

Psalm 146 is good news to a world without true hope and without real help: **Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.** (verse 5) Hope may be viewed as the end of the road, the goal, the destination of your life. Help may be viewed as the strength, comfort and support needed to reach that hope. The good news for a world that is lost in sin and can't find its way to the true God and true glory is that the God of the covenant (约), the God of Jacob, the God who sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue the perishing is Himself our Hope (our destination of eternal glory & joy) and our Help (our strong support to get us there).

Let us hear this call to reject every idol (偶像) that is false help and false hope, and embrace the God who is true hope and real help!

1. The Psalm begins with a call to praise: it begins and ends with "Praise the LORD!" which in Hebrew (希伯来文) is "Hallelu-Jah!" (哈利路亚, 赞美神) (146:1-2)

The book of the 150 Psalms in general moves from petition (祈求) to praise. The closer you get to the end, the more 'Hallelu-jahs' there are. The last 5 Psalms (146-150) are all praise psalms which begin and end with 'Praise the Lord!'

Psalm 146 is a call to praise the LORD. It begins with 4 commands to praise the LORD:

-**Praise the LORD!** – Here is the opening and closing command. Praise is commanded by our God. He is worthy of all praise.

-**Praise the LORD, O my soul!** – The psalmist does not only command others to praise; He stirs himself up to do the same!

-**While I live I will praise the LORD.** – He leads by his own example and commitment (委身, 忠诚) to praise the Lord – as long as life shall last.

-**I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.** – He also praises the Lord with the whole width and depth of His life.

We are often asked: How is your *prayer* life? Here God is asking us: How is your *praise* life? Is your life filled with praises to God? Are you *leading others* toward a life of praising God? You don't have to be 'on top of the world' to sing His praises. The psalmist speaks later of being oppressed (被压迫的), hungry, and burdened; yet he is committed to the life-long praise of God. Why? Because He did put His trust in God for help and hope – which make a man happy even when he's hurting.

2. But before He calls us to trust in God, he warns us against putting our trust in mortal man (Psalm 146:3-4)

Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man in whom there is no help. (3) The psalmist is not railing here against politicians, as if to say, "You can trust ordinary people, but never trust the government; they'll disappoint you every time!" He is warning us against placing ultimate confidence in *any* human being, *any son of man* – even in **princes** who are powerful and have all the troops, all the riches, and all the levers of power on their side. *Even then* they are not a reliable source of the real help and hope man needs.

Do not put your trust in parents, pastors, employer, spouse or any mere man. Why not? **His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish** (灭亡). (4) To put it simply: they all die. Man is mortal (终有一死的), and when he dies, his plans, power and promises die with him. Even the best of men die: *the best of men is man at best*. Man's promise is always much better than man's performance. Man always appears to be more than he really is. Man is unreliable, forgetful, breakable, and *mortal*. *Our life hangs from the tiny thread of one breath!* **All men are like grass and their glory is like the flower of the field.** (Isaiah 40:6)

Don't look for help in, don't put your hope in mere mortals, in mere riches, in medicine, in diet, in clothing, in marriage. These are all temporary. These shall all come to an end! And if that's where you seek your hope and help, you too will perish with man.

This is man's constant temptation (试探) since the fall into sin: to put his trust in *man*. To trust in powerful, gifted people who hold the reins of power and can 'make things happen.' We want our children to get into that group of friends for then they will be somebody; they will be secure. If we get that great pastor, then our church will do well! Or we lean on our spouses as if our very lives depend on them! Or my well-being depends on my employer. I must have his favor or else I can't survive, and we will do anything to have his approval. But when you lay awake at night convicted of your sin, what can a mere man do to atone (赎罪) for you? And when you're dying of cancer, what can the most famous doctor do to give you life? And when your life is hollow and meaningless from chasing empty dreams what can one more promotion, one more dollar, one more award do to fill your deepest longings?

3. Most of the rest of the psalm describing the happiness of the one who puts His trust in the LORD (146:5-9)

Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help. What a title for God! Jacob was a weak man whose life was full of sins and troubles. But He trusted in the strong God of the covenant – El Shaddai - who was for him in all his weaknesses and troubles. He made a covenant with Jacob at Bethel: **Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.** (Genesis 28:15) Indeed, how blessed was Jacob to be taken into covenant by such a great God! This is the God who walked with Him every step of the way in all His troubles.

Happy is he...whose hope is in the LORD his God. And we trust in Him also for a blessed outcome. He will make all things right and take us all the way to the perfect day. Not only will He help me every step of the way (**His mercies are new every morning!** Lamentations 3:23) and all the days of my life; He will bring me to my eternal rest and *will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* (Ps. 23:6)

Why should you trust in Him? He is not like mortal man- uncertain , unpredictable, here today and gone tomorrow. The LORD commends Himself to us here in a beautiful description of 11 attributes (属性) :

- 1) He is the LORD **Who Made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them** (6a). He owns everything and has all things in His hand, under His control. Nothing can get in His way. **Our help is in the name of the LORD who made heaven and earth!** (Ps. 121:1)
- 2) **Who keeps truth forever (remains faithful forever)** (6b) – Man is faithless but God is faithful and totally reliable. He always keeps His word. His **faithfulness is great** (Lamentations 3:23). He will not fail anyone who comes to Him for help. Those who trust in Him will never be put to shame. Even though we as believers fail Him so often, he will never fail us. **I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O Jacob, are not consumed!** (Malachi 3:6)
Calvin: There is in this first attribute a commendation of his power, which should swallow up all our fears. But as it is not enough that God is merely able to help us, but a further promise is necessary, that he is willing and shall do it, David next declares that he is faithful and true, that, on discovering his willingness, no room may be left for hesitation (犹豫).
- 3) **He executes justice (公义) for the oppressed** – Those who are persecuted He will maintain their cause, He will vindicate (维护) them, He will reward them for their faith. **In all these things we are more than conquerors. Nothing in all creation can separate us from his love.**
- 4) **He gives food to the hungry**(7b) – He will not turn a blind eye to their needs, but will care for them in every need.
- 5) **The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners**(7c) – He breaks the chains of those who are slaves of sin and rebellion. When they cry out to Him He sets them free forever. (see Psalm 107) *Rebellion and Satan are no match for His powerful, redeeming love (救赎大爱)!*
- 6) **He opens the eyes of the blind;** (8a)
- 7) **He raises those who are bowed down.**(8b) The God of the covenant has a heart for those who suffer afflictions of various kinds, who are bent over with many griefs, who are downcast and discouraged. He will lift off their burdens and straighten them up. He will provide full restoration of life's glory that removes all the groaning of this present life!
- 8) **The LORD loves the righteous** (8c) – Who are the righteous but those who trust in Him and rest in His good promises, no matter how hard life gets? The LORD loves those who hope in Him and that great love of God is their perfect security!
- 9) **The LORD watches over the strangers**(9a)
- 10) **He relieves the fatherless and widow**(9b) – Our God cares for the alien (外国人) , orphan, widow – the needy, disadvantaged, easily-exploited (被剥削者) , forgotten ones (被遗忘的人) . While people on earth make them the special target for gain, they are the target of His special care.
- 11) **but the ways of the wicked He turns upside down**(9c) – the LORD opposes our enemies; they may seem to have the upperhand (占上风) but will not prevail. He will see to it they get their due. Satan's dominion (撒旦的统治) will be utterly and finally destroyed. God will see to it!

This is our God! Do you see how full of help and hope He is for you, dear saints? How in His covenant of grace He withholds nothing from you? His grace is truly sufficient for you from all angles! Calvin: *All 11 make this point: the help of God will be ready and forthcoming to those who are in the lowest circumstances, and that our miseries will be no barrier in the way of his helping us.*

Do you see that this Psalm is talking about Jesus Christ? Jesus is the fulfillment of all 11 attributes of the LORD God of Jacob. In Jesus God Himself has come down with the perfect help and hope everyone needs. God gives you everything you need in Jesus His Son.

Remember how Jesus began His ministry in Nazareth? **The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** (Luke 4:17-19) Jesus is Psalm 146 in the flesh-and-blood.

- He is the Creator of heaven and earth (John 1:1-13; Colossians 1:15-17)
- He is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:6) He will not turn away anyone who comes to Him (John 6:37)
- He pronounced blessing upon those who suffer for His name; indeed, there reward in heaven is great!
- He fed the 5,000 as a sign that he cares for and supplies all the needs of His people.
- He expelled demons from those who were imprisoned by evil and set them free to follow Him! (see Mark 5:1-20)
- He healed the blind, and straightened up the woman who was bent over by a disabling spirit (Luke 13:11)

-He loves those who trust in Him and gave special attention to the needy, the lepers (麻风病人), outcasts (被驱逐者, 流浪者), and the Gentiles (外邦人).

-He is the Rock who is the foundation for those who build their lives on Him, but He crushes those who reject Him.

So if you want true help and hope for this life and forever, if you want true and lasting happiness, take your heart off the people and things of this world and set your heart on Jesus Christ for the lasting meaning, happiness, freedom, and eternal riches that only God can give! In His life on earth He proved that He is this God of Psalm 146 who is our help and hope. In His death He purchased that help and hope for us with his precious blood. Then He rose again on the 3rd day to share these blessings with His people. By believing in Jesus all this blessedness promised here is yours! Already now in this life we experience the beginning of this eternal happiness, and in the life to come we will receive His salvation (拯救) in full. He is our complete redemption (救赎). What we can't find in mere man we will find in the God-who-became-man – Jesus Christ.

Do you see why the Psalmist is committed to life-long praise to God, in spite of the suffering he faces?

4. He concludes the psalm by telling us that this God who gives blessed happiness to His people reigns forever (10)

The LORD shall reign forever – Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Those who trust in Him will not be disappointed. Your blessedness will not be broken, will never be taken away, for He reigns forever. Nations elect presidents who promise them great blessings, but these things are short-lived, for soon another person will take his place. But the LORD is king forever. His promised blessings will never come to an end. Calvin: *It follows that, whether living or dying, we shall be safe under the keeping of a king who reigns expressly for our salvation.*

Jesus reigns as our King and Priest forever, because He lives forever. **Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost** (拯救到底) **those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.** (Hebrews 7:24-25)

How should we respond to such a King and Saviour but by coming to Him continually in prayer with every need and for all we need? John Newton's hymn, Come My Soul With Every Care, says it beautifully:

*Come, my soul, with every care, Jesus longs to answer prayer.
You are coming to a King; large petitions with you bring!*

5. The psalm then closes as it opened: with a call to praise the Lord!

Praise the LORD! (10b) Now that we have seen the beauty and glory of God our Savior we have even more reason to praise Him!

How is your *praise* life? Are you praising the Lord with your whole life because He is the Saviour of your whole life? Praise the LORD everyday your whole life long for redeeming you. And let the sound of His praise be glorious. Praise Him even in afflictions for we have a great Redeemer who will save us from all our troubles and bring us in that everlasting rest where there will be no more sorrow or sighing or pain or tears.

It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isaiah 25:9)