

PSALM 145 – TEACH US TO PRAISE FROM A-Z
(SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2018)

INTRODUCTION

This is our fifth and final week in the book of Psalms.

Last week because I messed up the order, we were in Psalm 80, which is part of book 3 of the Psalms.

Last week, I also shared how Book 3 of the Psalter especially is filled with trouble and laments.

Book 3 ends with the profound question – what has happened to the glories of the Davidic kingdom?

This question is answered in Books 4 and 5.

Book 4 we saw starts with Psalm 90 written by Moses. Moses is mentioned 7 times in Book 4 as a number of the Psalms look back on the history of Israel.

Psalms 93-99 are called the “enthronement psalms” and sing of God’s kingship and rule over the earth. Here we see at least a partial response to the loss of the glory of the Davidic king.

Israel must not look for any earthly king but keep her focus on the Messiah and king to come.

Book 5 begins with Psalm 107, perhaps written during the days of Ezra as it celebrates the return of God’s people after the judgment of the captivity.

Psalm 110 in this book is one of the most quoted Psalms in the NT as it looks forward to true Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Psalms 120-134 are 15 psalms called the Songs of Ascent. They were sung by the pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the various feasts.

Instead of a short doxology ending the book, there are six Psalms of praise to the Lord which conclude a book devoted to praise and thanksgiving.

What is special about Psalm 145?

It is the last Psalm of David listed by name.

It is an acrostic Psalm, using successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, from aleph to tav.

Now there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, but only 21 verses.

For some reason, *nun* is missing from this Psalm.

Other acrostic Psalms: 9-10; 25; 34; 37.

This Psalm teaches us once again that God deserves our constant praise and that we should seek to bring Him the praise that He deserves.

This is the greatest subject that one can consider.

This Psalm is also notable for the diversity of words of praise given to God.

Part of the reason is that it is an acrostic Psalm. David had to use his skill as a writer to use every letter in the alphabet and yet still bring a unified message of praise.

Verse 3 is a great summary of this Psalm.

3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness *is* unsearchable.

God deserves constant praise. Praise Him as He alone deserves.

We will look at this great Psalm of praise in six parts, **keeping in mind it is an acrostic Psalm**, but hopefully dividing the Psalm into parts will be helpful for us.

1. The Heart of Praise, vv. 1-3

The heading of this Psalm says that it is a praise of David.

The Hebrew word translated as praise is in the singular. The plural of this word is the Hebrew name for the book of Psalms – **Praises**.

Indeed, the Psalms are filled with a number of different styles.

John Calvin correctly called the Psalms “An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul.”

The Holy Spirit has here drawn to the life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated.

And here is something we must say.

Though we don't always feel like praising God as He deserves, though we sometimes can only cry out to Him in tears, all of life should lead to praise.

It is important to keep in mind that the Psalms were not just the super-spiritual prayer journal of David or the other writers.

David was the covenant head of Israel.

David is a picture of Jesus Christ.

It is Jesus Christ who truly fulfilled the expression of praise in this Psalm.

In Christ we also seek to bring praise that is regular and continuous – that ultimately will be fulfilled in eternity.

And when you see your praises to God sinking low, you must all the more cry to Him for His strengthening.

The first thing we see in this Psalm is David's desire and commitment to praise the LORD.

He would extol and bless the LORD.

He would do so every day.

He would do this for eternity.

Isn't this such a beautiful perspective and determination?

Do you resolve to give God praise?

Do you rejoice that in eternity, which is not far away for any of us, we will be entirely free in giving praise to the Triune God?

And why do we praise our great God?

Verse 3 gives the answer to this.

1. The LORD is great.
2. He deserves all your praise.
3. You cannot search or fathom the limits of His greatness.

We all fail in giving God the praise that He deserves.

My friends, we know that if we don't have the right focus in this life, then we give ourselves to be controlled by our passions, desires for entertainment, or even worse perversions.

Most people in life are slaves. They are ultimately not in control of their own lives. They are in bondage.

In Christ we have true freedom. And the greatest use of our freedom is when we seek to give thanks and praise to God as He deserves.

2. Others will join in the praise of God, vv. 4-7

David lived a fairly long life for his time and especially considering how he lived such an active and dangerous life.

David's life was ultimately under the protection and care of God.

David's desire was not only that he would live a life of praise but that other generations would come to praise the Lord.

And according to God's mercy and faithfulness this is exactly what has been fulfilled.

And we should continue to desire and seek for the words of verse 4 to be fulfilled in our own age.

What a beautiful thing when new generations are filled with praise for God.

We know we live in a very discouraging time in many ways.

But let us keep in mind the confidence of this Psalm. Our great God will raise up in His timing those who will give Him the praise that He deserves.

In verse 5, David expresses that his own meditation or focus is on the glorious splendor of God's majesty and on God's wondrous works.

The nature of our awesome, Triune God and all that He has done in creation and salvation – what a basis for praise!

Now the word meditate doesn't just mean something done silently or in private.

This is a word used for worship, what we might call thoughtful worship.

Do we think about our praise of God or is it just done out of routine and repetition?

In verse 6, the word awesome or terrible is used to translate **that which brings fear**.

Indeed, we are to praise God not just for His acts of kindness but also for God's works which humble us and help us consider His power!

David also was focused on recounting all the mighty acts that God accomplished.

The Lord does so many things which testify of His goodness and righteousness causing His people to praise Him.

We serve a God who deserves our praise and who brings us to praise.

3. The center of this Psalm, vv. 8-9

If verse 3 is the foundation of this Psalm of praise, I would argue that verses 8 and 9 are the central verses.

I found that the two key attributes of God – **gracious** and **full of compassion** are words both used 13x in the OT and both used 6x in the Psalms.

As we focus on the praise of God and His incredible greatness, what a blessing to know that God is slow to anger and great in His mercy, His covenantal love or faithfulness.

And while we never want to diminish the holiness and perfect justice of God and though God's love is often twisted into something it is not, it is beautiful to declare and consider the truth of verse 8.

It is the only basis for our salvation.

Last year, I played a clip from R. C. Sproul on whether God loves everyone.

He talked about His benevolence which is shown to all. The love of God is also His beneficence, His love displayed also upon all.

His love of complacency, not used as we often use this word, is His special love that He has for His Son and all who have been adopted in to His family.

God does not love the whole world in terms of His complacency.

God hates those swift to shed blood. We must take this into account. When I hear preachers say, God loves us unconditionally, I want to scream. Why the cross? You must be in Christ to enjoy God's love of complacency.

Verse 9 we can say is part of the reason why all men stand guilty before God.

To all who live, God does show His goodness.

God's compassion is over all His works.

The truth of verse 9 is why Jonah tried to run from God.

Jonah 4:2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, “Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

As we praise God and as we bring a witness for God, let us not downplay or pervert His abundant love, patience, and mercy.

4. The Response to God’s compassion, vv. 10-13

The only proper response to God’s compassion is the praise of all of creation.

Look at verse 10.

Certainly, David did not believe that every single person praises God.

This verse can be understood as saying God deserves praise from all of His works.

And even those who do not praise God still show the praise of God in that God has made them.

On the other hand, God’s saints, the holy ones who know His mercy and grace, do respond in praise.

And what is it that saints should declare?

We should speak of the glory of God's kingdom, His rule over all things.

We speak of the power of God - His power to save, judge, and rule over all things.

We also declare in an evangelistic sense - making known to others all the great things that God does.

And in a special way, we declare the everlasting nature of God's kingdom and His rule (verse 13).

And here again what assurance is found for those trusting in God.

It doesn't always seem like God's kingdom is the one that is over all the kingdoms of this world.

But this is the truth and what we must believe even as we pray for the spread and the fuller manifestation of God's kingdom and purposes, as we wait for the fullness of God's kingdom in the return of our Lord.

5. The Lord's gracious provisions, vv. 14-16

Verse 14 should have started with the Hebrew letter *nun*, but for some unknown reason this letter is skipped in this Psalm or maybe even was lost from the manuscripts that we use for our English translations.

The LORD upholds all who fall.

What a comfort to know God's peace even in our own failures.

He raises those who are bowed down.

This well might refer to those who are discouraged, literally those who are bent over.

Psa. 57:6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down;
They have dug a pit before me;
Into the midst of it they *themselves* have fallen.
Selah

Psa. 146:8 The LORD opens *the eyes of the blind*;
The LORD raises those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous.

Verse 15 reminds us of our total dependence on the LORD.

We would have nothing without His provision and allowance for us to have what we need.

God provides then what is needed, giving food in due season.

Further we see from verse 16 that the LORD opens His hand and in this is able to bring true satisfaction of needs.

Matt. 6:25 “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”

6. The Gospel proclaimed, vv. 17-21

The LORD is righteous in all His ways!

This speaks of His justice in all his actions. The cross shows how God can save sinners and yet also be just in saving guilty sinners.

Romans 3:21-26 is one text that confirms this glorious truth.

Rom. 3:21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, **22** even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, **26** to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The LORD is righteous.

He acts always in His covenant faithfulness, so what He does is indeed always a representation of His faithfulness.

And what beautiful truth is given to us in verse 18.

Near is Yahweh/the LORD to all who call upon Him.

Psa. 34:18 The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Psa. 119:151 You *are* near, O LORD,
And all Your commandments *are* truth.

The nearness of God is known to those who call on God in truth. This is important to emphasize.

We must serve God according to His truth, not our own ideas or feelings.

We must realize that nothing in this Psalm suggests works-based salvation. It is all of grace.

There is a picture of salvation in verse 19.

God does hear the cry of those who call on Him.

And we will only call on Him as He works His grace in our hearts.

The emphasis here is on the fact that God does hear. It is not in vain that you would call on Him in any way.

20 - Further, the LORD guards all who love Him.

How beautiful again is this picture of the mighty Lord watching over His people.

Do you see why you need to often to be reading and thinking about God's truth? Our minds must constantly be reminded of the truth lest we be distracted or filled with merely our own musings.

And as we consider this, must confess that this is all of grace. This is why we must give praise to our great God.

Verse 20 begins with the verb guard. It ends with the verb destroy.

The wicked the LORD will destroy. Here we have one of the themes that we saw in Psalm 1 and 2.

Verse 21 begins with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the word for praise, the same word used in the heading of the Psalm.

It brings this Psalm to a beautiful conclusion.

David will speak the praise of the LORD with his mouth.

But lest we think that we are special or the only ones praising God, we are reminded that all flesh will bless His holy name.

And this praise will last forever and ever!

An older commentator named Victorinus Bythner in 1670 wrote:

The ancient Hebrews declare him happy whoever, in after times, utters this psalm thrice each day with the mouth, heart, and tongue.

CONCLUSION AND COMMUNION

When I started this series on the Psalms I had to consider how the Psalm for this Sunday would be a good text to use for the Lord's Supper.

I think Psalm 145 is a wonderful text to use in conjunction with and preparation for our celebration of communion.

The Lord's Supper is about giving thanks and praise to our great God for His working of salvation through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

As we hold in our hand the elements of bread and wine, how beautiful to declare the words of verse 8 – the LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy.

For do we not see this truth most clearly in what our Lord has done for us in giving Himself for us, that is in our place?

God deserves constant praise. Praise Him as He alone deserves.

Let us praise God in our celebration of the Lord's Supper. And may God's praise flow frequently from our lips in all days to come.

Close in prayer and a song – 359