

PM Psalm 146

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[0 : 0 0] Can we see these verses and see what God would say to us this evening? Now I know for sure that maybe we shouldn't, but every one of us would have a favourite psalm or favourite psalms.

I wonder what your favourite psalm is. Ambrose of Milan described the psalms as a medicine for the soul and C.H. Spurgeon said about the psalms that he could never find a richer storehouse.

The psalms are often read aloud at DBC as a call to earth song worship every Sunday morning and evening. And in many churches today there has been a rediscovery of psalm singing.

And then that's something that you do every week. The Gideons give away hundreds of thousands of New Testaments every year which not only include a guide for helpful readings at the front but also the book of psalms at the back.

To my surprise it was Martin Luther, God's great reformer who first encouraged the production of the first ever New Testament in psalms.

[1 : 2 1] The psalms are easy to relate to because they reflect something as we thought this morning of the reality of living on planet earth.

Our ups and our downs, our despair and our delights, our fears and our faith are all found in the psalms. The psalms are prayers for us to pray, songs for us to sing, wisdom for us to follow, truth for us to apply to our lives and teaching for us to obey.

The psalms reveal to us something of the character of God and what our response should be to Him. Here are some of my favourite psalms.

We can think of God as the teacher who commands our obedience in Psalm 119. Our God the forgiver who expects our penitence in Psalm 32.

Our God the judge who searches our hearts, Psalm 139. Our God the helper who rewards our trust, Psalm 25.

[2 : 4 0] Our God the shepherd who guides our path, Psalm 23. And I pray this evening that God will encourage each one of our hearts and equip us better to live for Him and for His glory through this week.

I was going to ask you for help to read Psalm 146 again. But I'm not going to impose that upon you since this is my first ever visit to preach in the church.

But this is how the psalm would have been read and shared together. The reader would have read Psalm 146 verse 1.

Then the congregation would have sung or read together verse 2. Then the reader would have read verse 3 and 4. And the congregation would have read or sung verse 5 and 6.

Verse 7 and 9 again the reader would have read it. And the congregation would have sung and read verse 10. We've read this psalm together already this evening.

[3 : 50] But many Bible writers and scholars believe that this is how the psalm would have been sung. Psalm 146 and the psalms following may well have been written whilst reflecting on the time that God's people were brought back home from their time of captivity in Babylon to Jerusalem, the holy city of God.

When they returned to the city of Jerusalem and its walls were rebuilt, and even more significantly the temple was rebuilt, which remember represented the presence with and amongst God's people of God Himself.

And along with the rebuild of the temple would have come the re-establishment and the practice of their worship and all their feasts and festivals that God had asked them to remember and to practice.

If these psalms were indeed written as a reflection about this time in God's history, then you can imagine how thrilled, how overjoyed, how thankful God's people must have been.

No wonder they declared the praise of the Lord. There's just three simple things that I want to draw from the psalm this evening. And here's the first from verses 1 and 2 and verse 10.

[5 : 20] Our creator has made us for his praise. If you look at the end of the previous psalm, Psalm 145 and verse 21, it says, My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

The final five psalms now of the Psalter all begin in the same way. Praise the Lord. This is a phrase that my father would often use in the brethren church that I was brought up in.

He was known to say, Praise the Lord. Or Hallelujah in the middle of a sermon at church. Sometimes to my brother and I's dismay and embarrassment.

And as he prayed himself, or he listened to others praying, or as he met with God's people in all sorts of different ways, he was always quick to give praise to God.

I even remember the day I arrived home, a bit later than normal, from Theological College in Glasgow. And he asked me how things had went.

[6 : 44] And I don't know why he asked me this, but he said, Well, have you had your dinner with a young lady? And I said, Well, actually, I have. And he said, Do you think this young lady will be your future wife?

My dad was very forward. And I said, Well, Dad, actually, I think that might be the case. To which he replied, Praise the Lord. I wasn't sure how to take that, whether he was glad to get rid of me or not.

But that was my dad. And Shannon has pointed out to me that as I get older, that I am becoming more and more like my father.

Because you want to give praise to the Lord, but you also want to encourage others as they pray or as they preach. Hallelujah and praise the Lord are one and the same phrase.

The Hebrew word halel means praise you, coupled with ja, which is a small version for the name of God, Jehovah, which results in hallelujah, praise the Lord.

[7 : 56] In other words, let the name of the Lord, let the name of Jehovah, be praised. Thinking again of my human story of my father and myself, it's important to remember that we should not just use the phrase, hallelujah, or praise the Lord, unthinkingly, or out of habit.

It's not something that's to be recited without truly thinking about what it means. Hallelujah, praise the Lord, it's not just a piece of liturgy, or an evangelical happy buzz phrase.

It's something that we're to think about. Or indeed, as you sing the Psalms every Sunday here, I'm sure often, you praise the Lord.

It could also be easy, particularly when it comes to our corporate times of worship, our singing, our praying, our reading of scripture, our teaching, just to sing and to speak, praise the Lord, without it being true, and genuine, and a heartfelt response to the wonder of the character, and the grace, and the goodness, and the promises of God.

We should not become over-familiar with this wonderful phrase. And of course, there are times in all our lives when we find it hard to say and to sing praise the Lord in the midst of our doubts and fears, perhaps our personal sin, perhaps failings in our lives, perhaps marriage difficulties, parental heartaches, unemployment, financial crisis, illness, death, death, and loss.

[10:00] The list is endless in this world. Our desire is to praise the Lord. But sometimes the things that happen to us in life impact our ability to praise Him.

Our circumstances push in. We know that God is worthy of our praise, but we find it hard to praise Him.

Sometimes we can depend too much on our feelings alone and our circumstances. Our praise should involve both our mind and our heart.

But our praise should not depend upon the horizontal, all that's going on around us. We need to lift our eyes, don't we? We need to have that vertical look as we bring our praise to God.

And the Psalms are full of instances of this. During the summer at BBC, we have had a series entitled Summer in the Psalms.

[11:07] And we've been looking at some of the Psalms of lament. And we've been reminding ourselves of how lament must have a place within our own personal worship of God as well as within our corporate times of worship and praise.

The Psalmist in the midst of struggles finds it possible despite the difficulties and the doubts and the questions and the fears to praise the Lord.

I thought it might be good to read one of those Psalms which is one of my favourites Psalm 42. So you might want to turn to it as an example of a Psalm like this.

Psalm 42 which is page 563 of the Church Bible verse 1 says As a deer pants for flowing streams so pants my soul for you O God my soul thirsts for God for the living God when shall I come and appear before God my tears have been my food day and night while they say to me all day long where is your God these things I remember as I pour out my soul how I would go with the throng and lead them in the procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise a multitude keeping festival why are you cast down O my soul and why are you in turmoil within me hoping God for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God my soul is cast down within me therefore

I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon from Mount Mizar deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls all your breakers and your waves have gone over me by the day the Lord commands his steadfast love and at night his song is with me a prayer to the God of my life I say to God my rock why have you forgotten me why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy as with a deadly wound in my bones my adversaries taunt me while they say to me all day long where is your God why are you cast down O my soul and why are you in turmoil within me hope in God for I shall again praise him my salvation and my God why are you downcast

[14:12] O my soul why so disturbed within me I will put my hope in God for I will yet praise him my saviour and my God this of course goes against our sinful and fallen nature doesn't it it is what God has created us for for his praise yet as Psalm 42 reminds us praise does not necessarily come easily to us particularly when we're suffering in the book of Hebrews it reminds us of Jesus suffering for our sake it says in Hebrews 12 verses 2 to 3 fix our eyes on Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of the faith for the joy set before him he endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God consider him who endured such opposition from sinners so that you will not grow weary and lose heart

Hebrews 13 verses 11 to 12 the high priest carries the blood of animals into the most holy place as a sin offering but the bodies are burned outside the camp and so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his blood what is our response to be as followers of Christ as we pass through difficulties and challenges and find it hard to praise God well we are to remember Christ in Hebrews 13 again verses 15 and 16 it says through Jesus therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the food of lips that openly profess his name and do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices

God is pleased so having reflected just for a few moments on Psalm 42 and then read the verses from Hebrews 12 and 13 it's clear that we are to continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise look at verse 2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live I will sing praises to my God while I have my being in other words while I'm still alive while I still have breath in my body irrespective of what life is like what life throws at me in the good and in the bad times I will praise you Lord what a challenge to each one of us because our praise is costly some of you may have heard of Peter

Medan Peter was the global leader of Operation Mobilisation and he was a dear friend of mine since the age of that's me 14 and he was a mentor to me for many years of my ministry many of you will know that Peter passed away from terminal cancer just three years ago actually in July and I remember the difficulties that he went through and how difficult it was for him sometimes to praise the Lord I remember he sent me this text which I've kept he said my deterioration is rapid physically I am in a precarious position it's good to know I am in the hands of the Lord and in the next text which I have also kept he said let everyone know at

DBC that when the rubber hits the road the gospel and Christ still stand do you hear the sacrifice of praise in Peter's words do you hear his confidence in the Lord despite his circumstances we sometimes sing a song at DBC which is based upon Job chapter 1 verse 21 it says naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away may the name of the Lord be praised it's remarkable despite the challenges that Job faced that he praised the name of God sometimes we sing blessed be your name in the land of plentiful and in the second verse in the road marked with suffering and in the refrain of that song it says you give you take away blessed be your name

[19:44] I remember after the death of my parents and sadly they died one soon after the other I found that song a very hard one to sing you give and you take away blessed be your name we bring praise to the Lord we choose to glorify him to thank him to adore him to honour him to obey him praise is a genuine response to the singular goodness of God he alone is worthy of our worship our actions our words our hearts are to bring praise to the Lord when we live righteous lives before God it brings him glory and it results in his praise think of Psalm 119 verse 7 I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous truths praise is not about seeking to make ourselves look right or to sound right to others in fact it's not about us at all it's about our God our creating sustaining loving protecting compassionate gracious slow to anger just righteous redeeming promise keeping

God in other words our praise is motivated by looking to him seeing him trusting him following him hoping in him and there's no wonderful way of doing that no more wonderful way of doing that than gathering together with God's people I often find myself on a Sunday stopping singing and listening to those around me sing the praises of God of course our worship is to God first but we also sing God's truth to one another and encourage one another it says in the book of Hebrews chapter 10 therefore brothers and sisters since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way opened up through the curtain that is his body and since we have a great high priest over the house of

God let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for he who promised is faithful and let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds not giving up beating together as someone in a habit of doing but encouraging one another and all the more as we see the day approaching but as for me the psalmist says in psalm 71 verse 14 I will always have hope I will praise you more and more or psalm 34 verse 1

I will bless the Lord at all times his praise shall continually be on my lips verses 1 and 2 and 10 encourage us to praise our creator God the one who has made us for his praise and to do so for as long as we live and as verse 10 reminds us the Lord will reign forever right into eternity what will it be like to praise God with an undivided and unsinning heart secondly I want you to notice verses 3 to 4 our creator warns us not to put our trust and hold in human princes or authorities in the context of our thinking of this psalm about God's people looking back at their deliverance from Babylon back to

Jerusalem as they look back they ought to realise that this deliverance came about because God was faithful to his promises God had said that he would bring them back home when we look back on the book of Nehemiah for example we can see that King Artaxerxes allowed Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem and even provided him with protection protection that he would need on his travels and the provisions that he would need to start to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem and the temple by the time they returned the Persian king King Tarius helped them and he was not a man of God yet God used him it tells us in Daniel in Ezra 1 verse 2 his motive for giving permission to build the temple may have come from his discovery of the decree of Cyrus like all the laws of the

[25 : 33] Medes and Persians once they were set they could not be repealed it tells us in Daniel 6 verse 8 now in this we can unquestionably see the amazing providence of God God in his providence used kings authorities and powers to bring about his purposes for his people to return to Jerusalem throughout their history God's people Israel had put their trust sometimes in the wrong place these verses may even refer to the events recorded in 1 Samuel when God's people did not want judges to rule over them anymore they wanted a king why because they wanted to be like the other nations around them and what a disaster King Saul turned out to be although David was the greatest king that Israel ever had what happened they forgot that the one true

God was their king in other words they were to live under his reign and rule but they rejected God as their right and true king and they suffered because of it so in verses 3 and 4 God warns his people discourages his people to put their trust in earthly powers and authorities why because God is their creator in response to the sin and failure of humankind and the devastating fall that took place as a direct consequence this is what it says in Genesis 3 19 but the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken for dust you are and to dust you will return you see God the psalmist is telling us here is eternal and immortal you are earthly and mortal

God will never die you will one day die the psalmist is saying God's plans and purposes and promises will be fulfilled their plans will come to nothing what a challenge and warning to his people and to me and to you John MacArthur refers to these two verses in a very helpful way he says that they are a warning against misplaced trust this can be so true in our lives in what and in whom do we put our trust and hope do we put our trust in Holyrood and Westminster and our first minister and prime minister we need to apply these truths to our own lives first of all we are mortal we can't save anyone one day we will die we will return to the ground from which all mankind was made we will one day become the dust from which all mankind was made and our plans will ultimately come to nothing it's easy to judge those who are in authority sometimes for good reason but as

James reminds us here we must apply these verses to our own hearts first as James says in chapter 4 of his wonderful book now listen you who say tomorrow today or tomorrow you will go to this or to that city spend a year there carry on business and make money why you don't even know what will happen tomorrow what is your life you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes instead you want to say if it is the Lord's will we will live and do this or that as it is you boast in your arrogant schemes all such boasting is evil if anyone knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it is sin for them and so with humility and reverence and submission to God we put our trust in him or as Peter said to

Jesus who else can we turn to you have the words of eternal life we need to trust him today hope in him today and not be guilty of this misplaced trust that John MacArthur highlights what can that look like in our lives just in case we think well I don't think I've ever been guilty of misplaced trust trust sometimes our misplaced trust can be in ourselves misplaced trust in rulers and authorities in our spouses in our families our careers our church leaders our pastors our money our human hopes and plans sometimes we can all be guilty of misplaced trust we have to remember that we are dust and we are to put our faith and trust in God and before we become overly critical not saying that we shouldn't be of those who have authority over us reminder of the words of

[31 : 40] Paul in 1st Timothy where we're encouraged to pray for those who have authority over us and we're reminded there that they are ultimately answerable to God the third and final point I want to draw from this wonderful psalm is that our creator encourages and exhorts us to put our trust in him look at verses 5 to 9 again as we've already noticed from what was likely to be on the psalmist's mind the return of God's people from Babylon to Jerusalem look at verses 5 to 9 and how they describe what God did look at verse 5 he is the God of Abraham of Isaac and as it says here of Jacob not just Jacob the person God's personal blessing but also

Jacob the nation God's blessing to his people indeed God's promise to Abraham that all peoples of the earth would be blessed through his obedience Genesis 12 of course that has been fulfilled you and I are here this evening children of God you see God is faithful to all his promises look at the end of verse 6 who keeps faith forever and perhaps too in these verses we can think of how God is the God of the covenant the covenant keeping God the promises that he made to his people as we noticed this morning we see in verse 6 he is the God of creation the creator of heaven and earth the God who reveals himself through creation through scripture and finally and completely through his son the Lord

Jesus just as he spoke creation into being by the power of his word he also sustains it and one day will renew it in the new heaven and in the new earth that word that became flesh and made his dwelling among us I can't help thinking of the words of Isaiah and the words that are repeated about Jesus remember when he repeated the words of Isaiah and then he said these words are now being fulfilled in your presence the one who executes justice for the oppressed who gives food to the hungry the Lord who sets the prisoners free the Lord who opens the eyes of the blind the Lord who lifts up those who are bowed down the Lord who loves the righteous we see these words here in this psalm fulfilled through the life and ministry of Christ himself verses seven to nine the righteous merciful saving redeeming loving saviour a God who is just a God verse ten who is sovereign it's good to know that God is sovereign isn't it especially in this mixed up broken world that we live in

God is in control brothers and sisters he is the sovereign God the one who reigns look at verse ten throughout all time and all generations including yours and mine unlike humankind who are dust God is sovereign for time and eternity hallelujah praise the Lord well we're going to sing