

Psalms: God's Worship & Prayer Guide

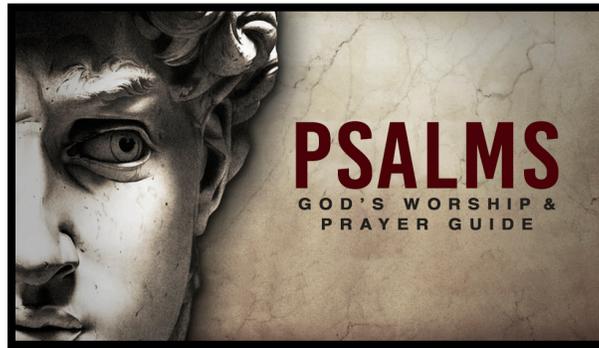
The Path of Praise: Part 2

Psalm 145:10-21

Written By

©Dr. Marty Baker

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From the beginning of our study of the Psalter to the end, we can't miss the this wonderful book calls us to do. It's one, little, monosyllabic word: praise. The first time it occurs is in Psalm 7:

¹⁷ I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High (Ps. 7).

Here David describes the opposition he encounters as a godly man in wicked times, and then he turns and speaks about how God, who is holy, will eventually break into time and space history and deal with pernicious people like this. Note how he underscores God's righteousness. Why does he do this? The simple answer is because this character is what moves Him to move from grace and patience with the lost, to discipline and judgment. The last clause calls believers like us, who also face our share of mean-spirited, sin-loving (¹⁹*And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil,* John. 3) people, to praise God most lofty name.

This, of course, serves to emphasize He is the King who rules and reigns from the most prominent position inside and outside the cosmos. From this vantage point He is more than equipped to see all so He is right and just when He moves to deal with evil. No wonder we are called to praise Him. A King of this nature, who could be preoccupied with a host of other things, takes the time to make sure He is fully aware of what we face. Armed with this knowledge, He is then best suited to come to our aid with the full power of His character and His empire.

Of the one-hundred-and-twenty-one calls for God's people to praise Him in this book of worship, the last one, which serves to close the book, reminds us that praise is what we are created for:

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD! (Ps. 150)

You were not created to work, enjoy sports, pour your life into travel, stay in tip-top shape and so forth, as worthy as these life pursuits are. Conversely, you and I were created by the living God to live lives full of praise of Him who has given us life. How do you go about doing that? That is what literary pieces like Psalm 145 show us. From the first to the last verse, this great old, and last, worship number of David, answers the question of all questions:

What Are The Reasons For Praising God?

By isolating the answers to these reasons, we are well-equipped to know exactly how to praise God. Thankfully, David puts the proverbial cookies on the lower shelf here by giving us two main answers to the query, and each, of course, is intrinsically related to God's kingdom wherein He rules and reigns graciously, thoughtfully, and compassionately overall which is seen and unseen. The first nine verses unpack this concept by waxing eloquent regarding how praise should be constantly wedded to the reality that God is on throne and He does, in fact, work in our lives in profound, sometimes jaw-dropping ways. Put simply, we learn we should always look for reasons to *praise God for His kingdom*, and how His kingdom practically impacts our lives.

Starting with verse ten, David introduces us to the second answer to the question which arises from the text.

Answer: Praise God For His Care

When you think about God caring for His creation it is just, well, mind-numbing. From the farthest reaches of inter-stellar space, which are distances no man can traverse, to the deepest depths of the vast oceans, He, as the King of the cosmos is *intimately* involved on an ongoing basis in making sure its voluminous, vast needs are addressed. What an amazing reality. He could be easily distracted with more important matters than making sure whales in the Pacific secure food for their lives, or that little sparrows in your neighborhood find debris to build nests, but He is not. He is the king how cares . . . even for His sin-stained, dysfunctional creation.

As believers in the God who is there on His lofty throne, it is one thing for us to praise Him for being the King who is mighty and worthy of our praise. It is another thing for us to turn and focus specifically on giving Him praise for how He goes about taking care of the everything from mankind to mussels in the ocean.

Within David's second answer as to why we should praise God, he opens the meaning of this answer up by answering two logical questions. One, who praises God for His care, and, two, what about His care is praiseworthy? The first question is easy to answer, while the second one will rightly consume more of our time.

Who praises God for His care? Here is how David couches his answer:

¹⁰ All Thy works shall give thanks to Thee, O LORD, and Thy godly ones shall bless Thee.

Works, *ma'asch* (מַעֲשֵׂה) here, speaks of everything God has made from the wonder of our creation in the womb by His creative hand (Psalm 138:14, "I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Thy works מַעֲשֵׂה, and my soul knows it very well") to the water He sovereignly supplies to mountain ranges around the world, Psalm 104:13, "He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; he earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works, מַעֲשֵׂה").

Of course, calling for the created order to praise God is a figure of speech called personification wherein the inanimate is given animate properties for effect. But is this not what Jesus said when the Pharisees castigated His followers for praising Him as He rode the donkey into Jerusalem on His triumphal entry? He rebuked them with these memorable words:

⁴⁰ And He answered and said, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!" (Lk. 19)

Praise for the Creator who came to be our sin-sacrifice was so warranted, so necessary if mankind wouldn't praise Him, then the hard, lifeless, mouthless stones would start speaking up. Hence, from Christ's perspective, the praise was warranted.

Frequently in Scripture we encounter the personification of praise from nature. Here is example from Isaiah's pen:

¹² For you will go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, and all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands (Isa. 55).

Contextually, Isaiah's speaks here of the impact of the Messiah's millennial kingdom on the planet when He arrives. With the curse lifted, no longer will the creation groan, as Paul mentions in Romans 8, verse 22. Freed from the decay and death related to sin, the very trees . . . if they could on this day . . . would use their mighty, beautiful branches to give the Messiah claps of joyous praise. Interesting picture, isn't it?

Could it be that every time you hear the wind moving through the leaves of the trees around your home they are, in a sense, praising God?

Could it be that as you stand and listen to the water in the Potomac crashing over rocks you are hearing, in a sense, its method of praising God?

Could it be as you hear all kinds of little birds singing outside your window when spring arrives, they are, in a sense, praising the God who provides even for them on a daily basis (Matt. 6:26)? Perhaps all of this is just a precursor to the praise they will render when the King comes in glory to establish His long-awaited kingdom on earth (Isa. 2).

If the created order is called to praise their Creator, it logically follows that those who have a faith relationship with Him should do no less. These folks are called God's "godly ones," which is not the best translation of the word *chasid* (חַסִּיד), in my view. Lexically, we know this word, which is related to *hesed*, speaks of loyal love. This particular root speaks of how this loyal love of God moves the person in question to loyal living, or obedience toward God. In this sense, then the word denotes a godly person. The NIV is closer the original meaning here when it translates it "faithful people." Who are they? They are people who are loyal to God, who walk closely with Him, and who careful to weave His ways and His word into their lives on a daily basis. In a word,

then, they are what we might call maturing believers in the Lord. Is this you? If so, then you have one response to the King who rules and reigns over your life: praise Him as a lifestyle. Do you? How often? What exactly do you praise Him for?

This last question really dovetails when what David reveals in verses 13 through 20. Here he dives into the following practical question we all want answers to as we seek to live worthy lives before the King of Kings:

What about His care is praiseworthy? Six areas, which are presented in six answers, are noteworthy:

Answer #1: His care is wedded to divine power (Psalm 145:11-12). Speaking of the King's maturing followers, David, says:

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; ¹² To make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts, and the glory of the majesty of Thy kingdom.

All earthly kings, presidents, and politicians are but men/women with limited powers. Not so with God, the ultimate King. Concerning His omnipotence, Wayne Grudem cogently states in his book *Bible Doctrine*:

God's omnipotence means that God is able to do all his holy will. The word omnipotence is derived from two Latin words, *omni*, 'all,' and *potens*, 'powerful,' and means 'all-powerful. There are no limits on God's power to do what he decides to do . . . There are, however, some things that God cannot do. God cannot will or do anything that would deny his own character . . . For example, God cannot lie (Titus 2:13). Although God's power is infinite, his use of that power is qualified by his other attributes (just as all God's attributes qualify all his actions).

The answer to the rhetorical question God posed to Sarah when He informed her that she would, in fact, have a promised child in her old age is always true, "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" (Gen. 18:14). The answer is categorically, no. God's power has no limits; therefore, giving a baby to a senior citizen, whose reproductive system was non-functional, was no problem if He so desired. That's some kind of power and it is a power used to care for people like Sarah.

God doesn't just sit on His throne with all that power and statically watch what's transpiring in your life. On the contrary, He who said you are worth more than the sparrows as His child, uses His power to care for you.

- His power allowed you to have the right life experiences and meet the right people to make sure you made rank many times after you left West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy, or the Coast Guard Academy.
- His power set up the complex events in your life so that you would just happen to meet your future mate.
- His power orchestrated events in your life so you could adopt your son or daughter.
- His power directed you to the right surgeon at the right time to lead you to health and wholeness.

- His power, well, you can probably finish the sentence many times over.

He has used His power countless times in your life, and you can readily and easily mark those times, correct? What should you do then? Follow David's advice: speak up and out about that power for in so doing you not only praise Him, but you serve as a great witness to those who do not know Him. Blaise Pascal, the famous Catholic mathematician, was an ardent Christ follower. In his lifetime, he charted a course between "two extremes: to exclude reason, [and] to admit reason" (*Pensees*, 253). Concerning this position, Pascal goes on to say, "To make faith contrary to the sense would be to exclude reason: to limit it to the senses would be in effect to admit reason only" (265). Likewise, to limit ourselves to reason would mean the elimination of mystery, while to ignore reason would result in absurdity: "If we submit everything to reason, our religion will have no mysterious and supernatural element. If we offend the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous" (273). Seen in this fashion, sharing how the mysterious power of God has providentially worked in your life can, and will, stand as a great apologetic to those who don't yet praise Him. So share away. Again, I ask you: Do you and will you?

Answer 2: His care is there because He is there (Psalm 145:13). At this juncture, David merely states the obvious:

¹³ Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion *endures* throughout all generations.

If our King's care was related to whether He was in office or out of office, whether He was on vacation or on the job, or just too busy to entertain questions from mere mortals like us, or whether He was mentally capable of handling the needs of the cosmos, we'd be in tremendous trouble. Such, however, is not the case for His kingdom is eternal, and His dominion over His created order applies to every generation that has walked, is walking, or will walk on the planet until He returns in glory (Mat. 24; Rev. 19). And because He is always on His glorious, magnificent throne, He always stands ready to evidence care toward His creation, especially those who call upon His name.

- When Joseph rested on the bottom of a dark, dank, and dusty pit after his jealous brothers threw him in there, the King of care was there (Gen. 37:24ff).
- When Israel repeatedly spiritually walked away the King, and He summarily disciplined them, He did, in fact, send them many deliverers in the period of the Judges to save them from their spiritual dysfunction. Yes, the King of care was there (Judges)
- When the disciples fought among themselves as you whom among them would be the greatest, the King of care was there to set them straight (Luke 22:24).
- When Paul and Silas were thrown into a Roman prison for their faith, the doors of the prison opened because the King of care was there (Acts 16).
- When John, a converted Jew and former disciple of Jesus, languished on Patmos for his faith in the Messiah, the King of care was there to speak to him in the most profound fashion.

All throughout biblical history and current history, the King of care has been and is available to bring the power of His kingdom to bear on all aspects of our world, from the rotation of our planet to how to help you in your loneliness after your husband or wife passed away. What a King He is. Because He is eternally present, He is ready, willing, and available to assist us, His children, with our plethora of temporal needs. This is plenty of reason to praise Him; wouldn't you agree?

Answer #3: His care is not restricted (Psalm 145:14-16). Put differently, God does not show favoritism with His general care of the cosmos.

¹⁴ The LORD sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down. ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to Thee, and Thou dost give them their food in due time. ¹⁶ Thou dost open Thy hand, and dost satisfy the desire of every living thing.

The word "all" here is probably hyperbolic because we can readily think of times when someone fell and they did not get up, or who were bowed down because of sickness, hardship and the like and they didn't make it. Sometimes that fall or bowing down was caused by God's discipline and judgment (Num. 32:15; Deut. 7:4), as when Korah rebelled against Moses (Num. 16), or when Israel suffered great loss when the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem, or when God sent a drought during Elijah's confrontation with wicked King Ahab (1 Kings 17). Hyperbole is probably also wedded to the statement that all eyes look to the King, when, in fact, we know the lost look away from Him because of their innate sin nature and love of darkness (Rom. 3; John 3:19). It is probably hyperbolic to also assert that the desire of every living thing is met by God, because we know, in fact, that starvation is a real problem in the animal and human world. Yes, He does care for the various needs of, say animals (Job 38:39-41), but there are, at times, exceptions for providential goals which are most likely above our so-called mental pay grade.

What, therefore, is the main meaning of these statements? David is hyperbolically asserting the King of Kings does, for the most part, condescend to our level and care for all of us, whether we follow or reject Him. He does not, like earthly kings, show favoritism (Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Tim. 5:21). He doesn't, therefore, just provide rain on red states, while leaving blue states in a state of drought. He doesn't instantly cater to progressive liberals, while shunning conservatives. He doesn't look at the Meyers-Briggs Personality Inventory and decide He only really likes six of the sixteen types, which means He would then choose to ignore the others because they bothered Him. No, God is a God of care, first and foremost . . . even toward those like the scientist Richard Dawkins who thinks He is just a superstition which needs to be expunged from society. Once more, this is reason to praise Him.

Answer #4: His care is fair and kind (Psalm 145:17). When He reaches down from His holy throne and helps us, no man can say He is unfair and unkind, ever. As David remarks:

¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and kind in all His deeds.

Paul's divinely ordered thorn in the flesh served to keep his pride in check so God could use him to impact millions of lives (2 Cor. 12). Who, then, would say the eye disease Paul had from God was not righteous? It was because it accomplished purposes in Paul's life which molded him into the man God needed to take the gospel to the Gentiles. At other times, however, God showed great kindness as when He healed the lame man by the Pool of Bethesda (John 5). According to John, there were countless other sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed people there that day waiting for

a healing in the pool when the angel descended; however, on this day, the King of care chose to show healing kindness to just one needy, destitute man by giving him new, strong legs (John 5:8). Does this mean He didn't care about the needs of the others? Far from it. But based on His intricate kingdom plans that day it was this man who was ready for the healing. Who knows what was going on in the lives of the others, and who knows what happened in their lives as they studied this outright miracle in the days, weeks, and months to follow?

Once again, the King of care showed care and kindness according to His purpose and plan. The fact He stopped by the pool at all is jaw-dropping given how busy His daily schedule must have been; however, from watching Him we know He possessed a heart of compassion for His creation. His healings show us this much, and because of all of this, He should be praised as you see his righteous working and kindness in your life. Can you identify it? If so, then praise Him for it.

Answer #5: His care is focused and favorable (Psalm 145:18-19).

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.

While He does provide for the needs of anybody and everybody, He does, like a father, have a special place in His heart for those who love and follow Him. He will fulfill the desire of your heart because He loves you, but you must be prepared for that fulfillment to be what He deems to be the best for you.

Paul and Silas praised God when the authorities threw them in a Roman prison for preaching the gospel and touching lives (Acts 16). God responded by sending a localized earthquake to open the doors of all the cells in that ominous, scary prison. At other times, as when John the Baptist was imprisoned for speaking truth to power, he never left that prison alive (Matt. 14). Yes, His care moves Him to care for us, and to sometimes deliver us. Did He not deliver Daniel from the lion's den (Dan. 6), or heal Hezekiah and give him a few more years (2 Kings 20:1-4)? The desires of these two godly men were realized then the King moved. Yet, when Stephen was dying from being stoned for his faith in the Messiah, the King did not deliver Him but allowed him to see Him standing in front of His throne in order to usher him, the first martyr of the Church, into glory (Acts 7:55). In this sense, was Stephen not saved from the situation? Indeed, but not in the way we might intend, but in God's perfect way.

Regardless, therefore, of what is going on in your life, if you are a child of the King, cry out to Him, tell Him what is on your heart, ask Him to save, and then stand back and watch Him move in ways you will praise Him for later.

Answer #6: His care is just (Psalm 145:20). David could not be clearer:

²⁰ The LORD keeps all who love Him; but all the wicked, He will destroy.

Does this mean you, as His child/subject, will never experience hardship? No. Does this mean He will keep you from danger, difficulty, and disease? No. What it does mean is you are going to know beyond the shadow of a doubt in your sordid, complex situation He is with you.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. ³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; (Isa. 43).

Right now in Shanxi, China, communist authorities “are ordering people who receive government assistance to replace religious symbols in their homes, including pictures of Jesus, with pictures of Chairman Mao and President Xi Jinping. Refusal to comply results in the assistance being taken away.”¹ At a time when government social welfare payments can mean the difference between getting by and not making it, these annulments are tragic. The article goes on to say that a member of the Three-Self Church, who is a woman in her 80s who lives in the province of Jiangxi, reported that she lost her government aid after she said ‘Thank God’ upon receiving a subsidy payment. ‘They expected me to praise the kindness of the Communist Party instead,’ she reported. In April, another elderly woman from the Henan province reported that her minimum living allowance was canceled when officials discovered a cross on her house’s door. The woman, who is a diabetic and needs frequent injections, lost all government aid due to her religious beliefs.

Don’t think for a moment that the King of care is not aware of this persecution, He is. He is also working in and through countless, unnamed Christians in house churches to provide for those who are suffering. And He is with these brave saints as they pass through these deep, dangerous waters. They continue to stand strong and true because they know they are not alone.

They also, like David, know that the same God who brings rain upon all the Chinese, whether they are party officials or 80-year-old emotionally battered Christian grandmothers, will in due time hold the godless accountable for their godless activity. He will do this because His justice demands it. Along these lines, we’d do well to remember the words of Paul:

⁶ For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, ⁷ and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, ⁸ dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed (2 Thess. 1).

In light of this, how can we not praise God for being utterly just? All of the injustice in the world we are privy to should move us to praise the King who will soon set all things straight.

For you who know these six answers to the query as to what about the King’s care is so praiseworthy, you have but one life-long obligation:

²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD; and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever (Ps. 145:21).

¹ The Catholic Register, “Chinese Christians Told To Replace Christ With Mao,” accessed on February 3, 2022, <https://www.catholicregister.org/home/international/item/31898-chinese-christians-told-to-replace-christ-with-mao>.