



Psalms of Praise

Introduction

Over the past weeks, we have studied wisdom psalms, thanksgiving psalms, laments, psalms of trust, royal psalms, and psalms of remembrance. Now it is time to praise the Lord! Psalms of praise overflow with praise of the Lord. In these psalms, God is praised for who He is, for His mighty power and grace as seen in His works, and for His attributes. It is important to see that the praise psalms differ from the psalms of thanksgiving. Claus Westermann notes that praise makes the object praised (God) the subject, whereas in thanksgiving, the speaker is the subject. Praise involves a looking away from oneself. It is a lavish description of the pure enjoyment of God and involves genuine appreciation while thanksgiving can often be offered out of duty. Finally, praise is expressed aloud and usually in public while thanksgiving is typically a private and silent act. Consequently, praise also encourages and edifies others (Allen Ross, "The Praise Psalms").

Thanksgiving psalms were usually written in response to a deliverance by God. The thanksgiving psalms we studied make it clear that each was an answer to prayer for deliverance. Notice in the thanksgiving psalms the frequent references to "I," "me," and God's dealing with "my" or "our" enemies.

Two types of praise may be found in the praise psalms: declarative praise in which the psalmist gives his testimony of what God has done and descriptive praise which explains the testimony by praising God and His attributes.

We studied five praise psalms this week.

- I. Praise for God's Revelation of His Glory - Psalm 19
- II. Praise to the King of Glory - Psalm 24
- III. Praise to God in Mount Zion - Psalm 48
- IV. Praise to God for All His Mercies - Psalm 103
- V. Praise to God, Our Help and Hope - Psalm 146

I. Praise for God's Revelation of His Glory - Psalm 19

Psalm 19 declares the perfection of God's revelation of Himself to all mankind. God has vividly revealed Himself in a general way through the works of His creation (19:1-6), and this revelation is clearly seen by all. See also Romans 1:18-20. God has also revealed

Himself in a special way through His perfect word. The Scriptures are a written statement of God's grace and power. The psalmist understands and is humbled by this. He lavishly praises God for this great revelation.

A. General Revelation - Psalm 19:1-6

The psalmist, David, writes that *The heavens declare the glory of God* (19:1). The Hebrew word for God here is "El," denoting His power as Creator. *The firmament (sky) shows His handiwork* (19:1), parallels the preceding line. In other words, all anyone has to do is look up to see the glory of God! Day and night reveal the power and greatness of God. "The presence of the heavenly host is a nonverbal testimony to God's existence that reaches every part of the planet. Everyone, regardless of his or her language, can understand it. This is the "paradox of wordless speech" (Dr Tom Constable, "Notes on Psalms").

The last line of verse 4 teaches that God has placed the sun in the heavens. It is God who is supreme and not the sun. Although the sun is great and glorious as a bridegroom on his wedding day and a strong runner winning his race (19:5), God is immeasurably greater and glorious. Although nothing can escape the heat of the sun (19:6), God is more powerful. God *set a tabernacle for the sun* (19:4); He created the sun, and the creator is always greater, more powerful, and more glorious than that which is created.

B. Specific Revelation - Psalm 19:7-11

In this section of the psalm, David shows how God has revealed Himself in a very compelling way, through His word. It is notable that David now uses the covenant name of God, "Yahweh" or "Jehovah," the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14, "I AM WHO I AM." David speaks of the word of the Lord and its perfection and purpose in the revelation of Himself. *Law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments* all refer to various aspects of God's word.

Law (literally "Torah") (19:7) is the broadest term and means "instruction," the totality of God's written revelation in Scripture. The *law* is perfect, meaning it is the all-sufficient revelation. It is able to turn us from our sins and turn us to God.

Testimony (19:7) is a direct revelation of God's will, a reminder of His truth. His testimonies are *sure* or

“trustworthy.” They bestow precious wisdom without cost on those who embrace and follow them.

Statutes and commandments (19:8) are God’s written orders. They are *right* and *pure*. *Right* refers to being righteous and *pure* means being totally without corruption. Thus, God’s word enlightens the minds of those who read it, *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:105).

The fear of the Lord (19:9) is a synonym for the Law, which was designed to put fear into our hearts. *Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children* (Deuteronomy 4:10).

Judgments (19:9) are judicial decisions, verdicts. The judgments of the Lord are always true and just.

To David, God’s words were more valuable than gold and sweeter than honey. They warned him against error, keeping him from sin, and brought great reward when he obeyed them. God’s words are designed to do the same for you.

C. Closing Prayer - Psalm 19:12-14

Who can understand his errors? (19:12) is a profound rhetorical question. It expresses the impossibility of our knowing our *secret faults* (19:12), *presumptuous sins* (19:13), and *great transgression* (19:13) without the light and guidance which God’s word provides.

David prays for forgiveness (19:12) and deliverance (19:13). “He is aware of sin’s subtle nature and complexity, dividing it into categories: errors, which are wrongs innocently committed; hidden faults, that is, faults unknown to himself because they are so deeply ingrained in his personality, certainly not hidden to God; and willful sins, which are sins of deliberate presumption. The psalmist also knows that he can never be fully aware of these sins in order to seek forgiveness unless God reveals their presence to him by the written law” (James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms](#)).

In the closing verse, David asks that his words and thoughts may be an acceptable sacrifice to God (See Hebrews 13:15.) who is his *strength* and his *redeemer*. And so Psalm 19 comes full circle: the One who placed the sun in the heavens is the same One who forgives and redeems!

Psalm 19 is a wonderful outpouring of praise. C. S. Lewis called it “the greatest poem in the psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world” ([Reflections on the Psalms](#)). The psalm is simply a response of praise to the realization of the mighty and miraculous

revelation of God’s glory. Has your heart ever overflowed with praise when you have learned a new and exciting truth in Scripture or when God has revealed Himself in some special way through His creation? If so, have you shared this praise with others? Remember that praise is not true praise unless it is shared. Will this psalm inspire you to search the Scriptures every day to find reasons for praising God? Who will you share your praise with?

II. Praise to the King of Glory - Psalm 24

Many believe that the historical setting for Psalm 24 was the great day described in 2 Samuel 6:11-19 when David brought the ark of the Lord into Jerusalem from the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. Since God was understood to symbolically dwell between the cherubim which covered the ark (2 Samuel 6:1), it would be fitting to welcome the ark with a hymn of praise such as this. The first two verses of Psalm 24 praise God as creator and owner of the earth; verses 3-6 recognize Him as the source of blessing and righteousness; and the final verses establish Him as the King of glory.

A. The Lord is Sovereign Over the Earth - Psalm 24:1-2

God created and God sustains the whole earth and all who dwell in it. The earth belongs to Him. He is sovereign over it. “This means that if you are a part of this world, as you are, you owe God allegiance as your true and rightful King” (James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms](#)).

B. The Lord Gives Blessing and Righteousness - Psalm 24:3-6

The psalmist asks who dares to ascend the hill of this sovereign Lord and stand in His holy presence (24:3). In answering, the psalmist lists four requirements for anyone who would draw near to the Lord. First, that person must have *clean hands*, meaning that his or her actions must be right and holy. Secondly, a *pure heart* is necessary. This refers to inward holiness, being committed to obeying God’s word. Thirdly, the person who wishes to enter the presence of the Lord must be a worshiper of God only and not have been lured away by idols. Lastly, that person must be honest and reject deceitful behavior. Such a person will *receive blessing and righteousness from the God of His salvation* (24:5).

Verse 5 explains that only God can provide the righteousness necessary to enter into His presence. The New Testament teaches that He has provided this righteousness through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who is the *Lord of Righteousness* (Jeremiah 23:6). He shed His life blood on the cross, washing away our sin

and clothing us in His righteousness. *While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son* (Romans 5:10). *In Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ* (Ephesians 2:13).

C. The Lord is the King of Glory - Psalm 24:7-10

These verses describe the triumphal entry of the King of glory. The psalmist personifies the *gates* of Jerusalem, the *everlasting doors* (24:7,9). Their heads are bowed before the King as He approaches. The psalmist calls them to *Lift up your heads* (24:7,9), that is, look up and receive the *King of glory* (24:7,9). Notice that verse 7 is repeated again in verse 9, adding to the dramatic effect of this glorious hymn.

The question, *Who is the King of glory?* is also asked twice. (24:8,10). The answer is that He is *the Lord strong and mighty* (24:8). He is *The Lord of hosts* (24:10), the Lord of all the armies of heaven. He is the Lord of heaven and earth!

All people should honor and glorify God because He is the King of glory. We should also realize that if we desire to draw near to Him, we need to purify (24:4) our thoughts, our words, and our actions. *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure* (1 John 3:3).

III. Praise to God in Mount Zion - Psalm 48

Psalm 48 is another song of the sons of Korah. It is also one of the five Songs of Zion, the city of God (Jerusalem), along with Psalms 76, 84, 87, and 122. In taking a close look at each of these psalms, it becomes clear that they are offered in praise of God who has made Zion His dwelling place and become her protector. Furthermore, Derek Kidner ([Psalms 1-72](#)) writes that this particular psalm makes one conscious of a larger setting than the hills of Jerusalem. "Zion is more than a local capital; the struggle concerns the whole earth and the whole span of time. The outlines of 'the Jerusalem above', with its great walls and foundations which are 'for ever', are already coming into view." Hebrews 12:18 and 22 explain, *You have not come to a mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire,.....But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.*

In Psalm, 48 God's greatness is seen in His holy city and in the personal testimony of the people who live there.

A. God's Greatness Displayed in His City - Psalm 48:1-7

The greatness of the King who reigns in Zion is declared by this Zion Psalm. God is the great King and the sovereign defender of His city.

1. The great King who resides in Zion - 48:1-3

"Ancient peoples connected the glory of a god with the place where He dweltThe holy mountain where His ark resided (see Psalm 24) reflected God's greatness" (Tom Constable, "Notes on the Psalms"). God is worthy of great praise. Zion is His holy mountain. "The way to Zion is uphill, which is why the psalms always speak of going 'up' to Jerusalem. There on the lofty hills of Zion the towering ramparts of the city rose, and the breathtaking beauty of the city beckoned" (James Montgomery Boice, [Psalms](#)). But even more than that, Zion is the residence of the great King. It is His presence there which is the true beauty of the city and which makes her secure. *He is known as her refuge* (48:3).

2. The power of the protector of Zion - 48:4-7

This passage describes the mighty power of God in protecting His city. Notice the progression of verbs in verses 5 and 6, describing the actions and attitudes of enemy kings who had gone up against Jerusalem. *They assembled...they passed by...they saw...they marveled...they were troubled...they hastened away.* The kings went up against the city, but they turned away without a fight. *Fear took hold of them there* (48:6). Were they terrified by the presence of God? The psalmist uses two images to describe their fear: it was like the pain of a woman in labor and it was like the breaking of the mightiest ships by the strong east wind.

B. People's Testimony - Psalm 48:8-14

The people give their testimony to God's mighty deliverance of Zion. They had heard of God's wonders of old. Now they had seen for themselves what God could do. Their present experience had confirmed what they had heard. This gave them confidence to know that God would keep His city secure forever.

1. Call to rejoice - 48:9-11

Upon thinking of God's *lovingkindness* (48:9), mighty works (God's *name* is always associated with the works He has done), *righteousness* (48:10), and His *judgments* (His just decisions) (48:11), the people offered praise and thanksgiving.

2. Call to inspect the city - 48:12-14

The people are invited to circle the city and see with their own eyes how completely God had defended and

delivered her. Not a tower had been touched (48:12). Her bulwarks were all standing and her magnificent buildings were unscathed (48:13).

The purpose of the inspection of the city was for telling the story to the next generation; to tell them of the mighty God of Zion who is God forever. He is *our God* and *our guide even to death*. He is a personal God and a permanent God.

IV. Praise to God for All His Mercies - Psalm 103

Psalm 103 is a call to remember all of the blessings which are available through the Lord. It is a reminder to count one's blessings and not just take God's grace and tender mercies for granted. Psalm 103 explains why God's people should praise Him and also how to praise Him.

A. How to Praise God - Psalm 103:1-2

David begins the psalm by reminding himself to *bless the Lord*. His desire is to praise God with *all that is within me*, that is, with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might. (See Deuteronomy 6:5.) David does not want to forget all of God's benefits. He wants to praise God for ALL He had done with ALL that is in him. He wants his praise to come from his heart and not just from his lips. May that be your desire as well.

B. Why to Praise God - Psalm 103:3-19

David praises God for His many benefits and for His character.

1. Praising God for His benefits - 103:3-5

God's benefits include His forgiveness. He *forgives all your iniquities* (103:3) and removes them *as far as the east is from the west* (103:12), alluding to an infinite, immeasurable distance. God also *heals all your diseases* (103:3). When a person has been sick and then gets well, God has done it. He is the healer. Another benefit is that God *redeems your life from destruction* (103:4). Because of His *lovingkindness and tender mercies* (103:4), He saves sinners from death and gives the gift of eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ. *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 6:23). Not only does He save, He *satisfies* with good things (103:5) and gives a "buoyant, tireless strength" (Derek Kidner, [Psalms 73-150](#)) *like the eagle's* (103:5).

2. His character - 103:6-19

This passage reveals what God is like by His actions, especially by the way He deals with people. All of the statements in this section are a reflection upon God's grace and mercy.

He *executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed* (103:6). The examples cited are Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai (103:7).

He is *slow to anger and abounding in mercy* (103:8). The word translated *mercy* is the Hebrew "hesed," God's loyal love toward His people.

God will not always bring accusation against us. His anger is not forever (103:9). Furthermore, He has not treated us the way sinners deserve to be treated (103:10). This is because His *mercy* ("hesed") upon *those who fear Him* (103:11) is as infinitely limitless as the heavens above.

God knows each person intimately. He made us from the dust of the earth (Genesis 3:19). He pities and forgives (103:12-13), as a father with his children.

People are like grass (103:15). See also Psalm 90:5, Isaiah 40:6, James 1:11, and 1 Peter 1:24. They flourish and fade. But God's mercy ("hesed") and righteousness (103:17) are forever on those who fear, remember, and obey Him (103:18).

C. Who Should Praise God? - Psalm 103:19-22

Because God's throne is established in heaven and He is sovereign over all (103:19), it follows that ALL should praise Him: angels (103:20), the heavenly hosts (103:21), all His works in all places (103:22), and *my soul* (103:22).

Are you one who fears God and obeys Him? Those who fear Him are those who stand in reverent awe of God, His benefits, His works, and His character. Those who truly fear Him will obey Him and will praise Him with all their heart, soul, and might.

V. Praise to God, Our Help and Hope - Psalm 146

The last five psalms (146-150) are a group of beautiful praise hymns, each one beginning and ending with "Hallelujah," translated as *Praise the Lord* in most English versions of the Bible. The word "hallelujah" is a compound of two Hebrew words, "hallel," meaning "praise" and "jah," a contraction of "Jehovah." In these last five psalms, every word is praise for Jehovah, the Lord. Psalm 147 is a call to praise God for His sovereign power and care. Psalm 148 calls for all heaven and earth to join in praise to God. Psalm 149 invites the saints to sing aloud a new song. Psalm 150 exhorts everything that has breath to praise the Lord. The writers of these last psalms are unknown. The praise is exuberant. The entire focus is upon worship of God! Psalm 146, which we have studied, begins with an expression of personal praise (146:2) and then encourages all of God's people to join in.

A. Psalmist's Declaration of Praise -
Psalm 146:1-2

The opening *Praise the Lord* is plural, a call to all to join in praise. The psalmist then proclaims the intention of his own soul, which is not only to praise the Lord at the moment, but to continue to praise Him as long as he lives.

B. Man's Help is Fleeting - Psalm 146:3-4

Human beings are not worthy of our praise and trust. Even influential people, like *princes* (146:3) are ultimately of *no help* (146:3). *Man* (146:3, the Hebrew word, "adam") *departs* (146:4) returning to the *earth* (146:4 - the Hebrew "adama"). Note the play on words with "adam" and "adama." Men die and return to dust (Genesis 3:19) and all the great plans a man has made perish with him. Any help offered by human beings is fleeting and consequently *no help* at all.

C. God's Help is Forever - Psalm 146:5-10

The Lord shall reign forever (146:10), so those who *hope* in Him are *happy* (146:5) or *blessed* (NASB).

1. God is able to help - 146:5-6

Those who hope in God place their trust in the powerful creator of *heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them*. He will be true to His word forever. The apostle Paul testified to this in 2 Timothy 4:16-17: *No one stood with me, but all forsook me. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me*.

2. God is faithful to help - 146:7-9

The psalmist gives an extensive and encouraging list of God's faithful gifts to His people. The Lord brings *justice for the oppressed* (146:7 and also Luke 4:18-21). The Lord provides food for the hungry (146:7 and also Exodus 16:15 and Matthew 14:13-21). The Lord sets the prisoners free (146:7 and also Luke 4:18 and Acts 16:25-26). The Lord *opens the eyes of the blind* (146:8 and also Matthew 9:30, John 9:7, and Luke 4:18-21). The Lord lifts up *those who are bowed down* (146:8 and also Luke 13:11-13). The Lord shows love to the righteous (146:8). The Lord *watches over the strangers* (146:9 and also Exodus 22:21 and Leviticus 19:34). The Lord supports orphans and widows (146:9 and also Deuteronomy 10:18, Luke 7:11-17, and James 1:27). But He turns the way of the wicked *upside down* (146:9).

These blessings also have a spiritual application for Christians that should come to mind as we read Psalm 146. The Lord has provided us with spiritual food, His precious word. He opens our spiritual eyes to see His truth and His salvation. He sets us free from being prisoners to sin. And far beyond loving the righteous, He is the one who makes us righteous. The apostle Peter wrote of believers as aliens and strangers on the earth (1 Peter 1:17, 11), but the Lord is the One who watches over us!

The ultimate reason to place our hope in God and give Him our praise is found in the final verse of the psalm. God *shall reign forever*. His power and His help is available now and forever. Our God, the God of Zion, will shower His love on endless generations. He is our eternal hope and His praise endures for eternity. Hallelujah! *Praise the Lord!*

Applications

1. In Psalm 48, the psalmist wrote about the mighty God of Zion who is God forever. You have heard about Him throughout this study. Have you listened and seen with your own eyes what He can do? Will you pass on what you have learned to the next generation? With whom will you share your testimony?

2. If you believe in God and in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be praising Him for eternity. Is not now a fitting time to begin perfecting your praises? Will you begin to praise God for everything, both large and small? Will you encourage others to do the same? What will you praise Him for right now?

