

PSALM 146

This and all the rest of the psalms that follow begin and end with Hallelujah, a word which puts much of God's praise into a little compass; for in it we praise him by his name Jah, the contraction of Jehovah. In this excellent psalm of praise,

- I. The psalmist engages himself to praise God (v. 1, 2).
- II. He engages others to trust in him, which is one necessary and acceptable way of praising him.
 1. He shows why we should not trust in men (v. 3, 4).
 2. Why we should trust in God (v. 5), because of his power in the kingdom of nature (v. 6), his dominion in the kingdom of providence (v. 7), and his grace in the kingdom of the Messiah (v. 8, 9), that everlasting kingdom (v. 10), to which many of the Jewish writers refer this psalm, and to which therefore we should have an eye, in the singing of it.

PSALM 146:1-4

A CALL TO PRAISE GOD

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince; as such, it might be thought,

1. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God, that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed not to do it himself in his own person. Michal thought it a disparagement to him to *dance before the ark*; but he was so far from being of this mind that he would himself be first and foremost in the work, v. 1, 2. He considered his dignity as so far from excusing him from it that it rather obliged him to lead in it, and he thought it so far from lessening him that it really magnified him; therefore he stirred up himself to it and to make a business of it: *Praise the Lord, O my soul!* and he resolved to abide by it: "I will praise him with my heart, *I will sing praises* to him with my mouth. Herein I will have an eye to him as *the Lord*, infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as *my God*, in covenant with me." Praise is most pleasant when, in praising God, we have an eye to him as

ours, whom we have an interest in and stand in relation to. "This I will do constantly while I live, every day of my life, and to my life's end; nay, I will do it *while I have any being*, for when I have no being on earth I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be doing it better." That which is the great end of our being ought to be our great employment and delight while we have any being. "In thee must our time and powers be spent."

2. It might be thought that he himself, having been so great a blessing to his country, should be adored, according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes, that they should all come and *trust in his shadow* and make him their *stay* and *strong-hold*. "No," says David, "*Put not your trust in princes* (v. 3), not in me, not in any other; do not repose your confidence in them; do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity; some have thought they knew better how to reign by knowing how to dissemble. Be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity; it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words." But, though we suppose them very wise and as good as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of man in whom there is help, in whom there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not abide.

(1.) We cannot be sure of their ability. Even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped, and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for us which we expect. David himself owned (¹⁰³⁹2 Samuel 3:39), *I am this day weak, though anointed king*. So that *in the son of man there is often no help*, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wits' end, as *a man astonished*, and then, though *a mighty man*, he *cannot save*, ²¹⁴⁹Jeremiah 14:9.

(2.) We cannot be sure of their continuance. Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives, yet he may be suddenly taken off when we expect most from him (v. 4): *His breath goes forth*, so it does every moment, and comes back again, but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then *he returns to his earth*. The earth is his, in respect of his original as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which therefore he must return, according to the sentence, ¹⁰³⁹Genesis 3:19. It is his, if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he has chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he has set his affections. He shall go to his own place. Or, rather, it is his earth because

of the property he has in it; and though he has had large possessions on earth a grave is all that will remain to him. *The earth God has given to the children of men*, and great striving there is about it, and, as a mark of their authority, men *call their lands by their own names*. But, after a while, no part of the earth will be their own but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs *while the earth remains*. But, when he returns to his earth, *in that very day his thoughts perish*; all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us vanish and are gone, and he cannot take one step further in them; all his purposes are cut off and buried with him, ^{<871>}Job 17:11. And then what becomes of our expectations from him? Princes are mortal, as well as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them which we may have from that Potentate who hath immortality. *Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils* and will not be there long.

^{<875>}PSALM 146:5-10

ENCOURAGEMENT TO TRUST IN GOD

The psalmist, having cautioned us not to trust in princes (because, if we do, we shall be miserably disappointed), here encourages us to put our confidence in God, because, if we do so, we shall be happily secured: *Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help*, that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him, and *whose hope is in the Lord his God*.

- I.** Let us take a view of the character here given of those whom God will uphold. Those shall have God for their help,
- 1.** Who take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly.
 - 2.** Who have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him, who have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him, when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him, in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope,

(1.) In the providence of God for all the good things we need, which relate to the life that now is.

(2.) In the grace of Christ for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this especially the learned Dr. Hammond refers this and the following verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm to have a most visible remarkable aspect towards the eternal Son of God in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbies, who says of v. 10 that it belongs to the days of the Messiah. And that it does so he thinks will appear by comparing v. 7, 8, with the characters Christ gives of the Messiah (⁴¹¹⁵Matthew 11:5, 6), *The blind receive their sight, the lame walk*; and the closing words there, *Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me*, he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to v. 5. *Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God*, and who is not offended in him.

II. Let us take a view of the great encouragements here given us to hope in *the Lord our God*.

1. He is the *Maker of the world*, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which, being derived from him, depend upon him (v. 6): *He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is*, and therefore his arm is not shortened, that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and *without whom was not any thing made that was made*. It is a great support to faith that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a good-will to it, a perfect knowledge of its case, and power to help it.

2. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's word, for he *keepeth truth for ever*, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true *from the beginning*, and therefore true *to the end*. Our Lord Jesus is the Amen, *the faithful witness*, as well as *the beginning*, the author and principle, *of the creation of God*, ⁴⁶⁸⁴Revelation 3:14. The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for *all the promises* are in him *yea and amen*.

3. He is the patron of injured innocency: *He pleads the cause of the oppressed*, and (as we read it) he *executes judgment* for them. He often does it in his providence, giving redress to those that suffer wrong and clearing up their integrity. He will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan

the great oppressor, and, all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors is so among the rest, ^{<615>}Jude 1:15.

4. He is a bountiful benefactor to the necessitous: *He gives food to the hungry*; so God does in an ordinary way for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when ravens fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once when he fed thousands miraculously with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family. This encourages us to hope in him as the nourisher of our souls with the bread of life.

5. He is the author of liberty to those that were bound: *The Lord looseth the prisoners*. He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt and afterwards in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought, in making the dumb to speak and the deaf to hear with that one word, *Ephphatha* — *Be opened*, his cleansing lepers, and so discharging them from their confinements, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of *loosing the prisoners*; and we may take encouragement from those to hope in him for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, ^{<260>}Isaiah 61:1, 2.

6. He gives sight to those that have been long deprived of it; *The Lord can open the eyes of the blind*, and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which before they were not aware of; witness ^{<121>}Genesis 21:19, and the prophet's servant, ^{<117>}2 Kings 6:17. But this has special reference to Christ; for *since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind till Christ did it* (^{<432>}John 9:32) and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination.

7. He sets that straight which was crooked, and makes those easy that were pained and ready to sink: *He raises those that are bowed down*, by comforting and supporting them under their burdens, and, in due time, removing their burdens. This was literally performed by Christ when he made a poor woman straight that had been *bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself* (^{<130>}Luke 13:12); and he still does it by his grace, giving rest to those that were weary and heavily laden, and raising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions.

8. He has a constant kindness for all good people: *The Lord loveth the righteous*, and they may with the more confidence depend upon his power

when they are sure of his good-will. Our Lord Jesus showed his love to the righteous *by fulfilling all righteousness.*

9. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care: *The Lord preserves the strangers.* It ought not to pass without remark that the name of *Jehovah* is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power (that of Jehovah) that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed, and that it is as much the glory of God to succour those that are in misery as it is to *ride on the heavens by his name Jah,* ¹⁹⁸⁸ Psalm 68:4.

(1.) Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but *the Lord preserves them,* that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the divine protection and been kept alive by it.

(2.) *Widows and fatherless children,* that have lost the head of the family, who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make a prey of them, that will not do them justice, nay, that will do them injustice; but *the Lord relieveth them,* and raiseth up friends for them. See ¹⁷²² Exodus 22:22, 23. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom, and that with him poor sinners, that are as fatherless, *may find mercy,* ³⁴⁰⁸ Hosea 14:3.

10. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom and oppress the faithful subjects of it: *The way of the wicked he turns upside down,* and therefore let us *hope in him,* and not be *afraid of the fury of the oppressor,* as though he were *ready to destroy.* It is the glory of the Messiah that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth that militate against his church, so that, having him for us, we need not fear any thing that can be done against us.

11. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time, to the utmost ages of eternity, v. 10. Let *this* encourage us to trust in God at all times that *the Lord shall reign for ever,* in spite of all the malignity of the powers of darkness, *even thy God, O Zion! unto all generations.* Christ is set King on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader; it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort that *the Lord reigns* as Zion's God, as Zion's king, that the Messiah is head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands.