

PSALM 148

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all the creatures, according to their capacity, to praise their Creator, and to show forth his eternal power and Godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen. Thereby the psalmist designs to express his great affection to the duty of praise; he is highly satisfied that God is praised, is very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore does all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all who shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold if they be not raised and enlarged, in praising God, by the lofty flights of divine poetry which we find in this psalm.

I. He calls upon the higher house, the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both those that are intellectual beings, and are capable of doing it actively (v. 1, 2), and those that are not, and are therefore capable of doing it only objectively (v. 3-6).

II. He calls upon the lower house, the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matter of praise (v. 7-10) and those that, being endued with reason, are capable of offering up this sacrifice (v. 11-13), especially his own people, who have more cause to do it, and are more concerned to do it, than any other (v. 14).

PSALM 148:1-6

AN INVITATION TO PRAISE

We, in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation, and, conversing within narrow confines, can scarcely admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know,

I. That there is above us a world of blessed angels by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them. *Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him;* and it is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he

neither needs them, nor is, nor can be, any way benefited by them. To that bright and happy world the psalmist has an eye here, v. 1, 2. In general, to *the heavens*, to *the heights*. The heavens are the heights, and therefore we must lift up our souls above the world unto God in *the heavens*, and *on things above* we must *set our affections*. It is his desire that God may be praised *from the heavens*, that thence a praising frame may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that while we are so cold, and low, and flat, in praising God, there are those above who are doing it in a better manner, and that while we are so often interrupted in this work they rest not day nor night from it. In particular, he had an eye to God's *angels*, to *his hosts*, and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts is plain enough; as soon as they were made they were enlisted, armed, and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is meant by the psalmist's calling upon them, and exciting them to praise God, is not so easy to account for. I will not say, They do not heed it, because we find that *to the principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God* (~~430~~ Ephesians 3:10); but I will say, They do not need it, for they are continually praising God and there is no deficiency at all in their performances; and therefore when, in singing this psalm, we call upon the angels to praise God (as we did, ~~430~~ Psalm 103:20), we mean that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands and in the best manner, — that we are pleased to think he is so, — that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his house above and are still praising him, — and that we have come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the *innumerable company of angels*, ~~522~~ Hebrews 12:22.

II. That there is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and those bright ones, in which God is praised, that is, which may give us occasion (as far as we know any thing of them) to give to God the glory not only of their being, but of their beneficence to mankind. Observe,

1. What these creatures are that thus show us the way in praising God, and, whenever we look up and consider the heavens, furnish us with matter for his praises.

(1.) There are the *sun*, *moon*, and *stars*, which continually, either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses, in which we may see a faint shadow (for so I must call it, not a resemblance) of the

glory of him that is *the Father of lights*, v. 3. The greater lights, the sun and moon, are not too great, too bright, to praise him; and the praises of the less lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon, and stars, their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen, more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we, who worship the true God only, make them our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us, nay, as Levites to attend us, who, as priests, offer this spiritual sacrifice.

(2.) There are the *heavens of heavens* above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown orbs abundance of glory redounds to God, for *the heavens of heavens are the Lord's* (^{<4856>}Psalm 115:16) and yet *they cannot contain him*, ^{<4872>}1 Kings 8:27. The learned Dr. Hammond understands her, by *the heavens of heavens*, the upper regions of the air, or all the regions of it, as ^{<983>}Psalm 68:33. We read of the heaven of heavens, whence *God sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice*, meaning the thunder.

(3.) There are *the waters that are above the heavens*, the clouds that hang above in the air, where they are reserved *against the day of battle and war*, ^{<3823>}Job 38:23. We have reason to praise God, not only that these waters do not drown the earth, but that they do water it and make it fruitful. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *Praise him, you heavens of heavens, and you waters that depend on the word of him who is above the heavens*, for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God has in his hand, wherewith he opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open.

2. Upon what account we are to give God the glory of them: *Let them praise the name of the Lord*, that is, let us praise the name of the Lord for them, and observe what constant and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them.

(1.) Because he made them, gave them their powers and assigned them their places: *He commanded* them (great as they are) out of nothing, *and they were created* at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command; for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged and acquiesced in, because he once spoke with such authority.

(2.) Because he still upholds and preserves them in their beings and posts, their powers and motions (v. 6): *He hath established them for ever and*

ever, that is, to the end of time, a short ever, but it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. *He hath made a decree*, the law of creation, *which shall not pass*; it was enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore needs not be altered, by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered. All the creatures that praised God at first for their creation must praise him still for their continuance. And we have reason to praise him that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have not a second time drowned the earth.

PSALM 148:7-14

AN INVITATION TO PRAISE

Considering that this earth, and the atmosphere that surrounds it, are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to enquire after those considerations that may be of use to reconcile us to our place in it; and I know none more likely than this (next to the visit which the Son of God once made to it), that even in this world, dark and as bad as it is, God is praised: *Praise you the Lord from the earth*, v. 7. As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth, so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed and perfumed.

I. Even those creatures that are not dignified with the powers of reason are summoned into this concert, because God may be glorified in them, v. 7-10. Let the *dragons* or *whales*, that sport themselves in the mighty waters (~~Psalm~~ Psalm 104:26), dance before the Lord, to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence by his dominion over the leviathan or whale, ~~Job~~ Job 41:1, etc. *All deeps*, and their inhabitants, praise God — the sea, and the animals there — the bowels of the earth, and the animals there. *Out of the depths* God may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere we meet with a great variety of meteors, which, being a kind of new productions (and some of them unaccountable), do in a special manner magnify the power of the great Creator. There are fiery meteors; lightning is fire, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled which may be so called. There are watery meteors, *hail*, and *snow*, and the *vapours* of which they are gendered. There are airy meteors, *stormy winds*; we know

not whence they come nor whither they go, whence their mighty force comes nor how it is spent; but this we know, that, be they ever so strong, so stormy, they *fulfil God's word*, and do that, and no more than that, which he appoints them; and by *this* Christ showed himself to have a divine power, that he *commanded even the winds and the seas*, and *they obeyed him*. Those that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, show themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. Take a view of the surface of the earth (v. 9), and there are presented to our view the exalted grounds, *mountains and all hills*, from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise; there are the exalted plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the *fruitful trees* of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised, others by their stateliness, as *all cedars*, those *trees of the Lord*, ^{DA16} Psalm 104:16. Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees, yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the *beasts* that run wild, *and all cattle* that are tame and in the service of man, v. 10. Nay, even the *creeping things* have not sunk so low, nor do the *flying fowl* soar so high, as not to be called upon to *praise the Lord*. Much of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

II. Much more those creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason ought to employ them in praising God: *Kings of the earth and all people*, v. 11, 12.

1. God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior creatures, for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord and he makes what use he pleases of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the *pars imperans* — *the part that commands*, and the *pars subdita* — *the part that is subject*: *Kings of the earth and all people*. It is by him that kings reign, and people are subject to them; the *princes and judges of the earth* have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we, to whom they are blessings, ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised.

2. God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God.

(1.) Those of each rank, high and low. The praises of kings, and princes, and judges, are demanded; those on whom God has put honour must honour him with it, and the power they are entrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, put them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God and doing him more service than others. Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them; Christ despised not the hosannas of the multitude.

(2.) Those of each sex, *young men and maidens*, who are accustomed to make merry together; let them turn their mirth into this channel; let it be sacred, that it may be pure.

(3.) Those of each age. *Old men* must still bring forth this fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity or the infirmity of their age will excuse them from it; *and children* too must begin betimes to praise God; even *out of the mouth of babes and sucklings* this good work is perfected. A good reason is given (v. 13) why all these should *praise the name of the Lord*, because *his name alone is excellent* and worthy to be praised; it is a name above every name, no name, no nature, but his, has in it all excellency. *His glory is above both the earth and the heaven*, and let all inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted *far above all blessing and praise*.

III. Most of all his own people, who are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, v. 14. Observe,

1. The dignity God has put upon *his people, even the children of Israel*, typical of the honour reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. *He exalts their horn*, their brightness, their plenty, their power. The people of Israel were, in many respects, honoured above any other nation, for *to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants*, ⁴⁰⁰⁴Romans 9:4. It was their own honour that they were *a people near unto God*, his *Segulla, his peculiar treasure*; they were admitted into his courts, when a stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him *nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for*. This blessing has not come upon the Gentiles, through Christ, for those that *were afar off are by his blood made nigh*, ⁴⁰¹³Ephesians 2:13. It is the greatest honour that can be put upon a man to be brought near to

god, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all when nearest of all in the kingdom of glory.

2. The duty God expects from them in consideration of this. Let those whom God honours honour him: *Praise you the Lord*. Let him be *the praise of all his saints*, the object of their praise; for he is a praise to them. *He is thy praise, and he is thy God,* ⁽⁵¹²⁾Deuteronomy 10:21. Some by *the horn of his people* understand David, as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be *a prince and a Saviour*, who is indeed the praise of all his saints and will be so for ever; for it is through him that they are *a people near to God*.