

Judged in Righteousness

Psalm 9

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction:

- A. Be turning to the book of Psalms, chapter 9. Today I want to share some thoughts impressed upon me in my study of this chapter. And my emphasis for today is reflected in the title I've chosen for this message, "Judged in Righteousness."
- B. Hebrews 9:27 declares to us with no ambiguity whatsoever that, "...*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*" You and I have a certain judgment to face and an eternity to spend. And when you get down to it, isn't that what prompts most of us to first become interested in and /or involved in religion – knowing that after we die there is a heaven and a hell, an eternal existence in either heaven's glory or hell's misery? And we want to know how we might be among those eternally blessed and bound for heaven.
- C. Well, I believe that this Psalm (when understood consistent with the whole of scripture) should take away all the guesswork for us. As I've said previously, it's like taking an open-book exam. This passage clearly identifies for us, not only the standard by which we all shall be judged, (in righteousness), but in this chapter characteristics are cited that identify both (1) those who are judged righteous, eternally accepted in God's sight, who shall inhabit heaven's glory as well as (2) those who shall be cast into hell – eternally banished from the presence of our holy God.
- D. So what could be more important for us to seriously consider and devote our attention toward understanding? We're talking about my and your eternal, everlasting destinies – heaven or hell.

II. God Has Determined to Reign as Judge:

- A. In verse 7 of Psalm 9, we read, "***But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.***" God has determined to reign as a Judge.
 - 1. First, notice that it is an eternal reign: The verse begins by noting the eternity of our Lord – "...*the Lord shall endure forever.*" And so, we know that the judgment spoken of here is an enduring judgment.
 - 2. And as verse 8 begins with these words, "***And he shall judge the world ...***" We see the certainty of this enduring, eternal judgment. It does not read, that, "the Lord may endure forever" or that, "He may judge the world," but He SHALL!

B. So, God has determined to reign in judgment – a sure, certain, and everlasting judgment.

III. The standard of judgment is righteousness:

A. Secondly, the standard of judgment or the basis upon which God judges is not a mystery but rather it is openly declared unto us. As verse 8 continues it reads, “***And he shall judge the world in righteousness,...***”

1. This word “world” here is a general name for all the countries of the habitable world, showing that this is referring to the universal judgment of all men.
2. It is estimated that about 1000 yrs. after the Holy Spirit inspired the Psalmist, David, to pen these words that the Apostle Paul repeated them in his sermon on Mars Hill. That’s recorded for us in that often quoted passage from Acts chapter 17 where, beginning in verse 30 we read, “***And the times of this ignorance God winked at; <speaking of that period under the Old Covenant in which these Gentile nations had been left to themselves> but now commandeth all men every where to repent: ³¹Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness ...***”
3. Notice here that in the progressive revelation of the New Testament, we have this standard of judgment by which all shall be judged clarified further as it reads, “***...by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.***” Of course this is speaking of no less than the perfect, impeccable righteousness established by that man ordained by God the Father, His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is speaking of the very merit of Christ’s perfect obedience, even unto the death of the cross which He rendered in perfect satisfaction to God’s holy law and justice. And as Acts 17:31 tells us, God assures all men everywhere (the same ‘all men everywhere’ who are commanded to repent in verse 30 – commanded to repent of imagining that anything other than a righteousness equal to that rendered by the Lord Jesus Christ would find them accepted before the judgment seat of God) – He assures all men (guarantees or gives them cause to know without a doubt) that Christ’s righteousness alone got the job done because he raised Him from the dead.

B. As Romans 5:21 sets forth, “***That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.***” In keeping with Romans 6:23, we know that “***The wages of sin is death...***” But just as sin demands death (just as sure as Christ died a bloody, sacrificial death because the sins of a people were charged or imputed to Him), even so righteousness demands life!

Christ came out of that grave because the very righteousness through which grace reigns unto eternal life – this very righteousness by which the world shall be judged – was fully established by Christ’s obedience unto death. As Romans 10 puts it, “Christ is the end (or the finishing) of the law for righteousness.”

C. Righteousness, you see, speaks of perfect satisfaction to God’s holy law and justice. So this means that perfect obedience to God’s revealed will from the cradle to the grave (not only in outward deeds, but in our very thoughts and motives) is required if one is to measure up to this standard of righteousness – the very standard by which God shall judge us all. Consider these verses:

1. Matthew 5:48: “***Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.***” There’s the standard – perfection!
2. Galatians 3:10: “***For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.***” If salvation is conditioned on you, the sinner, then you’re under the curse of the law.
3. James 2:10: “***For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.***”

D. Can you render this perfect righteousness? No way. That’s why we needed a Substitute to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. And this Substitute had to be one who could represent us – made under the same jurisdiction as us – walk on this earth in our room and stead, subject (as we are) to God’s holy commands to us His creatures, obligated to flawless compliance with His revealed will. And so to render this righteousness as a Substitute for sinners, Christ had to be made like unto us (humanity) and yet He could not be tainted with the sin of fallen humanity – as we all are as sons and daughters of Adam. He was born of the virgin Mary. He was that “holy thing” conceived by the Holy Spirit as was necessary in order for him to be a suitable Substitute and an acceptable sacrifice for sin. He had to be both God and man – the God-man.

E. But not only must the precepts of God’s revealed will be perfectly obeyed, but for GRACE to reign through righteousness (for unmerited favor to be shown by way of perfect satisfaction to God’s justice (that’s what grace is) – the law’s just and strict penalty due unto sin, the breaking of the law, had to be extracted. The just penalty had to be paid. You see, this was necessary for Christ did what He did as a Substitute for and on the behalf of sinners, (law breakers) and their guilt must be dealt with if they are to be pronounced righteous, And only the infinitely valuable blood of One who is both God and man could pay the infinite price due unto the injured justice of an infinitely, holy God.

- F. So if grace is to reign through righteousness, then the entire merit of Christ's obedience – His obedience even unto death – must be imputed or charged to all the objects of God's everlasting love – to all those whose sins were charged or imputed to Him so that He, who knew no sin, might pay the debt before God's justice – a debt that these objects of His everlasting love, grace, and mercy could never pay for themselves.
- G. As Ephesians 1 teaches us, God the Father chose a people in Christ from before the foundation of the world that they should be holy and without blame before him – sinners, saved by grace. That is, that these sinners are viewed by God as one in Christ, or as Ephesians 1:7 puts it, “...*wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*” – In Christ.
- H. So see here that the standard is unmistakable. There is no ambiguity. All shall be judged in righteousness. You and I must have a righteousness equal to that of the Lord of glory to be found acceptable in God's sight. And you and I, we sinners, cannot produce that. The only righteousness whereby we might be found accepted is His righteousness and that made ours by God's gracious imputation of it to us – His charging or reckoning it to our accounts.

IV. A Just, “Upright” Judgment:

- A. Now back in Psalm 9, notice the last part of verse 8 where it reads, “...*he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.*” That means with equity. In Psalm 98:9b, we read, “..*for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*” In other words, this standard of righteousness by which the world is judged shall be applied to all people equally.
- B. You see the rules of the enduring throne of judgment never change. It's hard for us to plan anything in this life. Tax laws continually change, governmental rules and regulations change, we live with great uncertainty about our future here in this life as it's hard to bank on anything staying the same. Planning for the future is difficult to say the least. But this judgment of God is upright – according to the absolute, never changing perfection of God's truth and justice. We often lament over the obvious injustice that is rendered from time to time in our less than perfect earthly court system, but know this – heaven's throne administers judgment in uprightness. You can bank on it never changing!
- C. So, in this judgment, your good intentions, your being more honest, more moral than others, more sincere about your religion, your shedding of genuine tears of repentance, your fervent prayers – none of these will matter. We all shall be equally judged, weighed against this one standard: Does your righteousness equal that of the one by which God judges all men – the one He ordained, the God-man whom He raised from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. You may stack up good against your fellow man. You may say, well I know everyone thinks so-and-so is going to heaven and I know if he or she gets in, I'll be okay. But that is just fooling yourself if you hear God's word and it's His throne of judgment and we don't set the standard. God does. And He clearly tells us that His measure is the impeccable righteousness of His Son – the sinless Lord of glory. You cannot produce that. It had to be produced for you and imputed to your account if you're to be accepted in God's sight. You must be accepted in Christ, based solely upon His righteousness having been graciously put to your account.

V. The Identification of Those who are Judged Righteous:

A. Now I mentioned at the outset, that not only has the standard of judgment been clearly set forth in this passage, but we have other identifying characteristics cited in our text that identify both (1) those that are judged righteous, eternally accepted in God's sight, as well as (2) those that shall be cast into hell. So first, let us consider the description of those who shall be judged favorably in God's sight.

B. Look with me at verse 10 where it reads, "***And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.***"

1. First, notice that this speaks of a group of people whom the Lord has not forsaken. Now to be found among those whom the immutable, never changing God of this universe loves with an everlasting love – those whom He never, no never forsakes, is to be among those whom the Father gave to the Son to be their Surety –so as to stand in their place, and pay their sin debt and bring in an everlasting righteousness for them. These are the blessed of God who are judged righteous in Christ their Savior. As God says of Himself in Malachi 3:6, "***For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.***" Because God does not change, those whom He does not forsake, He shall never forsake.

2. And it says of them here in Psalm 9:10 that they will put their trust in God. And notice the order. It does not say that the Lord has not forsaken them that seek Him for (or because) they put their trust in Him. No, it says "***And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for <or because> thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.***"

C. They Know His Name: So here in Psalm 9:10 we see that all who are so eternally blessed, those who are never forsaken, those judged righteous in Christ, are said to know His name. Now if you consider this verse 10 in conjunction with the first part of verse 16, you gain some insight about what it means to know His name.

For we read in the first part of verse 16 that, “***The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth:..***” Well, what can we identify concerning His judgment whereby we might know Him? It’s this: He judges the world in righteousness!

1. God’s name speaks of how He is identified such that we might know Him as He is and thereby worship Him as He is in order that He might be glorified.
 - (a) In John 17:3, Christ prayed to the Father, “***And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.***”
 - (b) In Isaiah 45, He distinguishes Himself in this way, saying in verses 21b and 22, “***...and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.*** ²²***Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.***” Now how can God be both a just God (not simply overlook or pretend we never sinned) and still be a merciful Savior? Only by the upright judgment which he executeth in the earth. He judged the world in righteousness by the doing and the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ – His righteousness, whereby the sins of His people were put away. To know God as a just God and a Savior is to know His name. And His name is ...

2. The Lord our Righteousness:
 - (a) In Jeremiah 23:6, speaking of Christ it reads, “***...and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.***”
 - (b) And then over in Jeremiah 33:15-16, we read, “***In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; <Christ’s humanity having descended from King David> and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.*** ¹⁶***In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she*** <speaking of spiritual Israel, a people chosen unto eternal deliverance> ***shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.***
 - (c) You see, all who are judged righteous, are so judged due to their oneness with the Lord Jesus Christ before the eyes of God’s holy and strict justice. So none know God without knowing of His standard of judgment. All who shall enter into the eternal presence of a Holy and just God will be awakened to the necessity of having His righteousness made to be theirs.

3. And as Psalm 9:10 tells us, those who are brought to know Him as a just God and a Savior will put their trust in Him. Oh, if you become convinced of your total unfitness (your sin) in your heart of hearts by the power of God’s Spirit under the preaching of this very Gospel of God’s grace wherein His righteousness is revealed, you will solely trust in Him for all of your salvation.

Such convinced sinners can do no other because the absolute necessity of possessing the very righteousness which Christ alone could and did establish by His obedience unto death – that necessity has been revealed to their minds and hearts by God-given faith. Nothing else will do for them. They will put their trust in Him and in Him alone!

D. They are identified by their standard of judgment, adopting God’s as their own:

1. Notice in verse 11, the Psalmist ends that verse saying, “...***declare among the people his doings.***” And then notice at the end of verse 14, he writes, “...***I will rejoice in thy salvation.***”
2. You see those who are judged righteous before God ultimately adopt God’s standard of judgment as their own. They rejoice in His doings, in His salvation. It is of grace, so not any work of their own hand. But in contrast, let us now consider the description of the condemned – those who shall be declared to be void of this righteousness that answers the demands of God’s holy law and justice...

VI. The Description of Those who are judged to be Void of a Righteousness:

A. Verses 15-16: Look with me in Psalm 9 at verses 15 and 16: ***The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. ¹⁶The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaiion <Hih-GUY-uhn> Selah.***

1. The metaphors here are taken from hunters, who dig pits for the wild animals to fall into or hide snares or traps so that they can more easily slay them. And yet these who are called “wicked” are said to be snared by their own traps – by the works of their own hands.
2. This principle can certainly be applied to physical realities such as in the story recorded in the book of Esther where Haman had built gallows designed for the hanging of his enemy Mordecai, only to end up being hung himself on those very gallows he had built.
3. But I believe this passage is speaking prophetically of the heathen who join in the idolatry that has been prevalent in every age, including in our day. I’m referring to those who adhere to the natural religion of man – the religion of works. That is, they seek to be saved based upon something other than the one righteousness by which God plainly declares He will judge the world. Many claim to be trusting in Christ, while at the same time imagining that many, even most, for whom He lived and died will perish anyway. And most often if you confront them with this obvious contradiction and ask them how could any for whom Christ died ultimately perish, they will boldly explain, “Oh, but you got to believe, or you got to <fill in the blank>.”

4. Listen, no matter how often you might invoke the name of Christ as your savior, the real savior you're relying upon, the real deciding factor is exposed by what you perceive to be God's standard of judgment – that is what you believe makes the real difference in keeping you out of hell and getting you into heaven. For many, it is as it once was for me, it is their act of believing, their exercise of faith that is presumed to make the difference, not Christ and His righteousness alone.
5. This religion of works is so pervasive in our day. This past week, I read a sign on a church here in town that typifies this. You know most folks get paid their wages on Friday and with that in mind, this sign read, "If the wages of sin is death, why don't you stop before Friday." My friend, you are a sinner and you will be until the day you die. You can't stop sinning. The only difference is that some sinners are saved by grace. As David wrote in Psalm 130:3, "***If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?***"
6. So the snare spoken of here in Psalm 9, is the wickedness of false religion – even religion that is often camouflaged as a hidden pit or trap covered in the cloak of religion. Why, many even call it grace but if the standard by which they suggest you can judge saved or lost is anything other than or in addition to God's standard – the righteousness of God in Christ, then know this: it is wicked and evil in God's sight and shall not stand at the judgment.
7. In studying this passage, I was reminded of the words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount when He said at the beginning of Matthew 7, "***Judge not, that ye be not judged. ²For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.***" That passage is not forbidding judgment, but rather is saying be careful how you judge. In fact in John 7:24, our Lord commands us to "***...judge righteous judgment.***" So here in Matthew 7, what He is saying is that if you're intent on making some work of the sinner's hand the standard by which you judge, then so be it. That's how you will be judged – by your works. But God's standard by which we all shall be measured is a perfect righteousness which you have never (and can never) produce. You see, to persist in imagining otherwise is to be tragically caught in your own snare by which you judge yourself and others.
8. A little further down in Matthew 7, we have that familiar passage in which our Lord said beginning in verse 22, "***Many will say to me in that day, <speaking of the day of judgment> Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?***" ²³ <Why that sounds like some pretty active preachers who would be widely held in esteem doesn't it? Preaching in the name of Christ, empowered by God to do many wonderful works.

And yet as they approach the judgment, banking on these esteemed works of their own hands, not Christ's work of righteousness alone, look what Christ says of them> ***And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*** This describes those found among the wicked as they are referred to in Psalm 9, verses 16 and 17 –of whom it is said in verse 17...

- B. The Wicked and the Indifferent: ***“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”*** Now before I go any further, I want you to notice the untranslated words leading up to this verse found there at the end of verse 16. It reads, Higgsion (Hih-GUY-uhn) and Selah. These words mean pause, mediate, solemnly stop here and consider the seriousness of the subject. We're talking about eternity and the Psalmist, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has told us plainly how we all will be judged. It's right here before our eyes. Pause, thoughtfully and prayerfully consider this most serious matter:
1. So with that suggestion, he says here in verse 17, (Repeat verse 17). Now we just saw a clear example of the “wicked” workers of iniquity to whom God will say, “depart from me” – declaring what they thought was good to be works of iniquity, sin. And given that the immediate context is speaking of their reliance on the work of their own hands, I believe that the “wicked” (as they are called here) is not necessarily referring to those who persist in the evils of outward immorality, but rather the context suggests that he is referring here to religious folks who remain hell-bent on relying upon something that proceeds from them, their faith, their good works, their repentance (something) in contrast to those who truly flee to Christ for mercy and grace, who are brought to rely solely upon His work of righteousness!
 2. And it does not say of these who persist in their works religion that they might go to hell, or that they are in danger of going to hell, but rather they shall be turned into hell. No ifs, ands, or buts about it.
 3. But I want you to notice the last part of that verse as it communicates to us that likewise, ***“...and all the nations that forget God”*** shall just as surely be turned into hell. And I believe this warning certainly does apply to those who commit gross sins and outward acts of immorality and evil. Certainly those who live like the devil so to speak, forget God. But I believe this also applies to those we would judge as good, upstanding, honest, moral folks who remain indifferent or unconcerned – who just forget God in the sense that they put all of this out of their minds – folks who might say, “I don't know, I figure it will all come out in the wash. I'm not sure about all of this so I'm not going to put forth much effort to delve into it. I'm a pretty good person” or so they might figure.

VII. Closing:

Well if that describes you, hear again the clear, easily understood message of this Psalm, a clear message that is consistent with the whole of scripture: God is not going to judge you or me or anyone else based upon how well we stack up against some other fallen sinner – That’s not the standard. From the message set forth in this very passage, I pray that you can see how God so clearly, plainly, and unmistakably tells us that He will judge the world in righteousness.

And as we’ve seen, all who truly put their trust in Christ, have His very righteousness accounted unto them. .Such are blessed by God to see their desperate need for His righteousness and that alone – the very merit of Christ’s obedience unto death on the cross. And any who are so blessed with that blood-bought gift of faith that causes them to look to Christ’s Person and work – His righteousness alone for all of their salvation – they can thereby know that they are among those for whom He died – those to whom His righteousness is imputed. Truly as the scripture declares, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (His doing and dying) and thou shalt be saved!”

As we read there in Psalm 9:11, let us declare among the people HIS doings.

May God so bless you!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God’s grace found in the only infallible source, God’s word itself – the Bible.