

The Final Doxology

Hallelujah Psalms Series, Part #5

Psalm 149-150 Dan Huff two August 28, 2016

I love the Psalms! We all have our own story about how impactful the Psalms have been in our lives. Paul David Tripp wrote:

You and I were not hardwired to make our way through this fallen world on our own. We were meant to exist with eyes filled with the beauty of [God's] presence and hearts at rest in the lap of his goodness. This is what I love about the Psalms. They put difficulty and hope together in the tension of hardship and grace that is the life of everyone this side of eternity. It is not hard to recognize the environment of the Psalms. The Psalms live in your city, on your street, in your family. The Psalms tell your story. It is a story of hope and disappointment, of need and provision, of fear and mystery, of struggle and rest, and of God's boundless love and amazing grace. People in the Psalms get angry, grow afraid, cry out in confusion, endure and survive opposition, gain hope for better days, hurt one another, run from God, trust in God, make foolish choices, ask for forgiveness, and grow wiser and stronger. They are people just like you and me.

The book of Psalms is more than a book of prayer and praise. It is a cross section of God's revelation to Israel (and to us, His people), and of Israel's (and our) response in faith to all the Lord is and has done.

The Psalms are man's word to God and God's Word to man, all inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Psalms reveal our faith when it is strong, and when it is weak. The Psalms are a window that enables us to look out on our brothers and sisters in the faith over thousands of years. The Psalms invite us to experience how God's people in the past related to Him and how we experience Him today. The book of Psalms has been called God's prescription for a complacent church, because through it He reveals how great, wonderful, magnificent, wise and utterly awe-inspiring He is.

If God's people, before the first coming of Christ, could have such a faith in the Lord, witnessing to His greatness and readiness to help, how much more should this be true among twenty-first century Christians who anticipate His second coming? The book of Psalms can and should revolutionize your devotional life, your family patterns, as well as the fellowship and witness of the church of Jesus Christ.

The Psalms are unique in the Scriptures in that they instruct us to use this type of language in our worship and praise to God, and in our individual and corporate prayers. In other words, in our most intimate moments with God, the Psalms are a model of how we are to speak to God, and how He speaks to us. And by applying these awesome, ancient words to new situations in our lives, the life of faith, hope and love of the individual Christian, the Christian family and the church can be greatly enhanced.

John Calvin, commenting on the book of Psalms wrote:

There is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror... The Holy Spirit has here drawn to life all the griefs and sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are prone to be agitated.

To those of us who have pored over the Psalms during different seasons of joy and sorrow throughout our lives, the Psalms have become dear, dear friends.

So, with that as an introduction let's look at these last two Psalms. But first, as a means of review, let's remember that Psalms 146-150 constitute the last "*Hallel*" or praise collection. These last five psalms are called the Hallelujah Psalms and are called hymns of descriptive praise, remembering that Hallelujah is just another way of saying Praise the Lord!

There are five books included in the whole collection of 150 Psalms, each ending with a doxology, such as, "*Blessed be the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Let all the people say, Amen! Praise the Lord!*" However, at the end of the Psalter, the entire Psalm 150 serves not only as the Doxology of the last book, but of the entire Psalter itself!

Now, let's turn to these final two Psalms, Psalm 149-150. I like the way Derek Kidner and John Stott divided up these last two psalms, so I'm going to borrow their outline or headings of these precious verses.

The Church Jubilant, Psalm 149:1-5

- ¹ *Praise the LORD!*
Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise in the assembly of the godly!
- ² *Let Israel be glad in his Maker;*
let the children of Zion rejoice in their King!
- ³ *Let them praise his name with dancing,*
making melody to him with tambourine and lyre!
- ⁴ *For the LORD takes pleasure in his people;*
he adorns the humble with salvation.

⁵ *Let the godly exult in glory;
let them sing for joy on their beds.*

In verse one, we clearly see the corporate nature of this worship: “...*in the assembly of the godly!*” This is a call to worship together, to encourage one another in our walk of faith and in our praise together.

Also in verse one, we read, “*Sing to the Lord a new song...*” We see this phrase often in Scripture, especially in the psalms (Psalm 96:1; Psalm 98:1; Psalm 40:1-3) where we clearly see this as a song of the redeemed. The old man has an old song; the new man has a new song!

*I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
² He drew me up from the pit of destruction,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.*

(Psalm 40:1-3)

Here we see that true believers have a song all their own. The song of the redeemed—the elect, the converted—is a new song that will never grow old. Psalm 40 tells us that when this song is heard by the unconverted, many will put their trust in the Lord by virtue of the strong influence of heartfelt, authentic worship by true believers. So our worship, in this sense, is a witness to the unbeliever, especially when the assembly of God’s people gather publicly to glorify the Lord in proclaiming His praise together.

In verse two we see the Lord commanding His people to rejoice in Him as their Maker. Israel and the Children of Zion are names given to the same people. In other places in the Psalms they are called saints. God’s salvation began with Abraham’s family, who then became the nation of Israel, and now, today, has burst all boundaries of nation, race, language, ethnic origin or geographical location. Together, as the children of Zion, we all rejoice in our King!

In verse we see we are to praise Him with dancing, making melody with various instruments. Since this is here and also repeated in Psalm 150, I could avoid it all together and just defer to our Pastor David Sunday on this, or I could just go ahead and address it head on, and lean on the old saying, “It’s easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission.” I think you want me to talk about this so I’ll address it briefly.

The human capability and inclination to dance are rooted in creation, not in the fall. Dance is a valid expression of God's image displayed through the artistic sensitivity and sociability of His creatures. Along with every other created human capability, however, dance suffers from our fallen and sinful condition. As a result, Christians are not to necessarily reject dance but to redeem it, realizing that some forms of dancing are more difficult to redeem than others.

Now, a lot has changed since David wrote this Psalm and many churches to this day hold strong to the conviction that dancing is a sin. Somewhere down the line dance has been banned in church settings and has been looked down upon by those who would call themselves Christians. Physical dance is really not the issue. The movement of the body does not have any magical aspect to it. Dance does, on the other hand, by its very act have vulnerability and heartfelt courage as an individual surrenders to the judgment of those around him, much like in a microcosmic way we may feel awkward just raising our hands, which can, in a sense be viewed as a part of dance.

In the Old Testament, Hebrew traditions were full of dancing and were the norm. As a gift from Yahweh, dance functioned as a medium of prayer and praise, as an expression of joy and reverence. "In many Old Testament biblical allusions to, and descriptions of, dance there is no disapproval, only affirmation of this medium of worship" (Kidner & Stott). The people are encouraged to praise God with "*dancing, making melody to him with timbrel and lyre*" (Psalm 149:3), and to "*praise him with timbrel and dance*" (Psalm 150:4). Dancing was such a common way of life in that time period and culture that in passages alluding to rejoicing without specific mention of dancing, it can be assumed that dance was more than likely normal and expected.

David was a true worshipper in spirit and in truth. He didn't need a dance instructor to dance. In 2 Samuel 6:16 he forgot the crowd, and in a spontaneous moment of spiritual emotion he began humbly expressing his spiritual fervency as he danced with all his might before the Lord. That was the kind of God-honoring dance that was both Holy Spirit inspired and Holy Spirit anointed. Some would reply that when his wife Michal despised David for dancing that it was because he shouldn't have been dancing, but you can see that David did not apologize for that and remember that Michal was barren from that day onward.

Deuteronomy 6:5 speaks of expressing our love for God with our entire being, meaning spirit, soul and body. Clearly our soul includes our mind, will and emotions. "How could we possibly express such strong emotions as thankfulness, love and joy without using our physical bodies?" (Kidner & Stott). Try to express emotion effectively without using your body—it's almost impossible!

Think about the story in Acts when the crippled man was healed and "*He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and*

praising God” (Acts 3:8-9). Now that is worship! No fancy choirs, just a man praising God for what He has done in His life and for Who God is.

There are also cultural differences in worship practices around the world that can more strongly emphasize dance. For example, African or South American cultures can be more accepting of dance than our American culture.

My conclusion: We need Christians who are willing to dance in the world and let the light of Christ shine through them. How that shows up here in our morning worship services, I’ll leave to David Sunday and Dan Leeper to work out.

However, just as there can be controversy over what musical instruments are or are not acceptable for use in worship (as we will see more clearly in Psalm 150), here we see a strong atmosphere of joy, suggesting that we are to worship our God with *“all that is within me, bless His holy name.”*

Give heart and soul and mind and strength to worship and serve the King of kings. This suggests some of the many ways to do that and are not intended to restrict, but to suggest examples of the myriad of ways God can and should be worshipped.

In verse four, we see that *“God takes pleasure in His people and adorns the humble with salvation.”* First of all, think about the fact that God takes pleasure in You! How can you NOT praise God Who takes pleasure in you? Here we see the humble being those who see their need for salvation and He is gracious and graciously bestows that salvation upon them. God first makes us meek and humble, then makes us beautiful by giving us the beauty and power of the gospel. He takes pleasure in doing all of this.

In verse five, the saints or the godly are again referred to here as exulting God and singing to Him even in their beds. Here we see, night as well as day becoming a time to praise Him. First of all, when all is well, after a long fruitful day of ministry and service to Christ, we lie down in peace, satisfied with the fruit of our labors, with the praise of God on our lips. But also, when we are in pain and can’t sleep; when sleep evades us because we are preoccupied with the cares and worries of this world; even on our death beds, we can turn to God and praise the One Who neither slumbers nor sleeps and is constantly watching over and preserving us.

The Church Militant, Psalm 149:6-9

In this last Psalm we see the spiritual warfare against the world and the princes of it by the power of God’s Word and Spirit. This reminds me of Hebrews 4:12 which refers to the Word of God as a two-edged sword. We see the verbs here being in the future tense, looking ahead to future

judgment on nations, peoples, kings and leaders. In the full-orbed view of the Christian life and God's plan for salvation, we see this judgment having its fulfillment in Christ. The overall meaning we see here is that at a time in the future, under the gospel, God would give His truth such power that the kings and leaders of the earth would be carried away as captives in the chains of judgment, and at a future time, kings and nobles would be powerless. It says this judgment has been written throughout the centuries by the prophets. And in this judgment work of subduing the world, through the knowledge of the two-edged sword of the Word of God, all the saints have a part in this, the sword being *"in their hands, and the praises of God in their throats!"*

They play their part through worship, through prayer, through sharing the Word, through holy living. In all this they participate in the honor and glory resulting from the triumphs of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Listen to this future judgment described in Revelation 19:1-5:

¹ After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out,

*"Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
² for his judgments are true and just;
for he has judged the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth with her immorality,
and has avenged on her the blood of his servants."*

*³ Once more they cried out,
"Hallelujah!
The smoke from her goes up forever and ever."*

⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" ⁵ And from the throne came a voice saying,

*"Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
small and great."*

So, just as Dan Leeper shared a few weeks ago from Psalm 146, we are not to trust in princes, or presidents, or in any other man made device in which there is no salvation! For all their plans will perish.

So, to conclude this Psalm, whatever the final judgment will be like and whatever the church's part in it will be, the conflict in verses six through nine are already a reality today. The powers of evil are abroad in the world and it is for the church of God, with the praise of God on our mouths and the double-edged sword of Bible truth in our hands, to see that these powers do not have their way, that the plans are frustrated and that their captives are liberated.

Psalm 150

¹ *Praise the LORD!*
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens!
² *Praise him for his mighty deeds;*
praise him according to his excellent greatness!

³ *Praise him with trumpet sound;*
praise him with lute and harp!
⁴ *Praise him with tambourine and dance;*
praise him with strings and pipe!
⁵ *Praise him with sounding cymbals;*
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
⁶ *Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!*
Praise the LORD!

Remember that this Psalm not only rounds off the fifth book in the Psalms but it also ends the entire Psalter.

The “Where” of Praise | Psalm 150:1

“*Praise God in His sanctuary.*” So this is a call to God’s worshippers to meet together in His chosen place. We also see the heavenly hosts mingling their praises with ours. Earth and heaven are together in this praise. His glory fills the universe: His praise can do no less.

The “Why” of Praise | Psalm 150: 2

Here there are two comprehensive reasons for praise. The first being for His mighty deeds, referring either to His power exercised or to the results of His power. However, in addition to all of His creation and His sovereignty over it, this must primarily refer to His saving acts as we see in Psalm 20:6: “*Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of His right hand.*” His mighty deed is as the humble Servant, dying on a cross for the salvation of those who would put their trust in Him.

Then secondly, we are to praise Him simply for Who He is, for His greatness of being Who He is in Himself as opposed to what He has done.

The “how” of praise” | Psalm 150:3-5

In these verses, the how of praise is answered, “With everything that is within you!”

In this short list, various instruments are listed, not to limit our worship to just these, but to illustrate the varied occasions, emotions and affections of worship. The trumpet and loud clashing cymbals are for celebration, joy, victory, loud overflowing adoration and praise! The strings, lute and pipe were used for more solemn, sedate, meditative occasions like when David played his lute to soothe King Saul’s troubled spirit.

Now, there are varied views on the use of instruments in worship as prescribed in Scripture. Some ask whether New Testament worship can be seen as different than Old Testament. Bob Kauflin, who wrote many of the worship songs we have sung from Sovereign Grace Ministries, once said, “It’s a shame that musical styles and the use of varied instruments has more power to divide us than the gospel has to unite us.” What we should all agree upon is that the music of a renewed heart alone is what God will accept, and that the gospel has the power to unite us in a way nothing else can.

One day, we can all look forward to a heaven where we will have something better than organs, guitars and drums to praise Him together with.

The “Who” of Praise| Psalm 150: 6

Literally verse six reads, “*Let all breath praise the Lord!*” Here we need only to look back at Psalm 148:7-12 to sum up the glorious variety of praise: “*...sea creatures, beasts and livestock, creeping things and flying birds, kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and rulers, young men and maidens, old men and children...*”

As we look ahead to the worship in Revelation 5:13 we read, “*And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, “To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever. Amen.”*”

Let me conclude here by creating a much larger context for these Psalms. Turn back to Psalm 1 for a moment. Some have taught that you can see Psalm 1 and Psalm 150 as bookends to the entire Psalter. Both have six verses. Another commentator describes the psalter as a journey from obedience (Psalm 1) to praise (Praise 150). In Psalm 1 we see the call to avoid the wicked, sinners

and scoffers, but to delight in the Law of the Lord and to meditate on it day and night, and Psalm 1 ends with a warning of judgment for those who walk in wickedness (as we also saw in Psalm 149)

Some have likened the Psalms to the journey of Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, as he begins his journey of obedience, walking through the various struggles of doubt, temptation, trials, battles, his own sinfulness, the influences of the world, then ending with his joyous arrival at the Celestial City where there is nothing but praise and exultation for all eternity, that being what we see in Psalm 150. Just like Christian on his journey, after Psalm 1, the next 148 Psalms have worked their way, often painfully, through all of the "Yes, but's" in our lives. They confront the conflicts, burdens, mysteries and sufferings that both the individual believer and the people of God have to cope with, and all that God, as their covenant Lord, does for them on their journey of faith.

So, in conclusion, the entire book of Psalms ends as briefly and as deceptively simple as it begins. In Psalm 1 the good prosper, the wicked perish, and everything will work out just fine. The answer of Psalm 150 is all praise to God. It does not take any of us very long to realize that living the way God intended is a great deal more difficult than we thought when we began the journey. We can become disoriented, but God is reorienting us to a new outlook on this Christian life, and that fills the rest of the Psalter.

We finally end with the single-minded praise of Psalm 150, which sees no evil, but is not naïve to the existence of it. In Psalm 150 we see that all such things as we have seen in the preceding 149 Psalms will end and will have been dealt with by God's judgment and redemptive power. In the meantime, we abandon ourselves to total trust in the Lord Who has so wonderfully revealed Himself and His purposes.

The hymn writer, George Herbert, wrote:

Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King.
The church with psalms must shout,
No doors can keep them out.
But above all, the heart must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing,
My God and King.

(Let All the World in Every Corner Sing by George Herbert, 1633)

Let's pray.

Lord, we the redeemed praise You with the new song that You have placed in our hearts. Knowing this we are sent out into the world to further Your cause. For Israel, that meant waging literal war against the nations that rejected You. For us, as Christians, our sword is the gospel of

Your Holy Word which penetrates hearts and any defense against Your truth. We conquer through the blood of Jesus Christ, and our testimony is what You have done in our lives. Gospel joy, knowing how much you take pleasure in us and have adorned us with so great a salvation, makes us ready for this mission.

Lord, we see that the Psalms are really a miniature of life. Every possible experience, if offered to and seen through You, is destined to end in praise. Confession leads to the joy of forgiveness. If we could praise You perfectly, we would love You completely and then our joy would be full. The new heavens and the new earth will be perfect because everyone and everything is glorifying You fully and therefore enjoying You forever. So, these final Psalms give us a glimpse of that unimaginable future. Give us a heart that beats in praise to You always and forever. Amen.

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