

Psalms 18-08-02a

This is Thursday, the 2nd of August, 2018. We continue our study in the Book of Psalms. It's been a couple of weeks since we were here.

We did a special last time. But we're ready to resume. We're looking at Psalm 9 and 10.

Psalm 9 and 10. You may remember that we discovered in our introduction to this section that there is an acrostic element here, an alphabetic element. And we're going to be looking to see the significance of that as we go along.

But let's begin, as is our custom, by asking God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, on the ministration of His Word to our hearts and our souls. Shall we pray? Father, it is a wonderful thing to be carried by Your grace, to be enfolded by Your gracious hands in provision, in blessing, in challenge, in coordinating the circumstances and the events of our lives for our good and for Your glory. We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ and the privileges that we enjoy in Him.

What a wonderful age it is to live in and to be a part of where we are assigned as Your gift to the Lord Jesus and the opportunity to represent Him, to accomplish on this earth the things that were originally assigned to Him in communicating Your truth and drawing others to the light, living in the light, walking in the light, and learning to function in such a way that we can serve both now and in the ages to come. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word tonight that Your Holy Spirit will be our teacher and our guide, will impress it on each heart in a meaningful and fruitful way so that all of Your will and all of Your goals for us can be accomplished as we haste the day when the Lord Jesus returns to take us to Himself and if we are qualified to present us before Your throne. We pray all of these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. As we turn our attention to this psalm, let me just quickly say that as a combination psalm, it was so clear that Psalm 9 and Psalm 10 belong together that the Septuagint combined them into one. The Catholic Bible follows the Septuagint, which of course was the source of the Vulgate, Jerome and the Vulgate.

The Vulgate, the Latin translation, was taken from the Septuagint. So the Catholics, bless their hearts, are sort of two steps removed. We're one step removed.

You have the Old Testament that is in Hebrew, and we've got our translations directly into English. But the Catholics, it starts with the Hebrew, then it was translated into the Greek Septuagint, then it was translated from that into the Latin Vulgate, and then the Latin Vulgate was translated into the English. So every time, we don't understand this now with digital copies, but in the days of analog, when you had a copier or a mimeograph and you make a copy of a copy of a copy, each one has less of the original granular detail.

And while there's a lot to be said for taking a look at the various versions, that one has got

some extra leaps in it that we're able to avoid. But because of that, if you go to a Catholic Bible, you get your Douay, Reims, and various other translations out of Rome, you'll find the Psalms are numbered differently from this point all the way through Psalm 147. And then they kind of make up the difference, and they end up with 150.

But these two are combined, and then they take one toward the end and they separate it so that they also have 150 Psalms. But if you get stuck and have to use a Catholic Bible, just remember, if you're looking for Psalm 10 in their Bible, you're going to be looking at Psalm 11 in our Bible. But be that as it may, it is a reminder that there is a close connection between these Psalms.

And we saw last time that there is an element of alphabet involved here, so that the first two verses, which are in our Bible, verse 1 and verse 2, in a Hebrew Bible, they're verse 2 and 3. Just gets confusing right off the bat, because the Hebrew numbers differently. The superscription is verse 1, and our verse 1 is their verse 2. So that's why you pay a guy like me the big bucks to go in and sort all of this out and just explain it to you without you having to wade into all of these deep waters. But as we begin looking at Psalm 9, what I'd like to do is quickly characterize what we're going to look at in this Psalm.

The first 12 verses are going to be a praise to God for His righteous judgment. Acknowledging God, recognizing God, celebrating God, thanking God that He is righteous in His judgment. That's going to be Psalm 9, 1 through 12.

So let's look at those verses together and see what it is that David, the psalmist, is saying. Because it's going to turn a corner at our verse 13 and move into more of a petition mode. But there's thanksgiving first and then a request.

And this is a good model. We've seen this other places that we thank God, we acknowledge God's righteousness, we acknowledge God's promises, and then based on that we move into our appeal, our requests to God, our expression of desire that He act and move in accordance with those things that we've recognized. So we're going to look at the thanksgiving portion of Psalm 9 tonight.

It's the first 12 verses. And it is praise for God's righteous judgment. Let's read it and then we'll talk about it.

Not hard to see that we're going to introduce that subject here. I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart. I will tell of all your marvelous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High. When my enemies turn back, they shall fall and perish at your presence.

For you have maintained my right and my cause. You sat on the throne judging in righteousness. You have rebuked the nations.

You have destroyed the wicked. You have blotted out their name forever and ever. O enemy, destructions are finished forever.

And you have destroyed cities. Even their memory has perished. But the Lord shall endure forever.

He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness. And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.

The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Those who know your name will put their trust in you. For you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Sing praises to the Lord who dwells in Zion. Declare His deeds among the people. When He avenges blood, He remembers them.

He does not forget the cry of the humble. Now, we've looked at some of this as a part of our overview. And so, some of this will be a little bit of review.

You may have a few notes here. But since it's been two weeks, let me just quickly talk about a few things here. Go back to the beginning.

I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart. I will tell of all your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in you.

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. Let's look at those two verses. You notice that there is a commitment spoken by David.

He says, count them. I will praise you. I will tell of your marvelous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in you. I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. So, instead of Satan's five I wills, you have David's four I wills here.

And these are choices. You don't have to acknowledge God. You don't have to reflect and remember.

This is a choice. And it is a good beginning for a healthy Christian life to begin by making a commitment to remember God and to praise Him and thank Him for who He is and what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. So, this is how David begins this song.

This song of praise. And it is a part of the superscription. Remember, Mutlaban.

Al-Mutlaban. Upon the death of the sun. And we think, well, that seems like kind of a mournful tune name for this thing that starts off with twelve verses of celebration.

But, you remember, there is a clue in that superscription. And we will be watching for it as we go. But, first of all, what kind of praise is this? We say, oh, praise the Lord.

You know, this has become sort of a toss-away line. Somebody says something good happened. Oh, praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord. Well, look at the quality involved in David's praise here. When he decides that he is going to praise the Lord, first of all, what does verse one tell us? What kind of praise is this? Is this toss-away superficial praise? I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.

I will praise you, oh Lord, with my whole heart. What is your whole heart? What does it mean to be wholehearted? It used to be a song. What is it, truehearted, wholehearted? I don't remember now all of the words to it.

But I know it starts out truehearted, wholehearted. And it goes on from there, talking about commitment. And that is really what we are talking about.

If you are wholehearted, there is no part of you reserved or holding back, right? And we think, well, if I am going to do a difficult task, or if I am going to endure under pressure, we don't so often think about committing to praising God with every fiber of our being. Now, you can decide that you are going to praise God. But how do you get to the wholeheartedness part? If I said, alright, I am going to stop talking now for a minute.

And during the next 60 seconds, I want you, in the quietude and solitude of your own mind and heart, to praise God wholeheartedly. Well, if you are like me, this is not something you can just do at the drop of a hat. Say, oh, okay, fine, I'll flip a switch and I've got wholehearted praise flowing out of my being.

What does it require? How do you praise the Lord with your whole heart? This is my question. What do you think? Well, how would you praise anybody? How would you praise your spouse? How would you praise your government? How would you praise somebody that did a good job? You've got to think about their qualities and their actions, right? You can think about somebody's fine qualities, but how do you know those qualities? It's what they do and, in some cases, what they don't do. You think about your husband or your wife.

You think about an obedient and faithful and diligent child. You think about somebody in your periphery that is a blessing and has done something. You have to think about two things to have wholehearted praise, who they are and how that defines what they do, how it is expressed in what they do, right? So if we're going to praise God with our whole heart, there's a little bit of preparation involved, right? We need to think about His nature and how that nature is expressed in actions.

Well, guess what? That's what's coming up in the remaining 11 verses here. But it's a great model for us. We shouldn't be shallow.

We shouldn't be trivializing the praise of God. God doesn't need trivial acknowledgment, offhanded compliments, unthinking witness, wholehearted. And that's the first thing David says.

And it's the first thing he, by example, provides by way of exhortation for us. If you're going to praise the Lord, do it with your whole heart. Okay, that sounds good.

Let me do that. How do I do that? I've got to stop and reflect on God's qualities, His essence. Remember the essence box Bob Thieme used to give? Do you remember it? Anybody that knows that, say it along with me.

Sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love. I don't hear anybody talking. I'm going to start over.

Sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, veracity. If you don't have those in your mind, they are a great starting place. That's God's qualities, some of them.

It's not exhaustive, it's sort of representative. You cannot fit God into that box. It's an essence box, and it's called a box for a reason.

It's a box for convenient memory, but it doesn't exhaust. God's sense of humor is not in there. Grace is not in there.

Did you notice? The essence box, no grace, compassion, long-suffering. There's a bunch of things that aren't in there, but it's a great starting point. Sovereignty, righteousness, justice.

Now, what did we say the theme of these 12 verses is? Quick, quick pop quiz. What are we talking about in these 12 verses? Praise for God's righteous judgment. He is sovereign.

He has the authority to judge. He is righteous, and He is justice. Right at the beginning of your essence box summary there, there's your qualities we're talking about.

So, Psalm 9. You can think about psalms that do various things. Psalm 1, the man that doesn't walk in the counsel of the ungodly, planted by the rivers of life. Psalm 23, you can think of Psalm 119, all about God's word and the value of it.

Well, Psalm 9, God's righteous judgment. Now, it's one thing to praise it, but what does it do for us? How do we then live in its light? That's going to be the rest of the psalm. That's where we're going to turn the corner in verse 13.

But we want to see how David sets this up. David is going to make some requests. He's going to have a conversation with God here to see about getting some things done.

But what does he begin with? Acknowledgement to God, and he has this in his soul. I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart. I will tell of all your marvelous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in you. I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. Now, what did we just talk about? What did I just get through saying about how you can praise someone or something with your whole heart? What are the two qualities? What it is, and how that is expressed in action.

I will show you my faith by my works, James says. I can be faithful sitting immobile, but if I'm faithful, sooner or later, that faithfulness is going to express itself in action. What does David say here? I will tell of your marvelous works.

These are things that God has done. I will be glad and rejoice in you, and sing praise to your name. That's who he is, and what he is, right? He is righteous, that's his quality.

He judges, that's his action. He implements the righteousness on the earth. Praising him for his righteous judgment.

He's righteous, but he's not righteous in the abstract. He's not righteous in a bubble. He's not a wonderful, divine, paradisaical ethic.

He is involved. He is immediate. He is engaged.

He has erupted into human life, and human activity, and human history. I-R-R, erupted. He has intervened.

He moves. He does. He acts.

So, David says, my whole heart appreciates who you are, and what you do, O Lord. That's the introduction. This is the starting gun for the psalm.

Now, how does verse 2 end? He begins, I will praise you, O Lord. And you notice that that's small caps there. What do you know about the small caps? What's the Hebrew word behind it? I will praise you, O Yahweh.

Tetragrammaton, God's personal covenant name to Israel. This is the familiar name. It reminds me, I'm speaking Spanish a lot with our contractors up here.

I was taught formal Spanish, where, you know, voy, vas, va, for ear, to go. And vas is the familiar. You use this with your family and your close friends.

And va, tu vas, is familiar, and that's informal and intimate. And then, usted va, that's the formal. Well, they don't use the formal in Mexico at all.

So when you're dealing with Mexicans, you can just forget that third line, and it's all the familiar. Como te va? How's it going with you? Familiar, te, ta, tu. Anyway, this is familiar.

God's covenant name, Yahweh. This is the familiar. This is the familial.

This is the covenant love relationship. I will be your God, you will be my people. I have chosen you out from among the nations.

To you, I am Yahweh. So he says, I will praise you, my covenant God, my familiar, we would say, Heavenly Father. That currency doesn't really come to bear until the Lord Jesus introduces us on that familiar level.

But look at how it ends. I'm interested in how it ends here. Tell of your marvelous works, be glad and rejoice in you.

Notice, be glad and rejoice. What's the difference? Is this just filler? I will be glad, I will rejoice. You remember how we're praising God because of what He is and what He does? Glad is what you are.

Rejoice is what you do. When people with a Jewish extraction want to rejoice, what do they do? Hava Nagila, they dance, they sing, they stomp things, they celebrate, right? It's expressive, it's an expressive thing. Rejoice is expression.

Gladness is the attitude inside. What you are. You are glad, you are not depressed, you're not down, you're not inert, you're not uninterested, you're not apathetic.

If you're glad, you've got a positive outlook and that will express itself in rejoicing. So, outside bracket is God and His name and His works. Inside is David with His name and His works.

He is happy David, He's glad David and He's writing this song and expressing this prayer for others as a part of His rejoicing. So, but then it ends up, He starts with O Lord, O Yahweh, and He ends with O what? O Most High. O El Elyon.

El Elyon. Have you ever stopped and thought about, we just glide over the various appellations, the various names for God? Why don't you just call Him Lord all the time? Why don't you just call Him Elohim? Or Yahweh Sabaoth? But why does He have so many different names? And since He has so many names, why are different ones picked at different times? We've talked about Yahweh, what is El Elyon? Well, I was interested in this and I did a little study on my own and I looked around to see what other people had to say and I found a guy that has summarized some of this and I wanted to give you his notions. He's written a commentary on the Psalms, which I don't have, but I have a copy of his little special note.

You know how like there's a kick-out box or an excursus, they call it, where somebody will take a little topic and say, you know, while we're on this subject, let me just kind of exhaust it a little bit. Well, he's got an excursus, he calls them reflections. He's got a reflection on Zion, he's got a reflection on this, reflection on that.

Here he's got reflections, Yahweh is El Elyon. And I thought, well, that's right up my street. Let me see if he agrees with me.

And of course, I wouldn't be reading him to you if he didn't. Reflections. This, by the way, is Willam A. Van Gemeren, if you're interested.

Willam, W-I-L-L-E-M. And his last name is all one word, Van Gemeren. It's A and then all the rest are Es.

Gemeren is all Es. Willam Van Gemeren. But I don't honestly know what's in the rest of his

commentary since I don't own it, but I like his excursus.

Yahweh is El Elyon. This is what he says. In Canaanite religious thought, which of course is where Israel has gone out of Egypt, El, the creator, was the supreme deity of the Canaanite pantheon.

They had El. And remember, a lot of these gods, and especially in the ancient Near East, are corrupted, half-remembered pieces of truth from before the flood and before Babel and so on. But as they got away from the source and started following their own path, it would get corrupted and perverted and distorted.

So God's name, El, is still there, but he's become sort of a Canaanite deity and he's picked up some mythology and some stories. And it's like Zeus or Jupiter or whoever, Jove. People say, by Jove.

Jove is the same old guy. But El, the creator, was the supreme deity of the Canaanite pantheon. Turn back to Genesis chapter 14.

If you know your way around Genesis, you know that the Abraham story picks up in Genesis 12. God says, get out from Ur and go to a place I will show you. And Abraham gets up and goes.

But then he gets stalled out because his father doesn't want to go all the way down. In chapter 13, Abraham went up from Egypt. He and his wife, all that he had, went to the south.

And he goes to Bethel. And God establishes the lot, splits off and goes to Sodom. In verse 14 of chapter 13, the Lord said to Abraham, after Lot had separated from him, Lift up your eyes now and look from the place where you are, northward, southward, eastward, and westward.

For all the land which you see, I will give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. This, by the way, seems to me to be sort of a double entendre prophecy because Abraham's descendants, in terms of the great nation and the fulfillment of the promises and all that, they are all in the dust of the earth.

And many who sleep in the dust will awake, some to righteousness and some to shame and contempt. But they're going to be as numerous as the dust. But at the moment, all of them ended up in the dust.

It wasn't continuous. Arise, walk in the land. This is verse 17 of Genesis 13.

Arise, walk in the land through the length and its width, for I give it to you. This is God's grace. He is a gracious and righteous God.

But He is acting. He is intervening for Abraham, who is a faithful man. And He is gifting the land to him and his descendants.

Abraham moved his tent, went and dwelt by the cherubim trees of Mamre, the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, built an altar there to the Lord. Then, you remember, the kings got together, went down, captured Lot, invaded, took all these people away. Abraham gets his servants together, whips them, gets all the stuff back.

They say the king of Sodom went out to meet him. So look at verse 18 of Genesis 14. Then Melchizedek, king of Salem, appears out of nowhere, as if by magic.

The author of Hebrews, Paul, says, Melchizedek seems to come from no place. He's not in any genealogy. He doesn't have father or mother.

There's no note of his birth. There's no note of his death. And he goes on to talk about the Lord Jesus being a high priest after this order.

But look at what it says. Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was the priest of whom? El Elyon.

El Elyon. That's Melchizedek's priesthood. He is the high priest for God Most High.

El Elyon. And so this is where we begin to encounter the appellation of God Most High. And what does he say when he blesses Abram in verse 19? Blessed be Abram of whom? God Most High.

David's not just picking out of a thesaurus different synonyms for God. If he says El Elyon, it's got resonance. It's got history.

It's got reference. It has ties. Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.

And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. Now, what is the content of this blessing with reference to God? Let me give you a clue here. Does it say anything about who God is? His character? Does it say anything about what God does? The answer to both of those questions is yes.

God is the possessor of heaven and earth. You don't have to do any actions to possess a thing. Do you have any possessions? Of course you do.

May not be many, but you've got possessions. Are you currently doing anything to exercise that possession? It belongs to you. It just is yours.

It's a condition of being. God is the possessor. He is the sovereign over heaven and earth.

God Most High. Nobody outranks Him. Nobody outpossesses Him.

And blessed be God Most High, who has done something. He has delivered your enemies into your hand. Does Melchizedek understand that God can be praised and blessed for who He is

and for what He does? Yes.

When David says God Most High, do you think David's ever heard the Genesis scroll growing up? Of course he has. Has he had this recounted by Jesse, his father, and countless other relatives there in Judah? Yes, he has. Is it an accident or a triviality that he calls God El Elyon? Not at all.

By the way, this is significant every time you encounter it. When you see El Elyon, when you see Most High, it's like Jerry Reed says, pay attention, I'm about to sing your song. This is God's special name.

And it goes all the way back to Melchizedek, who is a special guy by anybody's reckoning. So, El Elyon. Melchizedek recounts Him as creator, possessor of heaven and earth.

Israel, of course, there might be Canaanites that think that they've got Baal as El Elyon or some other god as El Elyon. But for Israel, only Yahweh is El Elyon. And that goes back to Genesis 14-22, where we were just looking.

You have Abram saying to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand, right after that blessing, by the way. I probably shouldn't have had you switch away. But Melchizedek pronounces that blessing.

Abram gives him a tithe of all. They share the bread and wine. It's a precursor of the upper room.

You know, the bread and the wine that Jesus uses as a symbol. The king of Sodom said to Abram, give me the people and take all the goods for yourself. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, this is 14-22 of Genesis, I have raised my hand to the LORD, that's LORD, small caps, Yahweh, God Most High, Yahweh, El Elyon.

The same two words that David uses in this first pair of verses, Psalm 9, 1 and 2. Now, I'm Perry Mason here, sewing it all up. We said, what kind of structure do we have here? What kind of psalm is this? Starts with an A and ends with crostic. It's acrostic.

So what's the first letter here? What are these first two verses governed by? What's the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet? Our word alphabet comes from it. Except in Hebrew, they call it the Alephbet. Those are the first two letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

Aleph and Bet, A and B. Aleph. These two verses talking about the LORD, God Most High, are Aleph. Aleph is the first letter.

I am the Aleph and the Tav. I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am the beginning and the end.

I am the head and the tail. The letter Aleph comes from the ox. It is the tractor of the ancient world.

It's the strongest domestic animal, is the ox. And so, it is the first and the chief, the highest and the best, Aleph. You are, I will make you the Aleph and not the Tav.

I will make you the head and not the tail. And the letter Aleph began as a sideways V with a curved line at the back that gives you the ears and the horns of an ox head. And you just turn that around and our capital letter A is just a sideways, old Hebrew alphabet Aleph.

Not the little funny thing you see in Aramaic square script. It's a sideways V with a curved line through the back and it looks like a pointy ox head. It's the head.

What is he talking about? You are the sovereign God. I will celebrate who you are and what you do as sovereignty, righteousness and justice. You are Yahweh, my covenant Lord and God and you are El Elyon, God most high.

Who does Abraham in these days tell the king of Sodom? He has raised his hand in fealty and in pledge and in dedication and in commitment. I have raised my hand to whom? Yahweh El Elyon. He has just been talking and sharing bread and wine with the priest of El Elyon who has mentioned that name twice and Abraham repeats it to the king of Sodom.

I am committed to him. What should be our testimony to the Sodomites of this world? I don't mean that so much in the literal sense as in the ungodly. What's our testimony? I raise my hand to my Lord and my God through the Lord Jesus Christ to El Elyon, God most high.

I celebrate who he is, I celebrate what he has done. You could almost end the psalm with the first verse, couldn't you? And yet we've got 11 more verses to go. And tonight, because we do have a little bit more to cover, we're going to pause here and take a break and I'm going to surprise the engineer with that.

But I want to come back and spend just a little bit more time so we get caught up on Psalm 9 because I want to move next time forward so that we can cover this double psalm in just a few weeks. So we're going to pause here and take our break. We can reflect on what we've learned already about wholehearted praise of God for who he is, who he is to us and what he has done in the earth in general and for us in particular.

When we come back, we'll look at these other 11 verses.