

The God Who Helps

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Bible Verse: Psalm 146
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Our Psalm for this evening is Psalm 146 and I invite you to turn there with me. We'll read it to open our time together and then, by the grace of God, be able to set a very broad context to understand the full significance of this Psalm in the context of the rest of the Psalter. Psalm. 146.

1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! 2 I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. 3 Do not trust in princes, In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. 4 His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; In that very day his thoughts perish. 5 How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God, 6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever; 7 Who executes justice for the oppressed; Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free. 8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises up those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous; 9 The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, But He thwarts the way of the wicked. 10 The LORD will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

With this Psalm we enter into the final five Psalms of the Psalter, Psalms 146 through 150, and that's a far more significant transition than it might seem upon a superficial reading of the Psalms. Each Psalm, as we've pointed out in the recent past, each of these final five psalms is marked by the same opening and the same closing and it's important for us to take a moment to observe this and to set it firmly in our mind as we will complete the teaching of the Psalms over the next month, Lord willing.

So in Psalm 146:1-2, it opens, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being." Then in verse 10, "The LORD will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!" It opens, "Praise the LORD." It closes, "Praise the LORD." Psalm 147:1, "Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant and praise is becoming." Verse 20 of Psalm 147, "He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!" Psalm 148:1, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all

His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens." Then in verse 14 of Psalm 148, "He has lifted up a horn for His people, Praise for all His godly ones; Even for the sons of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise the LORD!" Psalm 149:1, "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones." Verse 9, "To execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!" And then in Psalm 150, the entire Psalm, each verse has a doublet or a triplet of praise. "Praise the Lord! Praise God. Praise Him," verse 1. "Praise Him. Praise Him," verse 2. Verse 3, "Praise Him. Praise Him." Verse 4, "Praise Him Praise Him." Verse 5, "Praise Him. Praise Him." Verse 6, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!" As if five Psalms were not enough all emphasizing this theme, the first five verses of Psalm 150 have about 13 references to praising the Lord, and then in verse 6 he again says, "Let everything that has breath praise the LORD." And even that's not enough, he has to say it one more time for climactic emphasis, "Praise the LORD!"

Now I want to take you on a very hurried tour of the psalter so that you can see something very, very important. These final five psalms are the context for every other Psalm in the psalter. Psalms 1 through 145 have all been leading up to this great climax, this great fireworks finale of praise in the psalter. And the truth of the matter is, beloved, as much as we are used to, you know, perhaps seeing individual Psalms taught in isolation from one another, what you and I should understand having completed eight years of study in the Psalms is this, is that in the final analysis, you cannot fully understand any individual Psalm until you realize that it is contributing to this great climax in Psalms 146 through 150. Every Psalm is a note in the symphony that is giving rise to this great climax in the final five psalms.

And so, you need to understand that the entire psalter from the very beginning, starting at Psalm 1, has been moving in this direction and laying the groundwork, building the foundation for this final capstone of praise in the final five Psalms. And let's approach this in a couple of ways. You may remember, maybe not, that the entire psalter is composed of five books of Psalms, and each book ends on a blessing to God. So, look at Psalm 41 here, the end of book 1, Psalm 41 ends on the same theme of blessing God. Psalm 41:13, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen." And then Psalm 72 at the end of book 2 of the psalter, Psalm 72:18, the second book of the Psalms ends on this theme, "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who alone works wonders. And blessed be His glorious name forever; And may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen." And then look at Psalm 89 at the end of book 3 of the psalter. Psalm 89 at the end of book 3 we read more briefly in Psalm 89:52, "Blessed be the LORD forever! Amen and Amen." And then Psalm 106 at the end of book 4 of the psalter we read this, Psalm 106:48. I'll give you a moment to catch up with me. We read this, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, 'Amen.' Praise the LORD!" And then in book 5, you see this climactic ending with five Psalms ending on the theme of "Praise the LORD," which is what the prior four books had ended their theme on. And so there is this marvelous unity to the Psalms. They have been deliberately compiled in a way to continually and repeatedly lead us to this theme of praising the Lord.

Now we can look at this another way. Go back to Psalm 1 with me. Psalm 1. And when we taught on these first two Psalms early on, we said that they stood like pillars establishing the entranceway into the rest of the psalter. Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 are different in their emphasis, but they set a tone, they set a theme, they lay the foundation for the other 148 Psalms to follow, so that in Psalm 1 you read in an individual way the blessing of God that is on the God-fearing man. Psalm 1:1, "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." Listen, what's going on with this Psalm in the context of the whole 150 Psalms, he is saying that God blesses the God-fearing man. God blesses the man, the woman, who devote themselves to his word. And he ensures the well-being of their way, and at the same time, he is a God of justice, who judges the wicked who reject him and violate his law. He blesses the faithful. He judges the wicked. What's the point of this in the whole psalter except to lead you and me to say God is like that, this is the fruit of those who follow him. Well, what can we do but say praise the Lord? "Praise the Lord. He knows the way that I take. He will be faithful to me."

In Psalm 2, it goes from an individual plan, you might say, the individual blessing of God to in Psalm 2 to this macro view that God has a plan for the entire world and he is going to send the Messiah to rule over it all one day. And so it goes from an individual contemplation in Psalm 1 to a worldwide contemplation in Psalm 2 right from the very beginning, "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!'" Beloved, notice the sharp contrast between the focus of Psalm 1, very personal, very intimate, very individual, and immediately in Psalm 2 it explodes out upon all of the world, looking toward an end times event that is still future to us. It's stunning to see the breadth of the psalter, the depth of the psalter, the glory of God revealed in micro and macro ways so that you see in Psalm 2:4, "He who sits in the heavens laughs," he laughs at their rebellion. He's not intimidated by it, these mere specks of nations can be easily swatted away with one swipe of his omnipotent hand. And he will judge them, verse 5, "He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 'But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.'" And he goes on and speaks of this Messiah in verses 7 through 9, "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession." Verse 10, you see the final judgment, the warning about final judgment and its consequences to the kings of all the earth of all time, "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD." Do you see our theme again? Praise the Lord. "Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son," the Messiah is coming, "that He not

become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" The obvious implication being, "Praise the LORD!"

He watches over the individuals, he is a sovereign ruler over nations and everything in the subsequent 148 Psalms fits within that overall contemplation, that overall concept, you could say, that is introduced to us in the first two Psalms. And then just looking at the Psalms and thinking through in a very broad sense, beloved, every other Psalm, every other theme of the Psalm fits under that great umbrella of leading us to praise so that every joy that the Psalms express, every sorrow and trial that the Psalms express, every expression of repentance and confession of sin, every rejoicing in the forgiveness that is found in Christ, every imprecatory Psalm written against the enemies of God and seeking God's judgment in the vindication of his glory and his law against them, every statement of trust, every messianic Psalm that looks forward to the coming of Christ and adds another prophetic detail in the painting that points us to the Messiah, every praise Psalm, every aspect of every Psalm is designed to lead us step-by-step building a wall, as it were, brick by brick, leading us to this ultimate great climax where every individual stroke of the paintbrush leads us to a magnificent masterpiece of unparalleled greatness that we are designed to look at and in humble reverence, and with joyful adoration, fall on our face and join with these final five Psalms, and say, "Yes, praise the LORD!"

Now all of the joys of the prior 145 Psalms, all the sorrow, all the confession, all of the imprecations, all of the trust, all of the messianic prophecies, all of that is now behind us. All of that is now assumed. The prior 145 Psalms are assumed as we step into this hallowed ground of the final five Psalms of the psalter. Everything else is behind us. Now every word is devoted over to praise. And what the Psalms have done for us, what the full psalter does for us, is it gives us and develops for us a comprehensive worldview that addresses every possible conceivable aspect of life on earth, of spiritual life and of the life to come. It's all there. And even more surpassingly, the Psalms have cultivated in us an expectation of the coming Messiah. As David has written his 73 Psalms, he has pointed us faithfully to his greater son. As we have read and seen the godly aspects of the psalmist, they have been a shadow pointing us to their greater fulfillment in the coming Messiah. Every Psalm is pointing us and has pointed us to this direction.

You could think about it this way if you want another analogy, the prior 145 Psalms have been the guide that have taken us up to the top of spiritual Mount Everest and now we are on the peak of Mount Everest, we are at the summit, and we are breathing in the rarified air that very few people find. We are looking out on the magnificent panorama from the top of the spiritual world, and we see that it is breathtaking. We see that there is no other view like this anyplace on the planet. And as we drink all of that in, as we breathe in this rarified air, we are so overwhelmed by the majesty of it all that we fall down and we say, "Praise the LORD!" And beloved, the very fact that five Psalms do this, not just one, the fact that five Psalms do it repeatedly over and over again, it sweeps us up by the way of that incalculable emphasis, that this is the purpose of life, this is why we exist, this is the point of every trial and every blessing that God gives to you. Every stroke of adversity, every joyful praise in life is designed to lead you to this single conclusion so that you

filter all of life, all of your life experiences through the single lens that this is designed in one way or another to teach me to praise the Lord. You almost want to just stop and say, "Amen," and go off in a quiet place and contemplate and meditate on the fullness of all that we've already seen.

From a literary standpoint, from a biblical standpoint, I hope that you, as you see these things you never view the Psalms in the same way again. The Psalms are so much more than just giving you an isolated devotional to help you through a day and to give you a devotional thought to bump you up until, you know, you search out another one. The Psalms, as Martyn Lloyd-Jones has said in a completely different context, the Psalms are given to us not so that we can isolate one or two individual Psalms as our favorites and we neglect the others, they're all part of a broader whole, and we need to understand that and understand that there is this undercurrent, you could say. There is, as there are currents in the great Mississippi River below the surface, there are forces in the Psalms that are an undercurrent that are carrying you out to the bay where everything empties into an ocean of praise. It's magnificent. It is glorious. And even within the Psalms there are groups of Psalms to be viewed together. Psalms 22, 23 and 24 Psalms 90, 91 and 92. The Songs of Ascents, Psalms 120 to 134. There is just a depth to be plumbed by those who just take the time to read the Psalms seriously.

Well, with all of that, that sets the context for us as we enter into the hallowed ground of Psalm 146. What the psalmist is doing here in Psalm 146, and just to say it in just a single sentence, in Psalm 146 we see Scripture honoring God because he is trustworthy. He is a good and faithful God. And part of the way that the psalmist shows this magnificent theme, is he contrasts the immutable, unchanging faithfulness of God with the transience of human leaders. Men, even the greatest of so-called men on this earth, are frail and transient. It's not simply that our current President is frail and transient, every leader at the pinnacle of his strength is like that. Every human leader, every man on earth, every woman on earth merely has the breath of life in their nostrils here today, gone tomorrow. Alive today forgotten in the mists of time quickly as time goes on. Human leaders, transient, unworthy of our trust, unable to deliver on their promises. By contrast, this Lord who is to be praised, rules his creation in order to help his own. And the conclusion of that, when you see the contrast and when you see the goodness of God to his people, and to those that are helpless, you're led to the conclusion, "Praise the LORD!" He is the only one who can truly help those who are in trouble; by his power and his faithfulness, God shows that he is worthy of praise.

And so let's open up with the first two verses here and we can call this first section a resolve to a lifetime of praise. A resolve to a lifetime of praise, and whether you are young here tonight or whether you are at the latter stages of your life, this Psalm is still calling you, it is calling you whether your window is closing or whether life still has a lot to unfold before you, by human perspective anyway, what the psalter is doing, all 150 Psalms is doing and what Psalm 146 in particular calls you to do is to, in light of everything that we've seen, to understand that this Psalm is calling you to a conviction that, "I will give my life over to praising the Lord, that my life will be devoted to His service. I will gladly yield my entire man, body, soul and spirit, heart, soul, strength and

mind, all of it given over to the greatness of this God, and to devote my life and my affections to the praise of this God." That's where this Psalm starts.

Look at verses 1 and 2 with us. This Psalm calls us all to praise. It calls all of humanity to praise the Lord and yet this psalmist starts inwardly. He doesn't impose it externally on others without having first filtered it through his own heart. So, he says in verses 1 and 2,

1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD [here it is], O my soul! 2 I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Notice the first-person singular pronouns. Verse 1, "my soul." Verse 2, "I will praise while I live. I will sing praises to my God while I have my being." Beloved, in this verse the psalmist is setting his own soul into order, and let me just say that this is a, you know, this is a great call. It is a noble description of what the aspiration of our own heart can be and should be, you know, for each of us to say is this is this the defining preeminent priority of my life to praise the Lord like this? Is all of my life subordinate to that greater cause, that greater goal? In this verse the psalmist is setting his own soul in order before he says anything else. And this, frankly, is an overlooked spiritual skill, a spiritual discipline, you might say. The Psalms teach us to speak to ourselves, to address our own heart rather than letting our heart and emotions run away with us. Our intellect speaks to our emotions and says, "This is what you are to be given over to." We bring ourselves, we take ourselves in hand and we speak to ourselves, and we call our own souls to praise.

Beloved, this is a conscious commitment, not the overflow of feelings in reaction to earthly circumstances. This is a comprehensive commitment and you can understand why that must be if you remember the fullness of the introduction that we just reviewed, that this is coming after the Psalm is speaking collectively, the fullness of the psalter is what I mean by that. After he's come through adversity. After he's confessed sin. After he's dealt with his enemies. After he's faced death. At the end of, you know, processing all of that, he says, "I will praise the Lord." He's resolved to a lifetime of praise.

And so, he's expressing his determination to praise the Lord. Look at verse 2. He says, "I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. I praise the LORD. I sing praises to the LORD." And what you want to understand here is that he is making an open-ended commitment. He is expressing a lifetime resolve to praise the Lord. This is so important to grasp, beloved. Psalm 146 is expressing more than his mood of the moment. He's not writing in response to, you know, into musical stimulation or anything like that, with a full cognizance of the worthiness of God, he says, "I will devote my life to extolling His name, to exalting the glories of the name of Yahweh." He has yielded his whole man to praise God always and that is the natural outflow, that is the only possible right result, the only proper right response to the prior 145 Psalms. Just the depth of those lead you to no other possible conclusion. If God is like he is and Psalm 1 through 145, and he is, then I will give my life to praise him come what may.

You know, and look, think about marriage vows. Think about what a young man and a young woman pledged to each other, you know, to have and to hold, in sickness and health, for richer for poorer, till death do us part. I commit myself to you. I give myself over to you in front of all of these witnesses. And you know, and that's supposed to be a lifetime vow that's taken seriously and done in the context of, you know, for Christians in the context of the people of God. Well, if we understand that and we see that and the seriousness of that vow on a human level in a human relationship, multiply it by infinity of one who's worthy of the highest call of our heart, one who is infinitely faithful to us on the other side, from him to us is what I mean by that. Then how could we do anything else but respond to him with a resolve to a lifetime of praise? This is inescapable. And when you put this in the New Testament context of the coming of Christ, and the crucifixion of Christ, and the glory of Christ, and redemption in Christ, and forgiveness of sin, and newness of life, and the promise of heaven which is hinted at and spoken to plainly in in the psalter as well, you know, in response to Christ how could there be anything other than this wholehearted commitment?

And so he gives a resolve to a lifetime of praise in the first two verses. He moves on in the second part of the Psalm, point number 2, we see a realistic look at man. First, we saw a resolve to a lifetime of praise. Now we see a realistic look at man. In contrast to the glory of God and singing praises to God, he reinforces his theme by making a jarring contrast to the nature of man, and what he is about to say in these coming verses down through verse 4, is this: it is foolish to trust in men because they have no power to help.

Look at verses 3 and 4. He says,

3 Do not trust in princes, In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. 4
His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; In that very day his thoughts
perish.

He says men are not in control. They don't know what their life will hold tomorrow. In New Testament language, they can tear down their barns and build bigger barns but for all they know, God is going to require their soul that very evening. They're not in control. Now, James says you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You're just a passing vapor here today, gone tomorrow. The point of the psalmist is that men, humanity, even the highest ranking in all the earth, they have no ability to deliver you from evil. They have no ability to deliver you from your sorrows and from your difficulties. They have no ability to address the problem of the human condition.

Beloved, look, since the fall of Adam man has been at this for some 6,000 years, give or take. Don't you think that if man had the ability to solve problems that war would have been banished millennia ago? If it was within the capability of men to abolish human poverty, don't you think they would have figured it out in 6,000 years? Haven't they had their opportunity to prove themselves? Haven't we, as a collective, the collective human race had our opportunity to show that we can fix things by our own ingenuity? And what is the outcome? Over the past, just look over the past century, just over the past century

beloved, going back to what they called the Great War starting in 1917. World War I. World War II. The Korean War. The Vietnam War. The Iraqi War. Now Ukraine. The sexual revolution in the '60s. Presidential scandal and he resigns. Nuclear bombs. All of this just barely beyond the scope of our lifetimes. And this is the pinnacle? This is man and his progress? Just looking at it from those, you know, from that very narrow military perspective, it's obvious that man cannot solve his own problems. When man gets involved, the problems only get worse. And so, the most influential men ultimately have no real power. They have no real answers to the human dilemma. If man could help, whether it's a conservative leader or a liberal leader, whether it's the mayor of Chicago or the Governor of Ohio, if men could help, if man had answers, we would not have had serial mass murders in the news from week to week and month to month, we would not have city race riots. All of this, all of this is an undeniable testimony to the fact that there is no answer in man.

Look at it there in verse 3. You should look at it all and realize that there is no answer in politics whatsoever for the human condition. Politics and government leaders are just a necessary evil. Yes, appointed by God as a restraint to evil but they cannot ultimately solve the problems and so, it's foolish to hope in the next great political leader to come. We're specifically told not to do that. "Do not trust in princes," verse 3, "In mortal man in whom there is no deliverance." Man is mortal. He is frail. He is weak. He is appointed to die. He is transient and passing. Verse 4, "His spirit departs, he returns to the earth and that very day his thoughts perish."

You know, one of the things that Nancy and I have done over the past few years, some of you know this, you know, we've taken opportunity to go and visit some of the different grave sites of the US Presidents. Just a little subcategory interest of mine, US Presidents and their history. And we've been to a lot of them. The great ones, like George Washington, the obscure ones like James Buchanan buried in Pennsylvania in a city cemetery, Benjamin Harrison up in Indianapolis. And you look at these men, Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon and John Kennedy and Arlington National Cemetery, William Taft not far from him in the same cemetery, you look at these men who held the pinnacle of power in the free world, headlines heralding their coming, Camelot is here to change the course of our country. Peace in our time. Whip inflation now, Gerald Ford in Grand Rapids, MI. And you look at these things, you look at these graves and you realize that they are just giving silent testimony to the truth that is expressed here in Psalm 146. These were the greatest men, some of the greatest men of our time and how did it turn out for them? Their spirit departed. They returned dust to dust. And their thoughts have perished. Their active conscious mind is gone. Beloved, remember that as we come into another electoral cycle, remember that as you look for solutions to the world situation. Realize that there are never going to be answers, lasting answers at the hands of men. If they could figure it out, they would have already done it. But they can't.

And so that has a spiritual implication for you and me. We recognize that reality. We see it in Scripture. We see it illustrated in the world and the history around us, just within our country, let alone, you know, the great kings of the earth. You know, Cyrus of Persia, Alexander the Great, Caesar. You know, you can just catalog this any way you want to,

everything about human history, everything about the greatest leaders of our world show us that they are weak, that their victories are passing, and what you and I should understand is that that weak existence started immediately at the fall of Adam. In Genesis 3:19, God spoke to Adam after he fell and said, "You are dust and to dust you shall return." In Ecclesiastes 12:7 we read this, "the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." In the New Testament, Hebrews 9:27 we read, "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment." And when a man dies, all his thoughts and all of his plans die with him.

Now look, that's undeniable. This is the teaching of Scripture, and it is the undeniable experience of man. You know, two things that cannot be missed in life, death and taxes, and so, beloved, there is no permanence in man to help. We need to abandon the thought. James Boice in his great commentary on the Psalms, if you have only one author to read on the Psalms, get the three volumes by James Montgomery Boice and read those. On this text, Pastor Boice said this, "We trust politicians thinking that the President or Congress or Mayor or some other highly placed persons will be able to solve our problems, but they can't even solve their own. We trust science or education or anything else to be our ultimate savior. We do not actually trust God and worship him."

We resolve to a lifetime of praise, we take a realistic look at man, and you could think about it this way, in the opening two verses he looks up, praises God, he brings his eyes down and he looks around at him and says, "There's nothing like Yahweh anywhere on earth so I abandon any hope of those around me." You know, you think of what the Apostle John said about Jesus at the end of chapter 2 of the gospel of John. He was not entrusting himself to man because he knew what was in man. That's the way we should be, to not put our hope in men because in man there is no power to help. That's just a realistic look at the world.

Now he's looked up. He's looked around him. Now thirdly, he's going to look up again and he gives us in point number 3, he gives us a royal list of God's deeds. A royal list of God's deeds. He's setting up a contrast. He's exalted God in the first two verses, in the next two verses he's contrasted it with transient man who has no power to help, and now he goes back in order to reinforce his theme of praising God, he recites the things that God has done and what God does in order to show that a man should trust in his creator. Look at verse 5. He says in verse 5,

5 How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God,

And so this verse makes a sharp contrast with the transience of man. No hope in man. How blessed is the one, therefore, who trusts in his maker. There is no hope in man, but there is hope in Yahweh. And what he's saying is God is our help now in this earthly life, in this moment, as we sit here. Yahweh, you know by his Old Testament name, the Lord Jesus Christ as his revealed Incarnate Son, he is our hope. He is our hope in whatever the future brings to us. We need not try to calculate what's going to happen. It is enough for us to know that God is who he is as the prior 145 Psalms has revealed him to

be, it's enough for us to know that that's who he is and that we're in his hand. Beloved, in the final analysis, that's all you need for peace and satisfaction in this life. God is who he is. I belong to him in Christ. That's enough. Praise the Lord.

Now, why is God to be praised? Why is it a blessing, verse 5, to find your help in the God of Jacob, your hope in the Lord your God? Well, he's real. He's powerful. Why do we praise him? Why can he be trusted? Look at verse 6. This is the God who, verse 6.

6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever;

This God, Yahweh, is the God of power as shown by his work in creation, as shown in the heavens in the skies and shown in the seas. He's just giving illustrations, quick flashes of illustration of the power of God. Look at the universe. Look at the sea and everything that is in them and realize that he is a God of diverse power. And not only is he powerful but on a sweet side of things, he's faithful to his people. Verse 6, he keeps faith forever and his faithfulness is seen in his many actions for his people. Verse 7. What does God do? Verse 7,

7 [He] executes justice for the oppressed; [He] gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free.

This God who is high and lofty, this God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth, who is transcendent above all. Do you know what else he does? He looks on the lowly. He looks on the afflicted. He looks on the humbled. And when they cry out to him in earnest repentance, he hears them, he receives them. "The vilest sinner who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives." Zacchaeus, a despised tax gatherer in Luke 19, climbs up on a sycamore tree because he's too short to see Jesus above the crowds, through the crowds. The Lord looks up to him and says, "Zacchaeus, come down. I have to stay at your house tonight." They go to Zacchaeus' home, the religious leaders complain and mock about it, "He's gone to be with the man who is a sinner," and the Lord talks to Zacchaeus about repentance and Zacchaeus says, "Lord, behold, if I've defrauded anyone of anything I'll pay him back four times as much. I'll give away half of my wealth to the poor and with the rest of it, I'll pay off the people, restore the people that I've defrauded." What did Jesus say? "Salvation has come to this man's house." A man despised by the world, short of stature, a crook, a criminal, and in earnestness, he comes to Christ and what does Christ do? He receives him. He forgives him. He welcomes him into the family. A foreshadowing of how he would treat the thief on the cross, "Today, I tell you, you'll be with Me in Paradise." And all of those a foreshadowing of the way those of you who are truly, truly, truly saved, those of you that have been broken by the law of God, those of you who have been broken by your own sinfulness, those of you who are mindful of your personal guilt, not simply wanting God to fix things for you, full of grief and mourning and poverty of spirit over your sin, what did you find? What did you find when you really cried out to the Lord for mercy? When you really repented? Did he turn you away? Did he stiff-arm you say, "No, it's too late." Is that how he dealt with you? Larry, is that how he deal with you? Jim? Erica? Is that how Christ responded to

you when you cried out to him for mercy? What did he do? What did he do? Looking upon you in your lowly, afflicted, sinful state, what did he do but he reached out with his pure hands of mercy, grace and omnipotence, and picked you up in all of your filth and cleansed you by his blood, washed you, restored you, gave you new life, pardoned all of your sin, and received you into his family, received you into his grace. He ran to you as the prodigal father ran to him when he saw him far off and the prodigal was coming home smelling like the pig that he had been eating with. The father embraced him, "My sons come home. Kill the fatted calf. We're going to throw a party. My son who was lost has come home."

That's how God receives every repentant sinner and if you're in Christ, that's how he received you. What God is like that? What God, what God shows that kind of grace and sets the prisoners of sin free, relieves them of the punishment, breaks the power of sin and clothes them with the royal robes of Jesus Christ himself? I ask you what God is like that? Jesus said, "Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." What fool could hear words like that and harden their heart against him? What fool could say, "I don't need a Savior like that"? What fool could look at the risen Christ and reject his glory? What fool could look at the crucified Christ and say, "I'll have none of You. I will not have that man reign over me."

Do you realize, do you realize that when you respond to Christ that way, that you are spurning the King of the Universe? The Psalm 2 King? Do you realize that you're rejecting the God of the psalter? What will become of you? When the simplicity of the invitation calls upon you to come without condition, without further works, you don't have to clean your life up first. In fact, don't even try. Go in your guilt. Go in your shame. Go directly to Christ and say, "Because Your promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come. Not because there's anything in me. I trust not in my resolutions to get better. My warrant for faith, my warrant for coming to You is the bare word of God where You said, 'Come to Me.'" And in that lowly position where you have nothing to offer him, Jesus says, "I'll give you rest."

What God is like that anywhere in the universe? Every other religion tells you what to do to reconcile yourself to God, the things that you have to do, "Do these rituals," if you're a Catholic. "Do these works," if you're something else. Believe a false prophet, if it's going to be Mormonism or Islam or whatever. Ellen G. White, Seventh Day Adventist. Every place pointing you to your own righteousness, pointing you to another source of authority. It's all damnable, literally damnable, but in the purity and the simplicity of biblical faith, we find these kinds of exhortations to come. God helps those, you know, the perversion of the biblical God that says, "God helps those who help themselves." That's not biblical. What's biblical is this, "God helps those who cannot help themselves." Let me say that again, "God helps those who cannot help themselves and go to Him for mercy."

Look at verse 8. "The LORD opens the eyes of the blind," exactly what Christ did, he opened the eyes of the blind man in John 9, a direct manifestation of his deity. Verse 8,

8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises up those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous;

God should be praised because of that, and God should be praised because he protects the defenseless. Verse 9,

9 The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow, But He thwarts the way of the wicked.

There's a two-edged way of the Lord's work. He comes to the aid of those who cannot help themselves and he shows kindness to them, and that same God actively, powerfully hinders the plots of the wicked. For one illustration, read the book of Esther. Afresh read what happens to Haman and how he was hung on his own gallows that he built to put Mordecai to death.

Beloved, the Lord's hindrance of the wicked frames the entire psalter. We saw that at the end of verse 1. The way of the wicked will perish. Well, Psalm 146 is picking up on that here in verse 9, and says he thwarts the way of the wicked. They're doomed. You know, all of the godless ideologies, and all of the godless activity of the modern-day world is doomed in the end. It cannot successfully rise up and overthrow the sovereignty of a righteous holy God. He lets it go for a time in order to gather in his people, to gather in the elect, to give them time to repent, and his patience is misinterpreted either as an absence of his existence, or his indifference to sin, or even worse, his approval of it all. Total misunderstanding, total misinterpretation of the God of the Bible.

All of these wonderful ways of God lead us to the conclusion at the end of Psalm 146.

10 The LORD will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD. He is sovereign and yet he's gracious. He's just and yet he's merciful. Unlike man, unlike the kings of the earth, his rule is not temporary. His kingdom is forever. And the psalmist in these brief 10 verses, having established the great infinite worth of God, restates his call one final time at the end of the verse, verse 10, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!"

Beloved, do you understand that Christ is the only one worthy of your trust? Christ is the only one worthy of your love and obedience? Listen, men will always disappoint you and for the proud and resistant in the room here tonight, your own efforts will disappoint you. You cannot succeed in life apart from Christ. There is no hope apart from him. You are signing your own death warrant by rejecting Christ and why perish along the way when this great God invites you to his mercy. Sinner and saint alike, put your trust in Christ and praise the LORD!

Let's pray together.

Father, we join our hearts with the call of the psalmist, we recognize Your greatness, we acknowledge and thank You for Your goodness. We're so grateful for Your grace to sinners like us. You are glorious in every aspect of Your infinite perfections and in response to Scripture, in response to Christ, in gratitude for Your work in our lives, Your work in the skies and in the Scriptures, Your providence since the very beginning of creation, all of it, Lord, we gather it all up in the fullness of our hearts and with the fullness of the psalter echoing in our minds, O God, we say, "Praise the LORD!" In the name of Christ through whom alone we can approach Your holy throne. Amen.

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