

Praise the Lord

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[0 : 00] Now, could we turn back to the book of Psalms and Psalm 146? And again, let us focus on verses 3 to 5.

Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth. On that very day, his plans perish. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, and so on.

Amen. This group of Psalms from 146 right through to the end of the Psalter at Psalm 150, they begin and end with hallelujah, or praise the Lord.

And the reasons for praise are given in each of these Psalms. For example, in Psalm 147, one reason is given there at verse 2, that the Lord builds up Jerusalem, and he gathers the outcasts of Israel, and he heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds, and so on.

[1 : 43] These are reasons for praising the Lord. Also in Psalm 148, if you look at verse 5, let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created, and he established them forever.

He's talking about the heavens, the sun, and the moon, and the stars. He is the creator of all things, and as creator he is worthy of our praise.

Psalm 149, at verse 2, there's a reason there for praise. Let Israel be glad in his maker.

Let the children of Zion rejoice in their king. Israel, as a nation, were brought together and established by the Lord himself.

He took them out of the bondage of Egypt, established them in covenant with himself, and at last brought them and appointed them a place in the land of Canaan, which he had promised them.

[2 : 54] That is worthy of praise. And of course, Psalm 150 is full of praise. And verse 2, praise him for his mighty deeds.

Praise him according to his excellent greatness. Not only for his works will we praise him, but for himself. His excellent greatness as God.

And we praise him this morning for his kindness in giving us this opportunity to gather with you, to open his word and seek to worship him.

Now in Psalm 146, which is the psalm I'd like to say a few words on with the Lord's help this morning, the psalmist gives various reasons for which he is praising God.

But before he does that, he gives a word of warning. A word of warning not to put out trust in princes.

[3 : 59] Not to be praising men instead of praising God. And just say a few words on that first of all. And then a number of reasons he gives for which we ought to have our focus of praise upon the Lord himself, having men in their rightful place.

It says here, Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man in whom there is no salvation. There is no real deliverance from sin through men.

There is no eternal security when we trust in men or the sons of men or the schemes of men. There is only salvation and eternal blessing when we come to trust in God.

And then he talks about men. His breath departs, he says. He returns to the earth. On that very day, his plans perish. There are a number of examples I'd like to highlight from the Bible as to how unreasonable at the end of the day it is to trust in men.

You remember in the situation with King David, his son Absalom was a lovely young man, but he turned against his father.

[5 : 33] And he rebelled against his father. And he sought to put his father off the throne of Israel. He wasn't to be trusted, although he was an attractive young man in many ways.

Think about the counselor that King David had in his court as king, a man by the name of Ahithophel.

And it says in the Bible that whoever sought the counsel of Ahithophel was as if he was seeking the counsel of God himself. Such was the pinnacle to which that man had risen in authority, in the estimation of many.

But you see, Ahithophel fell along with Absalom against King David, against the king whom he had counseled over many years and to whom the king had looked up as an advisor.

Nevertheless, when the testing time came, Ahithophel fell on the wrong side of the line. against the king David. And when you think of the experiences of St. Paul himself, he says there in 2 Timothy chapter 4, Demas has deserted me, having loved this present world.

[7 : 15] Elsewhere in some of his writings, Paul counts Demas as being one of his helpers in the gospel. But now he's fallen away.

I don't know exactly why, but Paul says he loved this present world. And when you think of Jesus, our Savior, not that he was relying on men, but the men who were closest to him at the time of Jesus' most difficult time, when he came to the time of his being betrayed and his trial, the scripture says that they all forsook him and fled.

Even Peter, who had said previously, even if every other person leaves you, I'll never leave you. I'm willing to go to death for you.

Nevertheless, he also forsook him and fled. In John's gospel, chapter 2, at verse 24, we have these words.

When some people had made as if they were believing in Jesus, it says then, Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man for he himself knew what was in man.

[8 : 52] he knows what's in my heart and in your heart. I can't be relied on in every situation.

Neither can you be relied on in every situation. The sad thing is that so many people rely on words of men and live according to the outlook of other men.

Think of the number of scientists in the world who say, well, there is no God. The world has come to being and by natural selection and evolutionary processes, we are where we are and we've got what we've got.

God is cut out of it. Are you going to trust these men? Think of the philosophers of our time.

The way they talk to us about life and about our circumstances. Are you going to go along with the philosophers who aren't taught by the word of God and who haven't got their focus as the truth of God?

[10 : 10] Think of the number of people who make a religion of football or some other sport. They look up to famous footballers and they know all about them, the number of goals they've scored and all of these different things about them.

It's as if they are the center of their world. It's as if the world is made up of people like that to whom they look up. What about politicians?

What about musicians? All of these different people and they seem to command the affection and attention and dictate almost the course of life of so many people in the world in our present day.

The Lord says put not your trust in princes in a son of man in whom there is no salvation when his breath departs he returns to the earth.

On that very day his plans perish. What's the point of trusting in one who is going to perish? Whose plans are going to perish?

[11 : 30] Who is going to be returned to the dust of the earth as he was? I read in Spurgeon yesterday a comment he has on this psalm and this particular version he says though you should select one out of many and should imagine that he differs from the rest and may be safely depended upon you will be mistaken there is none to be trusted no not one Adam fell therefore lean not on any of his sons man is a helpless creature without God look not for help in that direction how many have turned away heartsick from men on whom they have relied however never was this with a believer in the Lord he is a very present help in time of trouble and having as it were focused our attention on the importance of the

Lord as the focus of our praise and worship and affection day by day he then throughout this psalm begins to give us reasons for why it is better to trust in the Lord than to trust in any man whoever he is or whatever he might be first of all I'm going to highlight this verse 5 blessed is he whose help is

the God of Jacob whose hope is in the Lord his God I think the God of Jacob highlights to us that this God is a God who comes into a covenant relationship with people do you remember the situation with Jacob and he wasn't perfect far far from it he was on his way and as he journeyed night fell and he made his bed there in the wilderness taking a stone for his pillow and he dreamed and he saw a marvellous dream a ladder set up upon the earth the angels of God ascending and descending on it and there above him the Lord himself and the Lord spoke to him in the midst of his trials in the midst of his difficulties and what does the Lord say Genesis 28:13 behold I am with you I will keep you until I bring you to this land and do for you all that I have promised you what an amazing God he is he knew what Jacob was like he knew the deceit of his heart he knew everything about him nevertheless God in love and mercy gave him a covenant commitment and covenant promises not just for the for the very moment in which he speaks but for the time to come I will keep you and bring you to this land and so on a covenant keeping God a God who promises to his people wonderful things and who fulfills that promise in a very personal and wonderful way remember what Jesus says I am with you always even to the end of the world I will never leave you I will never forsake you that is a commitment he makes to all of his people who trust in him even if everyone left me like they seem to have left Martin Luther at the time of the reformation and he stands there before his accusers and he says here I stand I can do none other God help me Amen and he did help him and he sustained him you will find that the Lord is the most faithful of friends to have the one who sticks closer than any brother the one who is worthy of all your praise and honour and all your service and love that's the first thing he's a covenant God but then in verse 6 he's a God of great power however well meaning some people might be and they might have helped you and done great things for you on many occasions up until now there will inevitably come a point beyond which they cannot go the situation baffles them they haven't got the wherewithal they haven't got the sympathy or the empathy to enter into your burden with you but here is he he is the God of power he made heaven and earth the sea and all that is in them who keeps faith forever he is the almighty God nothing is too hard for him maybe you feel this morning that there is something in your life that is going to bring you down something that you cannot face something that you cannot bear bear well if you have the God of power the creator of heaven and earth who knows heaven and who knows earth and the seas and all the depths of the seas and the depths to which you might sink in your affliction and your trials in the seas of life he knows the depths because he has been in the depths himself the Lord [18:03] Jesus Christ he was deeper than any of us can ever go in this world my God my God why have you forsaken me isn't that a deep chasm well he knows what your depths are and he is mighty and powerful to be able to bring you from the depths the psalmist himself in Psalm 130 he sang Lord from the depths to you I cried and however deep he was the Lord heard him and the Lord heard his song of praise at the end of the psalm when he sang upon God's mercy and love and grace and redemption plenty as redemption is ever found with him and he from all his distresses will redeem his people so he's the powerful God and then at the end of verse 6 that he keeps faith forever or he keeps truth forever he makes a commitment to you and he will not go back on it how many people have said something and they've gone back on it but the Lord never my grace is sufficient for you and my strength is made perfect in your weakness however weak you are I am there and able and willing to help you oh praise his name that he knows us where we are he knows us in our far away and backslidden state he knows us when we aren't able to go on for lack of strength he knows us and because he is a faithful God true to his word he will help and encourage those who trust in him but then in verse 7 another reason for praise is that he executes justice for the oppressed and he gives food to the hungry maybe you feel this morning that you are being dealt with unjustly people have reneged on a commitment people who have you have known for years nevertheless have let you down and you feel dealt with in an unjust way well the Lord will never do that he is a God of justice he executes justice for those who are oppressed and he gives food to those who are hungry maybe this morning you are among those who feel sidelined or on the periphery of things maligned in one way or another well the Lord is a God of justice and he deals injustice with those who are oppressed and may you know his leading and guiding of you in that situation and then it says here at the very end of verse seven the Lord sets the prisoners free we're not talking merely about prison like the apostle

Paul was in prison or Peter was in prison certainly the Lord saw to it that Peter was taken out of the prison by the angel in a miraculous way and Paul at the end of his first imprisonment in Rome he was set free certainly the Lord's hand was in that but there are so many other kinds of prisons aren't there into which people might fall and find themselves prisoners trying to make sense of what life is about and as it were closed in by the opinion of so many and you find yourself in the minority and you feel imprisoned by the power of so many against you well whatever kind of prison you find yourself in the Lord is able to take you out of it what about the prisoner who is in a cell of God's law the condemned cell where the law of God has come home with power into your experience and you are found guilty before God and you find yourself in that condemned cell and nothing and no one among the sons of men can take you out of that condemned cell who has the key to the cell in which you are held prisoner but only one has the key Jesus Christ he died to procure the key that opens the cell of those who are condemned by God's law and that key can be used to open the cell in which you find yourself even this morning you find yourself as a condemned sinner call upon this Lord who is able to set the prisoner free from condemnation and free from the curse of the law and free from the power of sin and everything that would seek to destroy you he sets the prisoner free isn't he worthy of singing a song of praise to him and then in verse 8 the Lord opens the eyes of the blind

[24 : 29] Jesus did this on more than one occasion during his ministry in the world opened the eyes of the blind even opened the eyes of a man born blind but I think the emphasis in this particular verse not just physical blindness but spiritual blindness and by nature we are all spiritually blind the natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God because they are foolishness to him neither is he able to understand them because they are to be spiritually understood and only the Lord can open our minds in a spiritual way maybe you can remember the first time on reading the scripture or hearing a sermon and it's as if a light came on and the scripture made sense to you it's as if your mind or your heart was opened and you saw things from a biblical perspective rather than looking at things through the smoke and mirrors of a fallen world you saw things in gospel light from the perspective of the

Lord himself and your eyes were opened and you knew who you were what your needs were and where you would go to have your needs satisfied you saw your sinnership you saw your lost condition and you saw a glimpse of Jesus as the only saviour able to save sinners like you from their sins opens the eyes of blind are your eyes open here this morning or are your eyes the eyes of your soul as it were shut and blind to the reality of the gospel do you see Jesus do you see the preciousness of Jesus do you see the glory of Jesus earth do you see a glimpse of the majesty and attractiveness of the saviour who died and rose again and who is now ascended on high and sitting at the right hand of the majesty of God can you see him and can you hear his voice throughout the scriptures calling you to himself directing you to himself look unto me all the ends of the earth and be saved

I am God and there is none else he opens and he alone opens the eyes of the blind and then he goes on the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down he loves the righteous maybe you feel bowed down this morning bearing a load that's so heavy for you maybe the burdens that come upon you in relation to the cause of Christ throughout our land or the cause of Christ in our island or in our congregations are you bowed down in prayer burdened in prayer for such a good cause as the cause of Christ well I think we need more and more prayer in our day more fervent prayer and only the Lord himself can give us relief those who are so bowed down in that situation will be relieved when the

Lord answers the prayers of his people when he comes in a day of his reviving and blessing power maybe you're burdened for a member of your family bowed down in prayer for someone who doesn't come to church at all despite having heard the gospel often who nevertheless have turned away and don't regard the gospel as being worthy of their attention to it well there are many parents I'm sure throughout our island and congregations in that kind of situation bowed down in prayer on behalf of those who don't care for their own souls but the Lord is able to lift them up he lifts up those who are bowed down and then in verse 9 the Lord watches over the sojourner those who are journeying on this wilderness journey he upholds the widow and the fatherless but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin isn't it amazing he knows every step we take as we journey through this wilderness of life isn't it amazing that he watches over those who sojourn just as he watched over the children of

Israel pillar of cloud by day pillar of fire by night supplying them with food from heaven by way of the manna supplying them with drink from the water from the rock that rock followed them and that rock was Christ he was with them he was in the midst of them because they were his people and he cared for them and he was bringing them safely to a place that he had promised them maybe it's many a year since you committed your soul to the Lord Jesus as your saviour maybe you feel the wilderness long and trying maybe many of those with whom you started following the Lord are gone into eternity before you and it's as if part of you has gone with them and it's as if you become more and more a stranger in this strange land when things are getting difficult for you or remember this the Lord knows you where you are and he knows you exactly where you are and your needs are known to him and he is able to help you and he watches over you day and night what a wonderful saviour what a wonderful shepherd he is and then he becomes more specific at the end of verse 9 when he says he upholds the widow and the fatherless he upholds the widow in her loneliness vulnerability in her weakness he knows exactly where she is and the children who have no father when you see pictures on television or in the newspapers of children who are abandoned and they're ready there to be taken up by the most evil men and women in the world to use them or traffic them what a horrible situation that is but we see here that the

[32 : 56] Lord knows his own children and he knows those who are fatherless and he is able to help them and intervene on their behalf he uses agencies to help children like that he uses Christian agencies to care for children like that and he is able to do that directly as well if he so cares to do but the way of the wicked he says he brings to ruin well maybe this is a kind of a suitable word at the end of verse nine to give you encouragement that the way of the wicked he brings to ruin the wicked the evil one who causes so much trouble and anxious moments in your life

Satan and the power of evil you feel they are too strong for you but there is a stronger one with you than who is in the world and he will bring the wicked to ruin this is what I say I say is chapter 54 the way of the wicked he will turn upside down and he says to his people no weapon that is formed against you shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication is from me declares the Lord however difficult however trying however anguished my plight might become as a Christian in this world the Lord knows me and he's able to crush the enemy of my soul what a saviour we have no wonder these psalms from 146 to the very end of the psalmody uses the word praise in some form 250 times the whole of this psalm book and we see also that this particular section of the psalm book he uses the word praise 38 times from psalm 146 to the end of the psalm psalm book 38 times he is really caught up despite life's trials and afflictions he's caught up with this cord of praise praise the

Lord for who he is and what he is able to do for me I'm going to just mention three texts and then I'll finish when Moses had taken the children of Israel across the Red Sea it says in Exodus 15 then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the Lord I will sing unto the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously the horse and the rider he has drowned in the sea a song of thankfulness and praise to God and David also in 2 Samuel 22 he spoke unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that he had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul and he sang I will give thanks unto thee O Lord among the heathen and I will sing praises to your name and finally Paul in Ephesians 5 and he counsels us all with these words be filled with his spirit speaking to yourselves in psalms hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ the apostle sort of rounds off that particular section of his writings with that word of encouragement to sing to the Lord who has done all things so well and wonderfully for them but do you find in your own heart this morning a desire to praise him in the middle of your trials and afflictions well please ask him to give you of his spirit that you might sing a song pleasing to him in the midst of your wilderness journeys amen let us pray