

All right, this summer we're looking at God's heart for the nations.

Again, in light of the holiday, we're going to look at this psalm, particularly in light of our nation, and we'll make application in that way.

I will say that most of the time when I come to a passage of Scripture,

I'm looking to basically explain what that passage means in context, then also show you the principles of who God is, who we are before God, and whatever the passage is talking about, general principles.

And then I usually shoot to make the easiest, most direct application, and then allow you to flesh out that application and flesh out those principles in your small group, in Bible studies, in your own personal time.

with the Lord.

Today, I'm not going to make the most direct, easiest application.

It's going to be like one more step, one more additional step of application.

So that just means that you're going to have to work a little bit to follow with me, and I'm going to work to bring you along with me as we make that application at the end of the sermon, all right?

So you just have to stay buckled in slightly longer than normal.

All right, enough talking about the sermon.

Let's pray, ask for God's help, and we'll actually preach the sermon.

Heavenly Father, thank you again for your word.

Lord, we're thankful for your ancient word that communicates timeless truths that still have application and bearing on us today.

Lord, would you help us to see you clearly?

Would you help us to love you more deeply?

Lord, would you teach us about the world that you've made and even the world that we're in right now?

Lord, would you draw us into deeper fellowship with yourself?

We pray all this in Jesus' name, amen.

So as we celebrate 250 years of our great nation, like I said before, I trust that you had a great time celebrating, that you got to see some fireworks, grilled some hot dogs, all the typical ways that we Americans celebrate, and maybe some not so typical ways.

I heard of some Tannerite being blown up and some other things that you all partook in.

Glad to hear it.

God bless America.

And we got to see in all of these different ways that Americans love their country and think it's the greatest nation that ever was.

And I think that's mostly true.

I think apart from the nation of Israel that was directly ruled by God for thousands of years, I do think that we rank very high in nations that are great and have reflected godly principles.

And yet there are some folks that relentlessly point to our country's flaws, our failures past and present, as evidence that we ought to be ashamed of our country and of our nation, and that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for loving our country and our nation.

Now, no one's denying that those flaws and those failures existed and exist,

But we need to consider, as we evaluate our nation, the 250 years that we've been in existence, our own participation in it, we need to consider who's the judge here?

Who's to judge?

Who's the one that's weighing the balances?

Who's the one who's deciding what's right, what's wrong, what's good, what's bad?

You know, the Israelites were asking a similar question here at the tail end of some political conflict in which Psalm 9 was written and set.

Absalom, David's son, had taken the throne by challenging David's integrity and righteousness.

He sat at the city gate.

David allowed him to sit at the city gate.

And he's like, you know what?

David's not a very good judge.

You guys should come bring your problems to me and I'll adjudicate righteously between you.

And eventually he...

developed a following and then overthrew David and ran him out of Jerusalem.

David's general Joab has just killed Absalom.

So after a skirmish, after he's run him out of town, after Absalom ran David out of town, there was a battle and Joab ended up killing David's son Absalom.

and restored David to his throne.

And again, while Absalom's rebellion, I can say his name, Absalom's rebellion was wicked and wrong, not all of his claims were false, right?

Not all of his claims were wrong.

David had sinned, he had done wrong.

We'll talk about that a little bit more later.

So the big question kind of coming into Psalm 9 is how were David's followers and the rest of the country to think about Absalom's death and David's rule, right?

So you had this family battle, this political battle that was going on.

David's back on the throne now, but how is the country supposed to think about what happened?

How are they supposed to think about Absalom's death and David's restoration to the throne?

How could they both celebrate this?

and be honest about their king and their nation after coming out of this conflict.

Ultimately, what we see in Psalm 9 is that David entrusts himself to Yahweh, the God of Israel, and he encourages God's people to do the same, right?

So after all this uprising and this turmoil, and David's now got to move forward with Israel, he entrusts himself to Yahweh, the God of Israel, and he encourages his people to do the same.

And he does so in this way.

So David points out in Psalm 9 that God from his perennial, perfect, and present, like what I did there, throne, avenges the afflicted and executes clear and perfect judgment on the nations.

So what it means to entrust yourself to God is that God from his present, perfect, and perennial, or flip that, throne, avenges the afflicted and executes clear and perfect judgment on the nations.

All right, for those of you who care about such things, this psalm is in chiastic structure, so we're going to bounce around.

That's all that means.

We're going to start at the beginning, we're going to go to the end, and then we'll end up in the middle.

All right, so first we're going to look at God's perennial throne from the first couple of verses here.

Let's read the title down to verse 4.

It says,

I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and exult in you.

I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

So after this intro, which this is an intro like many intros, I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it today.

David continues, when my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish before your presence.

For you have maintained by just cause, you have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment.

So Muthlabin literally means the death of the son.

So this psalm is to be sung to the tune of death of the son.

I don't know what that tune sounds like.

I would imagine it's pretty dark, all right?

If you look back at chapter three, though, you'll see that the title for that psalm, Psalm chapter three or Psalm three, is a psalm of David when he fled from Absalom, his son.

So Psalms 1 and 2 kick off major themes for the whole book of Psalms.

Psalms 1 and 2 are the intro to the entire 150 Psalms.

After that, you have this little section of Psalm 3 to 9, right?

So Psalms 3 to 9, you have this little group of Psalms that talk about Absalom throwing David out and then Absalom dying and David being restored, right?

So this group of Psalms 3 to 9 is structured around that event in David's life.

So all the way to the point where he was killed and restored.

So when David is talking generally about the wicked, right?

So if we're looking at God's perennial throne here and how God wipes out the wicked, the wicked that he's talking about is really in the background is absolute.

So he's talking generally about the wicked and giving us some general principles, but he's very much in the background of all of that is the political, the familial situation of Absalom and David.

So the first thing that David praises God for in the psalm is that he judges justly, is that God judges justly and he destroys the wicked.

In verse 3, we see that the wicked perish in God's presence.

Verse 3 says again, when my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish before your presence.

So the image here is of the wicked staggering and perishing in God's presence.

It's almost like a man gasping for air as if God's presence is a foreign environment in which the wicked cannot survive.

There's a lot we could say about that.

God doesn't just keep sinners from heaven.

by the angel with the flaming sword, that image when Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden.

There was a judicial sentence given there and God kept sinners out of his presence, out of heaven, but they can't be there.

Physically, morally, can't be in God's presence.

It's almost as if it's a foreign environment that's hostile to wickedness and sin.

But God's not merely just a passive judge here.

So it's not just as if his presence is there and you can't be around him, but he's actively judging in verses five and six.

David writes, you have rebuked the nations who have made the wicked perish.

You have blotted out their name forever and ever.

The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins, their cities you rooted out.

The very memory of them has perished.

The wicked exist for a time, David says, but praise God, he judges righteously and will ensure that their time comes to an end.

He will not tolerate wickedness and evil forever.

Or in other words, to be wicked is to be temporary.

But that's not how David talks about our God here.

Look at verses seven and eight.

But the Lord sits in throne forever.

He has established his throne for justice and he judges the world with righteousness.

He judges the peoples with uprightness.

The picture here of God's throne is of an immovable, everlasting institution.

You know, 250 years is worth celebrating, but make no mistake, God's not impressed.

His throne existed before the molecules that make up the dirt of this great land existed.

His righteous law predates the law of physics.

His righteousness is older and more established than gravity, and it will outlast all of its skeptics and opponents.

The wicked are temporary.

God's righteous throne is forever.

Now that's intimidating, but the good news is that God's perennial throne is also God's perfect throne.

Or in other words, David's not just after a fearful, begrudging submission.

Well, this is inevitable.

God's throne is forever.

It's immovable.

So I might as well just give in.

That's not what David's after.

He's after praise and adoration.

Therefore, he moves on to God's perfect throne.

If we skip down to verses...

13 to 14.

He says, We see here that the purpose of salvation or the purpose of David's rescue here is praise.

that God's righteous judgment that comes from his eternal throne is meant to produce praise.

First, from those who have been saved, which just makes sense, right?

As God judges justly and works on behalf of those who have been afflicted, the beauty of his righteousness is on display as he rescues his people.

Jim Hamilton puts it this way.

He says, Yahweh is not weak.

He does not slumber.

He is not inattentive.

He will plead the cause of those who keep his word.

He is their stronghold.

And those who have been rescued by him, those who have found him to be a stronghold and someone to rescue them, ought to be the first to praise and magnify him because they know firsthand his beauty and his greatness and his goodness towards them.

They know the beauty of his salvation.

But also, when God rescues those who rely on him, he silences his critics.

Look at verses 17 to 20.

It says, the wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

Arise, O Lord, let no man prevail.

Let the nations be judged before you.

Put them in fear, O Lord.

Let the nations know that they are but men.

So David calls God to action for the sake of God's own reputation.

He's like, don't let them belittle you.

Don't let them think that they're getting away with anything.

Put the fear of the Lord back in him, right?

Don't let them forget that you're God and that they are but men.

I just also want to point out here in this last section that if we're thinking through what defines a good nation or a bad nation or a wicked nation, the wicked nations here are wicked for at least three reasons.

One, in verse 17, they forget God.

In verse 18, they forget the needy.

And then in verse 18, among them, the poor have no hope.

So they forget God, they forget the needy, and they kill the hope of the poor.

Meaning,

No way to be not poor anymore, right?

So these characteristics, those three things, forgetting God, forgetting the needy, and killing the hope of the poor, these characteristics transcend government, they transcend leadership, though leadership and government have a lot of influence in promoting or discouraging

those things.

But those three characteristics, like the way that David is viewing nations here, is pretty much the whole, all of the nation's life.

Government, religion, culture, family.

He's got a big picture of a nation here, not just who's in office or a political regime at that time.

So what we see here

is that David is not after, again, begrudging submission, but he's after joyful praise and obedience.

And the thing that leads us into praising God, the thing that leads us into that obedience is seeing the goodness and the rightness of God's judgment.

So the rescued see it, right?

The rescued see that God's judgment is good and right because they were oppressed and now they've been rescued.

And those that need that rescue see that God's judgment is good and right because they're calling for it.

They're saying, hey, come judge my cause, come find me, show that I've been afflicted, vindicate me and restore me.

But David also says,

that God's righteousness is perfect and plain for all, even the wicked to see in verses 15 to 16.

He says,

The judgment of the wicked is obviously righteous, right?

The judgment that comes down on the wicked is obviously righteous because they are destroyed by their own devices.

This passage alludes to the way Absalom died.

You remember, if you remember the story,

Absalom had long, beautiful hair.

Everybody noted it.

It was noted several times in a description of Absalom, which was kind of a symbol of his strength and his pride.

And as he rode to meet David's army in battle, his hair got caught in a tree and his mule flew out from under him and he was stuck there in the tree hanging by his hair until David's men found him and Joab killed him.

God's judgment is ironically plain, right?

He judges in a way that is obviously just and irrefutably righteous.

James Johnston, commentator on this psalm, says, "God is not mocked.

Sin carries its own punishment.

Violent men tend to die by violence.

The greedy suffer the discontent that comes with their greed.

Those who view pornography ruin their own sex life.

Gossips tear down their own character as they spread stories.

Others think less of them."

God's righteousness is perfect and plain.

It will be obvious to all when his judgment is leveled, when his judgment is passed down, that his assessment and his wrath is righteous and deserved.

So David praises God's perennial throne where God has judged righteously in the past.

He's also praised God's perfect throne where we know that God will judge every thought and action perfectly so that his justice is clear to all in the future.

But lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we see God's present throne here right in the middle of the psalm.

Look at verses nine and 10.

He says, the Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble, and those who know your name put their trust in you.

For you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

The Lord is a stronghold for those on the wrong side of injustice.

And anybody that knows him, David says, knows anything true about the Lord, knows that they can trust him, that he's worthy of their trust, that they can turn to him.

Jim Hamilton puts it this way.

Who is like the Lord our God?

He does not help those who can help him as if anyone could.

He helps those who can offer him nothing, who cannot defend, enrich, or contribute to him in any way.

He helps those who cannot defend their borders, who cannot fund a security force, who cannot devise a clever strategy to entrap intruders, who cannot establish peace through a demonstration of their own strength,

Yahweh is their stronghold because they have no other fortress, no other help, no other refuge.

He does not help those who help themselves.

He helps those who cannot help themselves.

Brothers and sisters, that's you and me.

When we were dead in our trespasses and sins, God sent his son and made us alive together with him in Christ.

He rescued us when we were needy, when we had no hope, when we had no means of salvation.

defending or providing for ourselves.

So the afflicted know the Lord, but the better news is that the Lord knows the afflicted in verses 11 and 12.

Sing praises to the Lord who sits enthroned in Zion.

Tell among the peoples his deeds.

For he who avenges blood is mindful of them.

He does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

He who avenges blood is mindful of them.

He knows them.

The Lord sits, present tense, on his throne right now.

He avenges all wrongs, if not immediately in the present, then as we've seen in the future.

But most importantly, in the present, the Lord does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

He hears it, he knows, and he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.

The Lord is mindful of both the oppressor and the oppressed, and he judges righteously between them.

So God from his perennial perfect and present throne avenges the afflicted and executes perfect and clear justice on the nations.

So two applications this morning for our patriotism as we celebrate our country's 250th.

Two applications.

One, I think we need to remember that our nation has one judge.

the one true God, therefore, we ought to pray and work for a town, for a county, for a state, for a country that the judge of all the earth would approve of.

As we said before, a nation that remembers God, remembers the needy, and nurtures hope for the poor is a nation that God would approve of.

I'm not going to get into a ton of discussion about natural law versus God's revealed law.

I'm not calling for a theocracy.

I don't think it's necessary to do that.

But I do think God has established government for these purposes that can be clarified and detailed a little bit more clearly.

But we can work for a country that is free to all, that also promotes those principles.

And I think if you read the Declaration of Independence, which I would encourage you to do, you know, on this 250th or the preamble to the Constitution, the first two are located in those documents.

You know, fear of God or not forgetting God, the creator, and also the last one of creating hope for the poor or not squashing the hope for the poor.

I would argue that the second one, if you read the Federalist Papers, the discussions that the founders had,

in establishing those documents, that the second one, remembering the needy or not forgetting the needy, is included and is underlying the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Not going to get into a ton of details there this morning.

All I want to point out is that we ought to celebrate and be proud of the many ways in which our great nation was founded on principles that had all three of those things as high priorities.

And we have a rich and a deep history behind our nation of men who worked to know and worked to clarify natural law and studied law from the scriptures, especially the Old Testament law, and have given us a gift unlike anything that's ever existed.

That's worth celebrating.

The fact that it's survived 250 years is worth celebrating and worth continuing to work to preserve.

And yet, there's been an ever-growing group that would have us despise our history, our heritage, and even loathe ourselves for living within this heritage.

Now, as I acknowledged earlier, what makes us a little sticky is that there are many flaws and faults within our country from the very beginning to now, and that would make it seem like maybe perhaps none of it was ever good.

But as we saw from the beginning, David faced a similar problem here, right?

He's facing a similar problem.

They've just went through a tumultuous time where David sinned, he did wrong, he miscarried justice.

But he teaches us and shows us and models for us that we can and ought to entrust those past wrongs to God, especially when the present cause is just.

So let me see if I can explain this very simply and clearly.

This is this extra step that I'm going to take this morning.

So if we go back to the story of Absalom and David, the reason that Absalom turned on David, the reason that he betrayed David, was because Absalom's half-brother Amnon raped his sister Tamar, or half-sister Tamar, and David didn't do anything about it.

So they had this horrible, grievous injustice and sin that happened within David's family, and David just turns a blind eye.

Again, it was a gross and shameful injustice, and Absalom couldn't stand David's inaction, so he kills his brother Amnon.

And again, David pretty much does nothing.

He ends up having to send Absalom away, but that was probably the least that David could do given the situation.

Nobody is flawless in this story.

You'll notice in the Psalm, in Psalm 9, that David never claims to be righteous.

That's highly unusual.

Usually David's claiming to be, you know, vindicate me, show me to be righteous, defend my cause.

He doesn't do that here.

The closest he gets is that in verse four, he refers to his cause as just.

He says, for you have maintained my just cause.

He was God's anointed king, and though he had miscarried justice, it was not right for Absalom to take the throne by force without God's approval.

So David can call his cause just,

Just.

But again, while that's true, I'm sure as David resumed his throne that there were mixed feelings about the current regime and probably a significant dip in the patriotism in the Israeli Gallup polls.

Nobody's feeling good about this situation as David returns to the throne.

Instead of defending every one of his actions, though, as David returns to the throne, instead of going back and defending the sins and justifying the sins and trying to even correct the sins at the time, David turns himself and the people and he points to God and his perennial, perfect, and present judge.

And he says, there is a judge who's going to adjudicate everything that happened, including me, justly.

He says, generally, my cause is just.

I know that what happened needed to happen and that I ought to be on the throne here and return to the throne.

But he turns final judgment for all the particulars that happened over to the Lord, reminding the people that there's a higher authority than David that they can turn to, right?

There's a higher authority that they ought to turn to and look to when these earthly authorities, when the leadership of our nation breaks down and sins.

So I would argue this morning that to recover a genuine, full-throated love of our nation and the principles that it was founded on, and to extend those principles, to ensure that those principles are extended to everyone, that are extended to all, we need to first remember that the Lord judges the nations and the individuals that make up the nations and is a stronghold for the oppressed.

Let's pray.

Lord, as we come to the table this morning, we do remember that fundamentally you are our maker, our creator, and you are the judge of all the earth.

Lord, we're grateful to have a judge that is righteous, that is impartial, who judges perfectly, whose judgments stand for forever

Lord, and who is aware, who is present, who sees and doesn't forget those who have been wronged and afflicted.

Lord, would you help us to love that about you, Lord?

Would you give us a deep appreciation?

Would you give us a deep sense of awe for your holiness and the way that you sit on your throne and adjudicate justice?

Lord, we turn over even those areas of our past, maybe even our present, where we don't understand how you're working out justice.

where we don't understand how you're working out righteousness and we can't see the just outcome right now, we turn those over to you, trusting that if you have been faithful to judge righteously in the past, that if you judged righteously and perfectly to the extent that you purchased the ability to show mercy and grace

by passing down that judgment on your son, on our behalf, Lord, that you will continue to judge righteously and perfectly in the future.

Lord, we're thankful again for who you are.

Would you work that down deep into not only our hearts, but Lord, would you help us to be a light and an advocate for your glory and your holiness and your character, both here amongst ourselves, but also in our neighborhoods as well.

Pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen.