

Lesson for October 10, 2021

“Praise God For Justice and Righteousness”

Background Scripture: Psalm 9 and Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

Psalm 9 says that our praise should reflect a heart that is filled with thanksgiving. When our hearts overflow with gratitude for all that God has done for us, joyful praise will flow forth abundantly from our lips. The more blessing we recognize that we have from God, the more grateful we are for what He has done for us, and the more we will want to tell others about Him. When we thankfully acknowledge all that God has done for us, others will see a difference in our lives, and some may want to know why. Their asking allows us to tell about all the wondrous works of God in our lives.

Among the glorious blessings God’s people have is victory over enemies. Considering all that He has done for Israel, from their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, to the conquest of the promised land, to His continued victory over their enemies through the centuries, God’s people have every reason to proclaim the marvelous deeds of the “enthroned” and only truly “righteous judge” (verse 4).

God’s Justice Brings Hope. Life seems exceedingly unfair, particularly when we see so much injustice and disasters in the world, hardships and tragedies among our friends and family, and setbacks and anguish in our own lives. Sometimes, it seems as though God is nowhere to be found and justice lacks any practical meaning. It is in these times that we must have faith in God’s righteousness and in His love for us. The Hebrew prophets rarely were treated justly, and yet they often proclaimed the righteousness of God’s judgments. Although most of them did not live to see the realization of God’s judgments, they continued to

have faith in God's promises. "Let justice roll on like a river," declared the Lord God through His prophet Amos, and "righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24). Like the prophets of old, we too must anchor our faith in the trustworthiness of God's judgments, having faith that justice will truly prevail. And like the prophets, God will bring us a hope in a wondrous and eternal life beyond the grave while uplifting our spirits in the here and now. No justice and no hope are possible, however, if Jesus had not taken human form, died on the Cross for us, and was resurrected from the dead. Without Jesus, can there really be any justice for us? But the truth is that Jesus did do all those things, and, therefore, God's judgments do bring us hope, for God's judgments and justice are realized in our Savior, Christ Jesus.

In Psalm 9, the psalmist David praises the Lord God Almighty for providing justice to His people. The execution of God's judgments truly manifests His faithfulness to them. We, too, should glorify God for being a righteous judge, who expects us to live by His judgments justly and with compassion.

Think about this, write a letter to God. Begin by praising Him for the righteousness of His judgments, particularly through the ministry of Christ Jesus. Thank Him for the justice He demands for those who need justice and for pouring justice into your life. Ask God to help you be an extension of God's justice in every way you can and promise to be an embodiment of God's justice.

It has been said, "No thought is worth thinking that is not the thought of God. No sight is worth seeing unless it is seen through his eyes. No breath is worth breathing without thanks to the One whose very breath it is."

Sometimes, we feel that when we are seeking justice the deck of cards have been stacked against us and all you got was the rawest injustice.

Ecclesiastes 3:16 says, Moreover I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.

Human courts are designed to correct injustice, but they are often filled with wickedness and injustice. Lots of time everyone knows something was unjust, but because of certain legalities no one could get hold of the matter to correct it. That kind of injustice creates anger and frustration in many hearts. People say, "What do you mean, I am to accept that as from the hand of God?"

The Searcher picks that up and says there are three things he wants to show us about it.

Ecclesiastes 3:17, "I thought in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter, and for every work".

Though there is injustice, that is not the end of the story. God may correct it even within time, and if he does not do so, in time, still he has appointed a time when it all will be brought out. The Scriptures speak of a time appointed by God, when all the hidden motives of the heart will be examined, when "that which is spoken in secret shall be shouted from the housetops" (Matthew 10:27, Luke 12:3), and justice will ultimately prevail. That is what this Searcher says. Injustice is limited in its scope.

Second, I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men that God is testing them to show them that they are but beasts. (Ecclesiastes 3:18)

There is a beastly quality about all of us which injustice will bring out. What is it about a man that makes him prey upon even his friends or neighbors?

There is a beastliness about us all. Put in a situation where we are suffering injury we react with viciousness. God allows certain circumstances to show us that we all have that quality about us.

We are like animals in other ways, too, the Searcher says. Verse 19: For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath and man has no advantage over the beasts; for all is vanity. All go to one place; he is talking about the grave] all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20)

Man is frail, his existence temporary. Like the animals, we do not have very long to live on this earth. Injustice sharpens the realization that we do not have long to live rightly, honestly and truly before God. We die like an animal and our bodies dissolve like a beast's. From the human standpoint one cannot detect any difference. "Who knows that the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down to the earth?"

From a human standpoint, a dead man and a dead dog look as if the same thing happened to both of them. But from the divine point of view that is not the case. Though we die like beasts, the spirit of man goes upward while the spirit of the beast goes downward. Later on the Searcher states very positively that at death the spirit of man returns to God who gave it, but the spirit of the beast ends in nothingness. Injustice stems from our beastliness, and God's plan for life will uncover it.

In verses 22 Solomon concludes, that there is nothing better than that a man should enjoy his work, for that is his lot; but remember, enjoyment comes only from God. Then he adds the question who can bring him to see what will be after him?

He does not answer that question here; he leaves it hanging. The answer, of course, is that only God can help us to understand what lies beyond life.

The wonderful thing to extract from this passage is the great truth that God wants us to learn how to handle life in such a way that we can rejoice in any and every circumstance, as the Scriptures exhorts us. Recognize that all comes from a wise Father. Though circumstances bring us pain as well as pleasure, it

is his choice for us. Rejoice that in the midst of the pain there is the possibility of pleasure.

God teaches us lessons, sometimes repeatedly, until we learn them. Life comes from outside this world. It's taken some people a long time to learn this. Maybe, some never learn.

Life is not always fair. Solomon turns back to his cynicism. Why? Because wickedness is winning (verse 16). Without God, people become beast-like in their nature and actions. Verses 19-21 should not be endorsed as a doctrine but accepted as thoughts from a troubled man who's trying to understand life "under the sun" or without God's perspective.

Maybe, Solomon's advice in these verses is simply teaching us to learn to take advantage of our disadvantages. You may not be able to change your "lot" (verse 22), but you can change your reaction or attitude to it. Let God take your mess and make a miracle. Without God there is no purpose or meaning. With God you can have the time of your life.

What is our portion of life in this world? (Ecclesiastes 3:22)

To rejoice in our own works: "Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"

See Deuteronomy 12:7 and Ecclesiastes 2:24.

No one is going to bring you back to see your labors and the results thereof after you leave this earth (Psalms 6:5, Ecclesiastes 6:12, Ecclesiastes 9:10, and Ecclesiastes 10:14).

Enjoy today (Matthew 6:34) for tomorrow does not belong to us (James 4:13-16).

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen.

Next week's lesson October 17, 2021, "Give Thanks For Deliverance"

Background Scripture: Psalm 107

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, International Sunday School Commentary, Adult Sunday School Lessons, by Jessica Udall, and The Present Word Lesson.