

## Psalm 9

In Psalm 9 God's people rejoice in the righteous judgment of God against their enemies. God's people are confident that God will not let man prevail—though man exalts himself against God—but that God and his cause shall prevail.

As we see so often in the psalms, there is an antithesis in Psalm 9 between two groups of people. The younger children maybe remember that the word *antithesis* means *a division and a separation*. An antithesis is a separation between two groups of people. That is the antithesis that God made in the beginning. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed," God said to the serpent (Gen. 3:15). In this psalm we see this antithesis as well. There are the people of God, on the one hand, and there are people who are enemies of God, on the other hand. And the psalm tells us some things about both of them. Let's look at them for a little bit.

First of all, let's look at the people of God. We find in verse 9 that these people are oppressed, and they have times of trouble. Their oppression is the oppression of the enemy. The wicked are fighting against them and giving them trouble. We find also in verse 12 that the people of God are the humble. That means they are meek. It means they are not strong or powerful. It means that when you look at them, you can't see any strength in them. They are a very lowly people. We find in verse 13 that they are hated by the enemy. We find also that these people of God are always at the gates of death. If you look at their lives in this world, it looks like they are about to perish. We find in verse 18 that they are needy and poor. That is another description of their weakness and their emptiness. The people of God in this world are not the mighty of the world. The people of God in this world, as far as their spiritual conflict with the enemy goes, are not lifted up. There is no power that they have to overcome the foe.

What about the other people, the wicked, with whom there is the antithesis? We find that these wicked represent the cause of man. "Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail" (v. 19). Men think of themselves as great, as exalted. They think of themselves as prevailing. Because these wicked represent the cause of man, they hate the righteous, they hate the needy, they hate the humble, and they oppress them. They exalt themselves above everyone around them. "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them" (v. 6). That speaks of the strength of the enemy. The enemy that is man can destroy cities, can go into this or that place and raze it to the ground in such a way that even the memory of that place perishes. That is a description not first of all of a nation's fighting with tanks and swords against another nation and destroying a city physically in war; but that is a description of the wicked's going from city to city spiritually, that is, going to the church of Jesus Christ, going to Zion, and seeking to raze Zion to the ground. The wicked, who set themselves against God, seek to destroy the church.

We find that they have laid a net and prepared a trap (v. 15). We find that they oppress the righteous. The reason that the wicked do this is because their cause is the cause of man. Their cause is the cause that man is God. They exalt themselves, and they believe that no one shall overthrow them and that because they are strong and the righteous are weak, they may oppress the righteous. This is the way it has been from the beginning, that man views the cause of man as the greatest cause and that man exalts himself as God above God. That is what Satan did. That is what Adam and Eve did when they fell into sin. They fought to be like God, equal with God.

Being the enemies of God, the wicked are the enemies of God's people. Because their cause is man, they fight against all of those whose cause is Christ, whose cause is the gospel, whose cause is God. In this antithesis between the wicked and the righteous, we have the wicked in rage, in violence, with vigor seeking to destroy the people of God, whose cause is the Lord.

And now, the point of Psalm 9 is that although the wicked appear strong and the righteous appear weak, and though the wicked exalt themselves and their cause of man, the wicked have deceived

themselves. God is the judge, not man. God is the almighty God, not man. And God will maintain and protect the cause of his people. God will judge the wicked and destroy them.

Psalm 9 is not a lament about the oppression of the wicked, although God's people do lament that, and there are other psalms that lament that oppression. Rather, Psalm 9 is an exultation in the righteous judgment of God upon those who oppose his cause and oppose his people. "I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High" (vv. 1–2). Why? Because "when mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right" (vv. 3–4). And the psalm goes on and on with all the righteous judgment of God against the heathen. When the heathen laid a snare for the people of God, God's judgment was that the heathen fell into their own snare. When the enemy destroyed cities, that is, destroyed churches, Jehovah God judged the enemy and protected his people. And the cause of God is the cause that prevails. "Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men" (vv. 19–20). The cause of man cannot prevail over the cause of Jehovah God.

That means that the people of God are protected and kept. They are safe in him. Their cause shall prevail. "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (v. 9). That is the life and experience of the people of God. The members of the church of Jesus Christ are oppressed by the lie. Christ's people are oppressed by the violence of wicked men. Wicked men exalt the will of man in man's salvation, and God's people are troubled. Wicked men exalt the will of man in Jehovah's worship, and God's people are troubled. Wicked men are filled with fury against God's will, God's cause, God's church, and God's people. Nevertheless, in spite of all the fury of the foe, God's people have the confidence that Jehovah God will judge. The church of Jesus Christ is perfectly safe, though she is so low and weak that she cannot even defend herself. The cause of Jehovah God will prevail, and he will judge the wicked. He does that in the last day at the final judgment, but he also does that already now in the life of the wicked upon this earth. They fall into their own snare and their own net and are revealed to be nothing but men.

How can the church be so sure that the cause of Jehovah shall prevail? How can the church be so sure that Jehovah will judge for her? That comes out in verse 4. "Thou hast maintained *my right* and *my cause*." And when you read about "my right and my cause," you are reading the confession of Jesus Christ. Those are his words. Jesus Christ has a right, and Jesus Christ has a cause. He spoke of that cause and that right often during his earthly ministry. When he was challenged by the rulers, "How dare you teach these things?" or "What gives you the right to teach these things?" he taught the people, "I am doing my Father's business. I am doing my Father's work. I have my Father's knowledge. I am here on behalf of my Father's cause." The cause of Jesus Christ is the cause of Jehovah God. And that cause of Jesus Christ, which is the glory of God in the salvation of God's church, must prevail. It cannot falter and cannot fail. "Thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right," sings the Lord Jesus Christ to our God, and we sing with him.

And so in Psalm 9 the church that is oppressed and that struggles, the church that is weak and that stands at the doors of death, exults triumphantly in the judgment of Jehovah God that he visits upon her foe.