

# Every Deed Judged

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Date: 27 September 2020

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[ 0 : 00 ] We're going to begin our worship by singing from Psalm 89, Psalm 89 at verse 15.

O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know. In brightness of thy face, O Lord, they ever on shall go. They in thy name shall all the day rejoice exceedingly, and in thy righteousness shall they exalted be on high.

Because the glory of their strength doth only stand in thee, and in thy favour shall our horn and power exalted be. For God is our defence, and he to us doth safety bring.

The Holy One of Israel is our Almighty King. In vision to thy Holy One thou saidst, I help upon a strong one laid.

Out of the fork I raised a chosen one. Even David I have found him out, a servant unto me. And with my holy oil, my King anointed him to be.

[ 1 : 21 ] And so on these verses, to the praise of God. O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know. O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know.

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The joyful sound that know.

[ 3 : 46 ] O greatly blessed the people are, the joyful sound that know. A strong one laid out of the fork I raised the chosen one.

If David I have found him, I've not ever done to me.

And with my holy Lord I came, the Lord did him to me.

Let us join together in prayer. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, as we come before you, we pray for your help in this act of worship, that we may engage in prayer as we have sought to engage in bringing your praises and lifting up our voice in the presence of our God, who is the God of Israel.

The one to whom David came with his compositions, even with the voice and with the ten-stringed instrument, whatever that was, rejoicing in the presence of his God.

[ 5 : 35 ] Lord, we give thanks that in our praises we are not limited in any way, but as we are led by your Spirit into the word of truth, we give thanks that we are there assured that what we come with is acceptable to your God.

Lord, we would ask your blessing upon the services of your house today, even though it may be that in the current predicament that has marked us out as nations in the world, that we are not able to gather us, that we are not able to gather us, that we once did, even though some have been permitted to come together physically, many are not.

And even those that have been given the privilege, there are restrictions placed upon their gathering and the manner in which they are to conduct their worship, just as it is through of ourselves.

And yet you know that, and you are still willing to receive from us our worship, as it is conducted even within the confines of our own home.

We bless you that you are not restricted to man-made buildings, but at the fireside, whether it is alone or with others, that we can come to you and seek your blessing upon our time together around your word.

[ 7 : 20 ] We pray that you would open the word of truth to us, that you may remind us that it is your word to us, that it is truth. That speaks to us of the one who himself is the truth.

He is the way, the truth and the life. And all who have gained access to and by faith, and who have put their trust in him, know that to be true.

So we ask, Lord, that you would bless us today in his name, and you would bless us and enrich our lives as those who depend upon him. We bring before you our cares and concerns, whatever they may be, temporal or spiritual, thankful that you are able to visit us in mercy, mindful of the needs of those who are physically suffering because of illness, some who are physically suffering.

Some who are physically suffering. Some who are confined to beds within their own homes and in hospitals, some because of the infirmity of old age, yet being cared for by others.

We pray for hospitals and homes for the elderly. We pray for the hospices where the terminally ill are being looked after. We pray for all whose particular administration they are dependent upon, doctors and nurses and carers.

[ 8 : 45 ] We would ask that you would sanctify them, that they may be your hands, and that you will speak to them even by means of the tenderness of their care.

We pray for all who are concerned about their physical well-being. We pray for them who may have all kinds of uncertainty marking their lives because of how they are at the present.

We are particularly mindful of those who have succumbed to the virus that is prevalent in this day and generation throughout the world. We would ask, Lord, that you would remember those who have suffered from that illness beyond our capacity to understand.

We pray for wisdom to be imparted to those who are seeking for remedies that they may be guided in their endeavours. Remember our nation and all the nations of the earth.

We pray especially for the young at this time. We know that there are many concerns arising out of their situation as their schooling is affected.

[ 10 : 08 ] And at this time we know there are concerns arising out of those who have returned to colleges and universities. And the rampant form of the virus in these places.

While it may not be as destructive, nevertheless it is a means by which it finds its way into the community. And we pray for wisdom to be imparted to the young even in that respect.

So remember us all in all manner of need that we may have. Bless the sick in all the forms that it touches our lives.

Remember the bereaved, the broken in heart. Those who have attendant concerns because of the griefs that has overtaken their lives.

Even others who have suffered because of the threat of illness. Even there it has manifested itself in their minds being assailed.

[ 11 : 16 ] And the sense that they have of their own insufficiency. That's indeed true of us all.

We give thanks that your word counsels us to remember that you are a sovereign God. You sit on the throne of this universe. There may be kings.

There may be prime ministers. There may be all kinds of governors and governments. But you have the last word concerning them all. May we learn that.

We despair of the fact that there is so little evidence in our own country. Of any sense of God or any desire to bring God into their thinking.

Especially as they present their arguments and their hopes to society. Lord, teach us to bow the knee before you, the God of heaven.

[ 12 : 14 ] The one who has provided salvation to lost sinners in the passion of Jesus Christ. Bless your word to us this day then. May we remember that it is your word to us.

Whatever it is that we hear right and that we reflect upon. It is your word to us. And may it be so as we direct our attention towards it.

To continue with us we pray. Remembering all we entrust to your care. And keeping forgiving sin in Jesus. We ask all with forgiveness of sinning and through him.

Amen. We are going to hear the word of God now as we have it in the Old Testament Scriptures. And we are reading from the book of Ecclesiastes. And reading the last chapter of that book.

Ecclesiastes chapter 12. Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth. While the evil days come not.

[ 13 : 18 ] Nor the years draw nigh. When thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them. While the sun or the light or the moon or the stars be not darkened.

Nor the clouds return after the rain. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble. And the strong men shall bow themselves. And the grinders cease because they are few.

And those that look out of the windows be darkened. And the doors shall be shut in the streets. When the sound of the grinding is low. And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird.

And all the daughters of music shall be brought low. And when they shall be afraid of that which is high. And fear shall be in the way.

And the almond tree shall flourish. And the grasshopper shall be a burden. And desire shall fail. Because man goeth to his long home.

[ 14 : 23 ] And the mourners go about the streets. Or ever the silver cord be loosed. Or the golden bowl be broken. Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain.

Or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was. And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Vanity of vanity, saith the preacher. All is vanity. Moreover, because the preacher was wise. He still taught the people knowledge.

Yea, he gave good heed. And sought out and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words.

And that which was written was upright. Even words of truth. The words of the wise. Are as goads. And as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.

[ 15 : 28 ] Which are given from one shepherd. And further. By these, my son, be admonished. Of making many books there is no end.

And much studies a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his commandments.

For this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work unto judgment. And every secret thing. Whether it be good.

Or whether it be evil. Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing. To a reading of his word. And to his name.

Be the praise. We want us this time to turn to the passage that we read. The book of Ecclesiastes. And we're looking at the final words.

[ 16 : 30 ] In this chapter. That we read. Chapter 12. Reading again. Verse 13. Let us hear the conclusions.

Of the whole matter. Fear God. And keep his commandments. For this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment.

With every secret thing. Whether it be good. Or whether it be evil. For this is the whole. For this is the whole.

The book. The book I suppose. Is not an easy read. not even for the confirmed believer while it contains many gems that hearten the faith it also voices many thoughts that some would prefer not to air in the open it's thought to have been composed by King Solomon certainly it is a son of David that is named and we read in the scripture that God endowed him with unparalleled wisdom we read concerning Solomon in 1 Kings chapter 3 I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart so that there was none like thee before nor after thee shall any arise like unto thee some would consider the words of this man unduly pessimistic the very first words he utters we are told are vanity of vanities all is vanity and as one translation has it futile futile laments the teacher absolutely futile everything is futile these words are the words of the eternal pessimist as someone has said however in actual fact the writer is a believer who is also a realist he presents the world view of the man of faith who not only knows the score but understands it with more than just the light of reason but reason that is enlightened by God's grace and that makes all the difference as I look at this passage which we we cannot really

I suppose if truth be told think of any part of scripture without trying in some way to look at it in the light of our own current situation I've said that often I suppose in the last while and when we when we think of the current pandemic and try and fit these words of the writer of this book into the scheme of things I can't help but notice that his world view and our world view may be at odds they may be reconciled in many ways if we are believers like he was but if we are not then we may have a different perspective when we think of the pandemic

[ 20 : 46 ] I am aware of the information that is shared publicly that is designed to enlighten those who are caught up in it we have the news media who see themselves more than just a medium of truth conveying to our racist public the facts of the matter but also more often than not providing comment that's something we are used to now to supplement that dissemination of information we have expert opinion personally I didn't know that there were so many professors in the UK from medical doctors to epidemiologists behavioural scientists and political analysts and their role is to interpret the facts and sometimes despite it being the same facts opinions divided now what the writer of Ecclesiastes is doing is to direct everyone to God regardless of their experiences for as the last words of the book suggest we will answer to him at the last regardless of what our opinion of him is or what our opinion of our life in general has been the writer's conclusion is fear

God and keep his commandments because that is the whole duty of man for God will bring every work to judgment with every sacred thing whether it be good or whether it be evil whereas one translation has it God will evaluate every deed including every secret thing whether good or evil I want us to think then of these words and break it up into bite sized portions but really with two thoughts what does it mean for us to fear God and what is meant by the judgment that awaits we are reminded in the Bible that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom usually when the fear of God is mentioned it has to be remembered that it's not the same as being afraid of God not in the same sense anyway that we usually think of that some may believe that it is one and the same thing but the fear of

God is never a slavish fear it may have similarities no doubt and anyone who experiences the fear of God who is not a friend of God or a son of God or a worshipper of God their fear of God certainly means that they are afraid of God we know that when Jesus was speaking to his disciples he spoke to them about the wisdom of ministering in the world and encouraging those that they minister to to be afraid of God he tells them don't be afraid of those who kill the body fear not them who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell now in this context as some at least other commentators say to fear

God in this sense means to respect honour and worship the Lord as the Old Testament theologian Trimmer Longman III writes a right relationship with God is spoken of one in which he is properly subservient to the deity many believe and teach that the presence of fear is counterproductive emphasis should always be on love and people should be encouraged to love God especially as he is in Christ Jesus however such an aspiration is wholly unrealistic without the element of the fear of God being associated with it John Piper in a book entitled The Supremacy of God in Preaching refers throughout that book to someone he respected greatly as a preacher of great renown

Jonathan Edwards who was a minister of many centuries ago but whose ministry was greatly blessed and he refers in this book to preachers of the emphasis that Edwards placed on the words of Christ himself and he says this the use of threat or warning in preaching to the saints is rare today for at least two reasons first he says it produces guilt and fear which are considered to be unproductive second it seems theologically inappropriate because the saints are secure and do not need to be warned or threatened Edwards Edwards as a preacher rejects both reasons he says when fear and guilt correspond with the true state of things it is reasonable and loving to stir them up and while the saints are secure in the omnipotent keeping power of God their security proves itself in their willingness to give heed to biblical warnings and persevere in godliness now the second thing we have in this passage that mentions that proves the reality of the existence of the first is the desire to keep his commands fear god he says and keep his commandments you can't have one without the other these words take us as opposed right back to Sinai and the giving of the moral law by the hand of

[ 28 : 02 ] Moses Moses spoke to Israel he said to them and now Israel what did the lord thy god require of thee but to fear the lord thy god to walk in all his ways and to love him to serve the lord thy god to walk in his ways and to love him and to serve the lord thy god with all thy heart and with all thy soul again we see the need to demonstrate in a practical way their fear of the lord they love him they revere him they follow his paths they do his will as those who delight in it just as Christ himself said the greatest example we have of someone who came to do the will of God he delighted in it the third thing we have here is a reminder of what all this is it is the whole duty of man the whole duty of man when we were young we were taught the words of the shorter catechism ask the first question what is the chief end of man man man is to glorify

God and to enjoy him forever it is as if the writer is first ever so subtly reminding us of this fact this is the real reason for living in this world you ask your questions why did this happen and not this why now why in this way but at the heart of our life is a relationship with God if we do not have one or if it is in a state of disrepair then it is no wonder things go wrong many look at this book and see highlighted confusion and chaos things we see life we see life and see things that seem to have no rhyme nor reason but despite all that we are called to a life of faithful obedience it is not to be provided with answers to vexed questions or even to equip us so that we may become the conduit for these answers preacher

Gordon Keddy writes even our ignorance is by God's grace made the occasion of working in us a genuine humility and dependence upon God's goodness in his unseen purposes God's way of wisdom for us is not some mystical delving into his secret will it is the way of personal commitment and living faith whereby we can trust in him and even when we cannot discern his path in the final verse of the chapter we have the solemn statement for God shall bring every work into judgment many do not believe in judgment for a host of different reasons no doubt they may not lack the idea they may not believe that God can judge everyone the idea is awesome no doubt not just those who are alive today but those who ever lived or will live and God we are told will bring them to judgment but it is more than that it is every secret thing it gets more and more unlikely for some by the second well however unlikely it is one thing you can believe is that it is a plain truth that this verse states nothing could be plainer

God shall bring every work into judgment and there is no ambiguity about what these words mean nor can we believe them to be words that are unique and contained simply in this chapter and in this verse alone because the scripture teaches the same truth again and again God we are told will judge the world in righteousness some believe and the wise man alludes to this in his musings that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil in other words what the writer of this book is saying is that some have taken solace in the fact that judgment appears to have not been carried out and because of that delay the delay will mean that it will never happen the apostle

Peter in his own day and generation dealt with similar thoughts but we are told that throughout the scripture that all men have sinned and as a result of that sinning death will ensue and then following on from death there is the certainty of judgment it is written that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God Abraham the father of the faithful called God the judge of all the earth the apostle the apostle Peter describes the reality of the activity of the judge he knows that this world in which we live is itself waiting for the day when judgment will ensue

[ 34 : 42 ] John the writer of the book of the revelation describes to us the image of the great white throne the man of God does not here state what the ground of judgment will be but it is hinted at good and evil he says will be judged in Paul's epistle to the Romans in chapter 2 we read the following for when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law these having not the law allowed unto themselves which show the work of the law written in their hearts their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts and meanwhile excusing or excusing or excusing one another in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel he says we will be judged for our deeds our words but in particular with regard to our relationship with

Christ if we have one those who do not know Christ as Lord and Saviour will hear dreadful words from his mouth God those who are his enemies will know what it means depart from me I never knew you whereas those who know him as Lord will enjoy his company throughout eternity as their eternal saviour God God we are told shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil solemn words solemn thoughts that they stir up or should do these words will prove themselves to be God's truth and God's purposes for whatever confusion of mind arises out of some of the things we read in this passage the world in which we live is a world full of confusion we see that in our own current predicament but there is no confusion with

God there is no uncertainty there is only the genuine prospect in store for his people that they long to engage with and those who are not whose to reflect upon what it may mean for them that the fear of God would take a hold of their heart and so direct them to Christ God's provision for our fallenness let us pray Lord God in heaven we would ask good blessing upon your word that you would bless it to us and bless the thoughts that this wise man has brought our attention direct us to Christ and may we bow the knee to him acknowledging him as Lord and Saviour go before us now and now may grace mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always

Amen Beth for Christ God earth 2 I says yes that good man