

PSALM 145

Superlative Praise!

Main Idea: Though our superlative praise is an understatement of God's majestic glory, our redemption compels us to express our adoration of Him.

Leader:

*¹ I will extol You, my God, O King,
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
² Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.*

Men:

*³ Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised,
And His greatness is unsearchable.
⁴ One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.
⁵ On the glorious splendor of Your majesty
And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.
⁶ Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts,
And I will tell of Your greatness.
⁷ They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness
And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.*

All:

*⁸ The LORD is gracious and merciful;
Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.
⁹ The LORD is good to all,
And His mercies are over all His works.
¹⁰ All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD,
And Your godly ones shall bless You.
¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom
And talk of Your power;
¹² To make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts
And the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom.
¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And Your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

Women:

*¹⁴ The LORD sustains all who fall
And raises up all who are bowed down.
¹⁵ The eyes of all look to You,
And You give them their food in due time.
¹⁶ You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

*17 The LORD is righteous in all His ways
And kind in all His deeds.*

All:

*18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.*

*19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He will also hear their cry and will save them.*

*20 The LORD keeps all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.*

*21 My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.*

I'd like to invite you to open your Bibles to Psalm 145 as we consider this beautiful song of praise to God. The psalm is found on page #484 of the pew Bibles. This will be the last of the psalms we will consider in this series that we've been doing on the psalms. Next week we anticipate starting a series of messages on I Peter with Stan joining us again later on in preaching through that series.

This beautiful psalm, Psalm 145, is the last of the psalms that is attributed directly to David. It really is a matter of conjecture to try to determine any specific historical setting for the psalm. But I like to remember that David was a man after God's own heart and so this morning, we have a wonderful opportunity to observe a worshiping heart that brought great pleasure to God!

The Hebrew manuscripts give this psalm a title, "The Praise of David", a title that no other psalm has. Spurgeon said, "David had blessed God many a time in other psalms, but this he regarded as his peculiar, his crown jewel of praise." Indeed, this whole psalm is saturated with praise, but it is not just emotional response apart from an engaged mind. The praise is based on David's understanding of who God is and what He has done.

As Christians from the western world, we tend to closely analyze any written text. But that is not the purpose of the Psalms and definitely not this psalm! The Psalms are to be experienced; they are to be lived! They give voice to the author's experience with God and they are to be used in giving expression to the reader's (or the singer's) experience in relation to that same God that they reveal. They are not given to increase our intellectual grasp of deity, but instead they are intended to be participatory to the point that they give expression to our emotions, to our wonder, to our confusion, to our pain, to our joy, to our sorrow, and every other emotion we may feel. And above everything else, they give voice to our settled faith as we worship our God who is infinitely transcendent yet who is in intimate relationship with the weak and lowly!

This psalm in particular doesn't lend itself to be broken into a definite outline. If you feel you need an outline, there seems to be a general grouping of thoughts in verses 3-7, verses 8-13, verses 14-16, and then verses 17-21. But the sub points in these divisions tend to overlap quite a bit. The whole poem starting with verse 3 was really an acrostic, the first letters of each verse (including 13b) being the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Instead of looking at this psalm to analyze it, I'd just like to read through the psalm with you, examining the ways that God revealed Himself to David and to us, and then let's respond to Him. Let's pray.

David's first words are exclamations of intent to praise the Lord. *"I will extol you, my God, O King! And I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and I will praise your name forever and ever."* (V 1-2) In these verses, David is just getting cranked up in his praise! Notice that in and of itself, saying "I will praise You" is not praise.

When I hear the song, "Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God..." it hits me kind of like these first two verses do. It is incomplete because the expression of intent is different from actual praise. I want to say, "Well then, get on with it. Bow down and start worshipping! Don't just talk about it!"

Worship focuses on the person being praised, not on the worshiper. So praise becomes more than saying to God, "I'm here to praise You, or "I will praise You." Praise directed to God says, "I praise you because you did something for me", or "I worship you" because of something inherent to God's nature or His person. So I'm glad that David didn't stop at these first two verses but also gave us the rest of the psalm! Remember that the acrostic doesn't begin until verse 3. So it's as if David were giving only an introduction in verses 1-2 and then really getting into the actual praise poetry as he goes from verse 3 on!

But there are some things in these first two verses that we should note. First of all, notice that it is David who is doing the praising. In the Israelite's view, David was the supreme monarch, bowing to no one, yet here he recognizes the pre-eminence of the King of kings! David, God's choice for Israel's king, in this psalm chooses to praise the absolute King over all! Because David was able to humble himself before the sovereign majesty of God, his worship was acceptable before God.

Then notice that his worship was constant throughout his life, *"every day."* There wasn't a day when David wasn't aware of God's presence in his life and he was moved to respond in praise. Interestingly enough, David's praises to God continued even after his death. II Chron. 29:30 tells of King Hezekiah ordering *"...the Levites to sing praises to the Lord with the words of David and Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with joy, and bowed down and worshiped."* Even today we sing praises to God, worshipping in the very words of David.

So as God revealed Himself to David during David's life on this earth, he praised God daily, but notice also that David said that this same praise would go on into eternity. Everything else that we can do for God will cease. Faith ceases when in eternity, our faith becomes sight. Our good works for God are limited in scope and time to our mortal existence. When we enter eternity, our prayers will all be answered, never to be prayed again. But our praise of God will continue on, to His glory throughout eternity.

In verse 3, David gets into specifics as he praises God for His transcendence. *"Great is the Lord and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable."* God is great in everything that is good and just and right. When he says that God's greatness is unsearchable, the psalmist is not saying that it is impossible to catch a glimpse of God's greatness. Rather he means that we can never get to the end of our search of greatness in God.

In Psalm 139:1, a psalm Pastor Stan recently preached, David said to God, *"O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You understand my thoughts from afar. You scrutinize my path and lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways."* God knew David completely. But

when David said that God's greatness is unsearchable, it is as if David through these words was saying to God, "I can neither comprehend nor express the full extent of your infinite greatness. Your excellence cannot be overstated!"

True worship is based on a search of God's revelation of Himself, but in the end, we prostrate ourselves before One who is more than we can understand or take in. He indeed is God over all, not confined by physical laws that He has established. He is not governed by our limitations, but rather He is beyond all boundaries of comprehension, even though He is present with us here in this auditorium this morning.

So even if we explore our Creator our whole lives, there is always more of God to worship, more because He is infinite; He never had a beginning and He will never end; in fact He IS the beginning and He IS the end! He is unequalled; He is transcendent; He is all-consuming; He is all-encompassing; He is all-knowing; He is all-powerful. We can never plumb the depths of who He is; we can never repeat all of His excellencies; we can't fully embrace all He is; we can't circumscribe His works; and we can't comprehend all His ways!

The nearest we can come to understanding the Father is to look at Jesus who said, "*He who has seen me has seen the Father.*" Thomas LeBlanc expressed it so well when he said "God is so great, that till Christ revealed the Father, Deity was lost in its own infinity to the perception of men." Even with the unveiling that came through Christ, today in our present state of humanity with a sin-limited capacity for understanding, we simply cannot grasp the magnificence of God's majesty. Yet though our superlative praise is an understatement of God's majestic glory, our redemption compels us to express our adoration of Him.

Scripture tells us that someday we will "*know even as we are known.*" But until that is fulfilled, today one of the best ways in which we can somewhat comprehend the splendor of God's self-revelation is through His works, through His acts among us.

That is why David says in verse 4 that "*One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.*" My mom and dad would often remind us kids of God's provision for our family in 1958 when we returned to the mission field in Venezuela on a small freighter, taking a bus with us to be used at the Bible Institute where Mom and Dad taught. Dad worked as a mechanic during our furlough to support our family, as well as be able to buy and ship the bus to Venezuela for the ministry there.

But by the time we drove from the West Coast to Miami, it took almost all the money Dad had to get us and the bus on a small freighter for the trip south across the Caribbean Sea. I didn't realize it at the time, but Mom was more than a little upset with Dad that evening after we got on the ship. She was upset because that afternoon Dad let us kids spend the last money he had. While still on the West Coast, Dad had promised that before we left Miami, we kids could spend our allowance money to buy things to take back to Venezuela that we had waited until then to buy.

So I bought my baseball bat not realizing that it was the last money Dad had in his pocket. My Dad was a man of integrity and so he kept his promise to us kids. He knew that we were going to be OK. We were already loaded onto the ship and could eat in the dining room until we reached Venezuela where another missionary was to meet us.

Then the crew told my parents that the ship was delayed in port for another few days and meals were not going to be served. We watched Dad walk down the gangplank back onto the dock, asking the Lord what to do to feed his kids. As he walked into town looking for some work, he put his hand into his pocket and there was an envelope in it with enough money to feed his family until the ship dining room opened! Evidently someone at a church where he spoke had slipped that envelope into his pocket! That was God's provision, and as a young child, I was reminded every time I heard the story that God takes good care of His children! One generation telling another about the mighty works of God!

Many years later, I was field chairman in TEAM-Venezuela giving leadership to our missionaries during an especially discouraging time. An older missionary from another generation, John Conaway told me of a time in the early days when the TEAM-Venezuela missionaries were not united, when things deteriorated into division, jealousy, backbiting, and anger.

God's displeasure was evident. He was not blessing the work and it seemed that the growth of the Venezuelan church had come to a standstill. As they prayed, God intervened and convicted each one of sin, softening each one's heart toward Him and toward the other missionaries and the Venezuelan leaders.

With tears in his eyes, this old missionary said to me, "The TEAM Venezuela field has never been the same again! So you can trust God right now. He will work!" One generation telling another about the mighty works of God!

Kids, when you are old, you need to tell your grandchildren about God's mighty power and provision shown to us in this building project that is going up right now. You need to tell your grandchildren and great grandchildren about how God worked in your life and in the church's life; tell them about His mighty acts. Let them know they can trust and worship this same God! One generation both in the family and in the church needs to tell the next generation about the mighty works of our God! Plaques of bronze commemorating some act of God will never be as powerful a witness to His incredible work as will the continual communication of those works from one generation to the next.

Aren't you glad that we are not just challenged to praise and worship at another time and another place? We are invited into that worship right now and so we can praise Him at this moment! Let's respond to our great God together as we stand and sing, "Great is the Lord".

But the psalmist indicates that communication about God should be more than inter-generational. David rehearsed God's acts and His greatness within himself as he meditated on them. He was overwhelmed by their beauty.

(V 5-7) "On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts and I will tell of Your greatness. They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness, and will shout joyfully of Your righteousness."

David was awed by the glorious splendor and majesty of God, by His incredible acts, by His overflowing goodness. As he reflected on God's majesty and on His wonderful works, praise naturally

sprang from David's lips! David makes it sound as if praise is inevitable for the one who meditates on God's majestic splendor and on His marvelous works.

I love the way David talks about shouting joyfully about the righteousness of God! Sinners are terrorized by God's righteousness and His righteous deeds. God's righteous destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea as they were pursuing Moses and Israel, was to the nations a dreadful thing. But to God's people who had been enslaved by Egypt for 400 years, it was a cause for celebration.

Sinners cringe when they contemplate God's unbending righteousness because His righteousness is the standard for His commandments and is the basis of His moral Law which condemns the sinner. In other words, the fact that God is absolutely righteousness and totally just is the reason that the sinner stands condemned.

But since David was forgiven from His sin, he could respond, shouting joyfully about God's righteousness. The fact that Jesus Christ is perfectly righteous is the basis of David's salvation and of my salvation. That is because on the cross, the guilt of David's sin and of my sin was placed directly on God's righteous Son Jesus. So thank God for His perfect righteousness! We too can shout joyfully about God's righteousness extended to us in Jesus Christ!

So along with David, you and I can exult saying, (verses 8-10) *"The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. The Lord is good to all and His mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord and Your godly ones shall bless you."*

In that spirit of gratitude, let's sing together, "Shout to the Lord."

The focus of the psalmist shifts in verses 11-13 to the dominion God exercises over all His creation. *"They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and Your dominion endures throughout all generations."* David, who was absolute sovereign in Israel, rejoiced in God's eternal dominion over all creation. We certainly can't appreciate majesty the way that David could. And yet we, along with David, can rejoice over God's majestic and absolute dominion. We know that He will fix all the wrongs; in fact that is our only hope, but it is also our firm expectation! When we are in the midst of troubles or persecution, we need to walk in faith that God sovereignly controls everything so that *"...all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose."*

Notice that as David praises God saying that God's kingdom endures throughout all generations, it is through the incarnate Son of God, born in the Davidic line through the virgin Mary, that God's kingdom will be brought to full completion. The Messiah's kingdom is eternal!

So today, the renown of God's glorious rule is on the lips of godly people! As we walk by faith, even in the face of the apparent triumph of injustice and evil in the world, we can see God's sovereign hand at work and we rejoice in the reality of God's dominion, that indeed Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords! We look forward to the day when *"...at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess Him as Lord, to the glory of God the Father!"*

Let's respond together to this revelation of the glorious splendor of God's sovereign reign by reading from the Scriptures. Please stand as we prepare to read.

Leader:

*Not to us, O Lord, not to us,
But to Your name give glory
Because of Your lovingkindness,
Because of your truth.
Why should the nations say,
"Where now is their God?"
Our God is in the heavens;
He does whatever He pleases.*
(Psalm 115:1-3 NASB)

Congregation:

It is our God who has said:
*"Remember the former things long past,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things which have not been done.
Saying, 'My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish all my good pleasure.
...Truly I have spoken and I will bring it to pass.
I have planned it, surely I will do it.'"*
(Isa. 46:9-11 NASB)

Because our sinful nature goads us toward always wanting to control our own lives, when we look at God's sovereignty, we sense an inherent severity. But the revelation of God in the next few verses tells us that God's sovereignty is tempered by compassion. In His sovereign dominion, He also exercises sovereign yet compassionate provision. Verses 14-16 say, *"The Lord sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."*

When we think we can take care of ourselves, God is not impressed. God is not captivated with our spiritual resolve, with our fortitude, with our record of accomplishments, with our healthy self-image, or with our abilities. Rather *"...the Lord sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down"*.

God has revealed that the one He regards is the lowly humble self-confessed sinner who is living in the truth of who He is and who God is. Though God is exalted over all His creation, He concerns Himself about the one who humbly acknowledges his helpless state and throws himself on God's goodness.

The verb "sustains" that David uses expresses continual action. David's God and our God is the God who held up the fallen in David's time, who lifts up the fallen today, and who will rescue the fallen in the years to come.

In this world's economy, the fallen are trampled upon. They are the scorned. We tend to exalt the successful, the beautiful, and the strong. But God specializes in saving fallen men and fallen women. Remember the story in the eighth chapter of John about the fallen woman, the adulteress caught in the act? Do you remember the attitude of the self-righteous religious rulers? They wanted to stone her, but Jesus treated her tenderly, telling her to sin no more. She knew that she was a guilty sinner!

The Apostle Paul recognized that he was the "chief of sinners" yet he found mercy from the Lord! The thief on the cross recognized that he deserved death, and Jesus promised him that he would be in paradise with Him that very day!

Are you bowed down today, struggling as you recognize your brokenness, your fallenness before the Lord? David says that you are the person the God will sustain! He will raise you up if you will look to Him!

But David went even further as he recognized that we all are dependent on God's providence. You see, even the fiercest atheist may revel in his perceived independence, but he too is dependent on the providence of a good and merciful God for rain and sunshine, for his daily provision, and for protection from natural disaster. He is totally dependent, yet he shakes his fist at the One who lovingly provides for him. Because our God is a good God, because He is a loving God, He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing! Let's respond to our good God singing "Blessed Be Your Name."

Then in verses 17-21, David releases a barrage of praise. It's almost as if you as an Oregonian were setting off legal home fireworks in your yard, and all of a sudden the grand finale of the fireworks at the St. Paul Rodeo let loose next door. David's praise cannot be contained as he speaks of the salvation of the Lord! *"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and kind in all His deeds. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. The Lord keeps all who love Him. But all the wicked, He will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever."*

Let's join in with David giving God glory! Please stand and sing together, "To God Be the Glory".

Benediction:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

"SUPERLATIVE PRAISE"

Psalm 145

Main Idea: Though our superlative praise is an understatement of God's majestic glory, our redemption compels us to express our adoration of Him.

Introduction:

Vs. 1-2 Intent for Worshipful Praise

Vs. 3-7 Worshiping Beyond Our Understanding

Vs. 8-13 Worshiping the Merciful Sovereign

Vs. 14-16 Worshiping the Sustainer

Vs. 17-21 Worshiping Like Fireworks

