
As long as we live

Psalm 146

Introduction As long as we live, the One in whom we are to trust is the One on whom we are to pour out our praise. Psalm 146 reminds us of this and is a fitting conclusion for our 6-week series on the Names of God.

Recap

Today brings our series to a close. What we tried to do was straightforward. We aimed to pray and preach in such a way that we would understand the character of God by thinking together on His various names. Each Sunday we introduced a different name of God seen in a specific part in the Bible. The names of God then functioned as a lens through which we could see the greatness and goodness of God. The hope was that the Lord would use this series to cause each of us:

- ∞ To see who God really is
- ∞ To draw us to Himself
- ∞ To stop trusting in ourselves
- ∞ To start or continue trusting in all that God is for us in Jesus Christ.

When we see Him as trustworthy & savor Him as praiseworthy, our hearts will freely trust and our lips gladly praise the LORD.

This is what we've tried to make clear in this series and this is what Psalm 146 makes plain. Open your Bibles to Psalm 146.

Declaring the reasonableness of the praise of God

Vv.1-6

Psalm 146 is organized in two basic sections. The Psalm begins and ends with the command to praise God. Within these two commands we find these two sections 1) declaring the reasonableness of the praise of God and 2) describing the characteristics of the God of praise. The objective of this Psalm seems to be aimed at providing us what we need to trust and praise the Lord as long as we live.

Let's start our time in Psalm 146 by reading the first 6 verses. (read and pray)

A determination to praise God

Vv.1-2

The first movement of this Psalm is made of verses 1 & 2. We see the psalmist determined to praise the LORD as long as he lives. Our Psalm starts off and concludes with the Hebrew shout "Hallelujah!" translated in our English Bibles as "Praise the Lord". This Hebrew word is familiar to Christians all over the world. Regardless of a person's national language or local dialect, people following the risen Christ know at least one Hebrew word. This word is "Hallelujah". The word is often used but rarely explained. What is the Psalmist determined to do?

To understand the command upon each of us this morning, we need to understand this Hebrew word. It comes from a compound term made up of the verb “to praise” (i.e. hallel) and the short form of the name of God “Yah”.

Hallel is a key verb in the Old Testament. It carries the idea of expressive (animated, open) boasting. And this excited boasting is to be both public and vocal.

This word “hallel” is what I did this week when...

- ◆ My family and I watched the Dayton firework display down at the waterfront
- ◆ We heard that Rosemary Braxton gave birth to a 7lb. 2oz. baby boy

You see when we sense that an object is beautiful or stunning we excitedly boast about it. When we delight in it we desire to express our joy of it. This is hallel. These two examples, however, are infinitely parochial & inferior to what is happening in Ps.146 (and in the rest of the Bible). Coupled with this verb “hallel” we have the shorten name of God “Yah”. Yahweh, as we have been introduced to in this series, is the name above all names. He is the object of praise.

The Hebrew word translated praise in our Psalm is a word used best not of golf shots or fireworks displays; not of cooing babies or magnificent thunderstorms. It is reserved for the living Lord. It is kept for Him who truly deserves our boastful, excited, public and vocal praise! This we see is how Ps.146 begins and ends.

But now notice what happens to the one writing the Psalm. As he looks out over the congregation and says “Hallelujah” = You all, praise the Lord, the command bounces back at him. Rather than merely command others to praise the LORD, the psalmist says that he is to be excited himself over the wonder of the LORD.

Therefore he, in the latter part of v.1, commands his own soul to praise to the LORD. As we read on we sense the determination to carry out this command. “I will praise the Lord...I will sing praises to my God”. Our psalmist is modeling for us what we need in order to carry out praising the Lord as long as we live.

Taking responsibility for our own souls, we are to exhort ourselves to find and express delight in God. We are to tell ourselves constantly to praise the Lord. And we are to do this from this day forth and forever more. Permanence in praise is the point of vv. 1-2. We, like the psalmist, must renew our determination to a lifestyle of praise to our glorious God seen in our gracious Savior Jesus Christ our Lord.

A delight to praise God

Vv.3-6

In saying that praise should be a matter of determination and commitment, I do not wish to imply that praise is a difficult or an unpleasant task. Though we have times in which we must take our soul by the back of its neck and march it in front of the splendor of Christ and say, “Look at what you are missing! Praise the Lord! Notice your Creator and Redeemer’s beauty and power and love and compassion. Stop sulking. Start hoping. Love the Lord. Long for Him. Soul, praise the Lord!”

Though we have seasons or moments like this, I do not want to leave you with the notion that praise is a burden. Look with me at vv.3-6. These verses demonstrate that the psalmist delights in praising the LORD because the LORD is his only help and hope.

Denies that help and hope are found in the creature **vv.3-4**

In this section the psalmist first denies that help and hope are to be found in the creature who is mortal and frail. We come clearly to the teaching that ultimate solutions to all our problems are not found in any other than God alone! Man is limited and lacking in permanence. When the creature dies any help he might have given passes on with him. The psalmist makes his case that it is a delight to praise the Creator not the creature by showing how frail man truly is.

Notice how the psalmist describes man. He is not talking about some scoundrel in whom we are not to put our trust. The ones being contrasted with God are not vile villains. Rather, they are termed “princes”. The point is that even the best of people who may give help and comfort are frail and mortal. God, on the other hand, is supreme and eternal.

This is why he finds praise to be a delight. When the heart stops trusting in mere man and his plans and starts trusting in God and his plans, the soul finds the LORD praiseworthy. The heart finds God to be the object of joy! What a delight it is to praise the LORD.

Affirms that all help and hope are found in the Creator **vv.5-6**

In strong contrast to these words of verses 3-4, we find verses 5-6. Here the psalmist affirms that all help and hope are found in the Creator who is faithful forever. Why ever should we trust ultimately in the creature when we might trust the Creator? The one who does trust in the Creator who is faithful forever is described in verse 5 as “blessed”. The term “blessed” describes the condition of the heart that trusts in the LORD. O, how happy the soul is that relies upon the eternal, faithful, Creator of vv.5-6. This is why a determination to praise the LORD found in vv.1-2 gives way to a delight to praise the LORD found in vv.5-6.

What is this Creator God like? In vv.5-6, the psalmist presents a portrait of the One in whom we are to trust and the One on whom we are to pour out our praise.

The God of Jacob

The first phrase we come across in v.5 speaks of God as “the God of Jacob”. This relates to God’s covenantal relationship to the patriarchs. All of the history of God’s faithful dealings with His people is wrapped up in this phrase. The point here is clear. When we look to the God of Jacob for our help, we are standing in the tradition of faith that has extended over four thousand years. From the time of the patriarchs to 2005, God has been proven to be faithful to His word, true to His covenant, unwavering in His promises. He is the One we can trust. He is the One we must determine to praise. And all of this is because it is a delight to trust and praise the LORD.

The LORD his God

The second phrase which describes the God in whom we are to put our trust, the God upon whom we are to lavish praise is “The LORD his God”. Not only is God the faithful maker of the covenant for all these years but He is the present and personal God who establishes relationship with His people. We notice this facet of God as we see the psalmist using God’s personal Name; Yahweh. He then says that this almighty personal God is *his* God.

These two phrases work together to give us a most impressive statement of the ultimate resources we have in Him. Here we find the big idea of the message today. Here we notice the main point of our 6-week series.

*As long as we live, when we see Him as He truly is
we delight to trust and praise Him as He truly deserves!*

Maker of heaven and earth

If these descriptions are not enough, the poet goes on to give us another phrase to convince us that *as long as we live it is our delight to trust and praise God*. This phrase is “who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them”. The God who created the vast Universe and the varied Earth, the God who creatively made and sustains the sea and all that is in it, this God is to be trusted and praised! What power, what control, what authority, what supremacy we see in the God of Psalm 146.

Are you left with any hesitation to trust Him this morning? Do you still have a rational reason for not boasting about Him in public and demonstrating that He is your help and hope? Oh, beloved, stop with unbelief. Start trusting. Find Him all-glorious and all-gracious. Find him to be your only source of help and hope!

The keeper of faithfulness

But if there are still some of you in the auditorium whose hearts find it difficult to trust and praise this God (reasons like: upbringing was ungodly, trapped in a practiced sin, years of being sinned against, living with a difficult person, chronic pain, employment dissatisfying, children wayward, etc) – if you still find it difficult to trust and praise this God then allow the last phrase to win you over. This phrase is found in the last part of v.6. “Who keeps faith forever” is a phrase designed to communicate God’s forever faithfulness. The point of this phrase seems to be that this God of covenantal love, of personal relationship, the Creator of all; this God is faithful to the end! Here is our sure ground for trust. Here is our sweet grace for praise. Here we find our hunt for help and hope terminated. We are at home when we are here with this God; the keeper of faithfulness!

Describing the characteristics of the God of Praise

Vv.7-10

The second section of this Psalm is found in vv.7-10. Here we come across the psalmist describing the characteristics of the God of Praise. He is the One who ever gives to the helpless and the hopeless. Listen and learn from verses 7-10 (read vv.)

A description of the God of praise

Vv.7-9

We see the third movement of Psalm 146 as we attend with interest to vv.7-9.

Here the psalmist describes the LORD of praise by talking about His actions. Much could be said about these verses. I encourage you to meditate upon this section until you realize and relish the God of Psalm 146. For our time this morning I'm simply going to lift off the page and place before you both the verbs and the nouns of this third movement. The purpose is to see again what a great God He is and to see again what a great need we have of Him.

We are reminded in these verses that our God characteristically aids the helpless and the weak. These words flesh out the central declaration of the Psalm, found in verses 5-6. Our help and hope is found in Him (v.5) because He guards faithfulness forever (v.6). This truth causes our hearts happiness (v.5). And this happiness demonstrates itself in obedience to the command "Praise the LORD (vv.1,10).

Let's look at the elements found in these vv. to give us power to trust in and praise the LORD as long as we live.

8 verbs

The characteristics of the LORD seen in vv.7-9 are discovered in the types of verbs used in this text. Just listen to them for a moment.

He executes

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless executes justice. He will ensure that all wrongs will be righted for His people. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He gives

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless gives provisions. He guarantees necessities to sustain His people. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He sets free

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless sets free the prisoners. His power is made available to break all addictions holding His people. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He opens eyes

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless opens eyes. He illumines the eyes of the heart to recognize spiritual riches. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He lifts up

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless lifts up the bowed down. His compassion restores the depressed. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He loves

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless loves the righteous. His enduring love recaptures the hearts of His people. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He watches over

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless watches over His people. We are never outside His watchful eye. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He upholds

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless upholds the defenseless. We are vulnerable but He is faithful. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

He brings to ruin

Our faithful forever Lord who aids the helpless and hopeless brings to ruin those who try to ruin His people. Ultimately, nobody will get away with hurting His chosen people. Therefore, let us trust in and praise the Lord as long as we live!

These characteristics portray whom? If you have ever read or listened to the gospels and the book of Revelation you might be seeing the silhouette of Someone.

These verbs profile the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, with such a portrait of Jesus what more could we ask to assist us in the enduring obedience of trusting and praising?

The answer to this question is found in verse 10.

A demand to praise the God of praise

V.10

The last verse of Psalm 146 presents the concluding thought of the passage as the psalmist demands the praise of the Lord who reigns for all time. Jesus Christ rules and reigns now over your hardships. He rules and reigns now over your finances. He rules and reigns now over your temptations.

He rules and reigns now over anything that would entice you to worry and stop praising Him. And we know this by noticing how long He reigns. The verse says that He will reign forever. With Jesus Christ on the throne of all our tomorrows, we need not fear or fret over the future. Rather, we simply need to trust the LORD in a careful way and praise the LORD in a carefree way.

This is how we find the psalmist concluding his poem. And this is how we find the preacher concluding this 6-week series.

Conclusion

Having declared the reasonableness of the praise of God and having described the characteristics of the God of praise are you currently praising Him? Over these last six weeks having preached the names of God and having painted the attributes of the God are you currently trusting Him?

This message and this series can function for us as a good Litmus test. To notice the basis for your confidence and to look at the direction your heart is facing, to ask yourself these two questions.

1. What or whom do you trust? This series was to make clear that Jesus Christ is the One in whom we put our trust. But so many times and in so many ways we instead place our life-guiding trust in other things or people. Am I describing you today? Trusting that your guilt will be taken away by relying upon your abilities or achievements? Hoping that God will be pleased with you by trusting in your church attendance or theology? Desiring joy and peace by trusting in diet, exercise and medical care? Oh, beloved, in repentant trust come to Christ and live!
2. What do you think about and enjoy talking about most? What topic prompts you to speak openly and with enthusiasm? This series was to make clear that Jesus Christ is utterly stunning and is worthy of permanent praise. But so many times and in so many ways we instead place our affections upon other things or people. Am I describing you today – one who excitedly boasts about kids and cars and boats and baseball but not Jesus Christ; one who publicly and vocally says “WOW” over sunsets and stars and weddings and weekends but not Lord Jesus Christ? Oh, beloved, in repentant trust come to Christ and live!