

E. Psalm 145 – The Response of Sonship: Praise and Thanksgiving

As the songs of Israel’s sonship, the psalms proclaim and describe the blessedness and rich provision that God showers upon His children. God is a loving and faithful Father, but His lovingkindness (i.e., His faithfulness to His purposes and promises) is intentional and purposeful; it has its goal in perfecting faithful children. God created His human creature in His own image and likeness, and an image corresponds to and reflects that which it represents; when a human being conforms to his created nature and function, he reveals the One who created him; to see the image-child is to see the father (John 14:9-10). And because God is love, love is the most basic characteristic of His true children. They love as God loves, and He is the first and essential object of their love. So Israel’s fundamental obligation of sonship was to love their covenant God and Father completely and sincerely with all devotion (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 10:12-11:1). And because authentic love is grounded in true knowledge, love for God always expresses itself in the active adoration of praise and thanksgiving. The children of God are a grateful and praising people, and thus the psalms – the songs of sonship – have this as a central and pervasive theme.

1. Any number of psalms could be referenced to demonstrate this, but Psalm 145 is an excellent example of praise as the very marrow of Israel’s worship and devotion. It brings David’s psalms to their climax, as they move from humble and desperate pleas for God’s intervention to praise for deliverance and provision. The Jews who collated the psalms intentionally arranged this final set of Davidic psalms this way. They situated Psalm 145 – uniquely ascribed as “A Praise of David” – as the climax of David’s songs, and also the introduction to the final five psalms that are themselves the Psalter’s crescendo of praise.

Psalm 145 doesn’t begin with the exclamation, “*Praise Yahweh,*” as do the five psalms that follow it, but this theme dominates the psalm, even as David opened and closed his song by declaring his commitment to continual praise (vv. 1-2, 21). But whereas he began the psalm with his own *personal* intent, he closed it by calling on *all living things* (“all flesh”) to join him in his devotion and praise to the King of Israel and all creation.

2. David praised Yahweh for His *greatness* (v. 3), which he clarified by his parallel statement in verse 4. Though God is supremely great in Himself by virtue of His deity and sovereignty, David had particularly in mind His *manifest* greatness – the greatness that He demonstrates in the might and marvel of His works in the world.
 - a. David didn’t explicitly define those works, but the psalm itself shows that he had in mind Yahweh’s deeds performed on behalf of His creation that He loves. These “wonderful works” and “awesome acts” are the purposeful exercise of His will unto His ultimate goal of creational renewal – the summing up of everything in the created order in His glorified Son (Ephesians 1:9-10; cf. also Isaiah 49-55).
 - b. This purpose had *Israel*, the Abrahamic people, at its center. The triumphant offspring God pledged to Eve – the “seed” ordained to crush the serpent and banish the creational curse, He later revealed to be a descendent of Abraham: “*In you and in your descendents shall all the families of the earth be blessed*” (ref. Genesis 12:1-3, 22:15-18, 26:1-4, 28:10-14). The nation of Israel comprised these descendents, whose role as “son of God” was to make Him known to the world.

Here, too, David didn't explicitly identify Israel and its role in God's mighty works, but the Israelites for whom he penned this song would have made this connection. For he drew on the language of Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh in praising His universal goodness and mercy (vv. 8-9). David lauded the Lord's great *lovingkindness* (*hesed*), which speaks to His covenant faithfulness – i.e., His loving, unrelenting commitment to His covenant people and His purposes in and through them (cf. Exodus 20:1-6; Ezra 3:11; Nehemiah 1:1-6; Isaiah 54:1-8, 55:1-4; Jeremiah 31:1-6). This covenant signification is especially evident in the formula affirmation David cited in verse 8. Yahweh had declared this of Himself when Moses pled with Him to see His glory (Exodus 33:11-34:7), and through the centuries the children of Israel pointed to this declaration when they petitioned the Lord for His mercy and continued faithfulness toward them (cf. Numbers 14:1-24; Nehemiah 9; Psalm 86, 103; Joel 2; note also Jonah 4:1-2).

- c. David recognized that Yahweh's wondrous works of power and provision are grounded in and serve the goal of His grace, mercy and covenant faithfulness. Thus all His works give thanks to Him, and all His godly ones praise Him and bless His name, openly proclaiming the glory of His kingdom and the manifest power of His mighty deeds, so that the sons of men should come to know Him in truth as the mighty God and everlasting King (another allusion to Israel's role of mediating the knowledge of Yahweh to the nations) (vv. 9-13).
3. But beyond the human race, God's mighty acts are directed toward the good of the entire creation. His activities in the world focus on mankind (because man is the image-son ordained to exercise His rule), but with a view ultimately toward the full realization of His wise and loving intent for all creation.
 - a. God is jealous for His "very good" creation, and He sustains the earth and its inhabitants with open-handed provision, "*supporting those who fall*" and "*lifting the heads of those who are bowed down,*" even reaching beyond His image-children to "*satisfy the desire of every living thing*" (vv. 14-16; cf. 147:7-9).
 - b. Yahweh's goodness and mercy are over all His works (cf. Psalm 104), but His favor is especially toward His children who love and fear (revere) Him and call upon Him in truth (with integrity and sincerity). Thus He is *righteous* and *faithful*, always doing what is right and true out of a heart of kindness and compassion, and unwavering commitment to His own loving purposes (vv. 17-19).
 - c. Thus righteousness and faithfulness have two dimensions. Because they speak to His intent for His creation (having man at the center), they manifest themselves in fatherly care and compassion, but also in a destroying hand directed against everything and everyone that stands as an enemy of His good purposes (v. 20).
 4. David closed out this, his final song, by declaring again his commitment to the praise of Yahweh, his King, which he believed would at last be joined by "*all flesh*" in an everlasting chorus. One day, the praise in the mouths of Yahweh's godly ones would become the praise of all creation (cf. Psalm 96, 97 with Isaiah 11:1-9, 55:6-13, 65:17-25).