



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 144-150

Monday 2nd November - Psalm 144

Praise be to the Lord my Rock,
who trains my hands for war,
my fingers for battle.
2 He is my loving God and my fortress,
my stronghold and my deliverer,
my shield, in whom I take refuge,
who subdues peoples under me.
3 Lord, what are human beings that you care for
them,
mere mortals that you think of them?
4 They are like a breath;
their days are like a fleeting shadow.
5 Part your heavens, Lord, and come down;
touch the mountains, so that they smoke.
6 Send forth lightning and scatter the enemy;
shoot your arrows and rout them.
7 Reach down your hand from on high;
deliver me and rescue me
from the mighty waters,
from the hands of foreigners
8 whose mouths are full of lies,
whose right hands are deceitful.

9 I will sing a new song to you, my God;
on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you,
10 to the One who gives victory to kings,
who delivers his servant David.
From the deadly sword
11 deliver me;
rescue me from the hands of foreigners
whose mouths are full of lies,
whose right hands are deceitful.
12 Then our sons in their youth
will be like well-nurtured plants,
and our daughters will be like pillars
carved to adorn a palace.
13 Our barns will be filled
with every kind of provision.
Our sheep will increase by thousands,
by tens of thousands in our fields;
14 our oxen will draw heavy loads.
There will be no breaching of walls,
no going into captivity,
no cry of distress in our streets.
15 Blessed is the people of whom this is true;
blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.

In this Psalm, David is asking for the Lord to so bless his rule that the blessings flow out to the people. It begins with David declaring that God trains him for battle (and thus victory) but the end point is not the praise of David but the blessing of God's people with peace and prosperity. There's so much here to reflect on.

Notice the character of God displayed throughout the Psalm. He trains (v. 1), protects and subdues (v. 2), He cares (v. 3), He delivers and saves (v. 7-8, 10-11) and He blesses.

Notice the particular care of God for us as individuals in verse 3-4. It is so similar to Psalm 8. It's a reminder of the brevity of life and yet God's care us "fleeting shadows".

Notice David's desire for the presence of God amongst his people. Verse 5 reminds us of Exodus, where God routs Egypt and then is present with his people at Mount Sinai.

Notice the picture of blessing that results from salvation: children of character, food in abundance and safety from enemies. It's a picture of heavenly blessing.

May this Psalm cause you to reflect on the blessings that we have in Christ. In Christ, we have victory (1 Corinthians 15:57). In Christ we have peace with God (Romans 5:1). In Christ, we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 1)! May it cause you to praise God and thank Him for the blessings you have in Christ, right now.

James

Tuesday 3rd November - Psalm 145

- 1 I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- 3 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- 4 One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.
- 5 They speak of the glorious splendour of your
majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
- 6 They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- 7 They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- 8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- 9 The Lord is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- 10 All your works praise you, Lord;
your faithful people extol you.
- 11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
- 12 so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
- 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all
generations.
- The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.
- 14 The Lord upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
- 15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.
- 16 You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.
- 17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.
- 18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
- 19 He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.
- 20 The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
- 21 My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

In verses 1-2 the words build together calling us to exalt, praise, extol God – giving us a picture of unreserved and unbroken praise that happens every day, for ever and ever. How can we do that? I so often struggle to want to praise God, yet praising God is so important. If God is not praised, then how will we tell the world about his goodness. Praise is not the icing on the cake of my life, it is the only way to know God. This is the theme of the end of the book of Psalms. So how do we learn to praise?

This is the final Psalm of David in the arrangement of the book. David begins by praising God, leading the people in worship, but we know he did not succeed in keeping his pledge as there were days when he failed to make God known and he couldn't praise him forever since he died. No Israelite succeeded in giving praise to God consistently, with integrity, and perfection until Jesus. Even today, Jesus the divine-human king leads his people in the praise of God. There are two reasons why Jesus our King leads us in praising God – his greatness and goodness (Verses 3-6 his greatness, verses 7-9 his goodness). When Jesus walked among us, he was tempted to doubt that his Father was all good and all-powerful. However, when the people refused to repent after he had invested so much of his energy and life into them, his response is astonishing; "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children" (Matthew 11:25-26).

We praise God, not just because someone tells us to, but the Spirit of Jesus really makes us want to join in on the praise. As Christopher Ash says, we don't initiate the praise, for Jesus has done that, and we don't lead the praise, for Jesus is doing that, but we get to join in his choir, and "praise his holy name for ever and ever."

Father God, we praise you for your goodness and greatness. We praise you that you are not only great and powerful but also gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. Help us by your Spirit to praise you as you deserve, and do what we do to your glory. Amen.

Wednesday 4th November - Psalm 146

Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord, my soul.

2 I will praise the Lord all my life;

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

3 Do not put your trust in princes,

in human beings, who cannot save.

4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;

on that very day their plans come to nothing.

5 Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,

whose hope is in the Lord their God.

6 He is the Maker of heaven and earth,

the sea, and everything in them—

he remains faithful forever.

7 He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets prisoners free,

8 the Lord gives sight to the blind,

the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,
the Lord loves the righteous.

9 The Lord watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

10 The Lord reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the Lord.

This psalm opens with the psalmist calling his soul to praise the LORD. This call is repeated in the following 5 psalms. In these next 5 days we will be encouraged to praise the LORD because of who He is and what He has done for God's people and it then calls God's people to respond to His goodness and power. This hopefully will challenge us to think about the height, depth and width of God's goodness and power both in the Psalms but also as they point us to the person and work of Jesus.

So as we begin, why should we praise the LORD in the 10 verses that make up this psalm? Take some time to read and reread these verses. Consider how you might praise the LORD Jesus for what He has done.

The psalms often point us back to the beginning, Psalm 1 and 2. What reminds us to be faithful in this psalm and warns us against the path of the wicked?

So much of these psalms speak directly to who the Messiah will be and what He will do. Where in this psalm do we see Jesus as the Messiah and in His work? Can you think of other parts of the bible that point us in the same direction?

As the governments of the world look to find solutions to war, unemployment, disease and distress, how does this psalm change our expectations on what governments can do? What are we left with in this Psalm?

Phil

Thursday 5th November - Psalm 147

Praise the Lord.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

2 The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

3 He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

4 He determines the number of the stars
and calls them each by name.

5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power;
his understanding has no limit.

6 The Lord sustains the humble
but casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the Lord with grateful praise;
make music to our God on the harp.

8 He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.

9 He provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they call.

10 His pleasure is not in the strength of the
horse,
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;

11 the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

12 Extol the Lord, Jerusalem;
praise your God, Zion.

13 He strengthens the bars of your gates
and blesses your people within you.

14 He grants peace to your borders
and satisfies you with the finest of wheat.

15 He sends his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.

16 He spreads the snow like wool
and scatters the frost like ashes.

17 He hurls down his hail like pebbles.
Who can withstand his icy blast?

18 He sends his word and melts them;
he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.

19 He has revealed his word to Jacob,
his laws and decrees to Israel.

20 He has done this for no other nation;
they do not know his laws.

Praise the Lord.

This psalm has some strong links to Psalm 146. In the Greek version of this Psalm, both are included as one psalm. So take some time to reread psalm 146. Think through how is the power of God revealed in both of these psalms?

In this psalm there seems to be 3 sections with the focus of God's power. Verse 1 – 6 God's power in Israel, Babylon and the skies; then 7 – 11 God's power on the earth and finally 12 – 20 God's power in providing for His people through His word.

Thinking through Israel's poor history with idolatry. How might these psalms (146 and 147) be helpful for a people both in exile, those still in Babylon, as well as those being back in Jerusalem?

Israel's fear in its history has come from its weakness, how might this psalm give comfort for those who live with anxiety and fear?

Phil

Friday 6th November - Psalm 148

Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

2 Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

3 Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.

4 Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for at his command they were created,

6 and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

7 Praise the Lord from the earth,
you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds,
stormy winds that do his bidding,

9 you mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,

10 wild animals and all cattle,
small creatures and flying birds,

11 kings of the earth and all nations,
you princes and all rulers on earth,

12 young men and women,
old men and children.

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord,
for his name alone is exalted;
his splendour is above the earth and the heavens.

14 And he has raised up for his people a horn,
the praise of all his faithful servants,
of Israel, the people close to his heart.

Praise the Lord.

The whole universe is called to boast of the wonder of God. Praise is commanded from all aspects of the heavens above, including the angelic hosts (v. 1-5). The Egyptians considered the sun as one of their gods named Ra. They worshipped the sun that God created. But in v. 3 the author commanded the sun and the moon to give praise to the Lord who created them.

From the creation story in Genesis 1, God commanded creation as a spontaneous response to His word. This call for the heavens and all heavenly bodies (including all heavenly beings) to give praise to the Lord is because He is the Creator (v. 5). God established them forever and ever and never to pass away (v. 6). The focus of the call to praise shifts to the earth in v. 7. All the hosts above like lightning and hail, snow and clouds, all earth formations like mountains and hills and all creatures below are to praise our great God. The sea creatures, land animals and beautiful birds that sing, they all inspire awe and wonder to us. All of them are commanded to give praise to the Lord.

But ultimately, God wants nothing less but the praise of his faithful servants, the people who are close to his heart (v. 14). God deserves our praise because He has drawn near to us through His Son.

Psalm 148 calls upon all creation to praise God, from the angels and the heavenly bodies to every creation and thing on earth. God should be praised because He made all these things. The wonder and awe of God's creation should point us to seek and praise the Creator and not to worship His creation. He alone is the God that deserves our worship, honour, and praise.

Lord, may the utterance of our lips and the meditation of our hearts be in constant adoration of your glorious praise.

Edwin

Saturday 7th November - Psalm 149

Praise the Lord.

Sing to the Lord a new song,
his praise in the assembly of his faithful
people.

2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;
let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

3 Let them praise his name with dancing
and make music to him with timbrel and harp.

4 For the Lord takes delight in his people;
he crowns the humble with victory.

5 Let his faithful people rejoice in this honour
and sing for joy on their beds.

6 May the praise of God be in their mouths
and a double-edged sword in their hands,

7 to inflict vengeance on the nations
and punishment on the peoples,

8 to bind their kings with fetters,
their nobles with shackles of iron,

9 to carry out the sentence written against them
— this is the glory of all his faithful people.

Praise the Lord.

I've spoken to many people over the years who can recognise that God loves them, but they believe He loves them the same way a parent might love a really disobedient and difficult child. "Sure, he loves me... but really He just tolerates me..." is the kind of thing I've heard. Maybe you've felt that too.

This Psalm calls upon Israel to praise and rejoice in the Lord with all of their heart. They are to sing and dance and grab instruments. But notice verse 4: "For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory".

Get this: the God of the universe takes delight in His people. He takes delight in you. He delights in His people. It thrills Him to pour out his blessing upon us. He, the King of Kings, crowns us with victory! No wonder we are called to rejoice in this honour.

The challenge for many is that we believe our sin and our failures mean that God is constantly mad at us. It is true that God does not bless our sin. But let the stark truth of this passage sink in: God delights in His people. We bring Him joy. Wow.

The second half of the Psalm may trouble you as the Psalm turns from song and dance to war. But this is a picture of God's people bringing justice to the world around them as an instrument of God. Small Israel can subdue the nations because God is with them.

We aren't old covenant Israel and so we need not bring the sword. But we should seek justice for the oppressed as much as we sing!

May you be encouraged to praise God with all of your life, knowing that He delights in you. In Christ, your sin is washed away, your shame removed. God loves you and delights in you. Let that motivate you to repent of sin and submit your life to His good will.

James

Sunday 8th November - Psalm 150

Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary;

 praise him in his mighty heavens.

2 Praise him for his acts of power;

 praise him for his surpassing greatness.

3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

 praise him with the harp and lyre,

4 praise him with timbrel and dancing,

 praise him with the strings and pipe,

5 praise him with the clash of cymbals,

 praise him with resounding cymbals.

6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.

So, we come to the last Psalm – where everything that breathes is summoned to praise God for everything they are worth. After all, it's God's breath in the first place – his to give, his to take back, and to give again. Psalm 146-150 each begin and end with the word hallelujah, which is a call to praise meaning "Praise the Lord". This is what the whole book of Psalms is all about. So that as Christopher Ash says, "...all the people of Jesus may learn to pray all the psalms all the time."

Where should God be praised? – everywhere! Praise him in his sanctuary and the heavens (v. 1), inside and outside the church. Why should we praise him? Praise him for everything! For his acts of power and his surpassing greatness (v. 2). Praise him not just for what he's done, but also for who he is. How should we praise him? Praise him in every way, with whatever you can (v. 3-5). Who should praise him? Everyone!

Through the Psalms, we've had grief, anger, lament, agony, joy, struggle, yet at the very end we have praise psalms, and this is the ultimate praise psalm. This is what the Psalms are saying, and what the whole bible is saying – every prayer, in the end, ends with praise. You confess your sins, but it ends in the joy of forgiveness. We lament and cry out, and it moves eventually to a greater confidence and rest in him. The more we see God as he is, the more we become like him (2 Cor 3:18). This is saying if you process everything with God in prayer, and all prayer that is pursued long enough always ends in praise. So, don't rush it. The fact that so many individual psalms are laments and they don't finish in praise themselves, is an important guide. It may take years and even decades, or even till we are in glory before some prayers arrive in the hallelujahs of 150.

Father God, I ask that you would increase my capacity to praise you for who you are and for what you have done. We recognise you are so far above us, and we confess the smallness of our minds, and how our hearts are so often turned away from you. We long for the day when the work of Jesus will be completed in our hearts, when we will find great joy with all of your people, with every single breath. We thank you for your ultimate praise-worthy act of sending Jesus to live and die in our place. Amen.

Martin