

The last 5 psalms (Psalms 146-150) all begin and end with a call to praise: **Praise the LORD!** (Hebrew: **Hallelujah!**)

Besides praise, the 150 psalms contain many prayers of woe, sorrow, frustration, and requests for divine vengeance. But the Book of the Psalms ends with total praise. This teaches us something about the life of the Christian: during this present age there are many trials and temptation that trouble our lives, but our lives will end on the perfect pitch of only praise! May that day come quickly!

Even though we're not there yet – and, in fact, we may still have a long ways to go before we get there! – we are called already now to live a life that's filled with praises to our God, even though our praises are still mixed with mourning. According to Scripture, there is more than one good reason to praise the LORD:

### Many Reasons to Praise God

1. We should praise Him because it is our duty: **Praise the LORD** is a command, and the command to praise Him (in one form or another) is the #1 duty commanded by God in Scripture 1000s of times. God requires it!

2. We should praise God because He is worthy of praise in Himself for all His praiseworthy attributes:

**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name** (Psalm 96:8).

**I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.** (Psalm 108:3-4)

**His praise endures forever!** (Psalm 111:10) He is worthy of an *eternity* of praise.

3. We should praise the LORD simply because of all He has done for us in creation and salvation:

**"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."** (Revelation 4:11)

**Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.** (Psalm 106:47)

4. Another reason to praise the LORD is simply because He has made us glad by His goodness:

**It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High...For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.** (Psalm 92:1-4)

5. But in Psalm 147 we are given yet another reason to praise the Lord: because it is good for you to praise Him. It is healthy for you, it makes you beautiful, it suits you well. This is how the Psalm opens: **<sup>1</sup>Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.** Or, in another translation: **Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.** (Psalm 147:1)

I want to consider these three reasons for praising the Lord God, the one true God who made heaven and earth, who sent His Son, Jesus to bring salvation to a lost and sinful human race: 1) It is good, 2) it is pleasant, and 3) it is fitting to praise Him. These three reasons come down to only one: Praise the Lord because it's good for you.

Now there's something about this that worries a Christian: this sounds very selfish and man-centered. If you praise the Lord because it's good for you, isn't that really in the end praising yourself? Isn't that a "what's-in-it-for-me?" religion, when true Christianity is all about being *saved* from that – from *self-love* to be brought into a life of *self-denial* for the glory of Jesus Christ? Such a thing – self-centred worship of God – is not an idle threat. Some people love worship not because they love God but they're in love with the good feeling of worship. That turns praise and worship into an act of idolatry and it's no longer praise at all.

It is understandable, then, that some Bible commentators believe that Psalm 147:1 should be translated differently:

NOT: **<sup>1</sup>Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.**

BUT: **<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD, for He is good. Sing praises to our God for He is pleasant. Praise, for He is beautiful.**

This translation appears much more Christian and pious. There's only one problem with it: *it's not correct!* Our Bible translations are correct and we should not alter them to try to protect God's glory. He will protect His own glory, and His word always protects His glory. *Even Psalm 147:1 protects His glory when God tells us to praise the Lord because it's good for us. For when praising Him does us good, our lives reflect the glory of God even more brightly.*

Remember that God *created* us to praise Him. When He sees His creatures doing the very thing they were created to do, the thing that elevates their existence and puts their lives in the right frame, He is glorified in His creatures! He is glorified in His creatures when His creatures are happy, joyful, and bursting with the energy of praise. Not that sorrow and anger are wrong; sometimes these are required. But 1 day all these will be done away with, and only praise will remain!

Keep in mind that we're looking at just one of the many reasons for praise. The reason given in Psalm 147:1 is not the only reason, nor is it necessarily the highest reason for praising Him. One commentator understood this verse well when he wrote: **Praise is a discharge of duty that reacts healthfully and beneficially upon ourselves!** (Keil) In other words, our own health is not the focus or purpose, but it's a real by-product and benefit of praising God. Thus it is an additional reason for praise and thanksgiving. We praise God because He blesses us, but God also blesses us when we praise Him.

## Praise is Good

The first reason: **Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God.** Praise the LORD because it's a good for you: it is the most healthy and wholesome activity you can do in your life. "Good" can mean *morally* right, but it can also refer to human *welfare* and mean beneficial. The context suggests this is the meaning here.

Praising God is beneficial for you. It makes you well. It puts you in a proper and prosperous state. It is *psychologically healthy*. Praising the LORD is a *healthy* response to all the good God has rained down upon your life from day to day. By way of contrast, complaining and murmuring are not good at all, not a proper frame of mind; they drag your life down into depression and bitterness where God does not want you to be. They put you in a dark and miserable hole.

But praise and thanksgiving – these are *good*! Praise is a liberating and elevating thing for you to do.

**-All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.** (Proverbs 15:15)

**-A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.** (Proverbs 17:22)

Yes, it's truly healthy for you to praise the Lord!

What is it to praise the Lord? It is to contemplate the glorious character and mighty deeds of our Creator and Redeemer. When we contemplate the works of God, and His *majesty, might, glory, and kindness*, and praise Him for all that *He is, has done, is doing, and will yet do* – that act of praise (from a sincere heart) has a great influence upon ourselves: it *lifts up the mind* to contemplate great things! It makes the mind and heart soar. Our hearts and minds desperately need a break from Donald, Hilary, Justin, Vladimir and Al-Shabab. They need to focus on the deep and great things of God that have been revealed to us in general and special revelation.

Part 1 of this Psalm (verses 1-6) is the first of 3 calls to praise in Psalm 147. (Part 2 is verses 7-11; Part 3 is verses 12-20)

<sup>2</sup> **The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.**

<sup>3</sup> **He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.**

<sup>4</sup> **He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.**

<sup>5</sup> **Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.**

<sup>6</sup> **The Lord lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground.**

Here He lists several reasons to praise God: reasons taken from His saving mercy, His creative power, and His attributes.

Just think about the stars for a moment. Dwarf galaxies have just a few billion ( $10^9$ ) stars. Giant galaxies have as many as 100 trillion stars ( $10^{14}$ ). There are approximately 170 billion to 200 billion galaxies in the observable universe. How many stars is this?? Yet God counts their number (in other words, keeps track of them all, sustains them all) and has a name for each one of them, showing how personally and directly involved he is in the whole universe and its every detail! Wow! Think about it, and Praise the LORD! It's good for you. *Very good!*

## Praise is Pleasant

The next word is pleasant: It is *pleasant* to praise Him. The word means *delightful* and *sweet*. Praise is beautiful. The Hebrew word is *naom* from which we get *Naomi*. Remember Naomi? She called herself Marah (or bitter) when she lived in Moab away from the Lord, but then she came back to Israel and to the Lord and she became pleasant again. Praise is a delightful thing for you to do. It makes you a delightful, pleasant and beautiful person, beautiful and beautifying. It's a very pleasing and happy thing to express and to hear singing and praise, and to meet a *merry* heart, a heart that is glad with God for all that he has done in creation, providence, and in saving us from our sins.

Praise is pictured as wearing a beautiful garment. Isaiah 61 says that Jesus came to dress you in a garment of praise.

**"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives...<sup>3</sup> to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified."** (Isaiah 61:1-3)

Praising God is like putting on a beautiful set of clothes which makes your appearance very pretty or dashing. Grumbling and complaining, on the other hand, are really ugly, and make us ugly and undesirable people. At one time we could not see God or his glory. We lived in darkness. We had eyes only for ourselves and the fading beauties of this world. It was a dark and ugly existence; we were held in bondage by worry, fear, and complaining. But Jesus came to rescue us from that ugly darkness. He came to give us eyes for God and his glory. He died for our sin of bitterness. He paid the price for it and washed it away. He rose on the third day to create in us a new life of seeing, trusting, obeying, and praising God!

Part 2 of this Psalm is a second call to praise.

<sup>7</sup> **Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; Sing praises on the harp to our God,**

<sup>8</sup> **Who covers the heavens with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains.**

<sup>9</sup> **He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry.**

<sup>10</sup> **He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.**

<sup>11</sup> **The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.**

Here again our minds are lifted up to God's work in creation and salvation. Think of His great goodness and kindness in creation: he sends clouds to give rain to produce grass to feed the animals. Yes, he hears even the baby birds when they cry for food and He feeds them. This is our God! The vastness of the galaxies...one little bird crying in a nest...he makes them all the objects of His care.

As Jesus said: If your heavenly Father is so concerned about grass and birds, then *how much more* does He care for you His own dear children?!! (see Matthew 6:25-33) That's also what this Psalm says: the Lord takes pleasure in the one who fears Him and hopes in His mercy. Let that amaze you and elevate your mind: if you, a wicked sinner, hope in His mercy, His pity – and you have good reason to trust the One who hears and feeds baby birds! – the God of heaven and earth, for whom entire nations are just dust on a scale (see Isaiah 40:15), takes pleasure in you. The word means: (He finds you) acceptable, is satisfied with you and sees nothing objectionable in you. This clearly points to the cross of Jesus Christ where the LORD put on His Son everything that was objectionable in us and made Jesus an object of scorn, so that he might make us an object of His favour and take pleasure in us. **Praise the Lord!**

Yes, God did this for us that we might praise Him. And as we praise Him more and more, it makes us more and more pleasant and beautiful children of God. And God is glorified when we are pleasant people! He saved us for this very purpose: that we might become more and more pleasing in our characters.

### **Praise is Fitting**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> reason to praise the LORD is that praise is **fitting** or **comely**. It is closely related to the word *beautiful* and that is why the NKJV uses the word *beautiful* instead. But this word takes a slightly different direction. It means agreeable or suitable. Praise the LORD because it suits you. It's made to fit. It agrees with the *way* God made you. It agrees with the *reason* God made you. The reason you are here on this world, fearfully and wonderfully made by God, is to offer your life to God in praise-filled, God-glorifying service. Paul says in Romans 11:36 – **For from Him and through Him and unto Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever!** All things are from Him, exist through Him, and are designed to go back to Him. So it is with us. The great tragedy and self-destructiveness of sin is that we ignore our highest purpose, and live against our very design. We live in a way that is *unfitting*. The wicked neither **glorify God nor give Him thanks**. (Ro 1:21)

Also, it suits well your new life in the Spirit as a believer in Christ. The heart has a deep need for living to the praise of God. It is fitting to do that. That is our crown of honor and glory as human beings. When we were living against our design and purpose and living in misery, God took pity on us and sent His Son to rescue us from ourselves. And Jesus came to live the life we weren't living – a life of total praise to God, the truly meaningful life of a fulfilled human being, living as God created us. And He died the death we should have died as blasphemers of God living against our purpose. He did this to bring many sons to glory – back to the glory of living a life in the Spirit that praises God. Jesus came to restore us to the true humanity and dignity of praising God, a life that is fitting for us and suits us well!

Now you see how this life of praising-God-because-it's-good-for-you is so God-centered: this is the way God made us to live, and it resembles or images Him. Praising the Lord elevates us to a way of life that reflects our good, happy, beautiful and holy God – and that delights Him!

Let us consider here the third call to praise the LORD in this Psalm:

<sup>12</sup> **Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!**

<sup>13</sup> **For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you.**

<sup>14</sup> **He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest wheat.**

<sup>15</sup> **He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly.**

<sup>16</sup> **He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes;**

<sup>17</sup> **He casts out His hail like morsels; who can stand before His cold?**

<sup>18</sup> **He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.**

<sup>19</sup> **He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel.**

<sup>20</sup> **He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the Lord!**

Here again we praise the LORD for His works: for His saving love toward His people: strengthening and protecting the church, with a special blessing for our children, and also giving us our daily bread; and for His powerful work in creation: His word brings winter – snow storms, frost on the car windows, and icy cold weather, and then it brings spring – warm winds, melting snow and ice, flowing water; finally, it goes back to the theme of His covenant love in the last verse: how this Almighty God who made and rules the world by his word, has given to us His word in written form in the Bible, His message of saving love in Jesus Christ. *Why has He chosen us for this privilege, while others are still without the word of salvation?* We stand amazed at this unspeakable gift – and we **Praise the LORD!**

In that way Jesus answers our soul's deepest longing – the need of the heart created in God's image to go out and burst with praises to our God!

As we give Him the praise He deserves forever, we also do what is fitting for ourselves! By putting a song of praise in our mouths, He receives the glory, and we are honored to live a life that is healthy, and beautiful, and fits us well – as we **discharge the duty that reacts healthfully and beneficially upon ourselves** (Keil). As we receive this benefit of praise from the Lord which is good for us, we actually glorify Him even more because we are living the good and healthy life He created and saved us to live. *So God gets all the glory even when what we do for Him is also done for our own good!*

### **Conclusion**

If you don't know a life of praise it's because you haven't met Jesus personally. Ask Him to redeem you from a life that is trapped in the prison of yourself, to set you free to go out and upward to God. To live the life that is truly good, pleasant and fitting! He will answer your prayer. He will change your spirit of misery and replace it with the garment of praise.

Dear Christians, do you hear this command to **Praise the LORD**? Do it! It brings Him glory, and it does you much good, and that also brings Him more glory. He gave you a garment of praise which makes you a very beautiful person. He paid a lot for that garment – it cost the Father the life of His Precious Son. It cost the Son His own life. Wear it! He wants to see us looking good and healthy because that shows His glory all the more!