

Throne Control

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[0:00] Well, Psalm 9 is where we're at. We're only three away from the end of our study, just the first twelve psalms in this book called *The Way of the Righteous and the Muck of Life* by Dale Ralph Davis.

And the central figure or feature of this psalm is God reigning and judging from His throne. The throne is something we'll find over and over and God judging and ruling from the throne. Psalm 9, verses 7 and 8 are really the heart of this psalm. The Lord reigns forever. He has established His throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness. He will govern the peoples with justice.

So, He's seen in this psalm as judge upon the throne. That speaks of His sovereignty. He's sovereign over all. And He's there on the throne to dispense judgment and mercy, or judgment and righteousness.

The two things that are often denied to the righteous in this world. They often get unjust treatment. And so, this is a psalm, again, for the righteous who are persecuted in this world.

[1:21] And it points us to the Lord who reigns. He's reigning over all, and not for a while, but forever. Not only on your good days, but on your worst days as well. And this is the psalm that we need to remember.

The position of our God reigning over all. Davis calls this psalm throne control. Because, again, it has to do with the control of God over all things from His throne.

The psalm easily divides into two sections. Verses 1 to 12 are full of praise. Praise, remembering a past deliverance. And then verses 13 to the end are a petition arising out of a present need.

So, we'll look at David's prayer. And we'll take it under three headings, even though there's two parts to this psalm. Three headings. The first is pray in remembrance. Pray in remembrance.

Verses 1 and 2 are the introduction to the psalm. And as I read, notice the four I wills of praise. I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart.

[2:37] I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you. I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. What does I will reveal in David?

This is a question for you to respond to. What does that mean when David says, I will?

Determination. This is David's determination to praise God.

Why do we need determination to praise God? Why do we need determination to praise God?

Okay. Okay.

So, we have a flesh and a world and a devil. Everything is gathered together to work against us praising God. Haven't you found that to be so?

We don't praise God nearly as much as we ought. And David sensed that too. And so, he says, unless I'm determined to praise Him, I won't as much as I should. And so, he's determined to praise God.

[3:42] Now, just four points then, very briefly. Notice how each I will reveals a different aspect of praise. First of all, there is always reason for wholehearted praise in our Lord.

When David says, I will praise the Lord, he doesn't mean, well, I'll just make my mouth open up and speak good words. No, he says, with my whole heart, with all my heart.

Because there's always in God everything needed to bring forth wholehearted praise in me.

Secondly, there's always many wonders to tell. That's what he says.

I will tell of your wonders. There's wonders in your lifetime, however long you've lived. There's wonders in the church's history, in the scriptures to tell forth in praise.

And then thirdly, there's always enough in God to give gladness and joy. Did you notice joy is a choice? I will be glad and rejoice in you.

[4:47] That's a needed corrective to the modern view that tells us that joy is a virus you catch. And so there's really not much that you can do about it, whether you have it or whether you don't.

David says, I will be glad. He's determined to rejoice in the Lord. And then fourthly, high praise for the Most High deserves a song.

Not just spoken praise, telling how wonderful God is, but singing His praise. That's one of the beauties of public worship.

We get to come together and sing His praise. Well, you can do it in your homes as well. But these are the opening determinations of the psalmist. And we see that the things that stir Him, the theme of His praise here is some recent or past deliverance that he's received from God in his own personal experience.

Look at verses 3 to 6. He talks about this past deliverance. My enemies turn back. They stumble and perish before you. For you have upheld my right and my cause.

[6:02] You have sat on your throne judging righteously. You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked. You've blotted out their name forever and ever.

Endless ruin has overtaken the enemy. You have uprooted their cities. Even the memory of them has perished. David here tells us what he's been through.

And he points to a deliverance. The deliverances of God from the nations that were fighting against him as Israel's king. David was a man of war.

He was a man with bloody hands. Remember? That's why he couldn't build the temple. He was a man of war. He fought the battles of the Lord against the nations that were conspiring against God and His people.

And he had many victories and deliverances. And here he attributes all his success to God's throne work. God's throne control. What happened in the throne room of the universe made all the difference on every field of battle.

[7:13] Look at verse 4. For you have upheld my right. My cause. You have sat on your throne judging righteously.

So the reason I have victory out there on the battlefield is because you're sitting on the throne judging righteously. And you see that my cause is right.

And you see that it is your cause. And so you uphold it. And you maintain it. And the outcome of my battles was determined then from your throne.

Because from the throne, God decrees victories. That's what Psalm 44 verse 3 says. You are my king and my God who decrees victories for Jacob.

So God on the throne, decreeing victory. Deliverance for David. And that's where he gives the praise. The Lord reigns forever.

[8:12] That's the picture that David has throughout this Psalm as verse 7 begins. The Lord reigns forever. Someone has said that's the quickest path from despair to hope.

Is that the Lord reigns forever. When you go to the book of Revelation. This is where the apostle John in vision is given hope.

And is giving hope to the persecuted church of the first century. They are beginning to experience the great wrath of the nations against Jesus and his people.

And the first three centuries would be called the killing centuries. As the blood of the martyrs was shed. And so they will need hope.

And so the book of Revelation is given to them. Well, you who are familiar with Revelation. What is the focus of chapters 4 and 5?

[9:13] Is that message, the heart of the message of Revelation is set forth? What's chapters 4 and 5 all about? The glory of God?

And where? What's it focused on? A throne, right? At the center is the throne. And glory radiates from that throne.

And from that throne, judgments fall on the earth. And so the rest of the book with its trumpets and its vials.

And all of these judgments that are falling upon the earth. They're coming from this throne room. So the picture that the people of God need is the picture of God reigning. Sitting on his throne.

Dispensing judgment with justice and righteousness on the earth. World history can appear chaotic and confusing.

[10:17] In fact, that was the message coming out of Egypt this past week. Confusion, confusion, confusion. And world history can appear chaotic and confusing. But it is not spinning out of control as it may appear.

But rather, the Lord is on his throne. And so we're not meant to live in this world without this throne. In our sights. We don't do well in the Christian life without this throne in view.

It's the stuff that fuels endurance and faithfulness. That's the message of the book of Revelation. It keeps us faithful. Even in the midst of injustice. The Lord omnipotent reigns.

Well, so he tells us what he's been through. He's been through these many battles and deliverances from the Lord. Secondly, he tells us where it's all going.

Where it's all going. Verses 7 and 8. The Lord reigns forever. He has established his throne for judgment. He will judge the world in righteousness.

[11:23] He will govern the peoples with justice. From the past, he sat on his throne and judged righteously and gave me deliverances.

To the future, he will judge the world in righteousness and justice. So David is saying, my own experiences of God judging on my behalf and giving me deliverance, it's just a slice of the whole pie of what's coming.

It's just mini demonstrations of where everything is heading. It's all heading to a throne. Established for judgment with the Lord, the judge, righting all wrongs.

Isn't that what the whole of the Bible tells us? That human history is leading to a throne. We saw it last week from Matthew 25. All the nations gathered before him. To the right, to the left, judging. That's where human history is going. And that's what David is tapping into here. He will judge the world in justice, in righteousness. So history is posting daily onward closer to that throne and that appointment of all men with the judge.

[12:42] Now, this is what gives the righteous the ability to get on with their lives, to not be sidelined even though they suffer injustices now at the hand of the world.

It's to be expected. It's not something to surprise us and to get us so that we lose our equilibrium. No, we know that's the case.

And we're looking to a throne at the end. Now, that's the perspective of the Apostle Paul. Hold your finger here and turn to 1 Corinthians 4. Because the Apostle Paul was suffering injustice, wasn't he?

He was being falsely accused. He was being lied about. And here in chapter 4, he shows us that he's got his eye on a future throne.

Chapter 4, verses 3 and 5. Again, the context is he's being falsely accused and lied about. And he says, I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court.

[13:49] Indeed, I do not even judge myself. So, I'm not even seeking justice from you, from the human courts, from myself. These things are not what count. Now, my conscience is clear, but that doesn't make me innocent.

It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time. Wait till the Lord comes.

He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness. And he will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time, each will receive his praise from God.

God, he's willing to wait for that day. The final day of judgment. And so, he finds peace.

And he gets on with his life. And he does what David does. That's what David's doing here. He's looking forward to that day when God, who reigns forever, will judge, finally.

[14:54] And put all wrongs right. Right. Now, David has told us of his experience. And what, I'm sorry, he's going to bring application now to others.

He's told us what he's been through, where it's all going. And now, what you can count on. What you can count on. You, the rest of God's people, can learn from David's experience.

Aren't you glad we don't have to go through everything ourselves in order to learn lessons in life?

That God actually expects us to learn and be wise by looking at others around us and learning from their failures and successes.

And learning from failures and successes seen here. Isn't that wonderful? We don't have to make all the same blunders ourselves to learn.

Do you realize that one of the reasons that David's experience and testimony is on record is for us to learn from it. All these things were written to teach us.

[16:07] Upon whom the ends of the world have come. So, let's ask this question. What are we to learn from David's personal experience here? What can we walk away with?

What can we count on? Well, there's a solid assurance that comes out of this. Verse 9. The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed.

Now, notice. Not just for David. He doesn't just say, Lord, you're a refuge for me. You are a refuge for the oppressed. All the oppressed. You're a stronghold in times of trouble.

So, David found him to be such. And so will all who take refuge in him. So, the application is widening out. Beyond David himself.

To all the righteous. To all those who know his name. Verse 10. Those who know your name will trust in you. For you, O Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

[17:09] So, this is what we can learn from David's experience. We can learn to know God's name. His character. What he's like. Because what David found him to be, he is today and forever.

Unchanging. You see, if you are, as you're reading David's situation, you say, well, boy, I don't have nations fighting against me. You'll walk away without anything to count on in your own life.

Because you're looking too much at the detail that you're missing the greater principle. What is there in the details of David's experience with God that we can extract and translate into our lives and our troubles?

Well, that's what he's telling us. It's what God is like. So, when we're reading our Bibles, we should ever be asking, what is this teaching me about God?

Whatever is going on, we want to get down to some bedrock principles. What do we see about God in this passage? Because that will translate to February 2011.

[18:22] And that's what this psalm is helping us to do. Those who know his name will trust in him. So, we need to know his name. And what specifically is it about God that encourages us to trust him from David's experience?

Can you see it? Verse 10? What does he come away with that we can take and go to the bank in our day today?

So, you see, that's a principle. That applied to David, and it applies as much to you and to me if we will seek him.

So, that's the translatable part here of David's testimony. He has never forsaken those who seek him. Isn't that reason for you to trust him in your time of need, whatever it be?

This is just the way God is. He doesn't forsake those who seek him. So, do you think for a moment that you're going to be the first one to blow God's reputation of never forsaking those who seek him?

[19:34] You think he's going to let that name be lost in your life and in your problem? Not in your life. He never, never forsakes those who seek him.

So, we should enter in with David in this song and proclamation of verses 11 and 12. Sing praises to the Lord.

Where is he? Enthroned in Zion. Proclaim among the nations what he has done. For he who avenges blood remembers he does not ignore the cry of the afflicted.

And so, this is what we should remember. That he does not ignore the cry of the afflicted. He does not forsake those who seek him.

So, we learn from David's experience. Pray with remembrance.

[20:33] David is remembering the past deliverance. What it teaches him about God's consistent character that he can cling to all the way to the end. Now, the second main point.

Pray in remembrance. Secondly, pray in context. Christ. Because verses 13 and 14 jerk us right back into the present tense. David's been talking about what God has done.

What God is going to do at the end of the age. And now, he jerks us back into the present. This is where David is. This is the starting point from which he prays. And begins to remember his past deliverances.

And we learn that all of his troubles are not past. All of them are not in the past tense. There are some that are continuing in his life. And here's another emergency.

Another fresh need for deliverance. Verses 13 and 14. Here's his cry. O Lord, see how my enemies persecute me. Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death.

[21:32] That I may declare your praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion. And there rejoice in your salvation. So, his enemies are persecuting him. They got him right down to the gates of death.

Just one step through the gate and he's gone. That's where he is. This is fresh emergency. Real trouble. What's the reason David gives the Lord to spare him from death? What reason did he give to God in his prayer that he'd not go through the gates of death? But he'd continue to live. What is it? To praise God. Is this the first time we've seen that? Remember back in chapter 5? Chapter 6 and verse 5 we saw it? It's not the last time in the Psalms. Psalm 119, 175.

Let me live that I may praise you. Again, we're reminded how valuable the praises of God's people in the gathered assembly are to God and to David.

[22 : 35] And David knows that's important. He pleads with God. Let me live that I may praise you. Now, David's in another mess then. And our author makes this observation.

Perhaps you don't think it needs to be made. But he makes it nonetheless. Wonderful deliverances can be followed by fresh needs. So, verse 13, help me Lord, I'm near to death because of my enemies, follows the deliverances of verses 1 to 12.

And it just reminds us in Davis' words that a believer's life does not consist of a jam or two and then cruise the rest of your life without them. But generally we will face them repeatedly all along the way to heaven.

And we should never be surprised that after a marvelous deliverance we're somehow in the middle of more slop. Now, that's the biblical realism that we find in the Psalms. It doesn't hide it from us. Oh, if you know Christ, everything's wonderful. No. Your enemies will be after you. And if it's not physical flesh and blood enemies, remember that the real enemies are those behind the flesh and blood.

[23 : 45] The principalities and powers and sin and Satan and the world. David here makes his petition.

It's a fresh cry for help in his present need. But notice what he does as he cries for help. As he prays, he remembers what God has done for him in the past.

And what was revealed to him there about God's consistent character. He remembers what he learned from his past experiences of deliverance. That God doesn't forsake those who cry.

And he doesn't ignore the cry of the afflicted. And that gives him hope in this present trouble. He prays with assurance. He prays with confidence. And verses 15 and 16 reflect back upon what God had done earlier in verses 5 and 6.

He says in verse 15, The nations have fallen into the pit. They have dug. Their feet are caught in the net. They have hidden. The Lord is known by his justice. The wicked are ensnared by the work of their hands.

[24 : 48] So now he's praying. But he's remembering the lessons learned from past deliverances. And then verses 17 and 18. He says, The wicked return to the grave.

All the nations that forget God. But the needy will not always be forgotten. Nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish. So when faced with new troubles, David does not only remember what God did before, but he fastens on what those experiences taught him about his unchanging God. His consistent character. So now in his present problems, he's praying with confidence that God will be to him what he is in his nature.

Never forsaking those who seek. Never ignoring the cry of the afflicted. So he now pleads that lesson afresh in verse 18.

The needy will not always be forgotten. Nor the hope of the afflicted ever perish. You see, that's the lesson he had learned earlier. And he prays now with fresh assurance in his fresh trouble.

[25 : 55] Davis calls this praying in context. Praying in context. Now, I think it's a helpful picture. And if you understand it, I think it should help you.

As it's helping me to think of how we pray. Every verse in the Bible has a context. And so does every trouble in our lives.

Now, just as we don't read verses out of context, nor are we to read our troubles out of context. What happens when you do not read a verse of Scripture in context?

And why?

What have you not taken into consideration? Which is? Defying context? What all the verses are around.

[26 : 56] What goes before it? And what comes after it? Has got to be allowed to shed its light upon the verse that you're studying. Your verse has a context all around it.

So does your trouble. What happens in trouble? Well, we tend to get tunnel vision and all we see is our trouble. That's like somebody studying their Bible with tunnel vision and not looking at the verses before and after.

We in our troubles can get tunnel vision and only see our problem. Oh no, that's as disastrous as reading the Scriptures out of context. There's a context to your problem.

There are things that have gone before it. And there are things coming after it. And your problem won't look right unless you see it in context. So what's the past context of your trouble?

Anybody? Anybody? Past deliverances. That's what David is showing us. I remember a Goliath once in my teen years.

[28:01] And how I cried to the Lord and he helped me. I remember running for 12 years from Saul and his armies. And I was that close to the gates of death over and over and over again.

And God delivered me. And David's remembering what comes before his trouble. And he's saying, you know what I've learned from that past? I've learned that God is consistent. He never ignores the cry of the afflicted one.

And what's coming? Oh, we're posting ever closer to that judgment day when God who sits on the throne will dispense judgment and righteousness. And so that's part of the context.

And David prays in context. That's the idea here. What has happened before? What's going to happen in the future? It comes to bear upon his prayer.

And because of that, he has confidence as he's praying. He's now facing a fresh Goliath. Well, he has confidence that God will help and not ignore him.

[29:02] So read your present troubles. In context. Pray in context. With the bigger picture in mind.

Remember Samuel set up that stone. Called it Ebenezer. Up to this point, the Lord has helped us. Well, we need those Ebenezer stones in our lives.

That say, okay, do you see all the past tense of my life? Here's a lesson I've learned. The Lord has helped me. So I'm not going to look at my problem here without looking at the Lord's help and expecting it.

Because that's the kind of God he is. That's just the way he is. Toward his covenant people. And that's why a journal can be helpful.

Because it records the past mercies and goodnesses of the Lord. At least we ought to have a mental bank of God's goodnesses. But we need to get back there often and rehearse them to ourselves.

[30:02] Even as David does in his prayers. This isn't your first storm of trouble. Nor of God's people. And this is the thing that we need to do. Is to make this history part of the past tense of our trouble.

So here's your trouble today or tomorrow. This is all part of that past history. What's gone before your trouble. These are your people. These are the people of God.

The history of God's people. And of his coming through for them. This is part of your history. So make sure you pray about your problem. In the context of all that God has been for his people throughout history.

All that he's been for you in your past. So another problem. What am I to do? Pray to the Lord who heard me the last time and the time before that. And has always heard his people.

So we pray with remembrance. Pray in remembrance. We pray in context. And we pray thirdly in anticipation. The end of David's prayer expands beyond his own personal troubles on a local scene to the big picture.

[31:15] The nations are once again in mind. The world. The people's in it. The larger struggle between man and God that we saw in Psalm 2. The city of God versus the city of man.

And this is now in view as he comes to the crescendo. The end of his prayer. Verses 19 and 20. In other words, put them in their place.

Put men in their place. That's his prayer. Put an end to all the swaggering pride of man. Of the nations who think of themselves as more than men. Who strut around with God-like status.

And notice how this all grows out of forgetting God. At the end of verse 17. Why do the nations strut? Because they forget God. When men forget God, they start to think of themselves as God.

As if the throne is theirs. As if the world is theirs. As if people are theirs. Christians are theirs.

Things are theirs. All to do with what they want. And they think no one can stop them.

[32 : 34] And this great overreach begins with forgetting God. So David says, remind them who you are. Put them in their place.

Show them that they are but men. And you are God on the throne. World history is stained with man's persecution of God's people.

There are nations where the policy is to actively persecute Christians. Davis mentioned several examples. He says, under communist reign in the Soviet Union.

Christians were put in psychiatric wards. Psychiatric hospitals where they were treated with drugs. Until they went out of their minds and then were declared insane.

In other nations, they simply turn a blind eye toward those who persecute Christians. So that crimes against Christians are rarely brought to justice. In India, in the ERISA state.

[33 : 35] Hindu extremists attacked and burned Christians' homes and churches and belongings. Over 100 were killed. 70,000 left homeless. And only 24 have been convicted.

Nearly four times that amount have been acquitted. In Pakistan, the murderer of our missionary, Araf and Kathy Kahn has not yet been brought to justice.

Blind eye turned to the perpetrators. And Davis says, arise, O Lord. Let not man triumph. Let the nations know they are but men.

Here Davis recalls an earlier part of the Battle of Gettysburg in the Civil War. Things were a confusing mess. A confusing mess behind the federal lines in the early days of the war at Gettysburg.

The Battle at Gettysburg. Ambulances clattering along. Dazed stragglers wandering around. The deafening sound of big guns. The crackle of small arms. The yelling and screaming of men.

[34 : 44] There was a column of General Slocum's troops marching toward the firing line. A line they still could not see. The high screech of the rebel yell rather unnerved them.

They were veterans. But there was something about the ungodly racket they heard that put them on the edge of panic. They were passing a little cabin by the roadside. And in front of it was a bent old woman.

She sensed the unease of the troops. And as rank upon rank passed by her, she kept soothingly remarking. Never mind, boys. They're nothing but men.

Never mind, boys. They're nothing but men. And one soldier said that those commonplace words uttered in that context seemed almost sublime.

And the lads shook off their panic and were brave soldiers once again. Well, that's a lesson that the whole world is going to learn one day. That the nations and men of them are nothing but men.

[35 : 48] But you and I are to be remembering that lesson every day, over and over, whenever injustice is done, whenever persecution comes upon the church.

They are but men. And we can pray with assurance. Lord, teach them that they are but men.

Psalms 9 teaches us to pray in remembrance, to pray in context, to pray in anticipation, with hope, for after all, the throne is occupied.

And he's ruling and reigning in justice for his people in Christ. Let's go with that encouragement and let's remember to pray for those who are persecuted for Jesus' sake.