

P.R.A.I.S.E.

Psalm 47

By Mike Elliott at DCC on November 9, 2008

Introduction

That song and the Scripture it is based on in Deuteronomy 6, so clearly speak of the exuberance and joy we have in praising God. In fact, Hallelujah means "PRAISE THE LORD."

I will be teaching from Psalm 47, please open your bibles there, and I'll follow that with the verses from Deuteronomy 6.

Psalm 47

- 1 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!**
- 2 For the LORD Most High *is* awesome;
He is a great King over all the earth.**
- 3 He will subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.**
- 4 He will choose our inheritance for us,
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah**
- 5 God has gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.**
- 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**
- 7 For God *is* the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with understanding.**
- 8 God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.**
- 9 The princes of the people have gathered together,
The people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth *belong* to God;
He is greatly exalted.**

Deuteronomy 6.4-5

Hear O Israel, Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one! You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Father in heaven, you are the one deserving of our love. May we show that love in abundant praise with our whole heart, soul and strength.

I ask for the work of your Holy Spirit to take what otherwise would be my mere words, what otherwise would be the congregation's dumb ears, and otherwise would be unworthy praise; to take them and make my words words of life, take their ears and open them, take our praise and elevate it to your throne for a pleasing sacrifice to you.

For by faith, and in Christ, you are well pleased by our praise.

This I ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

I grew up in Southern California and when I was 11 years old the Olympics came to Los Angeles. It was a very big deal. The city just south of where I lived had the cycling races on their main streets and the aquatics complex adjacent to my high school hosted the diving competition. I'd played soccer from an early age my dad was able to acquire three tickets to the gold medal match of men's soccer—for him, my brother, and for me. When we found out we got the tickets we were excited, and we didn't even know who would be playing!

As the much-anticipated day approached, we learned that it would be France against Brazil. I still remember sitting out on the patio of our house with spray-paint and cardboard making placards with the national flags of *both* countries, so we would be ready just in case our seats were surrounded by a group of ardent fans of one or the other teams. You don't want to be unprepared when it comes to international soccer fans!

Once we were there it was fun to watch the game, to be packed into a stadium with nearly 100,000 other people. But it was a bit awkward because we didn't really have any passion for either team. We enjoyed the quality of the sport but we weren't into cheering. Our shyness and lack of enthusiasm affected our outward expression of support for either team.

Unfortunately, when I became a Christian, a similar pattern continued. Of course I was no longer ambivalent about which team I supported—I was firmly on the Lord's team—but my shyness kept me from fully entering into the outward expression of my zeal for God.

If I say that I love God with all my heart, soul, and strength (per Deuteronomy 6) yet don't express it outwardly as Scripture shows is proper to do (per Psalm 47) I am either ignorant of Scripture's commands or a hypocrite.

We all are learning and growing, and to one degree or another fall into the first category of ignorance—so I'll grant myself and y'all some leeway here; but there is a whole chapter in Matthew pronouncing woes on hypocrites! I think there are few things as insulting to God and confusing to unbelievers as hypocrisy.

You can see what I am getting at here. If we are to love God with our whole heart, soul, and strength, and neglect to do so properly in our praise, we are either ignorant or hypocrites. We say we will heed all Scriptures commands yet we don't.

Today I have information and admonition; *information to avoid ignorance and admonition to avoid hypocrisy*. In all of it I trust you will be Bereans and search the Scriptures to see if what I say is true or false.

Posture of Praise (vs. Worship)—vv1,6

First, let me distinguish between praise and worship. In choosing the title for this message I really wanted to use "Praise" because it made for good alliteration with my previous message on prayer. But then I had to sort through the issue of praise versus worship. Was I really meaning worship when I was thinking about praise? I think this is a distinction a lot of us miss so let me share with you how these two terms relate.

A. Praise = shout (halal), extol (yadah, aineo), sing with musical instruments (zamar, psallo), honor (doxazo). 2Chron 20.19

B. Worship = pay homage (hawah), bow down (barach, proskuneo), serve (abad, latreo), be in awe (yarel, sebo). 2Chron 20.18

Looking at the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament usages, *praise* means to shout, extol, sing with musical instruments, and honor while *worship* means to pay homage, bow down, serve, or be in awe.

As one author states it, "praise is an upward explosion of energetic expression to God [whereas] worship take[s an] opposite direction. [It] involves a downward, reverent, submission.

One is dancing, the other is bowing;
 One is shouting, the other is kneeling;
 One can be raucous, the other silent;
 One is leaping, the other is prostration;
 One is exulting, the other debasing;
 One is rejoicing, the other is trembling."¹

¹ Aaron Keys, "Worship 101". July 18, 2004.

Note there are similarities: they both have a sense of extolling & honoring, and both take place individually, as families, and corporately as a congregation.

The most significant difference has to do with the way that is done—*praise* is loud, vocal, and upbeat whereas worship is humble and reverent². In Genesis 24.52 when **Abraham's servant heard their words, ... he worshiped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.** In Psalm 138 verse 2 it says **I will worship toward your holy temple**, which when we sang it earlier it was translated, "toward your holy temple Lord, I bow".

Contrast that with the use of praise in Psalm 47 verse 1: **Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!**

This contrast is well captured in two verses side by side in 2 Chronicles. Chapter 20 vv18-19: ¹⁸**And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD.** ¹⁹**Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high.**

It is no accident that a difference in posture and bodily action is a key to the distinction here. By its very nature laying flat on the face or kneeling engenders a feeling of humility and respect whereas standing, singing loudly, and holding your hands up engenders a different expression.

Remember, we are to love God with our mind and our strength, our bodily strength. We must avoid the Greek pagan concept that says the body is unimportant, or even worse, inherently evil. The carnal body is evil, but once redeemed it is good. The carnal mind is evil, but once redeemed it is good. The carnal soul is evil but once redeemed it is good. We must worship God with redeemed souls, minds, and bodies.

² It is apparent that modern English usage is different than the Biblical usages since we often speak of the Worship Service (referring to the whole time together) while "Praise" is a component of that Worship Service. Even when we speak of "Praise Bands" to mean "upbeat, peppy" we are speaking of "upbeat, peppy worship music"—again confusing the terms somewhat.

C. Posture in Prayer—Prostration (Josh 7.6, 1Chr 21.16, Matt 26.39, etc.); Kneeling (Dan 6.10, Acts 9.40, Luke 22.41 [note all these are private prayer]); Standing (Job 30.20, Gen 18.22, Lk 18.10-13, Neh 9.5); Hands Raised (Ps 28.2, 88.9, 143.6).

Here is a place where tradition too often infringes on what is biblical. Two weeks ago I taught on prayer and alluded to the impact of posture. I noted that lying cozy in bed is a very unwise prayer position! How about a much more conventional prayer position...I challenge you to find a spot in Scripture where public prayer involves closing the eyes and bowing the head, which is what we do all the time. Also, where in Scripture are we told to pray while seated? One example I found is of David in 2 Samuel 7.18, where he went into a private room and sat before the LORD and prayed. Even that example may not comport with our custom, since some interpreters understand that to mean he knelt and sat back on his feet. Also, it is a private prayer not a public prayer.

Let me share with you a quote from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA in 1849:

"... the posture of standing in public prayer, and that of kneeling in private prayer, are indicated by examples in Scripture, and in the general practice of the ancient Christian church, the posture of sitting in public is nowhere mentioned, and by no usage allowed; but on the contrary, was universally regarded by the early church as heathenish and irreverent, and is still in the customs of modern and western nations an attitude obviously wanting in the due expression of reverence; Therefore, this General Assembly *Resolve*, that the practice in question be considered grievously improper whenever the infirmities of the worshipper do not render it necessary;"

Numerous other postures DO have repeated biblical usage: standing with eyes and hands raised, standing with hands at the waist, kneeling with hands up, kneeling with hands and face down, lying on the ground with face down and hands up.³

Pardon me for filling in a gap in my exhortation from two weeks ago, but clearly Scripture says a lot about posture in prayer, as it does also about the use of the body in praise.

³ Interestingly, the Council of Nicea in 325 forbade kneeling on Sundays because that posture, one of penitence, was inappropriate during a celebration of the Resurrection; this is still the custom of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

D. Use of the Body in Praise—Mouth (shout-Ps 35.27, speak-Ps 34.1, sing-Ps 47.1,6, declare, Ps 22.22); Hands (clap-Ps 47.1, raise-Ps 134.2, 63.4); Standing (Ex 3.5); Dancing (Ps 150.4, Lk 6.23).

In our text the clearest use of the body in praise is in verses 1 and 6. Clapping uses the hands while shouting and singing use the voice. These verses are exceedingly clear that our bodies are involved in praising God. Further, they are not used faintheartedly or shyly, like me at the Olympic soccer game or as a young Christian. We CLAP. We SHOUT. We SING. Think of the contrast between boisterous applause that makes a room rumble and the kind of prim, proper, contained applause of the Queen at the opera.

Looking at the list in outline point "D", we see there are a variety of ways to properly use the body in praise. For example, shouting. Note this isn't to be chaotic, for God is not the author of confusion (1Cor 14.33). When we agree with what is said and sung we give a hearty, "Amen!" It shows we are listening and that we agree. Also, speaking of dancing, we do need to be careful. This morning during one of the songs our little daughter danced her way off the chair and tumbled headfirst to the floor—you probably heard her cry—so do be careful.

Speaking of expressing our exuberance, in outline section "A" I wrote down for you one of the Hebrew words for praise: *halal*. It has the further sense of "to be clamorously foolish". Kinda sounds like the crowd at a sporting event, right? Of course, those folks are called "fans", shortened from "fanatics". If the Cornhusker fanatics at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln clamor foolishly for their here-today-gone-tomorrow football team, how much more should we clamor foolishly for the eternal God who is King over all the earth!

Reigning King—vv2-3,7-8

Indeed, as verses 2-3 and 7-8 say: **a great King over all the earth.**

E. Universal authority, "over all the earth"—Ps 72.8, 103.19

His authority as king is universal. It extends over all the earth (Ps 72.8, 103.19) as the waters cover the sea. There is no part of the sea *not* covered by water.

F. Active authority, "will subdue the nations"—Rom 16.20; 1Cor 15.25, 27; Eph 1.22; Heb 2.8

This authority over all the earth is active. He is subduing all the nations. All nations are being put under the foot of Jesus, and we as his ambassadors are participating in that subduing to the point that the nations are being put under our feet. (Rom 16.20; 1Cor 15.25, 27; Eph 1.22; Heb 2.8)

Further, we do not give praise to an absentee God. In this age he is with us in the person of the Holy Spirit, and his omnipresence and omniscience dictate that he sees and hears everything we do.

Accept his precepts—v4

Following this declaration of God's authority, which is really an outworking of His sovereignty, the psalmist applies this sovereignty to the wisdom of God's will and providence.

Verse 4 says, **He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves.**

G. He chose the Promised Land and determined the tribes' allotments—Ex 13.5; Num 14.23, 26.55; Dt 4.1; Josh 21.43

Recall, the Israelites did not choose the Promised Land. God selected it and brought his people there. Once there they were quite unable to conquer it without God making a way before them and going with them into battle. Once it was conquered they did not settle wherever they wanted. God had them draw lots to assign their inheritances—lots which did not operate by chance.

At every step of the way they had to seek God's will (his revealed precepts), follow his leading, fight the battles He led them into, and rejoice in the outcome he brought about. Every step of the way God was in control and he provided for them.

H. He has decreed all things: including how to praise him and the circumstances in which to praise him—Rom 8.28, Ps 33.1

So too must we seek after God's will (his revealed precepts) in every area of life, especially as it pertains to how the Sovereign King of the earth is to be praised. Having learned his precepts, we accept them and implement them.

Part of learning and accepting his precepts is accepting the circumstances that accompany them. It would be quite natural for some of the tribes to have been jealous and dissatisfied when the inheritances were allotted. Imagine them saying, "That's not fair. Asher got the north coast and we are in the mountains!" But Scripture says that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. (Rom 8.28)

It is by faith that we trust his wisdom, and by faith we offer up praise. What is not of faith is sin (Rom 14.23) so apart from faith our attempts at praise is sin. *With* faith we claim the declaration of Psalm 33 verse 1: **praise from the upright is beautiful.** We must not rely on outward appearance, but live out these actions in the full strength of God's gift of grace.

A caution is in order here. I am clearly commending outward expression in praise, but remember that outward action is not a substitute of true heart feeling, it is an expression of it. In the first chapter of Isaiah (v13-17) there is a stern rebuke of people doing empty outward actions. Jesus also rebuked people for concerning themselves with outward appearances while they neglected the inner work, calling them whitened sepulchers that still had a stench. (Mt 23.27) So we must not substitute outward expression for inward conviction. The inward conviction is a work of God's magnificent grace that is visible in outward expression of praise.

Instruments—v5

The psalmist continues with his resounding praise in verse 5. **God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.**

I. Music mimics mood—Ps 150

As I understand it, the victorious action of God either accompanies the trumpet or is like a trumpet. Either way, praise is related to musical instruments. Psalm 150 is quite explicit in calling for musical instruments to accompany praise:

- 3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the lute and harp!**
- 4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!**
- 5 Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with clashing cymbals!**

It is perfectly fitting to use these instruments in praise. And notice that the mood of the instruments mimics the tone of the praise. The band described in Psalm 150 is intrinsically joyful. And that is as it should be.

Sing—v6

Moving on to verse 6 we are reminded to sing praises. It is repeated in this verse 4 times so clearly singing praise is critical. It would get tiresome for me to list the number of verses that speak of singing praise. Suffice it to say, singing is critical.

Previously I mentioned that the singing needs to be whole hearted. Singing isn't muttering nor is it whispering. If the singing isn't whole hearted (Ps 9.1, 111.1, 138.1) and hence confidently vocal, it isn't singing praise.

Psalm 9.1, **I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works.** Psalm 111.1, **Praise the LORD! I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.**

And notice again the psalmist gives us the reason why we are to sing praises to God... because he is the King of all the earth. Apparently we don't need more reason than that!

Exalted—v9

In our final verse we see the gathering together of people to praise God. Verse 9: **The princes of the people have gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham.**

J. Object of our congregational praise, "gathered together".

Throughout the ages and across the centuries the people of God are one; together we are the sons of Abraham (Gal 3.7) and we gather to worship Abraham's God. Hence we worship the same God in the same way. As David praised Abraham's God, so do we praise Abraham's God. We sing, we stand, we shout, we raise our hands; we celebrate.

K. Provider of the congregation's protection, "shields of the earth belong to God".

The princes mentioned in the first part of this verse refer to the leaders of the people. In the middle part of the verse it speaks of the shields of the earth, again a reference to the authorities on earth that are here for protection. Civil government is supposed to be a protection to the people of

God. Notice that these princes, these shields of the people, are God's—they belong to God. This is another statement of the LORD's authority over the world and all that dwells herein...

Conclusion

...leading to an appropriate conclusion by the psalmist: God is greatly exalted. Is there any better way to conclude a statement on praise? God is exalted in his being, and may he be exalted in our praises. May we praise him, the reigning King, with the full strength of our bodies, according to his precepts

Let us stand to pray.

Father in Heaven, through the merit of Christ and the mercy you have bestowed on us through faith in him, we come boldly to your throne. We do so in prayer and praise. Please, O God, may we do so rightly. May all of our labors, all of the things you will in us to do, conform to your Truth and be empowered by your Spirit. You are the Sovereign God, the King of all the Earth and to you we offer our Praise. WE love you, we praise you, we do so with all our hearts, souls and strength. With our whole being, mind and body included. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Having read and investigated Psalm 47, let's now sing it. Really sing it shouting to God with the voice of triumph. We celebrate the triumph Jesus Christ our Lord has obtained on our behalf.



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