

Praise The Lord!

Introduction. The late R. J. Stevens and his son, Tim, have done more for lifting and improving the praise of God's people than any two men I've known. But their work has gone beyond teaching the fundamentals of music — how to beat time, or pitch a song. They have reminded us why we praise.

Praise is not just an outward act. Praise stems from who we are — the inner person. Like the ancient poet, we should exclaim, "Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation" (Psalm 111:1).

Praise that arises from our inner being acknowledges and honors God not only in times of success and prosperity, but also in times of difficulty and adversity. Praise can occur at any time, any where — not just in a worship assembly. Praise may be in the form of singing, praying, or verbal testimony to others (Hebrews 13:15). Praise may occur with the family during devotions. Praise may be individual as we drive to work.

Praise even goes beyond prayer, thanksgiving, and supplication. We may pray thanking God for what He gave us, or entreating Him for what we need. But praise honors Him for who He is. Gary Henry observed, "While it is certain that we don't praise God as we should, our problem is not simply a failure to praise Him; it is a failure to appreciate His worthiness to be praised."

Psalm 146 is the first of five joyous hymns of praise that close this wonderful book, each beginning and ending with "Praise the Lord" ("Hallelujah" in Hebrew). The first four verses of Psalm 146 set us up for the revelation of six reasons why God is worthy to be praised. In praising Him we draw closer to Him. And in drawing closer to Him we deepen our spirituality and appropriately focus on being His disciples.

I. The Lord Is Our Helper (v. 5)

- A. Lois, age 9, prayed, "Dear God, Please help me in school. I need help in spelling, adding, subtracting, science, reading, history, geography, and writing. I don't need help in anything else."
- B. That's you and I. We need the divine Helper for everything. The Lord pleads the case of the poor and afflicted (Proverbs 22:23). Peter knew God had sent His angel (Acts 12:11), and Paul received help against the bitter Jews (Acts 26:22). This shows that God is with us (Isaiah 41:10), and assists us in our weaknesses through the Spirit (Romans 8:26) and through His Son (Hebrews 7:25).

II. The Lord Is Our Hope (v. 5)

- A. He is the God of all hope. And hope transcends this life. It's not wishful thinking, but confidently and expectantly believing in Him who cannot lie (Romans 3:4; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). And trusting in His precious promises brought to life through Jesus Christ.
- B. After Joel's message of judgment, he offered hope to Israel (3:16). Jeremiah presented God as one in which the people of Judah could put their hope (17:7, 13, 17). When Paul had the sentence of death, he could put his trust in God (2

Corinthians 1:9). Because God is one of hope, we have the hope of heaven, which is eternal life (Colossians 1:5-6).

III. The Lord Is A Powerful Creator (v. 6)

- A. As the flowers bloom and the dogwood trees blossom, we're visually reminded of God's goodness in the beauty of our world. From the mountain tops to the oceans, we see and praise God.
- B. Around one hundred times in scripture God is declared as the creator of the heavens and earth (Exodus 20:11; 2 Kings 19:15; Nehemiah 9:6; Mark 13:19; Revelation 4:11; 10:6; 14:7).

IV. The Lord Is A Bountiful Provider (vv. 7-8)

- A. He provides for our both our physical and spiritual needs. In a land of plenty, it's easy to forget that God is the giver of all good gifts (James 1:17). Furthermore, His power, protection, and provision extend to the oppressed, the hungry, the hurting, the lonely, and the disenfranchised.
- B. Abraham told Isaac that God would provide (Genesis 22:8, 13-14). The Old Testament writers backed this up (Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 61:1-3). The preachers of the New Covenant made sure that their listeners knew that God, unknown to them at the time, was a bountiful provider (Acts 14:15; 17:28).

V. The Lord Is Omnipresent (v. 9)

- A. The word omnipresent means "all-present" and affirms that God is everywhere He chooses (cp. Psalm 139:7-12). Is it possible to go to a place where you will not find God? Because God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1) and through His Son continually sustains all that is (Hebrews 1:3), He is present to the whole of creation and to its parts.
- B. His omni-visual eyes see what is going on in this world (1 Peter 3:12). He sees the righteous. He knows who you are. He knows your heart, feels your pain, and sees your need.
- C. Jonah attempted to flee from the presence of the Lord, only to discover that God was with him to bring him back to the place of obedience and service (Jonah 1:3-4). Adam and Eve attempted to hide from God but failed (Genesis 3:8; cp. Numbers 32:23; Jeremiah 23:24; Hebrews 4:13).

VI. The Lord Is Preeminent (v. 10)

- A. "The Lord shall reign forever" (cp. 1 Chronicles 16:31). Our trust is not in presidents, princes, and kings, but the everlasting, eternal God who lives, reigns, and exerts His providential care in our world today.
- B. Isaiah was awestruck when He saw God (Isaiah 6:5). God the King is powerful, casting away enemies (Zephaniah 3:15). Every knee will bow to the King (Romans 14:11), for He is eternal, immortal, invisible, and wise (1 Timothy 1:17).

Conclusion. The unnamed psalmist gave us important reasons why God can be praised in this assembly and in all others around the world. In a moment, we're all going to rise and offer our praise to God. If there is something, however, about you that

needs to be changed, come up to the front and talk to us. God wants to be your faithful Father, and He is worthy of that position.

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