

PRAISE FOR ALL SEASONS

Psalm 146

Sunday August 29th 2010 Morning Service

Rupert Bentley Taylor

1. I. A Command

This psalm begins & ends 'Praise the LORD'. God's command to us.

Urgent: God wants us to get this message very clearly. The words 'Praise the LORD!' come repeatedly in v.1-2. What does God want from us this morning? If there is no note of praise something is deeply wrong in our hearts

Personal: moves at once from plural command v1 to personal command: 'Praise the LORD O my soul'. Takes himself in hand. The commonest disease in sinful world is the unthankful heart. But psalmist is determined to praise God: are you?

Continual: v2 'all my life, as long as I live'. Not praise tied to experience, how I feel, but praise tied to theology, what I believe. This choice to praise God is characteristic Bible thinking: Psalm 34:1 'I will extol the LORD at all times'. To make that choice is a key sign of Christian maturity & life.

Challenge: to all of us to enter into praise this morning. Never too late to take yourself in hand, to respond to God's command. Phil 4:4 'Rejoice in the LORD always. I will say it again, Rejoice'. 1 Thess 5:16-17 'Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus'.

2. II. A Warning v.3-4

Strong connection between praise & trust. Who you truly praise you will truly trust. Danger is that we praise God in this building but go out trusting in ourselves, our money, our own plans, our family, our friends. The princes here represent not just people of royal birth & title, but any alternative human source of sufficiency.

Emphasis here is on the humanness of these princes: Hebrew word for 'man' comes twice here in v3. Here is someone or something of this world that seems to offer all we need. What Satan wants us all to think. We are all trusting something: is it just a human source?

But see the inadequacy of these princes: God's verdict is v3 'they cannot save'. The princes will not last. They will all die. My career will not last. My money is not secure. My health will fail. My family will pass away. I

will not find anyone other than God who can truly see me through. True praise brings us again & again to God. By praise we clear our cluttered hearts, clear our clouded vision, so that we see LORD clearly so that we may trust him fully.

3. III. A Blessing v.5-6

These verses are about the blessings that come to those who not only praise God with lips but also trust God with their lives. 3 linked thoughts, that express this blessing.

1. The blessed know God as both help & hope: v5 'whose help is.. whose hope is...'. Help is about the immediate need, there is a God who can help me right now: hope is about the future. In Bible language 'hope' carries no uncertainty, the future may be uncertain, but in that uncertain future, God is utterly reliable. The blessed man has God as help today & his hope for tomorrow.
2. The blessed have the God of Jacob as their God. V5 'whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is the LORD his God'. This connects the God of Jacob to us/me. This title identifies God as the great God of the past who is also our God today. Jacob fled alone from Canaan in danger of his life but God preserved him & brought him back & finally as the father of the nation of Israel. The God of Jacob is not just a God sitting on some remote pinnacle of glory: but a God engaged in real world with all its struggles & problems. The "God of Jacob is my God". If you can say that, you are blessed.
3. The blessed find in God awesome power & complete faithfulness. V6 looks back and says God is Creator. Nothing that exists that was not his making. That is the power of God. Is that sort of power sufficient for you this week? But also v 6 looks on: 'the LORD who remains faithful forever'. This God is both powerful & totally faithful. To be in communion with this God: not just to sing his praises but to trust his person, this is what it is to be blessed. This is a blessing open to you & me this morning.

4. IV. A Saviour

v7-9 has 9 affirmations about what God does: & x5 the name of God, the 'LORD', is repeated. Are these absolute promises, describing current reality? Are all prisoners now set free? In Acts 12 we read of Peter miraculously delivered from prison but in same chapter we read of James, another apostle, arrested & executed, never released. Are all blind Christians today guaranteed healing now? What can this list mean? Is it just a poetic flight of fancy?

1. God's grace is for the real world. The list is whole variety of troubled circumstances. Here is a God involved with the battered, bruised, struggling, wounded, needy people. A God who deals with the realities & pains of life. Praise Him!
2. God's grace is specific: there is a variety of needs & a variety of ways God meets need: his grace matches our different needs. There is grace in God to match the needs you face. Praise Him!
3. God works salvation. Key verdict against the princes in v3 was that they 'cannot save'. But God can. This list of needs is a sample list of needs that mark a broken world. Root of all these troubles is human rebellion

that traces back to Genesis 3. We are all sinners living with the consequences of sin. This is the list of our reality, samples of reality of being human. So what does God do?

1) He helps: already seen that in v5. Partial but real help for us in God. God ponce said to Paul in his affliction, 'my grace is sufficient for you'. There is one who helps us in this world's pains.

2) He sends the Saviour: This list of deliverances is very like Isaiah 61:1-2, read out by Jesus in Luke 4 about himself. He fed 5000 hungry people with 5 loaves & 2 fishes. He reached out & restored sight of blind. He has authority to undo what sin has done. Praise God!

3) He ends it all: what Jesus did, was a sign of the end of all these afflictions. God is going to deal with the roots of human need. He will undo the damage in our world more deeply than we can yet understand. It will cost God at Calvary more than we can ever realise. But God will deliver us altogether from all the troubles of this sinful world. Rev 21 says 'God himself will... wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. He who was seated on the throne said I am making everything new!'

But these verses are also a lovely description of the character of God: what is yr God like? Look at the verbs in verses 7-9. God is gracious. His heart is moved by our need. God's love is why Jesus came to Calvary.

Yet is another side: v9 but he 'frustrates the ways of the wicked'. Not just a fluffy Father Christmas: God will deal with evil, he calls us to account. Will you come under the mercies or under the judgements of this God?

Ultimately the joys of the believer are the character of his God. The joy of heaven is God himself. God's Spirit & God's Word invite us to taste and see that the LORD is good: to savour & treasure & delight our hearts in him, to dwell on what he is like, to hold to what he says and to love him who so loves us.

Final assurance: v10. This is the opposite to v4. The princes are not only human they are mortal: cannot last. But God both saves & remains same through all generations. The God of Psalm 146 is same today. Hallelujah!

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