

# PSALM 9

In this psalm,

**I.** David praises God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies and the enemies of his country (v. 1-6), and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise (v. 11, 12).

**II.** He prays to God that he might have still further occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances and the confusion of his enemies (v. 13, 14, 19, 20).

**III.** He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world (v. 7, 8), protecting his oppressed people (v. 9, 10, 18), and bringing his and their implacable enemies to ruin (v. 15-17). This is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which have been in part destroyed already, and shall be yet more and more till they all be made his footstool, which we are to assure ourselves of, that God may have the glory and we may take the comfort.

## ~~991~~ PSALM 9:1-10

### DEVOUT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*To the chief musician upon Muth-labben. A psalm of David.*

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon *Muth-labben*, which some make to refer to the death of Goliath, others of Nabal, others of Absalom; but I incline to think it signifies only some tone, or some musical instrument, to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies David is here triumphing in the defeat of are the Philistines, and the other neighbouring nations that opposed his settlement in the throne, whom he contested with and subdued in the beginning of his reign, ~~1088~~ 2 Samuel 5:8. In these verses,

**I.** David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, v. 1, 2. Note,

1. God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works.

2. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity, with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our *whole heart*.

3. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy we should take occasion thence to remember former mercies and so to *show forth all his marvellous works*.

4. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy: *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*.

5. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only: *I will be glad and rejoice in thee*, not in the gift so much as in the giver.

6. Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing psalms.

7. When God has shown himself to be above the proud enemies of the church we must take occasion thence to give glory to him as the *Most High*.

8. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed; see <sup><620></sup>Revelation 12:10; 19:5; 15:3, 4.

**II.** He acknowledges the almighty power of God as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with or stand before, v. 3. But,

1. They are forced to turn back. Their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not, push forward in their enterprises, but retire with precipitation.

2. When once they turn back, they fall and perish; even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting. If Haman begin to fall before Mordecai, he is a lost man, and shall prevail no more; see <sup><763></sup>Esther 6:13.

3. The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, are sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. That is easily done which a man does with his very presence; with *that* God confounds his enemies,

such a presence has he. This was fulfilled when our Lord Jesus, with one word, *I am he*, made his enemies to *fall back at his presence* (~~John~~ John 18:6) and he could, at the same time, have made them perish.

4. When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion we must ascribe their discomfiture to the power, not of instruments, but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

**III.** He gives to God the glory of his righteousness, in his appearing on his behalf (v. 4): "*Thou hast maintained my right and my cause*, that is, my righteous cause; when that came on, *thou satest in the throne, judging right.*" Observe,

1. God sits in the throne of judgment. To him it belongs to decide controversies, to determine appeals, to avenge the injured, and to punish the injurious; for he has said, *Vengeance is mine.*

2. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth and that with him there is no unrighteousness. Far be it from God that he should pervert justice. If there seem to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of Providence, yet these, instead of shaking our belief of God's justice, may serve to strengthen our belief of the judgment to come, which will set all to-rights.

3. Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

**IV.** He records, with joy, the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell and attends those triumphs with his praises, v. 5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen, and wicked people, who were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion.

1. He had checked them: "*Thou hast rebuked the heathen*, hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them." This he did before he destroyed them, that they might take warning by the rebukes of Providence and so prevent their own destruction.

2. He had cut them off: *Thou hast destroyed the wicked.* The wicked are marked for destruction, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice and destructive power in this world.

**3.** He had buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy, had put out their name for ever, that they should never be remembered with any respect.

**V.** He exults over the enemy whom God thus appears against (v. 6): *Thou hast destroyed cities*. Either, “Thou, O enemy! hast destroyed our cities, at least in intention and imagination,” or “Thou, O God! hast destroyed their cities by the desolation brought upon their country.” It may be taken either way; for the psalmist will have the enemy to know,

**1.** That their destruction is just and that God was but reckoning with them for all the mischief which they had done and designed against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them (when there was no king in Israel to fight their battles), had destroyed their cities and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them. But now the wheel was turned upon them; their destructions of Israel had come to a perpetual end; they shall now cease to spoil and must themselves be spoiled, <sup>231</sup>Isaiah 33:1.

**2.** That it is total and final, such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them, So devouring a thing is time, and much more such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such ruins that their very memorial has perished, and those who have sought them could not find where they stood; but we look for a city that has stronger foundations.

**VI.** He comforts himself and others in God, and pleases himself with the thoughts of him.

**1.** With the thoughts of his eternity. On this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish and forgotten; *but the Lord shall endure for ever*, v. 7. There is no change of his being; his felicity, power, and perfection, are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, <sup>490</sup>Psalms 29:10; 93:2.

**2.** With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in government and judgment: *He has prepared his throne*, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his immutable counsel. It is the great support and comfort of good

people, when the power of the church's enemies is threatening and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God now rules the world and will shortly judge the world.

**3.** With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government. He does all every day, he will do all at the last day, according to the eternal unalterable rules of equity (v. 8): *He shall judge the world*, all persons and all controversies, *shall minister judgment to the people* (shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state) in righteousness and *in uprightness*, so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it.

**4.** With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord, who endures for ever, is their everlasting strength and protection; he that judges the world will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed (v. 9): *He will be a refuge for the oppressed*, a high place, a strong place, for the oppressed, *in times of trouble*. It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world and to have troublous times appointed to them. Perhaps God may not immediately appear for them as their deliverer and avenger; but, in the midst of their distresses, they may by faith flee to him as their refuge and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them.

**5.** With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which those have that make God their refuge (v. 10): *“Those that know thy name will put their trust in thee*, as I have done” (for the grace of God is the same in all the saints), *“and then they will find, as I have found, that thou dost not forsake those that seek thee;”* for the favour of God is the same towards all the saints. Note,

**(1.)** The better God is known the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom will trust him *further than they can see him* (<sup><854></sup>Job 35:14); those who know him to be a God of almighty power will trust him when creature-confidences fail and they have nothing else to trust to (<sup><402></sup>2 Chronicles 20:12); and those who know him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness will trust him *though he slay them*, <sup><835></sup>Job 13:15. Those who know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness will rejoice in his word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know him to be the Father of spirits, and an

everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care and trust in him at all times, even to the end.

(2.) The more God is trusted the more he is sought unto. If we trust God we shall seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversations.

(3.) God never did, nor ever will, disown or desert any that duly seek to him and trust in him. Though he afflict them, he will not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

## ~~911~~ PSALM 9:11-20

### A CALL TO PRAISE GOD

In these verses,

**I.** David, having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise, v. 11. Those who believe God is greatly to be praised not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it: *Sing praises to the Lord who dwelleth in Zion.* As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type. There he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services. In all our praises we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assemblies of his people, as their protector and patron. He resolved himself to show forth God's marvellous works (v. 1), and here he calls upon others to *declare among the people his doings.* He commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion; he courts his neighbours to do it, to sing praises, not, as hitherto, to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to own among the heathen that *the Lord has done great things for his people Israel,* ~~913~~ Psalm 126:3, 4. Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines and their other wicked neighbours, who had, in making war upon them, used them barbarously and given them no quarter, v. 12. When God comes to

*make inquisition for blood* by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, *he remembers them*, remembers every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it sevenfold upon the head of the blood-thirsty; he will give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word (<sup>6524</sup>Deuteronomy 32:43), *He will avenge the blood of his servants*. Note, There is a day coming when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and avenge what has been shed unjustly; see <sup>2371</sup>Isaiah 26:21; <sup>2615</sup>Jeremiah 51:35. In that day it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him (<sup>1974</sup>Psalms 72:14), when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten *the cry of the humble*, neither the cry of their blood nor the cry of their prayers, but that both are sealed up among his treasures.

**II.** David, having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him; for he sees not all things put under him.

**1.** He prays,

(1.) That God would be compassionate to him (v. 13): *“Have mercy upon me, who, having misery only, and no merit, to speak for me, must depend upon mercy for relief.”*

(2.) That he would be concerned for him. He is not particular in his request, lest he should seem to prescribe to God; but submits himself to the wisdom and will of God in this modest request, *“Lord, consider my trouble, and do for me as thou thinkest fit.”*

**2.** He pleads,

(1.) The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered from those that hated him, and hatred is a cruel passion.

(2.) The experience he had had of divine succours and the expectation he now had of the continuance of them, as the necessity of his case required: *“O thou that liftest me up, that canst do it, that hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people from the gates of death!”* We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may thence take encouragement to hope that in all our distresses he will be a very present help to us.

**(3.)** His sincere purpose to praise God when his victories should be completed (v. 14): “Lord, save me, not that I may have the comfort and credit of the deliverance, but that thou mayest have the glory, *that I may show forth all thy praise*, and that publicly, *in the gates of the daughter of Zion;*” there God was said to dwell (v. 11) and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

**III.** David by faith foresees and foretels the certain ruin of all wicked people, both in this world and in that to come.

**1.** In this world, v. 15, 16. God executes judgment upon them when the measure of their iniquities is full, and does it,

**(1.)** So as to put shame upon them and make their fall inglorious; for they sink into the pit which they themselves digged (<sup><1075></sup>Psalm 7:15), they are taken in the net which they themselves laid for the ensnaring of God's people, and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines they were the aggressors, <sup><1087></sup>2 Samuel 5:17, 22. And other nations were subdued by those ward in which they embroiled themselves. The overruling providence of God frequently so orders it that persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God. Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves. Thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously, but efficiently, of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion.

**(2.)** So as to get honour to himself: *The Lord is known*, that is, he makes himself known, by these judgments which he executes. It is known that there is a God who judges in the earth, that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin and will punish it. In these judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The psalmist therefore adds here a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, *Higgaion*; it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments, and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations.



**2.** In the other world (v. 17): *The wicked shall be turned into hell*, as captives into the prison-house, even *all the nations that forget God*. Note,

**(1.)** Forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked.

**(2.)** There are nations of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and many mighty nations, that never regard him nor desire the knowledge of his ways.

**(3.)** Hell will, at last, be the portion of such, a state of everlasting misery and torment — *Sheol*, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be for ever lost and buried. Though there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, like sheep into the slaughter-house (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 49:14), and their being so numerous will not be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God or the least impeachment of his goodness.

**IV.** David encourages the people of God to wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred, v. 18. The needy may think themselves, and others may think them, forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished and to have been for ever frustrated. But he that believes does not make haste; the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak. We may build upon it as undoubtedly true that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them, at last, but will make it to appear that he never did forget them; it is impossible he should, though a woman may forget her sucking child.

**V.** He concludes with prayer that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects, of all the wicked enemies of his church: "*Arise, O Lord!* (v. 19), stir up thy self, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy name, and cause, and people."

**1.** "Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice: *Let not man prevail*; consult thy own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. *Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too strong for his Maker?*"

**2.** "Lord, reckon with them: *Let the heathen be judges in thy sight*, that is, let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee

and the mischief done to thy people.” Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight; and, when their day of grace is over, the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent towards them, <sup>(640)</sup> Revelation 14:10.

**3.** “Lord, frighten them: *Put them in fear, O Lord!* (v. 20), strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments.” God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble and to flee when none pursues, and thereby he makes them know and own that they are but men; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God — sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences make them subject to alarms. Note, It is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know and consider themselves to be but men, depending creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable.

In singing this psalm we must give to God the glory of his justice in pleading his people's cause against his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all anti-christian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm.