

Psalm 145 • The Cycle of Praise

Introduction

Although David most certainly spends significant portions of other Psalms praising God, this particular one is labeled as “A Psalm of Praise”. That is, it’s entirely devoted to the subject, a kind of worshipful treatise, if you will, of what David means when he invokes the word “praise”. This is important because the best Bible dictionary is the Bible itself. The examples of how a word is used throughout Scripture is actually the true definition according to God’s vocabulary. And in this Psalm we are presented with the opportunity to learn the definition of a word so commonly used in the course of church that we might never have really paused to consider what it truly means biblically.

¹I will extol You, my God, O King,
And I will bless Your name forever and
ever.
²Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and
ever.
³Great is the LORD, and highly to be
praised,
And His greatness is unsearchable.
⁴One generation shall praise Your works
to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.
⁵On the glorious splendor of Your
majesty
And on Your wonderful works, I will
meditate.
⁶Men shall speak of the power of Your
awesome acts,
And I will tell of Your greatness.
⁷They shall eagerly utter the memory of
Your abundant goodness
And will shout joyfully of Your
righteousness.

[Read v.1-7]

Q: What are the elements in this section relating to individual praise?

A: They are the “I will” statements.

1. “I will extol You, my God, O King...” (v.1)
2. “I will bless Your name forever and ever.” (v.1)
3. “Every day I will bless You...” (v.2)
4. “...I will praise Your name forever and ever.” (v.2)
5. “...on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.” (v.5)
6. “...I will tell of Your greatness.” (v.6)

Q: Which of these statements might seem out of place in comparison to the others? How might it actually and properly fit with the rest?

A: Except for “I will meditate” in v.5, all of the other “I will” statements speak of public or overt praise. It actually fits with the rest because it describes a true attitude of praise that is not revealed solely for public display, but works continually within the private and inward being. Combined together these describe a person wholly committed to God both inwardly and outwardly.

Q: What are the elements in this section relating to corporate praise?

1. “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” (v.4)
2. “Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts...” (v.6)
3. “They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness...” (v.7)
4. “And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.” (v.7)

Q: Is there a difference between the focus of individual vs. corporate praise?

A: The corporate praise seems more oriented towards testimony of the visible results of God’s working: “Your mighty acts”, “Your awesome acts”, “Your abundant goodness”, and “Your righteousness”. The individual praise appears more personally directed: “I will extol You”, “Your name”, “Your wonderful works”, “Your greatness”.

Q: How is the ever-widening momentum of praise here expressed?

A: It begins with the individual “I will”, which example inspires others to join in, which in turn causes the individual to join in and accompany others so that it expands as it rolls along in ever-expanding circles of adulation for God’s works and character.

Point: Genuine praise begins with a single, sincere heart which has an impact far beyond the individual.

Q: What are the descriptions of God's characteristics in this section?

1. "Great" (v.3)
2. "Mighty" (v.4)
3. "Glorious" (v.5)
4. "Wonderful" (v.5)
5. "Awesome" (v.6)
6. "Abundant" (v.7)

Point: One of the chief characteristics of praise as biblically defined is the contrast of our inferior nature to His exceedingly superior nature.

Q: What are the specific subjects of praise?

1. Divine majesty ("my God, O King" in v.1 & 5)
2. Greatness (v.3, 6)
3. Works & Acts (v.4 & 5)
4. Goodness (v.7)
5. Righteousness (v.7)

Q: What is the contrast of time presented here regarding praise?

A: All the time references are not just continual for this life, but extending further beyond: "forever and ever" (v.1 & 2), "one generation...to another" (v.4), "the memory of Your abundant goodness" (v.7).

Point: The daily attitude of praise gives way to a legacy of praise not just to our present group, but future generations. Praise doesn't just expand from the individual to the group, but from one generation to the next. It crosses the boundaries of time itself.

Application: How would you distinguish the difference between "praise" and "worship"? How are they similar? What makes them distinctive?

[Read v.8-9]

Q: What are the characteristics of God which David here highlights as being worthy of praise which gains momentum not just from the individual to the group, but from generation to generation across time?

1. Grace and mercy to the unworthy.
2. Forbearance to the guilty. (Through His lovingkindness – the quality of God's determination to uphold and fulfill His covenants in spite of our inability to keep them.)
3. Compassion to the afflicted.

Point: These are major themes throughout David's Psalms.

Q: Why does it specify in v.9 "over all His works" when describing the scope of His mercies?

A: This use of "works" is consistent in its use throughout Scripture as referring to creation. It's especially potent when we realize that **WE** are His works.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

Application: How is "praise" expressed in the course of our carrying out the work of God's kingdom?

⁸The LORD is gracious and merciful;
Slow to anger and great in
lovingkindness.
⁹The LORD is good to all,
And His mercies are over all His works.

¹⁰All Your works shall give thanks to
You, O LORD,
And Your godly ones shall bless You.
¹¹They shall speak of the glory of Your
kingdom
And talk of Your power;
¹²To make known to the sons of men
Your mighty acts
And the glory of the majesty of Your
kingdom.
¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting
kingdom,
And Your dominion endures throughout
all generations.

[Read v.10-13]

Q: What is another way for which “godly ones” is sometimes translated?

A: “Saints”.

Q: Given the context in the last section of what we learned to be the definition of “Your works”, through whom specifically does praise come through according to v.10?

A: God’s people.

Point: The biblical definition of “praise” is not recognition of God, or belief in God, or even acknowledging God; those things can be done by non-Believers. Praise is the exclusive expression of those belonging to Him.

Q: How do v.11-12 confirm the point just made, that praise is something only rendered by those belonging to God?

A: In these verses it specifically states that the saints (“godly ones”) praise God by speaking of “the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power” as a witness to “the sons of men”, a label that applies to all those **NOT** belonging to Him. As a new creation we are the sons of God; those remaining as the old creation are known as “the sons of men”.

Q: So what are the basic elements to which our praise witnesses publicly?

1. “The glory of Your kingdom” (v.11)
2. “Your power” (v.11)
3. “Your mighty acts” (v.12)
4. “The majesty of Your kingdom” (v.12)

Q: How would you characterize the way that our praise is supposed to represent God’s kingdom as provided in v.13?

A: It’s eternal. It cannot be overcome in the course of our single lifetime, or even the combined lifetimes of the generations before us or those yet to come. Men come and go, God is forever.

Point: One of the purposes of praise working in our life is to take our focus off of the finiteness of **THIS** life in order to subscribe to something eternally greater which began **BEFORE** we were even born and is extending into our next life beyond this one.

¹⁴The LORD sustains all who fall
And raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to You,
And You give them their food in due
time.

¹⁶You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living
thing.

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

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

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

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

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

[Read v.14-21]

Q: What are the actions attributed to God in v.14-16?

1. "...sustains all who fall..."
2. "...raises up all who are bowed down."
3. "...give...food in due time."
4. "...satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Point: These are all examples of how God's grace and mercy take form.

Q: But what is implied by the fact that we need God to take these actions on our behalf?

A: It means that at times we will fall, we'll be beaten down, we'll be hungry, and even experience as yet unfulfilled desires. The implication is not just that there will be hard times in the course of this life, but that praise is something that is supposed to be a natural by-product from God's working to bring us through those things.

Q: But how are we supposed to view the fact that although we belong to God, there may be times of hardship, trial, and deprivation?

A: It must all be kept in perspective in accordance with v.17, "The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds."

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

Q: It seems that praise comes from our personal experiences wherein God has sustained us, raised us up, satisfied us, or otherwise exerted His works to overcome our weaknesses and needs. But how do v.18-20 reveal that it's not just to everyone? What are the characteristics of those to whom God responds to in times of distress and need?

1. (v.18) "To all who call upon Him in truth."
2. (v.19) "...those who fear Him..."
3. (v.20) "...all who love Him..."

Point: This is one of the reasons why praise is so precious to God – it comes not just because He is recognized as God, nor just because He has been merciful, but it comes from those who love, fear, and obey Him to begin with who are, in effect, returning affection for affection.

Application: Describe how biblical praise is actually a mutual result of the relationship between a loving God and His loving people.

Overall Application

Before this lesson began, what was your definition of "praise"? Was it mostly something done with music? Or perhaps a kind of testimony? What have you learned about the cycle of praise, and how should you fit into it?