

A Great Word of Praise

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Bible Verse: Psalm 145
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Psalm 145, which I read just a moment ago, is a great word of praise to the God of the Bible. It is the last Psalm that is ascribed to David in the entire Psalter and so after 72 prior Psalms of David, we come to this final one and realize that we're passing a milestone, as it were, in our study of the Psalms. There is nothing in this Psalm that tells us the occasion upon which David wrote it, but it speaks to such transcendent themes about the character and nature of God that it is always appropriate to come and study. It is particularly broad in its scope as a result of the fact that there is no occasion listed for it. This is a Psalm for all times, you could say.

Now you can't see it in English, but there is an underlying artistic style to this Psalm that is very appealing in the original language. It is an acrostic Psalm in Hebrew. Each verse starts with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, leaving out only one letter in the process. And so this was a Psalm where David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, took his skill, his literary skill and put effort into making something that was memorable in the writing of this Psalm, and the entire exclusive focus of the Psalm, almost exclusively, is the praise of God. He goes through the character of God in order to praise him and praise is the exclusive purpose of this Psalm. You can see it as you look at the first two verses with me, and then the last verse. In verses 1 and 2 it says, "I will extol You, my God, O King, And I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever." Now drop down to verse 21, as we so commonly see, I hope that this has become commonplace for you to see that the last verse repeats the theme of the opening verse to indicate that this is the all-encompassing purpose of the Psalm, so that he says in verse 21, "My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever." He starts with praise and he comes full circle to come back to praise and that circling back to praise means that everything inside the circle is producing and is reinforcing the very same theme that he started with. The king of Israel here is using his highest artistic skill to praise God and not only to praise him for himself, but to lead the people of God in praise as well. This is a Psalm where you kind of it, it lifts you out of life, it takes you out of your circumstances, it takes you out of whatever troubles or preoccupations may have been occupying your mind. It replaces those preoccupations with the praise of God. And it is a magnificent Psalm, very sweeping and all-encompassing in its consideration of who this God is.

So we're going to look at four points here this evening and we're going to open up with point number 1: the goal of David's Psalm. The goal of David's Psalm, and what we're going to see is, is that the goal of this Psalm, he is instructing us is actually the goal of all of life. The reason that we live is expressed in these first two verses when he says, look at it again with me in verse 1,

1 I will extol You, my God, O King, And I will bless Your name forever and ever.

He takes the indefinite, looks into the indefinite future and says, "Whatever lies ahead in the future for me, I will praise You." And then he makes it specific and a day-by-day object of his life as well there in verse 2 when he says,

2 Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever.

And what he's saying when he says, "I will bless You and I will praise You and I will extol You," what he has in mind here is that within his heart and in the sight of men, he will make God's name high. He will lift up the name of God so that it is respected, that it is honored, and that it is feared. And so he's praising God. He cannot add to the intrinsic glory of God. God is already perfect in his glory, we can't contribute anything to his essential glory and make him better than what he is. What he's talking about is what the theologians call the ascribed glory of God. He is ascribing glory to God and he is helping us all to grow in our ascription of praise to God and our recognition of praise to God both in our hearts and before others.

And what he's doing in this Psalm, there's such a purity, in one sense, a simplicity to this Psalm. He is praising God for his abundant provision and love. He is stepping back. He's stepping back from the cynicism that marks our age, the cynicism and the skepticism and the doubt and the accusations and the hostility and the false religion of it all, everything that pollutes the spiritual life of our environment, he steps back from all of that and from the purity of his heart is praising God for his goodness and his greatness. And one of the striking things about this Psalm is that the praises is open-ended, as he says there in verse 1, "I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You." The idea is that, "I will always praise You." There is an unconditional commitment of his heart that closes off the possibility of going back on this commitment and David is saying, "Today, now I am committing myself and my life will be given over to Your praise for the remainder of my days and on into eternity." In our day of shallow commitments and broken promises, here we see a call and an aspiration that lifts us beyond the superficiality and the self-centeredness of our days and says, "I am abandoning everything else. My life will be given over to the praise of God." You know, there's this sense and it kind of reflects the moment of true conversion where a man recognizes Christ as Lord, a woman recognizes Christ as Lord, and submits to Christ and yields by faith, yields herself to Christ unconditionally with no possibility of going back. "I close the back door. I close all escape routes. I'm going forward in the praise of God and there's nothing else that I will do."

The beauty of it also is that as you think about that open-ended commitment to praise in the context of the ebb and flow of life, we realize what David is saying is, is that there will be days where he will praise God in the midst of blessing and there will be days where he praises God in the midst of adversity. Some days you will praise God in drought, some days you will praise him in the midst of the harvest. The thing that we want to see here in in this open-ended commitment to praise is that true praise, a heart devoted to praise, is honoring God in a way that is independent of circumstances "I will praise You no matter what comes to me in life. You will be the supreme object of my affections. You will be the highest thought in my mind. You will have the deepest priority and the deepest affection of my mind. And no matter what comes, whether it's adversity or blessings, perceived blessing, it's always blessing from God. But God, whatever comes to me in life, I will praise You," David says, and he can say that because his praise is independent of the circumstances, his praise is rooted in something higher than himself, so that we could say that shifting winds and shifting circumstances do not alter our duty or our prerogative or our ability to praise God from the depths of our heart.

You know, and it's just kind of a reflection of what Jesus said the greatest commandment was. You know, what's the greatest commandment in the law? "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your soul, with all your might." So that we realize and it's good for us to step back from our life circumstances and just realize that whatever our situation may be, our first and highest priority and duty is to give ourselves over to the praise of our God. And the thought that undergirds that and sustains us through the long haul of life, beloved, is not whipped up emotion, it's not based on your feelings, and it's not based on your circumstances. Our praise to God in this open-ended commitment to praise him is rooted in the fact that his character is unchanging. God is the same God in the midst of your good days as he is in your bad days, and as a result of that, nothing has altered in your reasons for praising him. You praise him, "God, this is a good day. I praise You for Your blessing." In adversity you say, "God, I praise You because You are with me even in the valley of the shadow of death, and I fear no evil because You are with me and I praise You for that."

And so as you think through these things on a very simplistic basic level, you see that the grounds for praise are always there. They are always there transcending our disposition and feelings and giving us grounds to praise him. And so that goal of praise brings clarity to our lives in any and every situation. Now, so that's the goal of David's Psalm in number 1, the goal of his Psalm is praise. Now, as so often happens in the Psalms, he moves into the grounds of his praise. Point number 2: the grounds for his praise. And in this meditation that David gives us, what is it that that causes him to give such a lofty open-ended commitment to praise God? Well, in this section which covers verses 3 to, I believe 19 or of the Psalm, we find four subpoints that we can consider, four distinct grounds for his praise and we're going to alliterate them with the letter G.

Why is David praising God? Well, first of all, God is great. God is incomprehensibly great. His greatness transcends time. His praise will never cease. Look at verses 3 through 7 with me.

3 Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable.

It is beyond human knowledge. The fullness of it cannot be known by the finite human mind.

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

I mean, David is so full that he's just popped out with praise. He has just exploded into praise. Here. What God does, all of the deeds of God, are an outworking of his greatness and what we see is that his deeds are splendid and they reflect the glory of his majesty, and what I want you to see is the way in these five verses here, the way that David multiplies superlatives in an effort to express the greatness of God.

Look at it here beginning in verse 3. He says, "Your greatness is unsearchable," and then in verse 4, he talks about, "Your mighty acts." It's not enough to just say his acts, it's his mighty acts. Verse 5, "The glorious splendor of Your majesty." You know he would have made his point if he had said, "Your majesty, I will praise You for Your majesty." That would have made the point, it would have added to it if he had said, "The splendor of Your majesty," But David is so swept up in the greatness of God that those words aren't enough and so he says, "on the glorious splendor of Your majesty I will speak." And he goes on there in verse 5, "on Your wonderful works." Verse 6, "Your awesome acts. Your greatness." Verse 7, "Your abundant goodness." And what I want you to see and get a sense of what David is saying here, is he's not simply mechanically reciting the attributes and works of God here. His whole man is swept up in it, in the fullness of his mind, soul and spirit, he is swept up in it and so that he must multiply adjectives in order to somehow try to express the fullness of what is in his heart. And you know, I suppose that for many of us if we thought about it, you know, let me put it this way, let me put it in what I intend to be a positive expression of the truth here: this calls us powerfully out of our mechanical approach to praying, our mechanical approach to praise, our halfhearted efforts at worship are somewhat meandering commitment to joining in the singing with the people of God when the hymns are being led from the platform. This convicts us all of how shallow and halfhearted we often are as we consider these things. And even when we gather together and even when we sing, you know, we just kind of mumble out the words in a way that is not reflective of the full majesty and is not worthy of the fullness of the majesty of God.

So what David says here beckons us to a higher ground, beckons us to a higher place of praise where our minds are swept up with the knowledge of God and these superlatives, "the fullness of the excellency of Your greatness," come naturally out of us. It reminds

me, turn to Ephesians 3 with me. It reminds me of the Apostle Paul being swept up in his prayer. What we see here is that there is something in what we're discussing right now that is the pulsating heart of true godliness. David can't find adequate words in order to express the fullness of what he knows to be true about God so he says, "Your greatness is unsearchable." Well, in a like manner, another godly man writing under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, multiplies, multiplies the synonyms and the adjectives in order to express something of the greatness of what is being expressed.

So in Ephesians 3:14, Paul enters into conscious prayer here and he says, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." David said, "Your greatness is unsearchable." Paul says, "The love of Christ surpasses knowledge that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." Paul is praying and appealing to God to expand and to illuminate our minds in order that we might more fully comprehend the unsearchable greatness of his glory, the unsearchable greatness of the love of Christ, and there's almost a tension in his prayer here. He says in verse 18, "I'm praying that you would comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth and know the love of Christ. I'm praying that you would comprehend that which surpasses knowledge." Do you get the tension? "I'm asking God to enable you to understand that which you can't understand. It's so rich in its glory, I'm just asking God to expand you and immerse you in it in a way that goes beyond all that you could ask or think." As he goes on to say in verse 20, as again he just multiplies adverbs and adjectives, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us." There's what we think. There's what we ask. There's beyond what we ask. There's beyond all that we ask. There's abundantly beyond all that we ask. There's more abundantly beyond all that we ask. There's far more abundantly beyond all that we could ask or think. Do you see how the adjectives and the adverbs and the spirit of the biblical writers just by the language that they use elevate us into this lofty conception of who God is and how great he is? That's why David is praising him in this Psalm, "You are so great. You are unsearchably great. I can praise You truly, but I can't praise You exhaustively."

And so he declares the greatness of God as we go back to Psalm 145, having kind of seen a mirror of it in the New Testament, and then he goes on here and he speaks in verse 4, God's greatness is so wonderful that it will never die out. There will always be a voice among men that are praising God. He will always have his 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal. He always will. He will preserve his own remnant. So that David can say in verse 4 of Psalm 145, "One generation shall praise Your works to another and shall declare Your mighty acts." And so, you know, this is transcendent and yet it intersects with David's circle of influence.

And beloved, what I want you to think about is that this is a New Testament principle also. You don't need to turn there for the sake of time, but in 2 Timothy 2:2 you get the

same idea. Look, those of us that have received the faith from faithful men, we have a responsibility, it is one of our highest responsibilities and highest duties in life to do everything that is in our power to transmit it to the next generation, parents to their children, elders to their congregation, the congregation going out. 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul says to Timothy, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." He says, "Timothy, from generation to generation we need to be thinking about passing this faith along unchanged, unaltered, in the same purity with which we've received it, that it's passed along and secured in the next generation." In just that verse in 2 Timothy 2, there are four generations of believers described: there is Paul, there is Timothy, there are the faithful men that Timothy teaches, and then there are the others that the faithful men teach. So that we have to do this, beloved, as a church and we'll have some things to say about this on Sunday, as a church and as individual believers, we need to realize that there are just such higher purposes that God has invoked in saving you than simply your personal happiness and your personal well-being or feeling, you know, emotionally encouraged in your own personal private life. God has saved you in part so that you would take the baton from those that you've learned faith from and that you would be passing the baton to someone else who would carry it on and pass it on to someone after them. The Psalms talk about how a generation yet to be born will praise his name. Well, that means that we have an individual and a collective responsibility to be transmitting the faith in one way, in some way or another, in some manner instructing our children, in some manner, teaching someone else, even if you only have two or three to talk to, that that is one of the highest purposes that you have is to pass the faith along.

And beloved, this is a point far beyond the walls of Truth Community Church but I do want to say this. You know, Scripture warns against people who want their ears tickled and they gather false teachers who will just simply tell them what they want to hear. Beloved, listen, and there's always going to be men coming out with a new book who think they've got a new angle on truth or a new angle on such settled doctrines as justification and things like that. Beloved, I just want you to know, this is all I'm going to say about it, theological innovation is not a virtue. Theological innovation is not a virtue. What's a virtue is to have received the true faith from godly men in your life and from generations past, what's a virtue is to take that and to pass it along unchanged, in the pure condition that it was given to you is to pass that along so it's available and it's preserved for the next generation. That's virtue. I'm very aware that you can write really weird stuff, you can write obscure things, or you can write out new theories about how hell isn't real and, you know, how people say they've been to heaven and back, and they write books and they become very, very wealthy because people lap that stuff up, but what you and I need to know and to understand is that that is not good. That is not virtuous. The virtue in God's sight is taking what you've received, preserving it and passing it along to another generation so that they can preserve it and keep it to another.

When we think about the men that have instructed us over the ages, the 4th century, you know, beyond Christ and beyond the apostles, we think about the legacy that's been given to us by men like Chrysostom in the 4th century, and Anselm and, you know, and Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and the other great Reformers, and those who died for their faith,

for Jan Hus and Wycliffe, you know, and moving in closer to our generation, you know, men like men like Spurgeon and the great theologians from Princeton Seminary before 1929, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones and G. Campbell Morgan and others like that, and others of our modern day that we don't need to repeat their names because you know who I'm thinking of. Look, everything that we have that blesses us in the Christian life, the truth that has transformed us, the truth that we hold dear, the truth that we would die for, beloved, we have that faith, Athanasius in the 4th century defending the doctrine of the Trinity, we have this faith as a great treasure that the Holy Spirit has preserved for us through faithful men throughout centuries. We need to cherish that, and we need to realize that that is a treasure to be defended, not a commodity to be tampered with in order to increase our crowd size or to increase book sales or anything of the kind. The call is to be faithful, not to be new. If something is new, it's probably not true, and if it's true, it's certainly not new.

And so we see this as we look at verse 4, "One generation praising Your works to another and describing Your mighty acts." We've received an incalculable gift in the gospel of Jesus Christ and there ought to be a greater sense, there ought to be a greater sense of protecting the gospel than there is of protecting your own life because that's how valuable it is. And so, you know, when David speaks about the mighty acts, the awesome acts, the wonderful works of God, he doesn't specify particular works in what he says here, he doesn't go and specify what he's thinking about. You could reflect on his glory and creation as many of you love to do. You could reflect in an Old Testament sense of his deliverance of Israel from the nation Egypt. Today in New Testament terms, we would think of his grace in sending Christ as our Savior. We remember that Christ will return and establish his kingdom. Beloved, there's no exhausting it. There's no exhausting it, and God's glorious works in all of those realms display his own exalted perfections. When God delivered Israel, he was displaying his greatness. When Christ suffered on the cross to redeem sinners, he was displaying his greatness among other attributes. And as God works out his providence in the church in the subsequent 2,000 years, he's displaying his greatness, mighty acts, glorious splendor, wonderful works, abundant goodness.

And you see, beloved, and part of what makes it fresh, you know, what makes this fresh, we don't tamper with the truth, we take what we've been given and we pass it along as unaltered as possible, as humanly possible in our weakness, but what makes it fresh is this: it's not that we're injecting or inventing new truth into the body of faith that is given to us, what makes it fresh is that God's work in our own lives adds to the grounds of the praise. We know these things now by personal experience. We know the personal, those of you that have been truly born again, you know by personal experience the power of the Holy Spirit to convert your soul and to make you someone new. To sanctify you. To change you. You know the power of truth in your heart. You know how your heart burns when you hear the truth that you love being proclaimed, or you're reading it in Scripture for yourself. You know something of that. That's what makes it fresh. That's what adds to the grounds of praise as the days go along. God is still displaying his greatness to us and to a new generation in new circumstances, working out, displaying his attributes in different spheres of his providence and you and I have the blessed privilege of

participating and being a witness to it, being a witness to it in our experience, being a witness to it as we've proclaim it to others.

God is adding daily to the works for which we praise him in his providence and so it's our privilege and it is a privilege, beloved, for us to be together to do this, to declare the greatness of God to the world, to declare the greatness of God to one another, to declare the greatness of God to his people, and to celebrate it together. And there's no exhausting it. We'll never run out of things to talk about. We'll never run out of ways to describe, ways to discuss the glories of the love of Christ, the glories of God in his perfections. There's no exhausting it. It's unsearchable. We will go through all of eternity and likely developing more and more as eternity progresses, if you can use a time frame to discuss it. One aspect of the glory of eternity is going to be the deepening of our knowledge and understanding of God, and throughout all of eternity we're never going to exhaust it. It's infinite. It cannot be measured. There is no end to it.

God is great and that is one ground of David's praise, but he moves on, he moves on the second ground of his praise, it's not just that God is great but God is good. God is good, and the very nature of the character of God elicits our praise. It's not just that he's great, and when I come to this point in my thinking, I just can't get over it and I never will get over it. It's one thing for God to be so infinitely great and powerful and omnipotent, sovereign, omniscient, omnipresent, that's one thing, and for him to be so transcendently magnificent, that's unsearchable greatness, and yet at the same time, the same God is good. He is inexpressibly kind.

Look at verses 8 through 13. Again, he's multiplying attributes and adjectives.

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

David is multiplying descriptions of the attributes of God. He is merciful. He shows kindness to those who deserve judgment. He's slow to anger. He is great in loyal love to his people. The goodness of God is a multifaceted diamond that radiates different glory as you examine it from different angles. This is a 2,000 carat diamond that we're looking at and holding it up to the light and we see different aspects of the perfections of the diamond radiating as the light passes through it and as David expresses it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

I want to highlight only one aspect for the sake of time here this evening, verse 9. "The LORD is good to all, And His mercies are over all His works." And there are at least 13 times in this Psalm the word "all" is used. He's gone from A to Z in the Hebrew alphabet

so there's a comprehensive nature just in the acrostic nature of the Psalm that he uses. This is God's phrase from A to Z, you could say, but then he goes on and he uses the word "all" to show the comprehensiveness in another way and he uses it here when he says he's good to all in his mercies are over all his works. God cares for everything. He actively cares for everything under the sun. He cares for his people. God is so good that he cares for his enemies as well. He sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous alike, Jesus said in Matthew 5. He's not only good to humans, the apex of his creation, he's not only good to those that are made in his image, he's good to the minor creatures. He feeds the birds of the air. He paints the flowers of the field. He is so good. He's so good that birds who cannot feed themselves and cannot build barns to store things from one day to the next, they all find their food out of the goodness of the providential hand of God. He makes sure that his creation is cared for.

Listen, this is kind, this is merciful and this is such gracious condescension. This is the God who had no beginning, who dwells in unapproachable light. This is the God who, by the power of his spoken word, spoke the universe and the circulating galaxies into existence. "And yet what is man that You care for him? What is a sparrow? Two sold for a cent that You care for them and yet not one falls to the ground apart from Your heavenly Father," Jesus said. He does not need us. He is not impressed by anything that we do. He's just incomprehensibly good, incomprehensibly kind. A transcendent God who cares for men and animals and inanimate creation, you offer him nothing in return. And he cares for us. He had mercy on us in our rebellion against him. He has mercy on us in our dullness of spirit even as believers.

Beloved, that's good. That is kind. That, beloved, is worthy of praise. And then when you multiply all of that goodness by Infinity, you're left with being drenched in praise. And then you consider Christ himself, you consider the condescension of Christ to come into the world, you consider how he gave himself to death, even death on a cross. And why did he do it? Romans 5:6 through 8. Listen to it with me. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." We were helpless. We were ungodly. We were sinners, rebels against his will. And while we were like that, not after we had become good, but while we were unrighteous, dead in trespasses, dominated by the devil, under the wrath of God, in that miserable, hostile condition like that is when Christ in his goodness, Christ in his love, entered the world in order to redeem a people for himself, in order to save us from our sins by his grace, his goodness, his love, his kindness, his patience.

Beloved, do you see? He is good to the highest extent. And then. And then you remember still more that the goodness has only begun. Jesus says to us in this life, looking forward to the life to come, he says, "Don't let your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also." Christ giving an unbreakable promise to his people, "I will come for you. I love you. I

will gather you up and I will take you to where I am so that you and I, we can be together forever. So that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For I'm convinced that neither angels, nor principalities, nor things to come, nor things present, nor angels, nor any other created thing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Beloved, beloved, let this stick inside your mind. Christ is good. God is good to his people. And when we contemplate these things in light of Psalm 145 and the other Scriptures that we've looked at, it needs to drive out our tendencies to doubt, it needs to drive out our anxieties because he's worthy of our trust. He's great. He's able to take care of us. He's good. He will take care of us. Drive out the doubt, drive out the complaining and in its place let praise rise up in our hearts. No wonder David is praising God in this great word of praise in Psalm 145. Listen, the greatness of God is good and the goodness of God is great. The greatness of God is good, and the goodness of God is great.

And then it goes on. David goes on. He's given the grounds for his praise. God is great. God is good. God is gracious. God is gracious. God deserves our praise because he shows grace to the weak. Look at verses 14 through 19. This is so blessedly wonderful. Verse 14,

14 The LORD sustains all who fall And raises up all who are bowed down. 15 The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time. 16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds. 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.

You know, knowing some of the testimonies inside the room here, beloved, I know that some of you can testify to this by great personal experience, that when you were particularly enslaved to sin, when you were most unworthy of the greatness and the goodness of God, you cried out to him in repentance, you cried out to him, "God, deliver me from my sin." And what did he do? He did. He did. He delivered you from your ungodly thinking. He delivered you from your ungodly lifestyle. He delivered you from your enslavement to all kinds of different vices and iniquities, and he did it to me too. And, beloved, beloved, this is what God is like. Christ said, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. It is not those who are healthy who need a physician but those who are sick." And here's the point, God deserves praise because he is gracious. God does not shower his kindness and grace on self-righteous people. He rejected the Pharisee who prayed in the temple, "God, I thank You that I'm not like other men." Who was it in that section of Scripture that received the mercy of God, who walked away justified? It was the guilty tax collector who said, "God, have mercy on me, the sinner." So ashamed of his sin, so convicted of guilt that he didn't even want to look up. He simply beat his chest as a physical expression to release the feelings of remorse that were in his heart, and he called out to God and God had mercy on him. In the depth of his unworthiness, God showed him grace.

This is the nature of God. He is gracious. Let me remind you how Scripture describes the thief on the cross. Don't turn there, just listen to it with me in this context of everything that we've said. This is a great word of praise that David is giving. He's praising God because God is great, God is good and God is gracious. And while Christ is bearing the weight of the sin of his people as he is suffering himself on the cross, as he's being mocked on the cross, as darkness is about to descend upon the world, as the Father, as it were, turns his face away from his own Son and Christ, knowing all of these things are coming upon him, one solitary man cries out to him for grace in the midst of his own sufferings and in Luke 23:39, we read, "One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, 'Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!' But the other answered, and rebuking him said, 'Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he was saying," the grammar gives the idea that he was saying it repeatedly, not just once. He was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" This criminal who had earlier himself been mocking Christ, as you compare Scripture with Scripture, this one who by his own confession was being justly condemned for the crimes that he had committed, rebukes one who is mocking Christ and turns with nothing to offer. He can't offer anything from his hands. He can't even move his hands, they're immobile on the cross, on his own cross. Nothing to offer Christ, nothing but the guilt of his own soul, and he repentedly says, "Jesus, remember me." And the great goodness of God, the good greatness of God, the unsearchable graciousness of Jesus Christ responds to him in verse 43. "And He said to him, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.'" This man, who by his own confession, deserved condemnation, would wake up within a matter of moments, a few hours, and the one that he was providentially crucified with, he would be with him and see him in exalted glory in Paradise, all of his sins forgiven, fully entered into the kingdom of God, the family of God, this man who deserved nothing but death and condemnation is blessed at the finish line of his life with the greatest gift imaginable. Why? Because God is gracious. For no other reason than the fact that God wanted to show mercy to him.

And let me just say a word of this. You know, the kindness of God should lead you to repentance. If you are not in Christ, the kindness, this kind of kindness of God should melt your heart toward him and cause you to turn to him in repentance. It's not the thunderings of law, the thunderings of law can prepare the ground in conviction of sin, but it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance, Romans 2:4 says. And so there is hope for you even as the chief of sinners, the worst of sinners in your own mind. You're not the chief. The Apostle Paul was the chief. But if Christ would save a sinner on the cross like that, don't you think he would save a sinner like you? His grace is extended to all. It's offered to all. But at the same time, and here speaking with in the room, speaking to those who have hardened their heart, understand something, it is the greatest self-deception you could practice on yourself to say, "I'll repent at the end of my life. You know, the thief on the cross, He saved the thief on the cross, that's what I'll do too and I'll live the way I want." Listen, that's not the way it works. Look, if you are unwilling to repent today, if you're unwilling to turn from sin today, what makes you think that you'll

be willing down the road? If you're rejecting Christ now, what makes you think that you'll receive him later? This is not within your power to do. You need to fall and ask Christ to have mercy on you now. And the thief on the cross, it is so important to understand, yes, there was a thief on the cross who was saved in his dying moments and entered into Paradise, but do you know what? There were two and the other one didn't. The other one did not receive mercy because he hardened his heart against Christ even in his dying hour. Speaking pastorally, it is far more common for people who have rejected Christ throughout their life to harden their heart even more on their deathbed than it is to soften it in light of impending death. You have trained yourself in one way and you tend to go out the way that you've prepared yourself along the way. Yes, God can have mercy on a deathbed, but don't you dare, don't you dare take that for granted. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to turn to this gracious God who's offering Christ to you as we speak.

Well, go back one final time to Psalm 145. You're probably still there, I wasn't. The grounds for his praise. God is great. God is good. God is gracious. Finally, God is glorious. God is glorious. God not only guards his creation, God also guards his justice. He guards his holiness. And there is this this warning that I was just expressing based on the other thief on the cross, is right here on the surface of the text in verse 20 that we're looking at here tonight as well. Verse 20, "The LORD keeps all who love Him," because he's so gracious but, beloved, he's also glorious. And in verse 20 it says, "But all the wicked He will destroy." The wicked will not live forever. They will not flourish forever. There will be a time of accounting for those who reject Christ and those who refuse the gospel.

In 2 Thessalonians the Apostle Paul says this, chapter 1, verse 6 and following. He says, "For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 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." God's glory now as displayed in the gospel, displayed in the glory of Christ, beloved, another aspect, another outworking of his glory will come in judgment. And a pastor can't help but fret about some of those under his charge when he sees patterns of indifference and coldness and hardness and unteachability. Beloved, God is good, he is great, he is gracious, but he is glorious and he won't forever tolerate those who trample on all of those things. Scripture warns that a more severe judgment awaits those who reject the gospel of Christ. And all of this, all of this is a manifestation of why God should be praised. He upholds his justice. He upholds his law. Every violation of the law will be punished either in Christ or in hell. There is no alternative. He's glorious. He's gracious. He's good. He's great. That's why we praise him.

Now, with all of that in mind, go back to Psalm 145. You're still there still, aren't you? I keep going back and forth. But now David ends it where he began. In verse 21,

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

And that brings us to the grand finale. That verse is the grand finale. That's the third point. First point was the goal of the Psalm. Second point the grounds of the praise. Thirdly, the grand finale. David here has done more than set the context for our praise as he says there in verse 21, "My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, And all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever." Beloved, this is the launchpad for the end of the Psalter. This is the rocket powerfully taking off and blasting into intergalactical orbit to express the praise of God. David has concluded his Psalm, these are the last words of David that we read in the Psalter, "My mouth will praise the name of God forever and ever." But beloved, in the arrangement of the Psalms, that becomes that which launches the final five verses of the Psalm that conclude the entire book of the Psalms.

Look at Psalm 146:1, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!" Psalm 147:1, "Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God." Psalm 148:1, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights!" Psalm 149:1, "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones." And then Psalm 150, "Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD." And as if all of that wasn't enough, he has to say it one more time to end the Psalter, "Praise the LORD!" We'll look at those five Psalms in coming Tuesdays.

But beloved, that resounding echo reverberating, multifaceted, musically-induced and accompanied praise bouncing off the walls, echoing throughout eternity, joined in proclamation by choirs of angels. Beloved, let's close it this way and put it this way: get with what's going to be happening throughout all of eternity, get with what the Psalms are calling us to, get with what God is worthy of and praise the Lord.

Father, we offer You our praise. We lift the name of Christ higher and higher. We honor You and bless You both now and forevermore. Father, may it be said of us at the end of our days that we blessed the Lord, we praised the Lord as Psalm 145 called us to do. Father, may it be said of this church and of those within its walls that the truth was handed from this generation to the next so that others yet to come would praise Your works to one another and declare Your mighty acts, the glorious splendor of Your majesty, that a generation yet to be born would tell of Your greatness and, Father, as they tell of Your greatness, may those yet to come praise the Lord. In Christ's name. Amen.

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