



## **Joy and Judgment**

### **Psalm 149**

#### **1. Joy (verses 1-6a)**

#### **2. Judgment (verses 6b-9)**

During our vacation this past summer, we took our usual trip to California to visit Yvonne's parents. On our way home, we stopped by Durango, where SR and his wife, Jenna, live. While there, we were talking with Jenna's uncle, Audi, who was recently saved. a few years ago. He was giving his testimony to all of us at the lunch table after church one Sunday. He was telling us how the great change in his life happened when he understood the difference between three theological words. Salvation Sanctification Glorification

He said that he was never clear on these words. He said that before he was a Christian, he thought that his salvation and his sanctification were the same. In other words, his salvation was dependent upon his sanctification. But when he was told (and discovered and came to believe), that his salvation and sanctification were different things, it made all of the difference in the world to him.

In other words, when he came to understand that his salvation was secured once and for all at the cross of Christ. And when he learned that his sanctification, the conforming of his will to God's will, is a painfully slow, lifelong process. And when he learned that his glorification, the removal of all sin from his soul, would take place only upon his death or the return of Christ. When he learned all of these things, it was life transforming for him.

You may have this confusion as well. So, let me be clear. In salvation, God's grace saves you. You are secure in him when you believe. But sanctification is the process of you becoming more and more like Christ. This is what we are called to do. We won't do it perfectly, but we will desire it and we will certainly grow in it. Finally, our glorification will be when we stand blameless with Christ with our resurrection bodies, whole and complete. We will not reach it in our lifetimes.

Now, it's not that these things are separate. They are all linked. Linked in time, but different. This is described in many Scriptures. One of the most simple verses to describe our salvation comes in Ephesians 2:8-9.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

That's the great reality of the gospel. It comes to us freely and a gift by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We don't work for it. We don't pay for it. It is given as a gift. God grants repentance to us (Acts 11:18). God gives us his grace. God gives us faith to believe. There is nothing that we can boast in. Echoing the cry of the reformers, We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This is Ephesians 2:8-9

Yet, though we are saved by faith alone, this faith is never alone. That's the very next verse:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

In other words, when God saved us by his grace, he calls us to works. He calls us to labor for him. It's not because we have to earn anything, or show our sincerity, but to be a witness of the transformed life God creates in us. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. We are different! We are changed" (2 Corinthians 5:14). One big manifestation of that change is our labor for good works. We aren't saved by works. But we are saved unto works.

This is the teaching of all of Scripture.

Titus 3:4-5-6

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

God saves us not because of our works, but merely by his mercy. Yet, a few verses later, Paul writes, "And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful" (Titus 3:14). Verse 14 isn't connected in any way as required for our salvation. Yet, it is important for our sanctification. In fact, Paul had written earlier of the relation of God's grace in our lives and our sanctification. He wrote, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12). It is God's grace that actually trains us to live righteously. If we are not living righteously, then we have reason to doubt that we have even experienced the grace of God in our lives at all!

I will give one final example of this teaching: James 2. In this chapter James labors long and hard to show how faith will be accompanied by works. He concludes with verse 26, "Faith without works is dead." That is, if there are not works, then there is no faith. This is what we are going to see in our text this morning: Psalm 149.

Three weeks ago, we began looking at the "Hallelujah Psalms." That is, the last five Psalms in the Psalter. They are called, "Hallelujah Psalms" because they all begin and end with "Hallelujah," which is translated, Praise the LORD. You can easily scan Psalm 146, 147, 148, 149, and 150 to see that this is the case. They all begin with "Hallelujah!" They all end with "Hallelujah!"

All of these Psalms call us to "Praise the LORD." Each Psalm in its own unique way. Psalm 146 was the resolve to praise the LORD, Verse 1, "Praise the LORD, O my soul." The Psalmist was having an inner conversation with himself, resolving that he would praise the LORD. This is what my hope for all of us is through this series, that we would resolve in our hearts to praise the LORD.

Psalm 147 speaks about how praise is "fitting." That is, it's appropriate. Verse 1, "Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting." When I call you to praise the LORD, it isn't some wearisome task. not it's good and pleasant.

Psalm 148 is a call for all creation to praise the LORD. whether in the heavens (verse 1). whether on the earth (verse 7). All of God's creation is called to praise the LORD. That includes you.

All that to say this: Are you praising the LORD? Are you giving your heart to glorify the LORD? in what you say and in what you do. This is the great application of these Psalms. And if you aren't praising the LORD, my preaching this past month has been in vain. and my preaching today may be in vain. It is so my heart that you would indeed praise the LORD.

So, this morning, we are going to look at the next Psalm, Psalm 149. Read it carefully.

### Psalm 149

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise in the assembly of the godly!  
Let Israel be glad in his Maker;  
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!  
Let them praise his name with dancing,  
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!  
For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;  
he adorns the humble with salvation.  
Let the godly exult in glory;  
let them sing for joy on their beds.  
Let the high praises of God be in their throats  
and two-edged swords in their hands,  
to execute vengeance on the nations  
and punishments on the peoples,  
to bind their kings with chains  
and their nobles with fetters of iron,  
to execute on them the judgment written!  
This is honor for all his godly ones.  
Praise the LORD!

This Psalm breaks nicely in half. The first half brings forth joy. The second half brings forth judgment. There is "joy" and there is "judgment" This is the title of my message this morning, "Joy and Judgment" So, let's first look at the joy.

### **1. Joy (verses 1-6a)**

This is the word that jumps out at you when you read through the first 5½ verses. Look at verse 1.

Psalm 149:1

Praise the LORD!  
Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

Now, that my not strike you as “joy.” But a “new song” often puts a skip in the step. And when the godly gathers, there is often joy. The “joy” become more obvious in verse 2.

Psalm 149:2

Let Israel be glad in his Maker;  
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!

“Glad” and “rejoice” are words of joy. They express happiness and delight. In verse 3, we read of dancing and musical instruments.

Psalm 149:3

Let them praise his name with dancing,  
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!

Dancing is often accompanied by joy. And music also brings a smile to the face and gladness to the heart. In verse 4, we even find the joy of God, taking pleasure in those who worship him.

Psalm 149:4

For the Lord takes pleasure in his people;

God takes delight when his people praise him! In verse 5, we find joy again.

Psalm 149:5

Let the godly exult in glory;  
let them sing for joy on their beds.

We see “exulting in glory” and “winging for joy” both expressions of joy and gladness. Verse 6 begins with this command.

Psalm 149:6

Let the high praises of God be in their throats

The lifted and exalted and loud and expressive praise of God! Such praise should come from the depths of our throats.

The first half of this Psalm overflows with joy. So, here's the question for you: Does your praise of God give flow from your joy? Does your praise of God give you joy? Because, that's how praise works. Not only does it come from joy. it also gives us joy.

So, let's dig deeper into each of these verses. I just want to open the up for you, spending more time in each verse

Psalm 149:1

Praise the LORD!  
Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise in the assembly of the godly!

The setting for verse 1 is the congregation. It is the "assembly of the godly." It is the church service. It is when the church gathers together. During that assembly here, we are exhorted to sing a "new song."

When you read through your Bible, you will encounter this phrase, "new song" on a number of occasions. It comes often in the Psalms. "Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth!" (Psalm 96:1). "Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things!" (Psalm 98:1). The idea of "new song" is simply a "fresh song."

Now, we at Rock Valley Bible Church, love to sing the old songs. We love to sing from the hymnal. We love to sing those songs that have been sung for centuries. and will continue to be sung for centuries. But the command here is also to sing a "new song." We love singing new songs as well. Because, there is a freshness to the new song. A new song often comes from a new experience of mercy and grace. Think about the following Psalm.

Psalm 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord;  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.  
He drew me up from the pit of destruction,  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,

making my steps secure.  
He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.

In this Psalm, David recalls his troubles, and how he cried out to the LORD in his distress. And God finally heard and answered his cry, and rescued him from destruction. He then says, “He has put a new song in my mouth.” There it is: a fresh deliverance. A fresh experience of mercy and grace, which brings a new song. I love what David Mathis says about this:

New songs of praise are appropriate for new rescues and fresh manifestations of grace. As long as God is gracious toward us, as long as he keeps showing us his power, and wowing us with his works, it is fitting that we not just sing old songs inspired by his past grace, but also that we sing new songs about his ever-streaming, never-ceasing grace”<sup>[1]</sup>

That’s the new song, the fresh experience of mercy and grace, leads to a new song of praise. I trust that you see the joy in this. New songs inspire fresh joy. as things are our praise to God is spoken in new ways. I think that’s the key to understanding Revelation 5:9-10, the picture in heaven of when Jesus opens the seals and begins to bring in his kingdom. It says that at the time, "they sang a new song" (Revelation 5:9). It’s s time of great joy in heaven, when Jesus begins to establish his reign upon the earth. Such joy calls for a new song.

In verse 2, we see the command to be joyful.

Psalm 149:2

Let Israel be glad in his Maker;  
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!

We often think about joy as a feeling that simply comes upon us when something good happens. When our favorite team wins the game. When we receive a good grade in school. When we pass a test that gives us a raise at work. When a child is born to us. When we are on our vacation, enjoying rest and relaxation. This is often when we think that joy comes. But verse 2 is a command to be joyful, not in any earthly event that brings joy into our heart, but because of who God is, and who God always has been. He is our maker. He is our king. And he commands our joy!

Such exhortations often come in the Psalms. "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all

the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!" (Psalm 100:1-2). "Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright" (Psalm 33:1). There are dozens more just like this. Commands to be joyful and to express this joy in worship. This is not unlike the New Testament. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). We are commanded to be a joyful people. Not glib for no reason. But deeply joyful for the LORD. That he is our creator and our king.

He has called us to his kingdom by his grace toward us. There is great reason to be joyful in God. For those of us who have experienced all of the grace of God in the gospel, this is especially true. He has taken us from our sin, and has brought us out of darkness into his marvelous light. forgiving all our transgression and sin. and adopted us into his family. and we will forever experience him. There is great reason for us to be glad. And this should stir us. That's what verse 3 is talking about.

### Psalm 149:3

Let them praise his name with dancing,  
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!

Now, throughout history, there have been Christian leaders who have opposed dancing, thinking it to be of the devil. But it is difficult to ban such a practice outright in light of verse 3 of this Psalm, which actually commands us to dance.

Now, to be fair, there is dance that is sensual and stirs up sexual desires. It is wicked and ought to be avoided. I'm thinking the dance that the daughter of Herodias danced before the company of the Herod at his party (Matthew 14:1-12). I'm thinking of the seductive pole dancer. I'm thinking of the teenage mosh pit where bodies are rubbing together in frolicking fun. Certainly, such dancing should be avoided. But that's not the dance here. The dance here is the dance that is stirred by joy in God!

I'm thinking of King David who was so excited when the ark entered into Jerusalem for the first time, to be set in place for the first time in history. where the ark would remain for centuries, as the place of worship for Israel. David had dreamed of the day when this would take place. But it was delayed when the oxen stumbled and Uzzah put out his hand to steady the ark of God, Uzzah was struck dead, because no human hand was ever to touch the ark. The ark stayed in the house of Obed-edom for 3 months (2 Samuel 6:1-11).

But when the time was right, David was so thrilled with the occasion that he was stirred to dance in praise to God. We read the following in 2 Samuel:

2 Samuel 6:12-15

So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing. And when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six steps, he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal. And David danced before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn.

Now, as the story continues on, Michah, David's wife, did not appreciate David's actions. But we ought never to despise when people are moved to praise God with their body. It's OK to dance. It's OK to lift your hands. It's OK to stir in your songs of praise to God, especially when moved by the praise of God. I trust that you have seen this. I have on many occasions.

Many times, such praise can be fake. But genuine stirring in our souls that causes us to dance ought never to be despised. We, at Rock Valley Bible Church, can learn to be better at this. I can be better at this.

Now, with the dance comes the instruments. Particularly here, there are two instruments: tambourine and lyre.

Psalm 149:3

Let them praise his name with dancing,  
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!

The tambourine here is percussion instrument. The lyre, here is a stringed instrument. We will talk more about these instruments next week, when we look at Psalm 150, which mentions a bunch of instruments: trumpets and harps and strings and pipes and cymbals.<sup>[2]</sup> The mentioned of instruments here is to provide the song to stir our joy, which leads to praise of God! which the LORD loves.

Psalm 149:4

For the Lord takes pleasure in his people;  
he adorns the humble with salvation.

The LORD loves us. He takes pleasure in us. The LORD loves to hear our praise. He loves to give salvation to the humble. Here's the gospel, God taking pleasure in

his people. God delighting to give salvation. But notice here who receives salvation. It's the humble. It's those who have come to the end of themselves, and recognized their need of him. who have cried out to the LORD for mercy. Those are the ones who receive salvation. Not those who are strong in themselves. but rather, those who are afflicted, and crushed and in need of help.

God delights in "adorning" us with salvation. that is, making us pretty in Christ Jesus. Isn't this the picture of the gospel? That we, who are sinners, are covered and clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. So, God looks upon us and sees not us in our sin, but Jesus in his righteousness. He makes us beautiful with his salvation. This ought to give us great joy!

Psalm 149:5

Let the godly exult in glory;  
let them sing for joy on their beds.

Verse 1 brought us into the congregation the assembly. Verse 5 brings us into the everyday. We are brought into our homes. Indeed we are brought into our bedrooms, when we are lying on our beds, exhausted and tired, in need of our daily renewal that sleep provides.

In that place, God calls us to praise!

Just think of the contrast. In the assembly, there are many people. In your bed, there is but one. In the assembly, it's loud and filled with activity. In your bed, there is quiet and restful. In the assembly, you are upright and alert. In your bed, you are prone and peaceful.

God wants your praise on your bed. He wants for you to "sing for joy" on your bed. When you have nothing else to do, but close your eyes and go to sleep. Give your praise to God!

Do you do this? Are you joyful in the LORD? Does your praise extend beyond Sunday morning singing at Rock Valley Bible Church? Does it get into your house? Does it come to your bed?

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Well, we have come to verse 6, the hinge of the Psalm. It's a great summary of the Psalm. If you want to remember what Psalm 149 is about, you can do no better than to memorize verse 6,

## Psalm 149:6

Let the high praises of God be in their throats  
and two-edged swords in their hands,

The first half of this verse summarizes the first half of the Psalm. A call for us to praise God, even with all of our might! The high praises of God should come from deep within our throats.

The second half of this verse summarizes the second half of the Psalm. A call to arms! Taking up the sword to fight against the enemies. Executing vengeance, bringing punishment. taking authorities into captivity. achieving judgment. Thus, my second point:

## **2. Judgment (verses 6b-9)**

We saw the “Joy” in verses 1-6a. We see the “Judgment” in verses 6b-9.

Now, obviously, (at least I hope, obviously), this doesn’t apply directly to us. As believers in Jesus, we are not called to take up arms to fight for the kingdom of God, taking vengeance into our own hands.

The weapons of our warfare are different. As the hymn writer says, ...

Lead on, O King Eternal,  
The day of march has come;  
Henceforth in fields of conquest  
Thy tents shall be our home.  
For not with swords’ loud clashing,  
Nor roll of stirring drums;  
With deeds of love and mercy  
The heav’nly kingdom comes. [\[3\]](#)

In our day and age, this is how our warfare is fought. We fight with deeds of love and mercy, not with swords and spears and clubs. Jesus said it well when talking with Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36). Because the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, we don’t need to take up weapons. We don’t need to enforce the law. We don’t need to punish those who go against the law.

In our day, God had given this role to the government. Romans 13:1 says, "There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." God has given the sword to the government to enforce the law. God has given them the sword to punish the transgressors, not us. Now, you may not agree with how they do their job, that's fine. But our role isn't to do the job for them. Our role is to do right and support our government in doing the same. We are not a theocracy, where the church rules society. God is not the president of the United States.

But, here's the point, when Psalm 149 was written, Israel was a theocracy! God was the king on the throne. and he called his citizens to the things mentioned in verses 6-9.

God called them to take "two-edged swords in their hands" (verse 6). God called them "to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples" (verse 7). Israel was "to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written!" (verses 8-9). It was right for them to do so. It was the honorable thing for them to do. Verse 9 says, "This is honor for all his godly ones." The noble and honoring thing for Israel to do was to fight for their nation.

We know the honor of fighting. We honor those in our country who have served in the military. It is a noble thing to fight for your country. We give medals to those who have performed courageously.

Now, regarding Psalm 149, such fighting took place several times throughout their history. The most prominent was during the conquest of Canaan. This is recorded in the book of Joshua. It was not only right for them to fight, but it was explicitly commanded of by the LORD.

Do you remember when Joshua was leading the people into the land? God instructed them to take the land. God told Israel to drive out the inhabitants of the land, every last one of them. And they were to take possession of the land and live there themselves. Indeed, this was the land that God had sworn to give to Abraham. But it was the people of Israel who were to actually take the land. with swords and spears. And if people didn't willingly leave, or put up a fight, they were to destroy them entirely.

Another time when Israel picked up the sword was when Judah came back from

their captivity in Babylon. Nehemiah was leading the effort to build the wall around the city to protect it. The workers held two items in their hand. They had a trowel in one hand to build the wall. In their other hand was a sword in the other to be ready in the case of an attack (Nehemiah 4:17-18). Further, Zephaniah, who prophesied at the same time promised that the LORD would "clear away your enemies" (Zephaniah 3:15).

Many people think that these "Hallelujah Psalms" were written during the days when Judah came back into the land after the exile. This would certainly support that notion, as their time was a time of war and fighting.

A perfect picture of Psalm 149 is Jericho. Because we see the people of Israel praising the LORD, as they marched around the city for six days, On the seventh day, the priests were blowing the trumpets, with the armed men in front of the ark of the LORD. After seven times around the city, Joshua said, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city" (Joshua 6:16). Indeed, "the high praises of God [were] in their throats and two-edged swords [were] in their hands." And when the wall fell down, everyone in the city were destroyed, except for Rahab the prostitute (Joshua 6:17).

This Psalm would have been totally appropriate for Israel to hear. Take the two-edged sword in your hands. execute vengeance on the nations, bring punishment to the peoples. bind the king with chains, put their nobles in fetters of iron. execute the judgment that Moses wrote for them to bring about. This was the honorable thing for them to do. to get the land that God had promised to give to them. But this isn't for us to do.

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Now, I think that there is a clear application for us. Our praise of God must go beyond our lips. Our trust in God must go beyond our hearts. God calls us to action. This is what God was calling Israel to do. Praise God with the mouth, and fight with the sword on behalf of the LORD. Again, verse 6, "Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands." For us, we might say it this way, "Let the high praises of God be in their throats and willing hands to do his work."

Do you remember in the beginning of my message how I quoted from James 2:26, "faith apart from works is dead"? I spoke in my introduction how our salvation is different than our sanctification. But they do go together. Those who are saved will be transformed. And how are they demonstration their transformation? By

doing the works that God has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Surely, in our case, the work isn't fighting physically against our enemies. Our work is to be a servant, like our king, Jesus. He was a servant, who came to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). He healed the sick and helped the weak.

We are called to work. We are called to action. Again, not that this working earns our salvation at all. But it is the natural consequence of salvation. This is what the Psalmist was calling Israel to do. They were called to give joyous worship to God and to take up the sword to execute judgment for Israel.

What is helpful about this is that this is the motto of our church: "We exist to enjoy his grace and to extend his glory." Enjoying his grace is my first point in my message. We are to have joy in the LORD. He is worthy of our worship. But after we worship the LORD with joy, we extend his glory. That's where you put shoe leather to your faith. That's where you do all that you can to do extend the glory of God by good works and serving others. We do this not only to those in the church, but also to those outside the church.

As we witness to those outside the church, we are extending the glory of God. I have a missionary friend in Nepal who often does this in his work in that country. He encounters some people in need of mercy and compassion. He funnels some resources from the states to meet a physical need (health related, orphan related, widow related, ...). Over time, Nepali workers on his team follow up with more help, bringing the gospel as the source behind the compassion. After months and years of love shown to people, the local Nepalis see a visible demonstration of the difference between the mercy of Jesus and the harshness of the Hindu gods. The villagers are drawn to Jesus. Many are saved, a church begins, and the rest of the story will be told in eternity. His actions are a means to extend the glory of God.

This is a great application of our text. We should be active.

If you just come to church and sing your songs, but not engage the people of the church, Psalm 149 is a call to ask you to come and engage in the work of the ministry. Volunteer for something. Find out some way to love and serve others.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 14, 2022 by  
Steve Brandon.

For more information see [www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org](http://www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org).

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[1] <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/sing-a-new-song>

[2] At this point in my message, I gave a little push for next week when we actually look at Psalm 150. I encouraged everyone who played an instrument to bring it. We planned a song where we have a bunch of instruments praising God during our worship time. You can read my message on Psalm 150 to hear a little bit about how it went.

[3] Words by Ernest W. Shurtleff in 1887.