

All people and all religions yearn for a god who is nearby. They want their gods to be pleased with them and then visit them with good gifts (or good luck). They might build images or idols to try to establish contact with these 'higher powers' or spirits, or they might go through various rituals or routines to stay on their good side. Others just make a conscious effort to be 'pretty good people' so that their god will be good to them. Everyone wants a god who comes near with his favour, even if that person speaks about his god as very great and very far away.

But there is only one God who is truly near to us: the LORD God of the Bible, the One, True Living God. He is the God we meet in Psalm 145 today, looking at Psalm 145:18 (in context): **The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.**

**We want to learn from this passage: 1) Who is this God? 2) How is He near? 3) To Whom is He near?**

1) Who is this God of the Bible of Whom Psalm 145 speaks: **the LORD is near to all who call on Him in truth?** He is the LORD.

a) Psalm 145 has much to say about the LORD God. It is filled with praises to Him. It is a complete alphabet of praise. Each verse begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet until all 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet are complete. In English we would say: *Psalm 145 sings the LORD's praises from A to Z!* It describes God the LORD with 4 key words, each one starting with a 'g':

- He is **great**: **Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; His greatness is unsearchable!** (3)
- He is **glorious**: Psalm 145:5,11 speak of **the glorious splendor of Your majesty and the glory of your kingdom**
- He is **good**: **They shall pour forth the same of your abundant goodness (7)...The LORD is good to all.** (9)
- He is **gracious**: **The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.** (8)

When you put all these together – the true God is great (infinite and endless in all that He is), glorious (full, perfect and beautiful), good (generous, ready to pour out His gifts on those who ask Him in faith) and gracious (patient, forgiving, kind, and ready to have mercy on those who deserve His anger) – this truth, that **the LORD is near**, becomes awesome beyond description! Really, do we lack *anything* at all when we know and trust such a God as this?!! He alone is the Creator and Saviour of the world.

b) He is the LORD. The name LORD (in capital letters) is sometimes translated Jehovah. It is God's *covenant* name. Long ago, when His people, the Israelites, were oppressed as Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, God revealed the meaning of this special Name to Moses at the foot of Mt. Sinai. There, when Moses was taking care of his father-in-law's sheep, God came down from heaven to meet Moses in a burning bush. The *fire* burned, but the *bush* did not burn up! From that fire God spoke and revealed His special Name to Moses and Israel: I AM WHO I AM (the short form in Hebrew is Jehovah, in English, LORD).

This name meant that God does not change; He is forever the same. He does not change in His Being, character or promises. He had made a covenant promise to Abraham and His descendants to be their God, and to be with them as His people. Now He was coming down in His love and power to save His people from slavery! The name LORD means the God who comes near to His people to help and save them out of all their troubles. He sent Moses to go to Egypt, and through Moses the LORD came near and rescued Israel.

Many years later the LORD came down as a human being, a Man named Jesus. Jesus is called Immanuel, *God-with-us*. So when we ask the question: Who is the LORD-Who-is-Near? we may answer: He is Jesus Christ! God has come very near to His people in Jesus Christ, His Son. In Jesus, we meet all the goodness, greatness, glory and grace of God!

When the LORD describes Himself in Psalm 145, He is calling us and pulling us toward Himself. He is saying to us: *Call on Me. I AM the One you need. Not one of the gods of this world is worthy to be called upon. Technology and health care and government cannot save you. Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* (Matthew 11:28)

He is the God who is so good and kind that He cares for all creatures – even the animals matter to Him! Psalm 147 says that when the young ravens call He feeds them. So you see this mighty, holy and loving God is a Saviour down to the very depths of

His being, and, as Jesus said, if God cares for the sparrow, surely He will care for His children who trust in Him as a heavenly Father! So the LORD who is near to those who call is great, gracious, glorious and good: loving, good and kind to all He made. This makes *wickedness* all the more serious, for the wicked despise this Great and Kind Saviour, and will suffer forever for that if they do not repent. But how sure you may be that when you pray in truth this Saviour God is more ready to hear you than you are to speak to Him!

## **2) The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth: How is He Near to us?**

Psalm 145 not only says that the LORD is near; it also describes ways in which the LORD is near. This is not an abstract truth that we shall never meet. This is a truth-in-real-life that we need and meet all the time! What does His nearness look like?

a) First, He is near to help us when we are afflicted with grief and trouble: **The LORD upholds all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down.** (Psalm 145:14). He speaks here of people who carry such heavy burdens in their lives and are so afflicted that their backs are bent all the way over. They are totally stooped over in their troubles and are falling down under it. Do you know what that is like? Do you know what it is like to carry a heavy worry for a long, long time? To be dragged down by a sickness that is not going away? To have family heartaches and struggles that stay with you day after day? To feel the consequences of past sins that you carry with you all the time? There is so much heaviness to life in this fallen world!

But the LORD is near to those who fall and are bowed down. When they cry out to Him for help, He visits them and 'raises them up' – literally, 'He straightens them out'. You might call Him the Ultimate Chiropractor and Physiotherapist! What this means is that He comforts them and revives their lost hope. He lifts them out of the pit of despair. He is so good in the way He helps us in all our woes and troubles.

He is near. If you need proof look at Luke 13. There the Lord Jesus met a woman in one of the Jewish synagogues **who had a spirit of infirmity 18 years and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up**. He laid His hands on her and **immediately she was made straight and glorified God!** (Luke 13:10-13). Remember that Jesus' miracles were signs of the kingdom. They weren't God promising that He will give immediate and full healing in this life. The day of total healing will come to every believer when the kingdom comes at the end of the age! But the miracles show us that God is the "back straightener" who already now gives rest and relief to those who are bent over with heavy burdens! He comes near to rescue us from all troubles, forgive all our sins, and lead us down the pathway that brings us to complete joy and glory!

The LORD is near. This reminds us of Paul saying: **The LORD is near. Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests (aches, pains, fears, woes, hurts) to God!** Near to help us in our time of need. We know from Paul's thorn in the flesh that sometimes He is near to help in ways other than we expect. But He draws near in His grace and that grace is sufficient for us to carry us to that day when our full redemption will come! **The LORD is near!**

b) Second, He is near to all His creation in all its needs. **The eyes of all look expectantly to you, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.** (Psalm 145:15-16) Here the psalmist is describing all creatures, both human and animal. You can see that little baby bird (a swallow) with wide-open eyes looking for that next bite, and even though that bird does not know the LORD, it is as if it's looking straight into the eyes of the LORD of heaven and earth and pleading: *Please being me my next fly!* God sees that look of need in its eyes and sends the mother swallow with a fly at the proper time! **You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.** Here we have the picture of animals standing at the edge of a fence while God walks by with His hand full of food, and He opens His hand and feeds them until they're all satisfied. That's our God! That's our LORD! That's our Saviour! **He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry.** (Psalm 147:9)

This is what kind of a King He is, and what His kingdom is like. This psalm describes His great kingdom. (see Psalm 145:11-13) The LORD God is a mighty, loving King who takes care of all His creatures with specific, generous care. Of course, the purpose of this psalm is not to talk to needy spiders and swallows who can't know God, but to talk to needy people and call them to come to Him in faith and trust Him for salvation and for all their needs.

The LORD is near to take care of all our needs, spiritual and physical, soul and body. He loved us so much that He came to carry our burden of sin, sickness and death. He was crushed by that burden on the cross until it killed Him. And then He rose

again to remove the burden from our shoulder and give us rest. When we trust in this LORD Jesus, we may be sure that He has our entire life in view and under His care. If the sparrows and swallows matter to Him, every issue of your life certainly matters to Him. The LORD is near to you in all your aches and pains and griefs. This is the glorious kingdom of God you enter when you believe in Jesus. Romans 8:32: **He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us allthings?**

### **3) The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth: To whom is the LORD near?**

**To all who call on Him in truth.** What does that mean? **In truth** means *sincerely, from the heart, without hypocrisy.*

- Proverbs 15:8 **The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is acceptable to him.**
- Psalm 17:1 – **Give ear to my prayer - my prayer does not rise from deceitful lips.**
- Psalm 145:19 also explains what it means to call on Him in truth: **He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hearthecries and saves them. (19) The fear of the LORD is that *faith which stands in awe of His greatness and goodness and trusts in Him***

So here we are being called to a sincere, heartfelt life of prayer – whether it is salvation we need, or burdens lifted, or food and drink. In Jesus' kingdom it all matters to Him. He cares about our cares. He promises that He will be near to us when we pray to Him in truth.

- These are not the prayers of emergency religion – where we run to God only in times of great crisis but for the rest we don't have time for Him. This is self-centred religion, not God-centered religion.
- Not the prayers of mere formality – where we pray to Him only out of duty, not out of true faith; where we think we will be heard just by going through the motions of praying as if prayer is a magic wand we can use to force God to bless us.
- Not the prayers of the proud – where we want to prove how good and religious we are, but are not falling down before Him as helpless and needy sinners, in need of His greatness, glory, grace, and goodness daily!
- Not the prayers of the hypocrite who on Sunday makes a show of how close he is to God, and then on Monday lives as if God does not matter and does not exist; the person who lives a double-life.

Calling on Him in truth is the prayer of heartfelt, sincere, childlike faith: *I know I am not worthy of receiving anything from His hand, and am deserving only of hell, but I also know that He is good, so good He sent His Son to save me, and in His Son He will supply everything I need!*

Calling on Him in truth does not mean that your faith must be perfect and strong in order to be heard by Him, for then no one's prayers would be acceptable. Remember that even faith that is small as a mustard seed is noticed by the Lord! You must simply recognize that you are weak and He is strong, you are unworthy and He is gracious, you are empty and He is full. You must believe that He came near to you in Jesus, His Son, so that in Jesus you may come near to Him. He will certainly receive all those who come to Him in Jesus' name, and as often as you come to Him in Jesus' name!

Call on Him with all your needs. Nothing is too big for Him, nothing is too small for Him. Our Saviour is the Creator; His kingdom covers *everything*. Let us live a life of constant prayer to the LORD who is near in his generous grace and ready to hear and help with open hand and open heart!

### **Conclusion**

The LORD promises to be **near**. This does not mean that He will give you *whatever* you ask, *whenever* you ask! He knows what we need far better than we know what we need. As our heavenly Father He will often answer our prayers in ways far different than we expected! Augustine said: *When He does not give what you ask, He does not give lest what He gives should bring you harm.* Do not grumble against God when "He's not coming through" like you think He should. He is righteous in all His ways, kind in all His works, and good to all (Psalm 145:9,17), not just in the circumstances that favour us!

He promises to be near. He will help us, carry us, comfort us, advance us, purify us, and take us all the way to glory. When the LORD is near to us, truly all is well, and all will be well, no matter what happens!