

Psalms: God's Worship & Prayer Guide

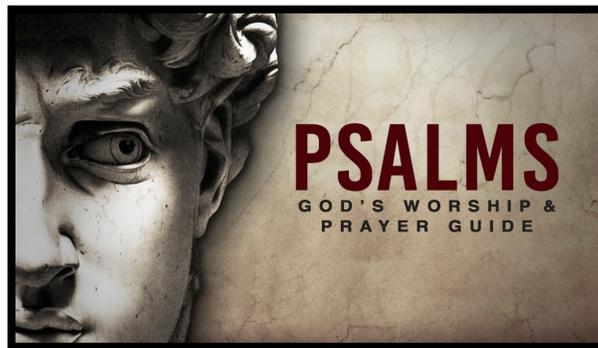
The Path of Praise

Psalm 145

Written By

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January 16, 2022



If you were writing a book for God, what would be the focus of your final chapter? For David, that answer came easy. He would, and did, focus on the many reasons a saint has for praising God. Psalms 145 is that last chapter of the book for the godly king, and rightfully did he construct it around an acrostic where every verse begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. True, verse fourteen should start with a *nun* (נ), and it does in some ancient Qumran, Greek, and Syriac versions, but since it is not in our text we will not worry about it for perhaps David built it like this on purpose. Could he have purposefully omitted this letter to start with the next letter, *samekh* (ס), in order to stress the fact that God is there to help us when we trip and fall in life, as is stated in verse 14? It's possible. Yet let not this background observation distract you from the importance of praise in your Christian walk, as David meticulously notes as he ties his praise to almost every letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ ם
Mem Mem Lamed Khaf Khaf Yod Tait Chest Zayin Vav He Dalet Gimel Beit Aleph

נ ן ס ע פ פ ה צ ץ ק ר ש ת
Tav Shin Reish Qof Tzadi Tzadi Peh Peh Ayin Samekh Nun Nun

Since we have twenty-one verses to cover in this study, let's waste no time getting into the text. The question which naturally arises from these verses of precise praise is not hard to identify:

What Are The Reasons For Praising God?

While there are a variety of ways to break these verses down structurally, from the highly complex to the simple, I propose we opt for the latter. By and large, I think David is giving us two main reasons why he lives a life of praise to God. Verses one through nine introduce us to his first answer: *We praise God for His amazing, glorious kingdom.* In a world where earthly kingdoms are far from perfect and are riddled with corruption, deception, injustice, and abuse of power this particular aspect of praise is most refreshing. Verses ten through twenty give us our second answer: *We praise God for how He, the living, personal God cares for us on our earthly pilgrimage.* Again, the answer puts winds in our sails as we sail on a sea of life fraught with issues, problems, challenges, and controversies.

With this in mind, let's sink our interpretive spades into these two reasons for divine praise. Granted, they are David's personal reasons; however, as we consider them I think you will clearly see they should be your reasons.

Answer: Praise God for His Kingdom

The opening line notifies us of David's authorship of this particular worship song.

¹ *A Psalm of Praise, of David.*

With the next line, David underscores his praise focus in the next nine verses revolves around God who is the King of Kings.

I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name forever and ever.

Eschatologically, God's kingdom, as Jesus taught us, and as we learn from many Old and New Testament texts, is coming (Isaiah 2: 1-4; 9:6; Psalm 2, 89; Rev. 19-20). However, long before this earthly Davidic empire arises and establishes true peace, justice, holiness and the like (you know, all the things missing in earthly kingdoms presently), God's wondrous, magnificent kingdom is always functioning in the heavenly dimension. Many texts support this observation:

³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; and let them say among the nations, The LORD reigns (1 Chron. 16).

¹ The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned *above* the cherubim, let the earth shake! (Psalm 99)

Earthly empires come and go, yet God is always on the heavenly throne of His kingdom for it is eternal as He is eternal (Psalm 11:4; 93:2). Ostensibly, this means we need not fear the fracturing, mismanagement, volatility, and wickedness of these temporal kingdoms for they are over-ridden, subservient and answerable to the true King of Kings (Dan. 2:21, 36-39).

With these theological truth before us, we are equipped to move down systematically through David's acrostic, especially highlighting here in the first nine verses how our praise should be wedded to the concept of the Lord as the true King of Kings. To do this in short-order, since our time is limited, I propose we pose and answer questions which arise from the various emphases in these particular verses.

How often should you praise Him for His kingdom? David's answer couldn't be clearer:

² Every day I will bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name forever and ever. ³ Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.

No, David is not saying, "All I do with every minute of a given day is praise God." Had this been the case, his kingdom would have crumbled around him into abject chaos. His emphasis is, conversely, on the fact of having a *mindset of praise* throughout every day of your entire life. And why are you praising Him? Because He is great, as Isaiah discovered when God ushered him into His glorious, ominous, brilliant presence (Isa. 6). Daniel, too, understood this truth when God permitted him to see Him on His fiery throne which had fire issuing from it as He prepared for worldwide judgment of the wicked (Dan. 7:9-10). We praise Him because, as David says, His greatness is unsearchable." He is knowable, but only to a point. Regarding the knowability of God, Wayne Grudem insightfully concludes:

"1. We can never fully understand God. Because God is infinite and we are finite or limited, we can never fully understand God. In this sense God is said to be incomprehensible, where the term 'incomprehensible' is used with an older sense, 'unable to be fully understood.' This sense must be clearly distinguished from the more common meaning, 'unable to be understood.' It is not true to say that God is unable to be understood, but it is true to say that he cannot be understood fully or exhaustively. . . . We will never be able to measure or fully know the understanding of God: it is far too great for us to equal or understand. Similarly, when thinking of God's knowledge of all his ways, David says, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it' (Ps. 139:6; cf. v. 17) . . . This doctrine of God's incomprehensibility has much positive application for our own lives. It means that we will never be able to know 'too much' about God, for we will never run out of things to learn about him, and we will thus never tire in delighting in the discovery of more and more of his excellence and of the greatness of his works.¹

What an excellent paragraph. God's communicable attributes He has given, in part, to us we do "get" to a certain degree, attributes like spirituality, knowledge, wisdom, truth, goodness, love, holiness, justice, jealousy, wrath and so forth. Yet with even these there is a depth of knowledge in life we never completely fathom, but this does not mean we can't grow in our knowledge of these areas. God's incommunicable attributes, which are intrinsically his, we struggle to comprehend, attributes like divine independence (He does not really need us or any other part of the creation for anything, Acts 17:24-25), unchangeableness (Psalm 102:25-27), eternity (Rev. 1:8;

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1999), 69.

Jude 25), omnipresence (Deut. 10:14), and so forth. This, on the contrary, does not mean we cannot and shouldn't use the inquisitive minds He gave us to seek to grasp these mind-bending facets of His vast character. And as our understanding of Him grows, we understand why we should, more often than not, praise this King, for He is no ordinary King. He is, as David says, my God, the King.

So, what about it? As you ponder deep thoughts about God, as you encounter Him in the Word, as stories from the Testaments introduce you to His character, as you have a breath-taking moment as you look out the window of your ascending plane and take in the massive white cumulus clouds, as you watch 4K flying over of Bermuda or Italy while listening to calming music on your computer, do you pause to praise the King, your King. Such is the step and sign of spiritual maturity.

This first answer logically leads us to a second question:

Who should praise Him for His kingdom? Read on to find the answer to your query:

⁴ One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. ⁵ On the glorious splendor of Thy majesty, and on Thy wonderful works, I will meditate. ⁶ And men shall speak of the power of Thine awesome acts; and I will tell of Thy greatness. ⁷ They shall eagerly utter the memory of Thine abundant goodness, and shall shout joyfully of Thy righteousness.

Parents should tell their children and grandchildren the awesome, miraculous things they have seen God do in their lives, so those children and grandchildren can gain hope, strength, and faith from those stories, and so they can be positioned to share their own stories with those who come after them. Yes, David says he meditates, or thinks deeply about the off-the-charts things God has done in his life, and he, then, turns and makes sure people in his life know about these events so God gets the glory and so they get educated regarding the importance of passing on the glory of a God who does work miraculously in our lives. This is the stuff we should know and articulate to all we come in contact with, especially our family members and friends.

Just like Israel built a stone memorial next to the Jordan to remember how God parted the waters at flood state to permit the 2 million Israelites to cross over into the land of promise, we need to metaphorically build verbal memorials to stories of God's goodness we can, and will, pass on to others for God's glory and their maturation. This is exactly what General Joshua did based on the Lord's instruction:

Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. ⁶ Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' ⁷ then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever. ⁸ And thus the sons of Israel did, as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the LORD spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the lodging place, and put them down there (Josh. 4).

All of this should make you ask yourself: What awesome kingdom work has God performed in my life and what am I doing to make sure future generations know about it?

In 1993, my parents gave me and Liz \$9,000 of my inheritance to help us purchase our first California home. We fixed it up and sold it several years later, making around \$127,000 in profit. Not wanting to purchase a new home right away, we invested the money in some CDs (remember when they actually paid you a good return?), and we moved into a nice rental in a new gated area to see how we liked it. We didn't because it was hard for church people to access us, so a year later when the CDs came due, we went shopping.

We isolated the new area on the north side of Stockton where we wanted to live, and we wrote down what we wanted in our "final" dream home. With all of this detail thought out, we went shopping.

Driving around the Spanos Center area of homes in the January fog was depressing enough, but equally depressing is we didn't see any homes we liked or could afford. Before we departed the area, we pulled into a cul-de-sac and parked to assess our hunting expedition. There at the top of the cul-de-sac was a beautiful home, something akin to what we desired. I prayed, "Lord, I know you are busy with a lot of things since you run the universe, but I as your son really do need a home, and that one right over there looks like what we are looking for. Could you get us into a home like that? Amen."

Later that night I called a woman in our church named Carol to see how her knee surgery went that day. Her friend and fellow parishioner, Ruth, picked up the phone since she was caring for her. "Hi, Pastor, how are you?"

"I'm fine, Ruth. How is Carol," I replied.

"Oh, she's doing quite well. Say, how did your day go today?" she asked.

I commenced to tell her, a former real estate agent, how we had spent the day looking at homes in the Spanos Center. She then replied, "Well, why don't you come by and look at my home in that area. My husband is gone, and I don't need this large of a home anymore, so I probably should sell and downsize. So, why don't you and Liz come by tomorrow and check out my place."

I'll NEVER forget the day we drove to her home. Pulling in the same cul-de-sac I had prayed in, we were dumbfounded when the house numbers she gave us matched the home I had prayed about! Walking in to this wealthy lady's five bedroom, three car garage home, we just couldn't believe how beautiful it was, and how it matched exactly what we wanted in a home.

Standing out on the large back cement patio, we marveled at the massive and gorgeous yard. Ruth had landscaped it, or paid to have much of it done, and she loved gardening probably more than I. At one point the phone rang and she excused herself. I turned to Liz and said, "Honey, this is an amazing place, but there is no way we can afford this." She agreed, and Ruth came back out in a few minutes and said, "So, what do you think? Would you like to buy it?"

"Ruth," it is kind of you to offer us to purchase your home with no realtor fees, but your home is, well, just way beyond my income range.

Looking at us she replied, "Well, I know this home has appreciated about 5% a month since I bought it new a few years ago; however, I tell you what. I'll make you a deal. I'll sell it to you what I bought it for originally with no appreciation. Will that work?"

It worked all right. We bought that home the King of Kings arranged for us, and it was that dream home we thought we'd always own which made it possible for us to afford to purchase a home here in Burke when God sovereignly moved us about seven years later. Is God not the

King? Is He not great? Are His ways unsearchable? Does He not perform miracles in your life like this to position you to do His work? Indeed. And what should you do with this kingdom information? Tell it to others to give God the glory and praise and to remind them to share their own stories of the King's amazing and timely provision.

I shared that story not long after it happened while on a break as a pastors Promise Keepers conference in Phoenix. After I explained it to some pastoral friends sitting with me, a pastor I didn't know sitting in front of me turned around and said, "Hey, man, I know you don't know me, and I'm sorry for listening in, but that story has just blessed me. My wife and I are looking for a home, and I am now encouraged to see what God is going to do for us." Ah, there it is. We, who are children of the King of Kings, praise Him for His wondrous, sometimes miraculous provision, and that praise, in turn, is communicated to others so they are blessed and challenged to go out and do likewise when, no if, God moves in their lives in a profound, jaw-dropping fashion.

The question is, What is your kingdom story? What do you need to tell your children about? It is so important to speak up and educate them, for when they go away to school and are bombarded by friends and professors who don't know the King and probably don't even think He or His kingdom exists, they will at that moment of faith conflict be able to say, "Oh, I know there is a King of Kings in heaven above. Let me tell you a story about Him."

All of this talk, of course, naturally leads to a final question for this small section:

Why should we praise the Lord of the kingdom? The last question tells us what to do when the King moves magnificently in our lives, while this question drills down into how our praise should be intrinsically wedded to the King's character. Really, what is He like?

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.

In the Hebrew text, "gracious and merciful" appear at the head of the clause, leaving "the LORD" to finish out the clause. The copula, "to be" or "is" is left out by David on purpose. This is called ellipsis and it is meant to highlight the importance of the word or words in a given clause. Here David showcased these two amazing facets of God's holy character. How can you not read through the historical stores of the OT and not see His rich grace and mercy?

- When Adam and Eve willfully sinned and rejected God, did He not show grace and mercy to them? Indeed.
- When Cain murdered his brother Abel over how to approach God, did He not show grace and mercy to them? Indeed.
- When Joseph's brother's sold him into slavery, did He not show grace and mercy to them? Indeed.
- When Israel constantly rebelled against God during the period of the Judges from 1390-1051 B.C., did He not show grace and mercy to them? Indeed. Seven cycles of sin were countered with multiple deliverers/saviors (Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephtah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, and, of course, Samuel).
- When David sinned with Bathsheba, did He not show grace and mercy to them? Indeed.

- When Peter denied knowing his Lord three times in a row on the eve of Christ's arrest and trumped up trial, did He not show grace and mercy to them? Indeed. Yes, post-resurrection He appeared to him and challenged him to "feed My sheep," because you love me (John 21:15-17).

I could go on, but you get the point, don't you? God is gracious and merciful.

He's also slow to anger and wrath. This second clause also lacks a main verb, serving to stress the importance of the statement. God's anger and wrath are intrinsically wedded to His utter holiness and hatred of sin (Lev. 11:44). However, we should be most grateful that His anger and wrath are equally balanced by His grace and mercy. If they weren't, we wouldn't be here, correct? He does move against sin, but in due time. For instance, He warned wayward Israel, after the breakup of the nation in 930 B.C., that judgment was coming. No one believed Him, but He gave them from 930 – 722 B.C., or 208 years to think about their sin and turn to Him in repentant faith. They didn't, and He moved to judge them by means of sending the Assyrians their way.

You would think a thinking person in the southern empire of Judah, would have taken note of all of this and repented. They didn't. From 722 B.C. until the fall of the nation in 586 B.C., God, again, warned them of impending divine doom through numerous courageous prophets if they did not repent. Men like Isaiah and Jeremiah attempted to arrest the spiritual attention of the nation, but, in the end, they would have none of it (Jer. 5:3, "They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent"). Many lived to see nation judged and survivors carted off as slaves to Babylon, never to see the land of promise again. Imagine. God gave them 136 years to appeal to His grace and mercy, but they chose to embrace their sin and shun Him.

So, please, don't tell me that the God of the Old Testament isn't loving, kind, and tolerant. Those traits readily identify Him and the stories support the conclusion. There is always room before His throne for repentance and forgiveness (Matthew 3:2, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away," Acts 17:30, "God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent), but if not, then there is always a day of divine reckoning (Rom. 2:5; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 6:15-17). When it comes, let no man say God was not gracious and merciful nor that His anger was unfounded. No, this King's kingdom is praiseworthy because it evidences a perfect balance between grace, mercy and slow, but sure divine judgment. How wise and fair is this King.

In addition, verse nine, which forms the last sentence describing why we should praise God for His glorious kingdom, states this comforting thought:

⁹ The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works.

Our politicians show extreme favoritism, and any more they think of new, mean-spirited ways to discipline anyone who'd dare not support any facet of their carnal causes. Pay them enough money and they will look the other way, give you a seat at their table, allow you to push your agenda, and so forth. Support them and they will make sure governmental monies flow to you and yours. Oppose them and you will be odd man out.

God is not like this, thankfully. We praise Him because His character is so far beyond that of a temporal, earthly potentate. He is "good to all," isn't He? He doesn't just cause His rain to fall on the just and not the unjust. He doesn't permit His sun to shine on the crops of those farmers

who love Him, while withholding light from farmers who never even think of Him. He doesn't selectively strike generators at hydroelectric plants so the power goes out to States which typically oppose and hate Him. He doesn't cause extreme hailstorms to pound into oblivion those homes set against Him or are in love with evil. No, for now His kingdom shows grace and mercy to all. All of the goodness they experience from His good hand should move them to worship Him and embrace His Son's life-giving gospel (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 10:9; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Yet most don't give Him, the King of Kings, who rules over His eternal kingdom, a moment's notice. Why? They are not convinced He is even there. They are too wrapped up in their little, busy, important lives. They love darkness and not light. They think this life is all there is.

Despite their spiritual belligerence, He still evidences goodness even to them. What mercy. What a God. What a King. No wonder we are encouraged to praise Him. If left to us, and if we had His unlimited power, we'd probably have . . . with righteous indignation . . . moved on North Korea, or the Taliban, or Boko Haram, or Mexican drug cartels, or career criminals, or the like long ago. He, as the King of Kings, is just made of different stuff. Peter describes Him well when he writes,

⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3).

I praise Him for being this kind of King. He's just waiting for you to come to your spiritual senses and come to embrace Him in faith as your Savior (John 3:16). When you do, then, you, my friend, will want to get in on action of praising Him. His kingdom could have consumed you, but it didn't. He's giving you grace to come to Him. What are you waiting for?

For those of us who know this King, we re-commit ourselves this day to give Him the praise for His kingdom which rules and reigns over us. So, here's a helpful assignment to get your praise pump going: Lord, I praise you as my King and for your kingdom today because . . .

- It gives me hope.
- It stills my fears.
- It encourages my soul.
- It, well, it's your turn to fill in the proverbial blank.