

How To Be Right All The Time

Text: Psalm 146:1-10

Series: The Psalms [#28]

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November 7, 2010

Theme: **You Are Always Right When You Praise God.**

Introduction

The book of Psalms closes with a resounding chorus of praise. The final five Psalms open and close with “Praise the LORD!” Psalm 146 opens with two calls to praise God. The first stanza of Psalm 148 has nine calls to praise God. The six verses of Psalm 150 include 13 calls to praise God. The hymn book of the Old Testament closes on a high note of praise.

What does it mean to *praise God*? Our English word *praise* describes expressing approval or admiration for someone or something. It also can include being thankful and having respect. The phrase “singing his/her/its praises” describes a person speaking well of, even promoting a person or thing.

The Bible’s meaning of praise is much the same. The idea of the Old Testament words is to express the value of, to declare approval, love and thankfulness. Praise is an action—it is something we actually do. Thinking about why God is worthy of praise is reflection, not praise. Thinking about praising God is not praising Him. Praise is our *action* of declaring God’s value, our admiration and respect for Him. It is, largely, something we do openly—it is commending God and His goodness before and to others. One writer states,

“The glory and majesty of God and all His works are to fill men’s hearts and find expression in their word and witness. This becomes so overpowering to a man’s mind and heart that he must break out in some utterance.”¹

We see in Psalm 146, and many others places, that praising God is something we are called, commanded to do, not as an empty obligation or form, but from our minds and hearts. So, another writer comments

“Not only is praise commanded of the living, but it itself is a measure of spiritual vitality. Those who are alive in the Lord, and who know they draw their very breath by His grace, delight to praise His name. Praise, then, is not only commanded of those with life and breath, but is a sign of life and breath in Him. It is also a tonic that keeps life and breath fresh in His service.”²

Later he adds, “...praise is *a matter of breath and life*. That is, praise must come from a genuine and vital relationship with God...”³

Praise is important. In fact, whenever, wherever you praise God, you are doing the right thing, you are pleasing Him. At times we struggle with knowing what we should do, with if we are right, if we are doing the right thing. We ask God and others for guidance, and sometimes we still are not sure that we are right. We wish for, try to figure out how to be right, how to be right every time, all the time. One thing we know with certainty from the Bible is that when we praise God we *are* right—each time, every time, all the time. *You are always right when you praise God.* Why is this true? First, ...

Because God Always Deserves Your Praise.

Psalm 146 is a short Psalm that is long on reasons for praising God. God deserves our praise because He is the great Creator. Verse 6 tells us that God “made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them.” This is not new news. The Bible opens, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”⁴ We are reminded of this many times in the Old and New Testaments.⁵ This truth is so basic and familiar that we might yawn and rush on.

People often speak of seeing and worshiping God in nature. Certainly some scenes in the mountains and valleys, the seas and skies, forests and fields can take our breath away and lead us to think about and to praise God. The well known hymn *How Great Thou Art* came from the Swedish poem *O Great God*, written in 1885. One writer tells us the author, Carl Boberg,

“and some friends were returning home ... [from] an afternoon service. Nature was at its peak that radiant afternoon. Presently a thundercloud appeared on the horizon, and soon sharp lightning flashed across the sky. Strong winds swept over the meadows and billowing fields of grain. The thunder pealed in loud claps. Then rain came in cool fresh showers. In a little while the storm was over, and a rainbow appeared. When Boberg arrived home, he opened the window and saw the bay of Mönsterås like a mirror before him ... From the woods on the other side of the bay, he heard the song of a thrush... the church bells were tolling in the quiet evening. It was this series of sights, sounds, and experiences that inspired the writing of the song.”⁶

Question: How often do you see the sights of God’s creation and then respond with praise, with “God, how great you are!”?

This response is important and valuable. No matter how bad and ugly the situations between peoples and nations are, no matter how bad or ugly your own situation may be, God still is the unchanging sovereign Creator. Praising Him as the Creator means we are thinking about Him and His great work, that there is at least some accuracy in our view of things and some vitality in our relationship with Him. As well, it is something we should get

used to because one of the songs of heaven will be “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”⁷ Praise the LORD because He is the great Creator!

God always deserves our praise because, in addition to creation, He does great things. The writer of Psalm 70 looked at his life and world and said, “You have done great things, O God, who is like You?” (19). The writer of Psalm 126 reflected on God bringing Israel back from captivity and exclaimed,

“... We were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting; then they said among the nations, ‘The LORD has done great things for them.’ The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.”

(1b-3)

Let’s walk through the examples of God’s ongoing great work here in Psalm 146. Verse 7, “He executes justice for the oppressed.” There is much injustice, there are many oppressed people in our world. How much worse would it be if God were not, as we read in Psalm 9, “a stronghold for the oppressed” (9), if He did not “vindicate the orphan and the oppressed” as read in Psalm 10:18?

Continuing on in verse 7, one of God’s great works is giving food to the hungry. God put our climate, water and soil in place and we are to be diligent and good stewards. But He is also directly involved. God brought a drought on Israel for three and a half years during King Ahab’s reign, and then brought rains so crops could grow again and the hungry could be fed again.⁸

At the end of verse 7 the writer points out that God sets prisoners free. While this referred primarily to physical captivity, we know from Scripture that there is even a greater freedom God gives—release, freedom from captivity to sin, spiritual freedom.⁹ As we come to verse 8 we see more of God’s great work to those in need. “The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD raises up those who are bowed down.” The writer saw God doing this in his world. The people in the first century saw Jesus doing this. We see God reaching down directly to people in need in our world today.

And then, moving to a different train of thought, the end of the verse tells us, “The LORD loves the righteous.” As we saw last week in Psalm 91, God has a special care for those who trust and follow Him. Verse 9 shows us two more ways in which God intervenes and cares for people in need. “The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow.” The examples close with a sharp contrast to God’s great love and care for the needy and righteous. “*But* He thwarts the way of the wicked.” Yes, God deserves our praise because He has been and is doing great things.

Not only has God been doing these great things, He will continue to do them. He will be faithful forever. Look at the end of verse 6. “Who [God] keeps faith forever.” What a wonderful and reassuring truth! As the hymn writer penned,

“Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with Thee. Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not. As Thou has been Thou forever wilt be.”¹⁰

Psalm 33:11 tells us God’s counsel stands forever. Psalm 119:89-90 tells us God’s word is settled in heaven and His faithfulness throughout all generations. Psalm 111:3 tells us God’s righteousness endures forever. And then there is that wonderful word from the apostle Paul, “If we are faithless, He [God] remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself”¹¹ *God will be faithful forever! He will be faithful to you forever!*

We are always right when we praise God because He always deserves our praise for ruling forever. While this is related to God’s forever faithfulness, it is singled out at the close of the Psalm. Verse 10, “The LORD will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!” This truth is repeated in Scripture and undergirds all of time and eternity. We see God’s people praising Him for it in times of great deliverance and victory, such as Israel escaping Egypt;¹² in times of distress and persecution;¹³ even in times of unbelievable horror and suffering. In the painful experience of the book of Lamentations when Jeremiah thought of God’s faithfulness, he could shout through the tears “The LORD’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail.”¹⁴ As he closed the book, still suffering, his call to God for rescue, renewal and restoration was based on his solid affirmation of this truth, “You, O LORD, rule forever; Your throne is from generation to generation.”¹⁵

Whatever happens to you, from the greatest heights of joy to the lowest pits of despair, God has been, will be, forever will be faithful to you because He is and always will be the sovereign Ruler. *So praise Him today, every day!*

And, finally, we are always right when we praise God because He is the only one worthy of our trust and praise. The writer states this through another sharp contrast—this one between the highest and best people and God. Go back up to verse 3.

“Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God.” (3-5)

There is no salvation, no rescue in others no matter how high or noble they may be because all of us are flawed and frail; because even with the best intention and dedication, all of us will fail others; because even with a long life of faithful help and support, we will die, and then can no longer help or rescue anyone.

The writer of Psalm 60 called out to God, “O give us help against the adversary, for deliverance by man is in vain” (11). Then he said with confidence, “Through God we shall do valiantly, and it is He who will tread down our adversaries” (12).

Because of who God is and what He does as the one and only God, the only perfect One, the only all powerful sovereign, the only always loving and compassionate shepherd, He and He alone is worthy of our trust and praise.

As it has been and is, so it always will be. Think back to that song of heaven we read earlier, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”¹⁶ Then there follows another song sung by the uncountable multitudes around God’s throne in heaven, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”¹⁷ And it continues. The apostle John tells us,

“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’ And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.”¹⁸

You are always right when you praise God because He, and only He, is worthy of your trust and praise.

Because You Can Always Praise God.

I realize that you may be thinking, “That’s great truth, *but* where I am at right now, I can’t praise God.” “I’m hurting too much.” “I’ve failed Him and others, my life is a mess.” “I’m so far down I can’t see up.” “My prayers seem to bounce off the ceiling.” “I can’t do anything right!”

That is where this great and good news gets even greater and better. Whatever you and your life are like today, you *can* praise God, you can *always* praise God. Remember, praising God is not based on you and your circumstances but on God, what He is like and what He does.

Want an example? The unknown writer of this Psalm is a good example. Look at verse 2. “I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.” His poetry underscores and expands his commitment to always praise God, not just later in heaven after life’s toils and tribulations are past, but always here and now in the present—in the present tense of every day, every circumstance and every breath. We don’t know what his life was like, but it probably was not much different than ours.

Even so, let’s view another example in the Psalms, King David. He frequently praised God in times of victory and blessing, but not just in those times. Psalm 7 opens with David pleading with God,

“O LORD my God, in You I have taken refuge; save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me, or he will tear my soul like a lion, dragging me away, while there is none to deliver.”
(1-2)

But, still being pursued and in danger, he closed the Psalm with, “I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High” (17).

Again in Psalm 22, his first words are

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest.”
(1-2)

Later in the Psalm, still waiting for God to answer, still feeling rejected by God, he writes, “I will tell of Your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You” (22). The writer of Psalm 146 and King David had learned a valuable truth—praising God is not based on how they felt, what they had done or not done, nor on what their circumstances were, but on who God is and what He does.

So what about you and me? Have we learned this truth? *We are always right when we praise God because He always deserves our praise and because we can always praise Him.* What kind of *examples* are we of God’s people who have been saved from sin and death to holiness and life everlasting? Who have been rescued from futility to experience true fulfillment? Who have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ? Who are loved and cared for by our unchanging, always faithful and loving great Shepherd, Jesus Christ?

As you talk with God in the next quiet moments, Thank Him that He is worthy of your praise—that He always has been, always is, and always will be worthy of your praise. Thank Him that praising Him is an offering you can bring Him to honor, thank and worship Him. Thank Him that praising Him is a testimony to others of who He is and what He does. Thank Him that nothing, that no one can steal your praise, or stop you from praising Him. Thank Him that you *can* always praise Him. Covenant with Him to be right all the time by praising Him all the time.

¹ Addison Leitch, "Praise," *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, IV: 834. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1982.

² Ronald Barclay Allen. *PRAISE! A Matter of Life and Breath*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980, p. 11.

³ Allen, p. 58.

⁴ Genesis 1:1.

⁵ e.g., Psalm 115:15; 124:8; Acts 14:15.

⁶ J. Irving Erickson. *Sing It Again: A Handbook on the Covenant Hymnal*. Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1985, pages 9-10.

⁷ Revelation 4:11.

⁸ 1 Kings 17 - 18; James 5:17-18.

⁹ Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18.

¹⁰ Thomas Chisholm. *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*. © 1923, 1951 Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, Illinois.

¹¹ 2 Timothy 2:13.

¹² Exodus 15:18.

¹³ Psalm 10:1-2, 16.

¹⁴ Lamentations 3:22.

¹⁵ Lamentations 5:19.

¹⁶ Revelation 4:11.

¹⁷ Revelation 5:12.

¹⁸ Revelation 5:13-14.

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