
Prayers

To God

If we look into ourselves Lord Jesus, we do not find all the truth, love, care and compassion we would like others to find in us. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, help us to be honest with ourselves, to see our own limitations, and to confess our inadequacies and sin. Then, may we submit to Your graciousness and accept Your humbling and merciful forgiveness. There is no other way for us to stand tall, except to do so in You: AMEN

For myself

Pray about the Sabbath day; when is your sabbath rest by which you honour God? Think carefully about this, because the Lord loves those who rest in Him

For others

Weekly theme: the United Nations

Pray for the Security Council of the United Nations, and its responsibility to review world peace.

Meditation

We live in an extraordinary world, where there are people who:

Use positions of advantage for personal gain at the expense of others;
Prey upon the weak and use them without respect for dignity or humanity;
Work in public services but do not accept the full accountability of their office;
Use bullying and violence to get what they want and keep others in subjection;
Use money to influence what happens for financial gain, at the expense of others;

But there are also very good people who because of their faith in Jesus,

Identify with the world's poor, and work for justice and freedom amongst all people;
Offer themselves in selfless public service, and refuse to engage in corruption;
Strive for truth in all its forms, spiritually, intellectually and compassionately;
Use peaceful means to promote the good of all and respect for true Faith;
Bring justice to our world by keeping the timeless truths of Your Word.

Give us a heart to see good in this world and identify with it personally.

Bible Passage

Psalm 9:1-8

For the director of music. To the tune of "The Death of the Son". A psalm of David.

- 1 I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonders.
- 2 I will be glad and rejoice in you;
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

- 3 My enemies turn back;
they stumble and perish before you.
- 4 For you have upheld my right and my cause;
you have sat on your throne, judging righteously.

- 5 You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked;
you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.
- 6 Endless ruin has overtaken the enemy,
you have uprooted their cities;
even the memory of them has perished.

- 7 The LORD reigns for ever;
he has established his throne for judgement.
- 8 He will judge the world in righteousness;
he will govern the peoples with justice.

Review

Psalm 9 has some real gems on the theme of praise. Today we look at the first eight verses which set the scene for the praise of God's power and justice. Before we start, take a look at the 'superscription', which is the sentence before the start of the first verse. The Hebrew for this is almost untranslatable, particularly the word for 'the death of a Son', but even though the psalm is not about this at all, the word are there in scripture; some things are mysteries!

There is one other thing about psalm 9, which is to do with its structure, and its relationship to psalm 10. Each stanza of psalm 9 (roughly each two verses) begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, but only the first half of the alphabet, and psalm 10 (more or less) contains the second half! It appears that the two must have some combined at some point in the past. There are some versions of the Bible they are presented as being one psalm. As far as our studies are concerned, we will see that there are some distinct connections between the two Psalms.

Verses 1 and 2 of psalm 9 are a wonderful expression of praise. The Lord is praised for who he is 'I praise you, O Lord', 'I ... rejoice in you', and he is praised because of what he has done 'I will tell of your wonders'. These two aspects of praising God go hand in hand, and one does not happen without the other. A similar example of this can be found in psalm 18 'I love you O Lord, my strength ... my deliverer' (Ps18:1); here, the praise is for who God is (His strength) and then what he has done (to deliver). Within the psalms generally, praise is

given to God as Creator, Judge, Redeemer, Saviour, or Deliverer, and you can find many of these represented in our psalm.

It is typical of our times that the existence of God is discussed as something different from his actions. People still ask, does God exist or not? Abstract arguments about the existence of God have been around for centuries. However, if you believe God is the creator of all things then there is no 'argument'. This is a statement of faith, of course, but faith is built on more than the strength of an argument. I, like many, have come across senior churchmen such as the retired Bishop of Edinburgh, Richard Holloway, who preaches openly that God does not exist; yet I have never heard a person such as this explain how their faith can be considered as 'Christian'. Without a Christian understanding of Creation and the Fall, there is no message of the hope of Salvation, as we celebrate in the Gospel! Such thinking is not Christianity in any real sense; it is secular humanism. I would rather praise our Creator with those who have sung this ancient psalm for centuries, than praise the Bishop's 'new world order' with no Creator.

Verses 3 to 8 show how one such as David went about praising God. Having won a battle, he offered God the glory and praise he could have taken to himself to bolster his own position as King in the eyes of his people. David was a godly leader, and he always point to the source of his authority rather than claim it for himself. Being a witness to God was a sacred duty for a leader (Ps 89:1ff and Is 55:3,4), as was giving thanks to the Lord when battles were won or justice established. Look at the word 'my' in verses 3 and 4; in speaking as he does, David is conscious of himself, but as he speaks to God about his concerns (9:5,6) however, this little word disappears, and he praises God for his defeat of enemies. Then, in verses 7 and 8, He gives the Lord full honour for his right judgement, which is the basis for peace and prosperity.

Again, we are not told who the enemy is. If we were, how limited this psalm would be! If verse 4 had the words 'against the Amorites', for example, then we would find it impossible to use the psalm. As it is, we can use the psalm and apply it to our own situation. Each of us face enemies. They come in different forms; people, events, tasks we dread, family we have fallen out with, and sometimes an enemy within. The Bible uses many words to talk about evil and the enemies we face. In whatever way the enemy is manifest (that is, 'made known'), our battle is the Lord's, and our testimony is that He will win the day for us!

Psalm 9 teaches us about the true meaning of praise of God, and can be used to remind 'the enemy' that God has the victory. These words give glory where it is due, which is to the Lord as our Creator and Saviour.

Discipleship

Application

Practical faith

In order for us to praise God within my daily life and work, we need reminders. It is possible to do this with a grace before meals, for example, or a cross placed beside a computer, a plaque on the wall with a psalm near a light switch, and saying prayers before and after sleep. All these things and more are important in everyday life, and each one of us can be blessed by using simple things to remind us of God and all He has done for us. Each of us can design our homes and organise our lifestyle to help us express faith, and find great blessing in so doing.

Ideas for what to do

- Do you find it possible to offer praise to God whilst you are doing something? It is perhaps true that if we are walking in the Lord's ways, then it may not be necessary to consciously 'praise' God in the midst of what we are doing. The very act of doing becomes the praise we offer to God.
- Pray for the 'praise' in the life of your own church community. Pray that everyone will be inspired to help each other become focussed on God who is worthy of our praise.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Is it possible to praise God 'for who He is' separately from 'what He has done'? What is the difference between the two?
2. Do you find your prayers always seem to speak about 'me', or 'I'? What can you do about it?
3. Think of church leaders you have known. Who, in your opinion, have done a good job of 'giving glory to God' rather than claiming it themselves?

Final Prayer

Almighty God, we praise and bless you for the peace we can have with You through the work of Jesus Christ, and for the work of the Holy Spirit which energises us to continue the same work of reconciliation throughout the world. Glory be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
AMEN
