

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 4.21.2024

PSALM 9 & 10 - A STRONGHOLD IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

I. INTRODUCTION

- Inevitably we will all go through times of trouble to varying degrees.
 - And in those times we all ask the “why” question-- “Why, God?”
 - We ask the “why” question because we don’t understand.
 - We ask the “why” question because of our perception that God is not near or aware of what we are going through.
 - As God’s people, how are we to hold on in faith and trust as we go through our times of trouble?
 - Today we are going to look at two psalms written by David in which he asks the “Why, God?” question.
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- Now, we are going to consider Psalms 9 and 10 together as one unit. Not only do they have overlapping themes, but they are largely considered by Bible scholars to be one psalm.
 - In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the whole of the two is considered one psalm.
 - Additionally, in Hebrew, Pss 9 and 10 are an acrostic poem; every second poetic line begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
 - There are motifs and phrases and repeated words that are common to both psalms, and there seems to be structure to the composition.
 - These two psalms don’t fit neatly into a particular category of psalms. They are a mix of thanksgiving, prayer, praise, and lament.
 - And my prayer is that you will grasp the glorious promise found in Psalm 9, that “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.”

Psalm 10

1 Why, O Lord, do you stand far away?

Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor;

let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.

3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul,

and the one greedy for gain curses[a] and renounces the Lord.

4 In the pride of his face[b] the wicked does not seek him;

all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

5 His ways prosper at all times;

your judgments are on high, out of his sight;

as for all his foes, he puffs at them.

6 He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved;

throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity."

7 His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression;

under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

8 He sits in ambush in the villages;

in hiding places he murders the innocent.

His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless;

9 he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket;

he lurks that he may seize the poor;

he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net.

10 The helpless are crushed, sink down,

and fall by his might.

11 He says in his heart, "God has forgotten,

he has hidden his face, he will never see it."

12 Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand;

forget not the afflicted.

13 Why does the wicked renounce God

and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"?

14 But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation,

that you may take it into your hands;

to you the helpless commits himself;

you have been the helper of the fatherless.

15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer;

call his wickedness to account till you find none.

16 The Lord is king forever and ever;

the nations perish from his land.

17 O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted;

you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear
18 to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,
so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

II. THE COMPLAINT

- David feels like God is standing far off, removed from whatever David's trouble is.
 - He feels like God is playing a game of hide and seek. We've all felt that way at some point. As if God is hiding his face from us.
 - He's troubled by the Lord's apparent inactivity, his apparent lack of intervention in the trouble that David is about to describe.
 - But here's what I want you to see—David is praying.
 - What he is complaining about doesn't keep him from God, on the contrary, it drives him to God.
 - We've seen this repeatedly, it is the pattern of David's life. In whatever trouble he finds himself in he goes to God.
 - Sadly, many of us do just the opposite. In times of trouble we run away from God not to him.
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- Now, the expression of the complaint that David makes is his perception of the situation.
 - David wants God to deliver judgment upon the wicked and vindicate the weak and helpless.
 - But, he's just not seeing that happen and he's wondering why God doesn't see it also.
 - David wants some good old-fashioned fire and brimstone to fall upon the wicked.
 - And we feel that way too, don't we? We want God to bring down judgment on wicked people.
 - We look at our world today, and we see exactly what David expresses. We see rampant wickedness and we also wonder, "Where are you God? Why aren't you doing something about it?"
 - David's complaint comes in the form of a question. There's nothing accusatory, he is approaching God in humility, looking for comfort, and seeking to understand.

III. THE DESCRIPTION

THE WICKED

- David launches into 10 verses describing the problem that is causing the times of trouble.
- V2 summarizes the problem - The arrogant wicked pursue the poor and they need to be caught in the same trap that they have set for others.
- The rest of the verses elaborate on that statement.
- Keep in mind that this description of the wicked is taking place in the context of David's prayer and he is being very specific in his description.
- This is good encouragement to us as we come to God in prayer, when we are talking to him about our times of trouble, we should say in prayer everything that we understand about the situation.
- And many times as we do that, our jumbled up thoughts seem to become clearer and we may even gain a better understanding of our situation.
- We can be expressive and specific in our praying to God and that is what David is doing here.

- The term 'wicked' is used five times in this psalm, and only one time in Psalm 9.
- In Ps 9, the wicked are seen as the wicked nations. In Ps 10, the wicked seem to be the wicked people in general.
- The wicked is the one who does what is morally wrong. Who violates God's laws and are condemned for transgressing it.
- David describes the wicked as arrogant, boastful, and prideful.
- Their pride leads them to make arrogant and damning assertions.
- V3 They curse and renounce the Lord.
- V4 They don't seek God and all of their thoughts are, "There is no God."
- V6 They say they will never be moved and never meet adversity. Basically that they can never be opposed.
- V11 They say in their heart, "God has forgotten." God will never call them to account.
- The wicked act as if God does not exist.
- They completely disregard the law of God and have become a law unto themselves.
- The wicked are greedy, filled with cursing, deceit, and they love to oppress the poor and helpless.
- In fact they set up ambushes to ensnare the helpless and they murder the innocent.
- V5 is the challenge for the righteous. David writes, His ways prospers at all times.
- Things never seem to go bad for the wicked.

THE HELPLESS POOR

- Two words are translated in this psalm as "poor." The first we saw in v2. The wicked pursue the poor.
- The poor is one who is needy, lowly, humble, of little means, and who wields no power.
- The other word is translated as helpless, as in v10, the helpless are crushed.
- That Hebrew word indicates a person whose condition is truly wretched.
- David describes the actions of the wicked as like that of predators who lie in wait to ambush their prey.
- David is describing their wickedness as something hidden and deceptive. Their boasting may be public but their nastiest work is done in secret.
- You might be asking, what do the wicked have to gain by taking advantage of the poor; the poor don't have anything to offer.
- The wicked do what they do to the poor because they can.
- This is what bothers David and deeply troubles him. The wicked man has the power and the poor and helpless do not.
- And after unburdening his soul in prayer to God he makes a series of requests to the Lord.

IV. THE PRAYER

- V12 Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted.
- David is appealing to the Lord, Yahweh, using God's covenant name, his name that is tied to his steadfast love and faithfulness to his people, tied to the unconditional promises he made.
- "O God" is "El" a contraction of the name, "Elohim". That is the name by which God reveals himself as the God of power and might.

- David makes his appeal to the all-faithful and all-powerful God, to not forget the afflicted.
- David can make this request based on an understanding of what he knows of God's character.
- His second request is in v15, Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none.
- David wants what every single one of us wants, and that is for the wicked to pay for all that they have done.
- Psalm 9:19-20 Arise, O Lord! Let not man prevail; let the nations be judged before you! Put them in fear, O Lord! Let the nations know that they are but men!
- David is asking that the wicked be consumed for all of the wickedness that they have done by the full expression of the fury of God's judgment.
- The wicked deserve to be consumed by the terrifying, furious, just, wrath of God.
- And that is exactly what we find taking place at the cross.
- What David is asking to come upon the wicked is the very expression of the judgment of God we find consuming his Son as the price to be paid for our sin.
- Jesus endured the full expression of God's judgment against the full extent of our wickedness.
- And this is what makes Jesus a sufficient Savior because he bore to the uttermost God's judgment for sin.
- It is not lost on us who it is that wrote this particular psalm—David.
- What David is describing of the wicked is very much the way that he acted. His hands are not clean.
- David was a man who very much needed a Savior. And so do we.
- Even as we pray for justice from God, and for God's judgment to come upon the wicked, let's remember that is what we were, so we can pray with humility as we pray for justice from God.
- We pray for judgment upon the wicked while remembering that the justice that was due to fall upon us fell upon another, Christ Jesus our Lord.

V. THE AFFIRMATION

- It's not wishful thinking that God will actually judge the wicked. David knows that God will.
- V14 But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands.
- David knows the character of God. David knows that God is faithful to his people. David knows that God is not far off and removed in his time of trouble even though he might perceive him to be.
- This leads David to make affirmations that express confidence in the Lord.
- V16 The Lord is king forever and ever;
- David expresses confidence that the Lord is the everlasting and ultimate King.
- Ps 9:7 But the Lord sits enthroned forever, he has established his throne for justice.
- The Lord is the king enthroned in Zion and his reign extends to include all the nations of the world, and he is King forever (9:4, 7-8, 11; 10:16).
- And the main feature of his Kingly rule over the nations that is emphasized is his role of acting as Judge of the nations.
- His very throne is established for justice.

- Ps 9:4 you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.
 - Ps 9:8 and he judges the world with righteousness; he judges the peoples with uprightness.
- David has confidence that the enduring, righteous King not only has the power to do what is right, he will do what is right.
 - He will punish the wicked, he will execute his righteous judgment.
 - All of the things that David describes the wicked doing in Ps 10 he confidently asserts in Ps 9 that will be the cause of their undoing.
 - Ps 9:15, 16b The nations have sunk in the pit that they made; in the net that they hid, their own foot has been caught...the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands.
 - The nations that forget God will be brought to ruin and desolation.
 - The ruins of history bear evidence that the Lord has acted in judgment against wicked nations.
- Ps 9:17 The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.
 - David confidently affirms God that will render his righteous judgment.
 - Acts 17:30-31 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”
 - The man he has appointed is Christ Jesus, the Lord’s Anointed.
- David also confidently affirms that God will answer his prayer
 - Ps 10:17 O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear.
 - He is confident that God will hear and that he will strengthen, and do justice.
 - David pours out his soul to God and then he comes around at the end of it all and says, “But you Lord are King forever, you are good and righteous, you see and hear, you will call the wicked to give account, you will render judgment, and you will strengthen the afflicted in times of trouble.”
- Psalm 9 has a glorious promise for saints in times of trouble.
 - The reality of expecting righteous judgment from God is grounded in the hope expressed in this promise.
 - Psalm 9:9-10 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 oppressed, who find themselves in times of trouble, can run to the Lord for safety.
 - A stronghold is a high place, a fortress, a defensive position that is impenetrable.
 - And David saw the Lord in this manner. God is a high place, a fortress, a stronghold in the wilderness, accessible to his saints yet unassailable by enemies (2 Sam. 22).
 - And that’s what David says the Lord is to his people in times of trouble—a stronghold.
 - In times of trouble, tribulation, adversity, affliction, and distress, he is a refuge to his saints.
- During the times of trouble you have walked through, one of the things you may have observed is how God uses those difficult times to teach you to trust him.
 - What David sees with his natural eyes is not pointing him to greater trust in the Lord. But he pours out his soul before God, he makes these

requests and then he falls back in confidence of God's unchangeable character and promises.

- Those who know your name, put their trust in you.
- God's name is his character. And a right apprehension of his good and righteous character will inspire confidence in him.
- Those who know God, who trust in him, who run to him for refuge, who seek him, will not be forsaken.
- That is David's confidence and it must be ours in times of trouble.

- God's protection of his saints never fails.
- And in times of trouble, God is near, he is not far off. He walks with us through the valleys of the shadow of death. He is with us through deep waters and fierce and fiery trials.
- Times of trouble cannot take us out of the mighty stronghold that is our God.

- Are you in times of trouble? Flee to the stronghold—flee to your Savior.
- Are you suffering an injustice? Take confidence in your righteous King, he will do what is right.
- Our hope of safety and deliverance in times of trouble is grounded in the unchangeable character of God and the unshakeable promises of God.
- Put your trust in Him, and you will find the Lord to be your stronghold in times of trouble.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?