

Living by faith or by sight

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[0 : 01] New things are all very good, but I'm just giving Simon the license to interrupt me on the basis that I'm likely to forget about the reading altogether. So if he just jumps up in the middle of my sentence, you'll know why.

Okay, we're going to be looking at Psalm 9 and 10 this morning. Just join with me in prayer for a moment. Lord, our ears would be deaf to your word, except that your spirit opens them to hear it, and that is my prayer now, Lord, for myself and for everyone here this morning.

Open our ears and bless the benefit of your word to our hearts and minds. In Jesus' name, amen. All right, well, we make them every day, hundreds, thousands of them, decisions.

We make so many decisions every day. Some decisions are big decisions, and we obviously know the process going through those. But some decisions are actually really, really small, almost the product of habit, the things we do just every day.

And we now sort of make those decisions and don't even realize we're making them. But we're still acting on a process of thought. It's just that we've lost touch with that particular thought at that particular moment in those small decisions.

[1 : 23] decisions. So just to get you thinking this morning, what decisions will you make this week? What decisions will you make this week?

What decisions will you make this week in your home? As a parent? As a husband? As a wife? As a child? What decisions will you make as you walk out the front door in the morning, whether you're going to school or work or going to sport or whatever it is you're going to do?

What decisions will you be anticipating and making during the day? Your decisions will reflect what you think of at home, family life, employment, relationships, security, happiness, work, success, and so on and so forth.

It will also involve making decisions about our culture and how you actually choose to engage with it on a day-by-day basis. Now, all of these decisions, and I say there are thousands of them, all of these decisions are an overflow of our worldview.

Now, if you're not familiar with the term worldview, there's a bit more in the back of the bulletin, the back article in the bulletin, a bit more detail about worldview. But essentially, a worldview can be thought of like my glasses here.

[2 : 49] It's a lens through which we see the world. It's a lens through which we understand the world, we understand God, and we understand our part in the world, our place in the world.

That's what a worldview is. How you think about the world, how you engage with the world. And that means that every single person here has a worldview.

But not every single person here actually knows they've got a worldview and is able to articulate it. But you will have one and you will act on it.

It will be the overflow of your thinking. Now, Psalms 9 and 10 may be considered and described as worldview psalms.

Why? Because they present two different ways of thinking about God. Two different ways of thinking about the world and how we experience the world.

[3 : 48] Two different ways of thinking about our place in the world in which brokenness and suffering, injustice impacts us every single day. We make a decision consciously or subconsciously about how we're going to react or respond to that suffering, injustice, those experiences of the world every single day.

And Psalm 9 and 10 highlight the challenge that we face to have what I'm calling this morning is having a thoroughly biblical worldview in which our thinking and actions are shaped by what is true about God, rather than having our thinking and actions shaped by our circumstances and our personal experiences of life.

We'll come back to that in a little while. But in the meantime, we're going to look at worldview option number one. That is God and the world viewed through the eyes or the lens of faith. And now Simon's going to read the first 12 verses of Psalm 9 for us.

Psalm chapter 9. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart. 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. When my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish before your presence. For you have maintained my just cause.

[5 : 16] You have sat on the throne giving righteous judgment. You have rebuked the nations. You 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. But the Lord sits enthroned forever.

He has established his throne for justice. And he judges the world with righteousness. He judges the peoples with uprightness. 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. 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. The world viewed from the eyes or lens of faith begins with praise and thankfulness.

[6 : 21] The focus of David from the very first word is on the Lord. That is, it's the Lord that shapes David's thinking and actions on a daily basis as he engages with all the experiences of life.

His general orientation is thankfulness and praise. Now, if you look at verses 1 and 2, there's nothing mechanical about this thanksgiving and praise. It's not just some prayer he's reciting of.

It's a spontaneous overflow from the depth of his being. The language there is very, very personal, very, very deep. He recalls God's wonderful deeds. That is, God's actions in the past dealing with and caring for his people.

But there's something even more profound, deeper than that in those first two verses. David's so appreciative and aware of God's character, God's good deeds. But David's actually delighting in the Lord himself.

His soul is overflowing with the beauty of the Lord himself. In other words, David's starting point is that the Lord is truly satisfying.

[7 : 40] The Lord is his delight. The Lord is his treasure. Just to be the Lord's person is sufficient for David.

The Lord is his source of joy and comfort and confidence and hope. And therefore, worship is natural. Worship is ascribing the supreme value to something.

And that's what David does to the Lord. And from there, David actually sees his circumstances from God's perspective.

Verse 3 there. David's well aware that he has many, many enemies. But they're not his focus.

He's God's king, tasked by the Lord to rule his people in righteousness and truth and justice. And that means inevitably that there will be conflict. But the eye of faith in King David sees beyond his immediate circumstances to the great king whom he serves.

[8 : 55] And in whose presence, verse 3, just the very presence of the Lord alone is enough to bring undone any enemy. And when we think about it, there's something quite remarkable here.

Because King David was a hugely successful king. He was a very, very powerful man. Yet, if you read through these verses again, as Simon's just read them to us, King David acknowledges that every detail of his story, he's actually down to God.

God's rescuing. God's protection. God's justice. God's judgment. God's purposes.

It's all there in those verses. It's that that David knows through the eyes of faith. It's that which keeps him in the present and guarantees his future and the future of God's people.

And then verses 9 to 12. Not only that, but David leans into or rests in the Lord. That is his general orientation. Thankfulness and praise.

[10 : 12] Seeing the circumstances from God's perspective and leaning into the Lord at every point. Confidently and warmly knowing the Lord as the Most High.

It's a very, very lofty term. The Most High. There is no greater appeal for David. There's no greater power. There's no greater comfort.

And David knows the Most High is the champion of truth, the champion of right, and the dispenser of justice and judgment.

And so David can rest in the Lord in whatever circumstances he faces. The Lord is so powerful. The Lord is so powerful. His rule and purpose cannot be threatened.

But at the same time, the Lord is so invested in his people. In the well-being of his people. In the well-being of his people. That he becomes that stronghold. That safe refuge.

[11 : 14] That place to hide. The place to rest and be secure and calm in the midst of the mess of life. The eyes of faith know that no matter the circumstance, the Lord will never abandon or forget his people.

No matter what circumstances appear to suggest. Simon, you read the next section for it, please. So chapter 9, 13 to 20.

Be gracious to me, O Lord. See my affliction from those who hate me. O you who lift me up from the gates of death. That I may recount all your praises.

That in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in your salvation. The nations have sunk in the pit that they made. In the net that they hid, their own foot has been caught.

The Lord has made himself known. He has executed judgment. The wicked are snared in the work of their own hands. Agion. Salah. The wicked shall return to Sheol, all the nations that forget God.

[12 : 21] For the needy shall not always be forgotten. And the hope of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O Lord. Let not man prevail. Let the nations be judged before you.

Put them in fear, O Lord. Let the nations know that they are but men. Salah. Sometimes we have the notion that when we talk about seeing the world through the eyes of faith.

That we are sort of in denial of reality. Well, Psalm 9 tells us that's not the case. The eyes of faith do not mean denial of real and tough circumstances.

Because in verse 13, the tone changes almost jarring from verse 12 to verse 13. Be gracious to me, O Lord.

See my affliction from those who hate me. The first 12 verses you wouldn't even realize David was suffering particularly badly. But here he is, verse 13. He just pours out something of the depth of the impact he feels on a daily basis.

[13 : 30] From his struggle against those who oppose his rule of righteousness and truth under the Lord's hand. And seeing the world through the eyes of faith does not make King David immune to tough circumstances.

But it does shape his response to them. That's a really important point. He's not immune to them because of the eyes of faith. But the eyes of faith shape his response in those tough circumstances.

And so the worship that was expressed in verses 1 to 12 as praise and thanks, now I think is expressed in prayer.

Because David now spreads out his helplessness before the Lord. Before the Lord's goodness and the Lord's grace. And I think the tone here is really clear.

That David is honest, but he's not anxious in his circumstances. He's very much aware of those who would try to bring him down for whatever reason.

[14 : 44] But he's not overwhelmed by those who would try to bring him down for whatever reason. Why? Because of the eyes of faith.

He is convinced that no matter the circumstance, the Lord will have the final say. The Lord will have the final say in each circumstance of his life.

And then there's a couple of really nice pictures in here. In verse 13, David pictures the Lord as his lifter up. Oh you who lift me up from the gates of death.

The Lord is his lifter up. That is, he's confident that the Lord will take him from the gates of death, which is picture language.

Take him from the extreme danger where it looks as if his cause is just about to get snuffed out. The Lord will actually transport him from that to, more picture language, the gates of Zion.

[15 : 46] Zion was God's city, the place of the good life, the life under God. The life of blessing and satisfaction and completeness.

The life of purity. So David is confident the Lord would be his lifter up. Literally transporting him from there to there in circumstances of life.

And just as surely, the picture has its other side. Verses 15 through to 20. The Lord, as the Lord is the lifter up of David, so David is confident the Lord will be the knocker down of powerful, rebellious people and nations.

As he frustrates and ultimately destroys them with his just judgment. And so there's a nice little play there on those two pictures. The arrogant nations, arrogant, powerful people who think they can just do what they like in God's word.

They think they are the lifted up ones. We're the ones above the rest. But David can see past that and knows that those who think they're lifted up and then knock down God's people will experience a great reversal.

[17 : 03] It will be God's people ultimately who will be lifted up. And those who arrogantly think themselves to be high will actually feel and experience God's judgment as he knocks them down.

And so the picture is very, very strong. Having carelessly rejected the Most High in their arrogance. And then, despising his beauty, despising his wonderful deeds.

Verse 19 and 20. One day, those same people will crumble in fear as God brings justice and judgment to them.

They've made terror their weapon. And they'll end facing their own terrors of God's judgment. Now, ready for worldview too.

Simon and I had a discussion before church. Simon, and there's a good reason for it. You can think about it. Simon reckons Psalm 10 should come before Psalm 9. But we'll go into that in a little while. Yep, thanks, Simon. Simon. Psalm 10, verses 1 to 11.

[18 : 14] Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? In arrogance, the wicked hotly pursue the poor.

Let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord. In the pride of his face, the wicked does not seek him.

All his thoughts are, there is no God. His ways prosper at all times. Your judgments are on high, out of his sight.

As for all his foes, he puffs at them. He says in his heart, I shall not be moved. Throughout all generations, I shall not meet adversity.

His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression. Under his tongue are mischief and iniquity. He sits in ambush in the villages. In hiding places, he murders the innocent.

[19 : 19] His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless. He lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket. He lurks that he may seize the poor. He seizes the poor when he draws him into his net.

The helpless are crushed, sink down and fall by his might. He says in his heart, God has forgotten, yet has hidden his face.

He will never see it. Talk about chalk and cheese. Very, very different pictures there, aren't they? Between Psalm 9 and Psalm 10.

Very different worldview. It's part two of the psalm. And one of the reasons I decided to connect it together, most English versions and most commentators don't, but there is some grammatical reasons like 9 and 10.

There's a certain acrostic thing. Every two verses begins with a particular letter, a sequential letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and that runs through the two psalms. And there's some other reasons why.

[20 : 23] There's certainly at least part A and part B, I think. At least that's my defense anyway. Talk to me more about that if you want. Getting into the text of Psalm 10, then, it's a very different picture of God's world from a very different starting point.

It's a picture shaped primarily by circumstance or by the experience of God's world. Shaped by injustice and godliness, godlessness rather, and shaped by how things appear to be as we look at them immediately.

And again, drawing the parallels, the orientation as we move into Psalm 10 is not praise and thanksgiving, as we saw in Psalm 9, but it's accusation, it's disappointment, it's frustration, all of which is directed at the Lord.

Why? Because starting with the circumstances, it just feels and seems like the Lord has abandoned them. Worse, verses 3 through to 10.

Far worse. It feels like the Lord has surrendered his world to the powerful schemes of godless, self-made people to do what they please.

[21 : 57] And indeed, that is what they do. They do what they please, with whomever they please, when they please. That's the picture of Psalm 10. And it's a very, very despairing, heavy picture, isn't it?

People who arrogantly act as if they are God, people who are convinced that they will only ever answer to themselves and their own selfish desires.

And so, from there, they take it that they can ruthlessly exploit anybody that comes within their reach.

It's a pretty horrible picture. And yet, it's one that's so familiar, isn't it, Tess?

Even worse, verse 5. In their godlessness, and their godlessness is so obvious, they seem to thrive.

[23 : 08] They actually have come to believe their own propaganda that success breeds success, and that they are, in fact, unstoppable. And again, you only have to listen to the news to hear some of the most powerful, influential people and corporations in the world who maybe wouldn't say that because it sounds too crude to say it openly, but that's obviously what oozes out of them.

We will do what we want to do because we have the power and the influence and the money to do it and the position. And as you go through the detail, I don't have too much time to stop on all the detail, but I just want to summarize some of those later verses in that first section by this.

Verbally, they're predators. That is, one of the key tools is to use words. Whatever words necessary to bully, intimidate, and knock people down or knock them into line so that they will do what these powerful, godless people want them to do.

And practically, they're predators also. The language here is of the most ruthless, consuming, and dismissing of people as just commodities.

Those who are poor and helpless and oppressed, disadvantaged, well, obviously, they're not lifted up. People like ourselves, they're just to be used and discarded.

[24 : 40] More fool them. It's the dog-eat-dog attitude of our culture, of our world, isn't it? It's so, so horrible.

These oppressed, poor people, they're not, it doesn't ever occur to these ruthless, wealthy, thriving people that they should stop and help them show compassion.

They're just there to be treated, consumed, discarded without either compassion or mercy. And as verse 11 takes us then, he says in his heart, God has forgotten.

He has hidden his face, he will never see it. So once again, you see, their worldview reflects what they think about God and what they think about themselves and what they think about the world in which they exist and operate in.

They're convinced that they are God-like. They've pushed the real God or any thought of God into the background and they've now stepped into the foreground as God-like figures themselves.

[26 : 02] And from there, they try and convince themselves that God does not exist. So there's an interesting play and dialogue there. Earlier in the psalm, it says, you know, there is no God but then the inner dialogue, which is verse 11, isn't quite so self-assured.

In all their godlessness, they still have to work to keep calm on the inside, convincing themselves that there is no God or if there is a God, verse 11, then probably hasn't noticed or he's forgotten or he just isn't interested and we will get away with it.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Do you see the thinking? Even if God exists and they're trying to convince themselves that God doesn't but even if God does exist, their thinking is this, that since God has not acted against me thus far, then I can have confidence he will not act against me in the future.

I.e., I might just sneak this in, I might just pull it off, I might get away with it, I might actually be able to run life like this and not have any consequences. why would he think that?

well as I said before either because God has forgotten that's a view of God or because God has overlooked sinful rebellious actions and that's a particular world view of God or because as per the starting thought the Lord is deliberately disinterested in what is happening in his world and that also is a world view thought because that person will then live in the light of what he thinks about God Psalm 10 verse 12 to the end Arise O Lord O God lift up your hand forget not the afflicted why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart you will not call to account but you do see for you note mischief and vexation that you may take it into your hands to you the helpless commits himself you have been the helper of the fatherless break the arm of the wicked and evildoer call his wickedness to account till you find none the Lord is king forever and ever the nations perish from his land

[28 : 46] O Lord you hear the desire of the afflicted you will strengthen their heart you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more as per psalm 9 so we have a prayer to conclude the psalm and the prayer I think reflects the heading if you're following on the sheet the prayer reflects the fact that the eyes of circumstance ultimately need faith see because ultimately people cannot live in a world like I've just described in Psalm 10 verses 1 to 11 we ultimately cannot live in a world in which all we see is all there is it would just be too heartbreaking and depressing to view our world like that we recognize evil you don't have to be a Christian to recognize evil we recognize exploitation we long for powerful and self powerful self-interested people to be called to account for their terrible actions we long for justice to prevail we long for a great reversal in our world don't we we long for a world that we can see governed by love and care and compassion and truth we long for a ruler who will be powerful enough to be in control and yet personal enough to be caring and compassionate and merciful my friends when we confront the experience or the circumstances of this life essentially what we're longing for is for the

Lord to be king in his world and I think that's what the prayer verses 12 through to 18 is as in Psalm 9 the prayer there it's a prayer for God to act in line with his character act Lord rise act in justice and righteousness and compassion and truth call to account that which is evil my friends the eyes of faith are necessary to confront the experiences of life the circumstances of life pushes almost in desperation at times to develop the eyes of faith the reality of God in his world then exposes the nonsense of rebellion without consequences and we're told in these verses

God does see everything not only does he see it there's actually more picture language it's as if God is there with his board taking notes on every part of evil every act of evil he sees it and he notes it and he will call to account in his way and in his time he will reverse the wrongs perpetrated on his despised people and the idea there of breaking someone's arm that's picture language for the culture of the day in other words it is break down or render neutral their power it's the right arm of power that's been pictured there he will break the power and influence of all who reject the Lord and act as if they are God and as we saw in Psalm 9 there will be a great reversal those who currently appear despised and abandoned will experience the blessing of being lifted up the blessing and joy of God's wonderful deeds being applied to them and for them and those who currently use terror in godlessness and ruthlessness who use terror to build their lifestyle will finally experience the terror themselves but the terror of God's judgment in the upshot both Psalms is that those who step over the boundary of humanness who step over the boundary and start to act as though they are

God and that they can do whatever they like in God's world with impunity including rejecting God they will be forced in another great reversal to recognize that they are oh so human and that God is oh so God they will be forced to recognize that in fact they are what they have always been God's creatures living under the authority of the creator and answering to him well just let me make a couple of lines of application here and I'm done then the main line of application is this that for us as Christians we need to be careful not to be theoretically engaged with the world view of Psalm 9 but operating practically in the world view of Psalm 10 as Christians it's quite easy for us and especially in this congregation because this is the language of this congregation it's quite easy and common for us to say

God is sovereign that he is in control of every circumstance of this life but then practically we can be frustrated with God because he's not acting to call to account as we think he should and when we think he should we can become fixated on evil and injustice exploitation stuff we observe and experience from individuals or from governments or whenever in political social economic religious decisions and policy we're seeing it all the time and sometimes we can get so fixated on it that it drags us into Psalm 10 world view we get sucked into struggling against these things as though we are on our own as though if it's not for us then these things won't be called to account and won't be dealt with we get frustrated that the ungodly are thriving we start to fear the impact of their ruthless determination to squeeze

[36 : 10] God out of his world we sense that we need to get active and frenetic about curtailing their wickedness and trying to bring them down before they destroy everything that puts us in Psalm 10 world view at a practical level all the while deep in our hearts those sorts of thoughts are producing decisions that shape our view of God again since he hasn't knocked down ungodly people I know lots of Christians then start to harbor thoughts well that must mean since he hasn't done it by now that must mean either he's not there or that he's unable that he doesn't have enough power or that he doesn't want to that is he's not good or that he's just totally disinterested doesn't care do you see how those sort of things start to frame our thoughts of God deep down now we can have those thoughts and still on a Sunday morning turn up all nice and shiny and sit down here and say isn't it wonderful that God's sovereign straddling two worldviews sometimes

I think and this is all I don't think let me be more honest sometimes I find myself even being jealous of the thriving nature of the ungodly jealous of their success jealous of their prosperity jealous of their indulgent lifestyle just wishing if I had money to have a holiday like that if I had money to buy that if I had money to have a house like that you see the world view I mean and from there we start to think that practically we're on our own we need to take matters into our own hands we are on our own to make the best of life in reaction against evil we might then even find ourselves taking up ungodly strategies to improve our lot so as Christians we find ourselves starting to fight like non-Christians we want to fight and win arguments we want to prove our point we want to better those who oppose us we want to protest a desire for justice but as I've experienced in my life too often that protest of justice is actually a desire for revenge

I want somebody to pay for the hurt they've inflicted on and ultimately we get dragged into that Psalm 10 worldview and then we find ourselves going down the pathway of self-vindication self-protection self-sufficiency and ultimately I think the end of that road is an attempt at self-salvation and that is a reactionary fear-based living with God pushed into the background most of the week except perhaps when we express our anger and frustration at Adam in prayer or as I say when we come to church on Sunday and piously say in terms of Psalm 9 praise God for his sovereign control it's a real trap for us we need to be real careful about it well secondly and much more briefly just this point here remember that the

Lord never forgets sin or rebellion but is always keen to graciously forgive I agree the gospel of Jesus is God's brilliant demonstration of his righteousness in justice and judgment God does not forget about sin not even one rebellious thought will be overlooked ignored or forgotten by the Lord nor has he forgotten his troubled helpless fatherless people the great reversal prayed for in Psalm 9 and 10 has already become reality in the death and resurrection of Jesus in John chapter 5 verse 20 60 30 it speaks along those lines

God has already had the last word in his world the word of judgment on sin all judgment has been put into the hands of Jesus and in a real sense has already been completed through Christ's death and resurrection and therefore Christ's resurrection is proof that Jesus is who he says he is and that God has done what he said he would do in terms of judgment now two ways to apply that and then I'm done for each Christian here this morning there's a wonderful freedom and assurance in knowing that Psalm 9 and 10 has already been fulfilled the prayer of Psalm 9 and 10 has been fulfilled in Jesus if you as a believer here this morning if your heart is genuinely oriented to living faithfully and confidently under the rule of King

[42:18] Jesus then regardless of how inconsistently you have applied your eyes of faith to your circumstances regardless of that you can be sure that you will only experience God's care and protection and blessing even in the midst of suffering that is what the gospel promises and achieves for us now if you're someone here this morning who has not yet bowed to Jesus then can I just plead with you don't ignore your inner dialogue this morning don't just keep on going thinking well okay God hasn't knocked me down thus far in life therefore maybe everything's okay or I hope that God that might be out there will just leave me alone to do my own thing don't allow yourself even to contemplate that you can continue a life of autonomy or living independently from God pushing God into the background and just running life as you want to as if you yourself were God don't think you can do that and get away with it you will never forget or ignore your rebellion your sin in fact he knows it far better than you do you might think you're this bad but the Lord knows you're this bad this guilty before so the Lord will never forget your sin and that's a much bigger problem you even realize but equally true of the

Lord he will graciously forgive your sin if you give up your autonomy and your rebellion if you come to him asking for grace and mercy and forgiveness then he promises that he will give that grace and mercy and forgiveness and he will never ever count your sin against you in his sovereign grace and because he's got the sovereign power to do so he will give you a fresh start into a wonderful new life of blessing and security so back to my first sentence this morning what decisions will you make this week what thinking about God and yourself will govern where you go from here and how you enter the week I'm speaking now both to Christians and those who aren't yet believers pray with me again

Lord we easily find ourselves torn between what we say and actually what captures our hearts Lord we sometimes find ourselves as I say theoretically in Psalm 9 confident in your sovereign purposes and control of your world and yet practically Lord find ourselves so fearful of what we observe and what we experience around us help us Lord to re-engage with you so that our theory is actually a demonstrated reality we find a freedom and a peace and a calm to trust you to lean into you that you might be our stronghold our refuge in times of trouble Amen Amen

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