

November 10, 2024

“Songs of Praise”
Lesson 2

Psalms 146 / 150

Intro

The two psalms today are part of a five psalm set (146-150) that are all praise psalms. Each of them begins with the idea of praising the Lord. Both of these psalms exhort the reader to rely on God alone, and the praises emphasize how reliable and trustworthy and awesome God is. Both psalms encourage the reader to show gratitude for the great things God has done for them.

Read Psalm 146

1. vs. 1: “Praise the Lord” is a translation of the Hebrew word “hallelujah”
The psalmist begins by encouraging himself to praise God – “...my soul”
This is a good place for all of us to start as God’s representatives / messengers
To lead others to worship God, we must be worshipping Him first
2. vs. 2: The psalmist makes a commitment here to praise God for all of his life
The repetition of two nearly identical thoughts adds emphasis to the idea
The psalmist intends to continue praising God, which implies in/with his whole life
This would mean when talking with people as well as in worship times
3. vs. 3: Here the people are warned against trusting in human leaders
This is a logical step after vs. 2 where he says he will praise God continually
Israel and Judah were tempted at times to make alliances with pagan nations for help
They didn’t turn to God in faith/trust as they were called to do
Human leaders can’t “save”—they can’t provide true and lasting help
God alone deserves our praise, as He alone is capable of giving us help always
Even through tough circumstances, people can’t help us as much as God can
4. vs. 4: This verse explains *why* we cannot fully trust in people
Even good people die—our human lives have a limit in time
When we die, we can no longer do any good thing for other people
Death is the ultimate example of human frailty
Therefore, any mortal is unworthy of the praise or reliance that God alone deserves
5. vs. 5: This verse connects back to vs. 3 regarding who to trust and why
The people who trust in God, who have hope in God alone, are called “blessed”
Being blessed means to be shown favor by God
God certainly favors those who put their trust in him rather than in man (vs. 3)
Jacob here could mean the individual, but also is used to refer to Israel itself, God’s people
The verse emphasizes God’s care for Jacob himself, and then for his descendants

6. vs. 6: This verse now shows actions or attributes of God that prove Him worthy of our trust
God's role as creator of heaven and earth show His mighty power
Acknowledging God's creative power happens many times in Scripture
These appeals are always seen as reasons to hope and trust in Him
See Ps. 115:15, Ps. 121:2, Ps. 124:8, Ps. 134:3, and Neh. 9:1-6
The second half of the verse begins a list of attributes
First, God is faithful to His people *forever*
This isn't a switch in topics, but a continuation of a thought
God's faithfulness is rooted in His role as creator of the universe
God made a covenant with humanity after the flood not to destroy the world again
7. vs. 7: In the ancient world, financial prosperity was often seen as a sign of God's favor
This verse says that isn't always so: God "upholds the cause of the oppressed"
He "gives food to the hungry"
God pays special attention to those who don't have enough
This concern is continued with Jesus' teachings in Matt. 25:37-45
This verse may be intended to remind those with enough to remember the vulnerable
We know that God cares about all, regardless of their wealth status
He certainly wants us to show the same kind of care to all people
8. vs. 8: God's actions connect with the list of Messianic actions in Is. 61:1-2
Here God sets prisoners free, gives sight to the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down
All of these actions speak to meeting people's needs who are in desperate situations
First God gives them physical needs (food in vs. 7, sight and freedom in vs. 8)
Then He meets emotional/spiritual needs (lifting up those who are down)
The verse concludes with the first of a group of people that God cares for
"The Lord loves the righteous"
God loves those who seek Him, who follow His ways, who become like Him
9. vs. 9: The first half of this verse gives three other groups that God has His eye on
The foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow
The people of Israel were once foreigners in Egypt
God calls His own people never to forget that by remembering to treat foreigners kindly
There are multiple laws demanding fair and generous treatment of foreigners
See Ex. 23:9, Lev. 19:34, Deut. 1:16 and Deut. 24:14
The third group is the fatherless and the widows
Care for these groups is seen in all the major divisions of the OT
In the Torah: Ex. 22:22-24, Deut. 10:18, 27:19)
In wisdom books: Ps. 10:14, Ps. 10:18, Ps. 68:5, Prov. 15:25
In the prophets: Is. 1:17, Jer. 22:3, Mal. 3:5
And in the NT: James 1:27 equates caring for these groups as "pure religion"
Any topic discussed over such a wide amount of Scripture is vital to heed and obey
The verse ends with a contrast
"God frustrates the ways of the wicked"
He cares for the previous three groups, but He acts against those who are evil
They may be evil because of the lack of care they show towards these groups

10. vs.10: In contrast to human leaders, God “reigns forever”

The fact that He is both eternal and has creative power means He can do anything
Calling Him the “God of Zion” connects Him to the hill Jerusalem was built on
It reminds the people that God chose to place His glory in Jerusalem, with His people
With that reminder, the people are once again encouraged to “Praise the Lord”

Read Psalm 150

1. vs. 1: The first verse of Psalm 150 is like that of Psalm 146: it encourages us to praise God

However, it also says that “God is in His sanctuary...in His mighty heavens”

Is this describing where God is or where the person praising is?

The best interpretation seems to be “both”

Worship of God is to be done in both earthly and heavenly realms

Perhaps the psalmist envisions the entire universe gathering to praise God

2. vs. 2: Praise of God (Father, Son or Holy Spirit) usually involves one of two areas:

Who God is

What He has done

Here God is praised for his acts of power (what He has done)

He is praised for His surpassing greatness (who He is)

3. vs. 3: This verse begins a three-verse view of what instruments are used to praise God

Verse 3 identifies a trumpet, a harp, and a lyre

The trumpet here is the priestly trumpet made of ram’s horn called a *shofar*

It is used in multiple ways

In worship, as a war signal, to warn of danger, to express joyful celebration, to
announce news, when a king is crowned, and to call the people to assemble

The harp and lyre are stringed instruments frequently mentioned together in Psalms

They are used by the prophets in the OT in their ministering

See I Sam. 10:5, I Chr. 25:1 and 6

David played a lyre to drive away Saul’s evil spirits

4. vs. 4: A timbrel is similar to a tambourine, small enough to be held in one hand

The use of a timbrel is often connected with dances of joy

“Strings” could be any of various instruments like a lyre

“Pipe” could be any of various kinds of wind instruments, like a flute

5. vs. 5: Here cymbals are mentioned in praising God

Cymbals are part of the percussion family of instruments

They are used to keep a rhythmic pattern

Here they are described as loud (clash, resounding)

6. vs. 6: The psalm finishes by noting who is to praise God

“Everything that has breath”

This seems to refer to all people, that all humanity should praise God

Animals also have breath, however

It seems likely that the psalmist is saying that all living things are to praise God

Application: Both these psalms encourage us to praise God for all the great deeds He has done and continues to do for us. When we meet together to praise God, we are aligning ourselves with what Scripture calls for us to do, and allows us to grow in our closeness to God and to other believers. Also, when we think about (meditate) on God’s gracious acts towards us, we grow in our gratitude toward God, and we grow less likely to grumble or resist Him.

Prayer: Father God, remind us daily of all Your mercies to us. Fill our hearts with gratitude and our mouths with Your praise. In Jesus’ name, Amen.