

Psalm 150

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Now I'm going to venture to speak on one of the psalms, and it is in fact the last psalm, Psalm 150. Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts. Praise him according to his excellent greatness.

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance. Praise him with stringed instruments and organs. Praise him upon the loud cymbals. Praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.

[00:01:11] Now I don't know when last you heard an address on that psalm, if ever, so to speak. As far as I'm concerned, I don't recollect anybody ever having spoken on that psalm in my hearing. And I feel that I'm venturing, rather, to venture to read it and to try to say something about it. But whatever else can be said, it envisages a day when the response to God and the response to the Lord Jesus is going to be on a broader scale than it is now. We were reading this afternoon about a little group in Bethany, just before the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there, there was a unanimity amongst the individuals there. A total response, [00:02:08] even though by a few, to the Lord Jesus. But this psalm, which, of course, is the climax of all the psalms, envisages a day when there's going to be not only unanimity, but universality, so to speak, in the response and in the acclamation that will be given to God in a day that is yet to come. How I want to speak about it is this. I want to use this as, as it were, a sample psalm, though it's rather a special one to be called a sample psalm. And what I would like to try to do is to speak about the psalms in general first. And in particular, I want, if I can, to say something about the Christian attitude and the Christian view of [00:03:06] the psalms. And then a little bit later on, I would like to say something about the closing stages of the book of psalms. The fifth book of psalms starts at Psalm 107, goes right through to this 150th psalm. And there is a sort of special character that one can see in the closing book of the psalms, the fifth book of psalms. I would like to say just a little bit about that, having spoken about the psalms in general first. Then finally, I hope to get right to the end here and look at these last one or two psalms, and in particular, the last one of all, and say a few words about that too. Now, I think it would be fair to say, and I'm sure you would [00:04:02] agree with me when you think about it, that the way to get a proper view of the psalms, a Christian view of the psalms, is not to plunge straight into the psalms and then ignore the rest of the Bible. But the way to find out what the psalms are, and are for us, particularly in the Christian day, is to look at them in the light of other scriptures and the rest of the Bible, in fact. And in order to understand the Old Testament, in order to understand the psalms, with the Christian angle on the psalms, we have to start with the New Testament, of course. The Christian view of anything is only got by starting with the New Testament. That's not to underrate [00:05:01] the Old Testament at

all. But if we are to see Christian truth, then that is enshrined, first of all, in the New Testament. And if we are going to make sense of the whole of the Bible, we will have to understand the linkages between the New Testament and the Old Testament, and the way in which the One Testament assists the understanding of the other. The New Testament helps us to understand the Old Testament. In the light of the Christian truth, we're able to go back and to see the way in which things were developing, and the end towards which they were all developing in the Old Testament days. On the other hand, once we've got a hold of the Christian truth in the New Testament, then how many marvellous things we find in the Old Testament which were, as it were, pointing forward and illustrating things that come to light in the Christian day, [00:06:07] and in the Christian part of the Holy Scriptures. So that the way to get the Christian view of the Psalms, I suggest, is to, first of all, have our minds fairly well steeped in the New Testament.

And it is a misunderstanding. It is a wrong understanding of the Psalms that might be got by simply plunging into the Psalms and ignoring the rest of the Bible, and simply trying to find what we can find in the Psalms themselves. One of the things that the Book of Psalms is not, and when you think about it, it's obvious really, we're not reading of Christian responses when we read of the statements and the prayers and the things that the men in the Psalms voice. These [00:07:07] are not, whatever else they are, they're not Christian responses. These are not Christian hymns, if you like. These are not Christian expressions, pure and simple. A lot of the things that Christians know about from the New Testament are not to be found in the Psalms. And a lot of the attitudes which are a reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are oppressed upon Christians and expected from Christians, and they have the power to show them as well, are not likely to be discovered in the Book of Psalms. It's not Christian response. It's not Christian expressions, exactly. But on the other hand, what it is, the Book of Psalms, is a set of experiences voiced and felt by godly men. It's a book of experience. Very [00:08:11] obviously, as you look at one psalm after another and right through the Psalms, these are the voice of experience. Feelings of godly men under pressures often, under testing, under the sense of abandonment sometimes, under the sense of trial, under the sense of loss, under the sense of heavy situations which are upon them, as a cry goes out to God. And these are godly men, indeed. And these prayers and these things that are voiced in the Psalms, these expressions of distress, these expressions of crying out to God, these expressions of dependence upon God, are expressions of pious godly men in the situation in which they were [00:09:07] found. And while these may not be the things that Christian people particularly would say, nevertheless, there are the experiences of godly men, and there's a very great deal to learn from the Psalms by looking at the piety of these men of God who expressed these things to their God as they knew him in that day. The piety of these men, the sensitivity of these men in the situation in which they found their reality before God, that surely is something that shines through all the Psalms. And whatever else we are reading, we are reading about real men, real godly men, in real situations, expressing openly their feelings to God. And often, they're under pressure.

[00:10:09] Often, they're going through the mill, so to speak. And through all those earlier parts of the Psalms, there's a great variety of kinds of situations in which the individuals are expressing themselves. There is the feelings of godly men. And while it's true that they didn't have the Christian light, and while it's true that we have truth far surpassing what they had in their day, yet it's also true that these were godly men, and their reaction and their faithfulness to God, in the light of the distressing situation in which they were, shines through. And there are tremendous lessons in the book of Psalms. For people like ourselves, we might feel rebuked [00:11:04] often when we see how pious and how true to God, in their problems and in their situations, these godly men often were. The Psalms really have a good deal that might be called prophetic in them. We see faithful men under

pressure. And we not only see them under pressure, but we see them coming out of their pressures and finding the relief. God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. That's our, which we all know. Those are men who have been in trouble, but have found God to be their resort, and God to be their refuge in their trouble. And not only are the feelings under the pressure, but the feelings that, on the other side of the pressure, so to speak, the feelings of relief and rejoicing, [00:12:03] celebration, that come into the minds of people who have known their God and proved Him in the ways in which those psalmists had proved God. It would be fair to say, I think, that the situations that the psalmists passed through and the things that they voiced in those situations are prophetic in a certain way of experiences which other people like them, people that know their God in the same sort of way as they did, people who knew God in the way that the Israelites knew God. Israel is to pass through tribulation in days that are yet to come, as I suppose you know. And the earthly people of God is going to know a lot about pressure and a lot about heavy circumstances, [00:13:02] and is going to know God in the kind of way that is reflected in the psalms in these particular kinds of ways, yet again in days which are still future to us today. And so the psalms are expressions of feelings of people that know their God in a certain way, and it's really people amongst the earthly people of God who found God to be what He was for them in their day, and the earthly people of God, the faithful amongst the earthly people of God, in all the great tribulation that is ahead for them, they, the true ones, the faithful ones, are going to find God in these kinds of ways to be their resort and their refuge under the tremendous pressures that are going to come upon them in days that are yet to come. And out of it all, God is going to deliver them, [00:14:01] and they're not only going to know the dark experiences in the midst of the pressure, but they're also going to know the joyous experiences when that kind of thing is over, and when God has relieved them, and God has redeemed them, and God has reinstated them, and when God has brought them back into His favour and into His blessing, and those are things that are ahead for this earth and for the earthly people of God in this earth in a certain way. And so the psalms are prophetic of experiences that His earthly people knew about in days gone by and are yet to know about in deeper ways in days that are yet to come. So that first and foremost, I suppose these psalms are not applicable to us in the Christian day in the direct way, but on the other hand, the manner of these men of God suits us too. We don't know God in quite [00:15:01] the same kind of way as they did. We don't think of Him as Jehovah. We don't think of Him as the God of Israel, though He is that, of course. But we think of Him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We think of Him as the one who has been fully revealed in Christ, things that the earthly people of God in this day, when these psalms were written, knew nothing about at all. We know God in Christ, and to know God in Christ is a far, far different thing from knowing God as He revealed Himself in the Old Testament days. Marvellous revelations of God in Old Testament times, but nothing quite to match what God has done in the Christian day, the way in which He has revealed Himself in our day. The truth we know about God, it encompasses all those earlier things, but it's a vaster thing, a greater knowledge of God than they could ever have [00:16:04] had. So that the manner of these godly men suits us, but often some of their expressions are not exactly right for Christians to use. They never speak about God as Father at all, because that's not a way in which God was known in their day. And these attitudes that the Lord Jesus Christ encouraged for His people to demonstrate, the Christ-like spirit, the spirit that returns good for evil, the spirit that does not react adversely under abuse and so on, under persecution, the spirit of grace in the face of hard-hitting opposition, the spirit of forbearance, the spirit of long-suffering, which the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated so perfectly, and which is suitable [00:17:01] for believers of the present day in the face of trial. That you will never find in the book of Psalms. You won't find the psalmist praying very much, at all frequently anyway, for forgiveness for their adversaries or for their persecutors. It's notably absent from the Psalms because it is the Christian spirit that the Psalms were written in the pre-Christian days. So that the Psalms really are prophetic and speak about other people of God than

ourselves. And what I want to say again, what is important for us to say, is that their godliness and their reality and their openness before God and their consciousness of their lives as lived as before God, something which is there for us all to profit by. But a lot of the experiences are hardly Christian experiences. [00:18:06] And a lot of the responses to God are hardly Christian responses to God. Those kinds of things seem to me to have to be said, if we were to speak fairly from the Christian angle about the book of Psalms. Now what about the end stages of the Psalms? These last Psalms, from Psalm 107 through to 150. What is it that characterizes the last book of Psalms more than the others? Well, if you look at the last five Psalms, for instance, it's not too difficult to say what characterizes the last five Psalms. Each one of those last five Psalms begins and ends with the vigorous hallelujah, praise ye Jehovah. And there is no doubt at all that by the time you reach the [00:19:05] end of the very last book of Psalms, there's praise to Jehovah and nothing else. It's praise and pure praise and only praise to God. As they noted, to Jehovah, praise ye the Lord. It begins and it ends. Each of these last five Psalms begins and ends with praise. And if you look between the start and the finish of each of those Psalms, you won't find much but anything else but praise. And this is why I gave out the hymn at the beginning that says, endless praise alone becomes that bright and blessed place where every eye beholds unveiled the mysteries of thy grace. And the whole story of earth and heaven and everything else is going to finish total response to God. And at the end of the story, certainly, right at the far end of everything, [00:20:08] there's going to be nothing left but honour and praise and exaltation of God. And that's the end of the whole story. But on the way, of course, the pressures are known. And it's a remarkable thing to me. It's a wonderful thing to me to see that the book which is characterised by distresses and expressions under distress and faith in God under the trial, misunderstanding, difficulty of understanding what God is doing many a time. The psalmist feels bereft. The psalmist feels desolate. The psalmist hardly knows where he's going. He appeals to God and he doesn't know where to turn. And out of all that, by those means, God is going to teach them to know himself. And the outcome of it all is going to be praise. The days of prayer, the days [00:21:07] of urgency will cease. But the days of response to the God who has brought his people through to that end point are going to last. They're going to be there and only there at the end. So that the end stages of the psalms are characterised by high praise to God. And there's nothing else in the very last five psalms. And it's a very energetic and it's a very zestful climax, this last psalm that I've read to you, is it not? The outcome of God's ways in the dark times for his earthly people is going ultimately to be a full and proper response to him for all that he has been to them and all that he has done in action on their behalf. And there's going to be [00:22:02] a proper appreciation of God in his ways with his earthly people from those people to whom he, for whom he has acted so. And it's going to be bright and it's going to be energetic. It's going to be brilliant in that day that is yet to come. And it's going to be total. It's going to be full. And God is going to, there are going to be returns to God for all that he has exhibited himself to be towards his earthly people. On the way to that, of course, if you search in the different psalms and look around, you'll find an awful lot. The people of God will not come into this kind of relief and this kind of redemption without having passed through the harrowing experiences. There's a lot in the psalms about the stirrings of conscience before God. There's a lot in the psalms that is sort of the soul groping after God. There's a lot in the psalms that shows the writer [00:23:10] or the person that voices the things awakening to certain things that God is doing with him, wakening to realization of the God who is behind his problems and behind all the ways that he's been asked to pass through. There's a lot in the psalms that speaks about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ and about the awareness of the things that the Lord Jesus Christ has suffered, brought home to the persons who are passing through trial themselves. A lot in the psalms about the gracious qualities of the Lord Jesus and the excellent features of the Lord Jesus. It's all in disguise in a certain way. It's not entirely on the surface, but there are discoveries [00:24:01] being made in those experiences about a person who is a great person and who is becoming known, so to speak, by the

experiences through which the writers are passing. And out of the turmoil, and out of the trial, and out of the ways of God with his people, their consciences will be affected, and their responses to God and to Christ, and their awareness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the way in which he will intervene on their behalf, begins to be prompted and begins to be awakened. And those are marvelous things to find in the psalms. And the earthly people of God, the faithful amongst the earthly people of God, are going to have those experiences. They're going to find God in the midst of them. A little bit like the kind of thing we were talking about this afternoon. Mary and Martha went through heavy experiences, but one of the things that [00:25:02] really came out of it was that the awareness of the person who was alongside them, who was their support and their help, and their present helper in time of trouble, all that was learnt in their trouble and out of the trouble they ultimately came. And the ultimate result was response to the one that had brought them through that experience. Our blessings and our knowledge of God are different from theirs. But on the other hand, we too, if we're believers at all, have known these kind of inward searchings, these experiences of deep repentance, which are often voiced in the psalms. If we're believers, we share with them those kind of things. Anyway, the inward searchings and the deep repentance and the utter dependence on the grace of God, which these people surely show as their voice, their thoughts, under their pressures. These [00:26:05] things are things that we do share with them. Of course, we know the Lord Jesus Christ in better ways and more excellent ways than they did as these things were written. We share their insights into Christ's great glory and his greatness, and we have it in more plain terms in the New Testament. And by the Spirit of God, we are able to have a view, a direct view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But they are to learn those things, and we are learning those things too, in our present experiences. And the pressures and the urgent prayers and the dark experiences ultimately are to give place to praise. And this is really the kind of thought that's in my mind tonight as well as was there in a certain sense this afternoon. Out of his handling of us, [00:27:08] so to speak, and the way his ways with us, we come to know him. And out of that, the response to him is prompted, and the returns come back to the great God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the one who has brought that person into our vision, so to speak, and into our sights, so to speak. Well, what characterizes the closing Psalms then is that they are more prominently related to relief and praise than the earlier Psalms. If you were to look at those five books of Psalms, and look at the last Psalm in each one of the five books of Psalms, you would find that each of those books of Psalms finishes up with praise. There's a doxology at the end of each of the five books of Psalms. But the fifth book of Psalms is almost a [00:28:04] doxology in itself, though there are other things in it. But a strong stream of praise threads through the last book of Psalms, from Psalm 107 to Psalm 150, in a way that isn't there in the earlier books of Psalms. You remember at the end of the second book of Psalms, Psalm 72, that Psalm that looks forward to the messianic kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a remarkable close to that Psalm. Let me just turn over to it, if I can find it quickly. Psalm 72, where David is speaking about the kingdom of the Lord Jesus in spirit. He is setting his sights on that great time. And at the end, the close of Psalm 72, he says, blessed be the Lord God, [00:29:03] the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. So you see those verses that I've just read to you are agreeing with what I said, that the end of that second book of Psalms finishes up with a great doxology to God. But it's short, and it's only the last few verses. And then there is that significant word, the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. And you know, it's true, is it not, that there is a day when prayer will no longer be suitable, because there's nothing to pray for any longer. When all the blessings are ours, and when all the pressures are off, and when all the [00:30:01] dark experiences are over, there's a day when nothing else but praise will be suitable. Praise, endless praise, alone becomes that bright and blessed place where every eye beholds, unveiled the glories of thy grace. So that prayer gives place to praise. Prayers come to an end.

Urgent situations come to an end. Urgent dependence on God comes ultimately to an end, because the place of blessing is entered into, and the joy of responding to the giver of all those blessings is something which is going to be entered into in such a way that all the other things will drop behind, and all the other things will be gone, and every eye, and every tongue, and every voice, every being will be directed towards the one focus of all praise, and the glories of the God of [00:31:05] grace, as known particularly in the person of his beloved son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are going to be our eternal occupation. That's going to be our eternal attitude. To depend on him, those days, the days of dependence and prayer will pass, but the days of praise will go on, and on, and on. So that turning now to Psalm 150, let me try to say a few words about this.

Very difficult to know where to start to talk about the last Psalm of all, and even that I don't think I can do, certainly I can't start just to talk about Psalm 150 without just having a quick look back over one or two of the previous Psalms. But it's quite plain, is it not, that Psalm [00:32:02] 150 rounds everything off, so to speak, with one grand burst of all-round praise, and how all-round that praise is in this particular Psalm. Everything that's gone before mounts to this great climax, so to speak, and it's an end to the book of Psalms, of course, but it seems to me that it's an end which envisages something which has no end. It's an end which envisages what is endless, and that's the end of the whole story, as far as the story of God's ways in this earth, and God's ways with men are concerned. It's going to finish up in God's eternal praise. It's going to finish up with loud outbursts of united, concerted praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Can I say a word or two, just briefly, about the build-up to this [00:33:05] last Psalm? Obviously we can't go too far back, but it's interesting to me to look at Psalm 148, and then Psalm 149, and then finally Psalm 150. If you were to look at Psalm 148, and obviously I can't do this other than very briefly, it starts up in the heavens. It says, Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise him in the heights. And then it comes down. It passes by the angels. It mentions the angels. It mentions the heavenly hosts, I suppose, in verse 2. And then it speaks about the sun and the moon. And then it speaks about the stars. And it speaks about the heavens of heavens and the waters that are above the heavens. And it says, Praise him in all those areas. It scans over a vast range of contributors [00:34:07] to this ultimate praise to God. Starts in the heights of heaven, passes the angels by, includes all created things, every one of them contributing their quarter by their very existence to the praise of this God who is the creator and controller of them all.

And then it comes down to earth. Look, for instance, at verse 9. Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees, all cedars, beasts, cattle, creeping things, flying fowl, kings of the earth, all people, princes, all judges of the earth, young men, maidens, old men, children. It seems to be coming down to earth. It seems to be talking about human beings. It seems to be talking about [00:35:02] things material and things not so material. Seems to be talking about things animate and things inanimate as well. Doesn't seem to leave anything out, but all these things of all these kinds are all united, so to speak, in asserting the greatness of God. And then, of course, later on, it begins to speak about those that have reacted to the greatness of Jehovah's name. I suppose when it speaks about the name of Jehovah, it is speaking about God as revealed. God's name is what he shows himself to be, so to speak. And when it speaks about the declaration and the exhibition of the name of Jehovah, it's speaking more about Jehovah as he has revealed himself. God as he has revealed himself. And towards the end of that song, you get into the [00:36:07] area where there are people who are not just by their own things, that are not just by their very existence contributing their praise to Jehovah, but people who are consciously doing it, reacting to what he has displayed himself to be. And the very last verse, of course, of Psalm 148, speaks about his special people, speaks about Israel again. He hath exalted the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints, even the children of Israel, a people near unto him.

Praise ye the Lord. So it starts with the heights, it comes down to earth, talks about everything, animate and inanimate, here on earth. And it speaks about unconscious response to God, it speaks about conscious response to God, speaks about these [00:37:06] things on a broad scale. And then it finally comes down to the place where his name was specially known, I suppose, amongst his earthly people, where the name of Jehovah was specially revealed and specially known. And those people reclaimed and brought back and reinstated are going to be at the centre of this great praise to Jehovah in days that are soon coming for this earth where you and I live. When you get into Psalm 159, it is speaking almost entirely about his earthly people. Psalm 149 seems to me to enlarge on the last verse of Psalm 148.

Psalm 148 verse 14, as the last and climactic conclusion of the psalm, refers to responses from his earthly people. But Psalm 149 enlarges on that and it's dwelling almost entirely upon [00:38:07] Israel's central part in this great response, this great recognition of Israel's God in all the earth. And high glory is going to come to God through his earthly people when all that he has achieved with them and all that he has done for them comes into its fruition and comes into reality in that day that is certainly coming. It's been delayed for a long time. Israel has done anything but honour God over a long part of her history. But God is going to deal with them in such a way as to bring them back and to place them in the place of favour that he intended for them here in this earth. And there's going to be a fitting response and a proper response to him from that earthly people, long recalcitrant and long difficult under the heavy hand of God, [00:39:06] needing to learn many a lesson. But they're going to come out of the great tribulation. They're going to go into the blessing and they're going to be at the centre, so to speak, of earthly praise to God in a day that is certainly destined and certainly going to come before very long maybe. So that Psalm 148 and Psalm 149, the one deals with the thing in breadth, so to speak, and the other deals with it at the hub, so to speak, at the centre amongst his earthly people where the centre of praise to God in the earthly sense is going to arise and take place. Psalm 150 then is just a top stone to all this. And it seems to me that Psalm 150, and it's obvious really, it isn't just that it seems to me, but it's quite plain. I'm [00:40:02] only stating the obvious, that Psalm 150 summarises and it crowns all those preceding Psalms. And it's brief, it's concise, it's direct, and yet it's pretty comprehensive as well, isn't it? It says, Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in the firmament of his power.

I suggest to you, and it's pretty clear that it is so, is it not, that the urge towards that day when God is fully honoured fills this psalm. And all possible contributors are pressed to join in.

And here the psalmist ranges through a lot of areas from which that praise is going to be contributed. And it seems to me, I don't know how it appeals to you, but you could say, [00:41:03] verse 1 speaks about the extent of the ultimate praise to God. Verse 2 speaks about the reasons for that ultimate praise to God. And verse 3 and all the ensuing verses, the rest of the psalm speaks about the manner in which that praise is rightly to be given. You could say, the where of praise, and that is verse 1. You could say, the why of praise, and that seems to me to be verse 2. And you could say, the how of praise, and that seems to me to be the rest of the psalm. The extent of God's ultimate praise is not going to have any boundaries to it.

Not going to have any limits to it. It's as wide as the heavens and the earth. And I suppose that's [00:42:03] what this first verse says. Praise him in his sanctuary. Praise him in the firmament of his power. I suppose that probably means, it seems right to think, that his sanctuary means his earthly sanctuary. This is, as it were, the center of all praise to God in heaven and in earth in days that are coming for this earth. But in the firmament of his power, this looks like the circumference, the wide

scope, the wide sweep of the sources of all that praise that will come to God. It's wrong to talk about the circumference of this area because it's an area that has no limits really. There is to be a center, a sanctuary in which God is to be praised on earth. [00:43:02] But that is to be the center of a whole wide untold in its vastness area from which all is going to be directed towards the God who has revealed himself in this time scene where you and I live. It's going to be as wide as the heavens and the earth. It's going to have a center on earth and it's going to have limited boundaries. That word in his sanctuary could be read, I suppose, it would be a good translation to read it in his holiness. There's not any difference between the word sanctuary and the word holiness in Hebrew, so I understand. And the thought that God is praised in holiness is a thought that perhaps we need to underline. There's no such thing as approach to God that is in anything else than holiness [00:44:04] and in awareness of his holiness. And while there's a lot in these Psalms that might look like exuberance and strong vital stuff, so to speak, let us not ever think that this is going to be shallow praise to God. It's going to be pretty shallow exuberance. It's going to be free praise and ready praise and right praise because it's going to be based on righteousness. It's going to be based on a work that sets the doers of this thing free and releases them so that they can be exuberant and they can be free in response to God. And so it will be holy praise as well as vibrant praise and energetic praise that will come to God in due course. These reasons for praising [00:45:05] God in verse 2 look to me to be pretty powerful ones, don't they? Praise him for his mighty acts.

Praise him according to his excellent greatness. His excellent greatness, the glory and the excellent greatness of our God. We Christians in our day, we know that in a way that's far beyond what the writer of that psalm knew. He knew God in a certain way and he had very high thoughts of God, Jehovah, the God of Israel. He had very respectful, holy thoughts of his God.

He had a deep sense of the great God to whom worship was due. But don't you and I today who [00:46:04] have the New Testament and have the work and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ behind us in the way that they didn't do, don't we know about God in a marvelous way? Isn't it fair to say that his excellent greatness, the greatness of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, known to us by God's Spirit in a much more excellent and surpassing way than was ever possible to a godly Israelite in days long gone by. You know Paul bursts out with praise to God, the Father. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who have blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. Paul, as he writes to those Ephesians, seems to me that he's so taken up with the person, the God, that he's writing about to them that for a moment he [00:47:07] forgets his addressee, so to speak, forgets the people he's sending the letter to and he gets down, as it were, in the presence of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that spirit of reaction and response and freedom to offer a tribute of praise to such a God as our God is, the Christian, the Christian's God, his excellent greatness. It's something that's transcendent, it's something that's surpassing, something that we can't really describe, something that's beyond our wit to really fully comprehend, yet we know him in Christ and we know about his marvellous grace, his loving kindness, his richness towards ourselves, and these are the reasons why we should praise him. We Christians today, how much more ought we to be in tune with this psalm than [00:48:04] even the writers were, perhaps. How ready we should be in praising God for his excellent greatness. Praise him for his mighty acts. These are the reasons why we can praise God. We don't praise God in our own, using our own devices for doing it, our own thoughts about it. It's his mighty acts towards us, his redemptive acts, his saving acts, his acts in Christ.

Most of all, the writer of that didn't know anything about God acting in Christ. Until it happened, of course, it couldn't be known, but we know about it. We have our Bibles full of it, our New Testaments

full of it. We have the Spirit of God, too, to direct our thoughts to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fill our hearts with him and to prompt us into these responses to God for his [00:49:02] mighty acts and for his excellent greatness. These are the reasons why we should praise God, the reasons why we will praise God in those days that are to come. Praise, endless praise alone becomes that bright and blessed place. But today is the day for entering into the Spirit of that, too, by the Spirit of God, to praise God for his excellent greatness as he has made it known in mighty acts, the acts and the actions and the work and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are the reasons why our hearts should be responsive to such a God as ours is. And then the rest of the psalm, what shall we say about that? Not a great deal of time to expand on it, but the manner of right praise to Jehovah, I suppose this is what the psalm is talking about, [00:50:04] first and foremost. The rest of the psalm exhibits the way in which right praise should be given to God. I said, verse 1, the where of praise, verse 2, the why of praise, and verse 3, and onwards, the how of praise. How should it be done? Well, in short, one can say everything has to go into it. It's only right that everything should go into praise to our God. It's obvious that the rest of the psalm, there is a wholeness about it. There are lots of parts to it. There are the different instruments here. There are the organs, the harps, the trumpets, the stringed instruments, the timbrels, and so on, the loud cymbals, the high-sounding cymbals, [00:51:01] different things, different roles by different contributions, so to speak, and yet there's a wholeness about it. It isn't a lot of little bits. It's a whole, coherent, joining together in total response to God, as these verses put it. The manner of right praise to God is that we shouldn't be half-hearted about it. There's nothing half-hearted about this psalm. Everything should go into it. Everything that we have is due its right to give in return to such a God as ours is. There's no flagging about this psalm. It doesn't peter out halfway through. It keeps going. Unflagging praise to God is the right kind of praise. There's no distraction in this psalm. The writer never even thinks of himself, never mentions himself. Not looking at [00:52:06] himself, he's looking at the object of his praise. There's no distraction in this psalm.

Man doesn't get his eye on other things halfway through and begin to talk about other things. He's full of the great Jehovah to whom his praise is directed, and he's urging others to join in. It's full of urgent desire that all should join in into this acclamation of the one who is at the center of this praise. There's no flagging in it, and there's no half-heartedness in it, and there's no distraction in it. Doesn't go off at a tangent halfway through at all. There's no mentioning of self in it. The best kind of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ leaves out talking about ourselves, you know. When we get occupied with him, we don't mention ourselves. [00:53:07] Mary, when she poured out her alabaster box at the feet of the Lord Jesus, it was one of the most selfless actions of all, wasn't it? Wasn't thinking about what she was doing. Wasn't thinking about what others would think about what she was doing either. She was doing it because she was absorbed with him. So with Martha, and so with Lazarus. Their eyes were on the center of their focus, so to speak. They weren't thinking about themselves. They weren't talking about themselves. Not even their own blessings were mentioned. What he had done for them was something that they certainly appreciated, but they left it out as far as that supper that they made for the Lord Jesus Christ was concerned. There wasn't a word about what they owed to him. There was nothing but outpouring and response to him. And he occupied the center of the picture, [00:54:04] so to speak. And they were all directing everything to him, and they were forgetting themselves. They were leaving themselves out of what they were saying. And proper praise to God and to the Lord Jesus isn't a thing that makes much of self, or mentions self even, or the things that we have been saved from are marvelous. And the blessings that we've been brought into are marvelous too. Never let us underrate them. But this kind of praise isn't taken up with blessings. Even the high blessings that we as Christians have received are not mentioned when the God who is the blesser is at the center of our focus. It's the one who does it, and the richness of the character of the God who has

revealed himself. That takes the mind, and that takes the heart. The praise goes all to him, and that's proper praise to God [00:55:03] and to the Lord Jesus Christ. No mentioning of self in this. And then, of course, there are all these instruments. You might want me to say something about that. I don't know. Pretty plain that it has a Jewish background, even if it wasn't true what I have said already, that the whole of the Psalms are in the Jewish context, really. These instruments, if you look at them, you will find that many of them are mentioned in previous places in the Bible. These are instruments that were associated with the high occasions in the past that Israel had celebrated. Some of those occasions were solemn ones. Some of those occasions were joyous ones. But some of these instruments are found, and many of these instruments are found, on these occasions of celebration and occasions of recognition of what God had done for them in [00:56:01] some of those earlier situations, so way back in the Old Testament. So that it has a Jewish background is quite obvious. But what I think I would like to say is that the variety of these instruments is one of the things that strikes me. Some of these instruments, obviously, are soft and delicate in their contribution that they make. Others are melodious and full of pure melody and grace. The output of one or two of these instruments is like that. On the other hand, there are some instruments there that are pretty strident, pretty strong, pretty decisive, loud praise on the part of some of these instruments. And, you know, it's true that responses to the Lord Jesus Christ can take on all these characters. Something marvelous about a soft reaction from the heart to the Lord Jesus, like Mary's, who in true devotion brought the best [00:57:07] that she had and poured it all out on him. Seems to me that's like a soft instrument doing its, contributing its quota, joining in, in recognizing him. On the other hand, melody and grace, those are things that have a spiritual meaning as well. There can be things that are of the Spirit of God which are drawn out by occupation with the Lord Jesus that are like him and have that character, sweetness, grace about them. And some of the responses to the Lord Jesus Christ that you and I can produce can be of that kind as well. On the other hand, let us not say that everything that we say to the Lord Jesus Christ has to be muted and moderated and kept pretty moderate. Not at all. There are these loud sounding things, symbols and so on, things that you know when, [00:58:07] you know it's happened when it does happen. When somebody strikes a symbol, it makes a difference. And you know the praise that's due to the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't only have to be sweet and soft, but it has to be decisive, has to be loud. It says in the book of Revelation that the angels were saying with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb. And it's good when the enthusiasm which is engendered by occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ, prompted by the Spirit of God, has a decisiveness about it and has something that makes it difficult to inhibit it and hold it back about it. During the Bible reading this afternoon, [00:59:02] my heart is indicting a good matter. I speak of the things that I have made touching the king. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. And that psalmist was so occupied with the object that he was writing about that everything went freely. And I don't suppose he ever studied whether it was loud or soft, but energetic anyway. And when proper praise returns to the Lord Jesus, it's well that it should be with a bit of push behind it and with a really bit of energy, the energy of the Spirit of God behind it. And it certainly looks, does it not, that these things are not going to be unnoticed when they're done. It's going to be harmonious, it's going to be sweet, it's going to be soft in parts, but it's going to be loud in other parts, and it's going to be voluminous in other senses. And the universe is going to notice. It's not [01:00:02] going to be so mute that nobody knows it's happened, not in any sense. Everybody is going to take notice when the whole universe will join in ultimately in response to the great God who has done these mighty acts and shown his excellent greatness. And that's a heartening thing for us to talk about here tonight, is it not? We, of course, we're often talking about Israel going through the wilderness and getting into the land. You and I pass through the wilderness. The pressures and the trials of our faith are certainly real things. And so long as we are here on earth and before we're with the Lord Jesus Christ in the long run, there are going to be wilderness experiences for us, all right. But it's often been said, and I'm sure it's

true, that unlike Israel, we can be in both places together. We can be going through the scene [01:01:06] where trials are, where faith is tested, and where the knowledge of the Lord in his support is needed. On the other hand, we can move into our natural climate, so to speak, as well. We can get into the area where the pressures, temporarily anyway, are off, and where we're occupied with the Lord, and occupied with God, the Father, who has revealed himself in him. And we get into that realm, get into that spiritual climate, so to speak. And there is relief from pressure, and there's a sense of freedom in that area, and these things take place. There is an area where Christ is everything, and you and I can enter into that area. And we've touched it a little bit in some of our meetings today, this afternoon. I think we were in an area where Christ was at the centre, and Mary and Martha were making a lot of hymn. And you and I can do that, too. [01:02:09] We can move off out of our wilderness experiences, and we can find the heartening experience getting into the place where we can bring our tributes to the Lord, and to God, and where we can pour out our souls to him, where the inhibitions are left behind to some extent, and where the free praise flows. Well, may it be, then, that we know something about this in truth, and that we're able not only to know about the times when prayer is needed, and the times when pressure is on, but the times when relief is felt, when we get into the presence of God, the Father, through him, and by the Spirit, bring our tributes, bring our responses. Do it freely. Do it in harmony. [01:03:02] Do it because we're full of him, and bow at his feet, as we will do forevermore.