as a unit. Structurally, the beginning of Ps 9 mirrors the ending of Ps 10 (an *inclusio*), with a declaration of confidence in God. Also, both psalms employ several of the same or closely parallel expressions.

A. Declaring One's Confidence in the Vindicator (9:1–2)

9:1–2. David begins by expressing his determination (**I will**) to **give thanks to the LORD ... tell of His wonders ... be glad and exult in Him and sing praise to His name.** God's **wonders** is a term in its various forms that denotes God's powerful actions (i.e., miracles; see also, e.g., Ex 34:10). Because of His **wonders** (and wonderfulness) David affirmed that God is the **Most High** (preeminent over any other existing authority), which in turn established the basis of David's ensuing appeal to God as the preeminent judicial authority and ultimate vindicator of the oppressed.

B. Affirming the Established Record of the Vindicator (9:3–12)

9:3–4. David proclaims his confidence in God as he sees his **enemies turn back.** The Lord is the preeminent vindicator who **maintained my just cause.** He affirms the Lord's past and present record as a judge of righteousness (literally, as opposed to the NASB's **judging righteously**; elsewhere this expression occurs only in Jr 11:20, again referring to God), as consistently and comprehensively borne out from the following three perspectives: first, God's vindication of David personally (vv. 3–4), in which David's words **you have maintained my just cause** “as a judge of righteousness,” hearkens specifically to his words in 1Sm 24:15 (“The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause and deliver me”).

9:5–10. Second, God vindicates the oppressed generally. He has **rebuked the nations** (cf. 2:1–6) and His blotting **out the name of the wicked** recalls God's judgment and annihilation of all the wicked among humanity during the flood (cf. Gn 6:7; 7:4, 23). God's vindication is based on His eternity: **the LORD abides forever, and He will judge the world in righteousness and equity.**

Third, the Lord is a **stronghold in times of trouble** and He will never forsake **those who know [His] name ... trust [Him] and seek Him**. Trusting in His **name** means to trust in His whole character and identity. God's vindication of His people is implied by the expression **those who know Your name**, which is elsewhere applied to the nation of Israel, the ones to whom God's name was "made known" (cf. Ex 3:13–15; 6:2–6; 1Ch 28:9; Ezk 20:5). The expression **those who seek You** is applied in the OT to Israelites and proselytes (cf. Ex 18:15; Ezr 4:2).

9:11–12. The response to God's righteous judgment is the exhortation to **sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion**. God's heavenly throne (v. 7) has a counterpart in the place He has chosen as His earthly residence, Jerusalem (2:6; 3:4; 20:2; 132:13–14). The message is to declare **among the peoples His deeds**, which recalls the specific OT mission of Israel (cf. 1Ch 16:8; Ps 105:1 [with v. 6]; Is 12:4).

LESSON NUGGET – Take time to praise the Lord for the victories He graciously gives you. We must pray like we really mean it. Pray and worship like we really mean it.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary.