

PSALM 150

The first and last of the psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short, and very memorable. But the scope of them is very different: the first psalm is an elaborate instruction in our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our devotion; this is all rapture and transport, and perhaps was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of these sacred songs, to show what is the design of them all, and that is to assist us in praising God. The psalmist had been himself full of the praises of God, and here he would fain fill all the world with them: again and again he calls, "Praise the Lord, praise him, praise him," no less than thirteen times in these six short verses. He shows,

I. For what, and upon what account, God is to be praised (v. 1, 2),

II. How, and with what expressions of joy, God is to be praised (v. 3-5).

III. Who must praise the Lord; it is every one's business (v. 6). In singing this psalm we should endeavour to get our hearts much affected with the perfections of God and the praises with which he is and shall be for ever attended, throughout all ages, world without end.

PSALM 150:1-6

ALL CREATURES CALLED TO PRAISE GOD

We are here, with the greatest earnestness imaginable, excited to praise God; if, as some suppose, this psalm was primarily intended for the Levites, to stir them up to do their office in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it as speaking to us, who are made to our God spiritual priests. And the repeated inculcating of the call thus intimates that it is a great and necessary duty, a duty which we should be much employed and much enlarged in, but which we are naturally backward to and cold in, and therefore need to be brought to, and held to, by precept upon precept, and line upon line. Observe here,

I. Whence this tribute of praise arises, and out of what part of his dominion it especially issues. It comes,

1. From *his sanctuary*; praise him there. Let his priests, let his people, that attend there, attend him with their praises. Where should he be praised, but there where he does, in a special manner, both manifest his glory and communicate his grace? *Praise God* upon the account of *his sanctuary*, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us, ^{257b}Ezekiel 37:26. *Praise God in his holy ones* (so some read it); we must take notice of the image of God as it appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and when we praise them we must praise God in them.

2. From *the firmament of his power*. *Praise him* because of his power and glory which appear in the firmament, its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it has upon this earth. Let those that have their dwelling *in the firmament of his power*, even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some, by the *sanctuary*, as well as by *the firmament of his power*, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory; that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually, in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

II. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due, upon many accounts, particularly,

1. The works of his power (v. 2): *Praise him for his mighty acts*; for *his mightinesses* (so the word is), for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace, what he has done in the creation, government, and redemption of the world, for the children of men in general, for his own church and children in particular.

2. The glory and majesty of his being: *Praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the multitude of his magnificence* (so Dr. Hammond reads it); not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite, but, since he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great and good men. *Deus non patitur hyperbolum* — *We cannot speak hyperbolically of God*; all the

danger is of saying too little and therefore, when we have done our utmost, we must own that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to, *his excellent greatness*.

III. In what manner this tribute must be paid, with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple-service, v. 3-5. It is well that we are not concerned to enquire what sort of instruments these were; it is enough that they were well known then. Our concern is to know,

1. That hereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God and how desirous he was that this good work might go on.

2. That in serving God we should spare no cost nor pains.

3. That the best music in God's ears is devout and pious affections, *non musica chordula, sed cor* — *not a melodious string, but a melodious heart*. Praise God with a strong faith; praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire towards him and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by a universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory.

4. That, various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done with an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder, but help one another. The New-Testament concert, instead of this, is *with one mind and one mouth to glorify God*, ^{<516>}Romans 15:6.

IV. Who must pay this tribute (v. 6): *Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord*. He began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary and were employed in the temple-service; but he concludes with a call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and *in every place*, as acceptably as at Jerusalem, *this incense should be offered*, ^{<311>}Malachi 1:11. Some think that in *every thing that has breath* here we must include the inferior creatures (as ^{<072>}Genesis 7:22), *all in whose nostrils was the breath of life*. They praise God according to their capacity. The singing of birds is a sort

of praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, “We would praise God if we could; do you do it for us.” John in vision heard a song of praise from *every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth*, ^{<66>}Revelation 5:13. Others think that only the children of men are meant; for into them God has in a more peculiar manner *breathed the breath of life*, and they have become *living souls*, ^{<1>}Genesis 2:7. Now that the gospel is ordered to be preached *to every creature*, to every human creature, it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit, for, but to spend it in praising God; and how can we spend it better? Prayers are called *our breathings*, ^{<23>}Lamentations 3:56. Let every one that breathes towards God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath, let the praises of God perfume our breath; let us be in this work as in our element; let it be to us as the air we breathe in, which we could not live without. Having our breath in our nostrils, let us consider that it is still going forth, and will shortly go and not return. Since therefore we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord, and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and, when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state to breathe God's praises in a freer better air.

The first three of the five books of psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with *Amen and Amen*, the fourth with *Amen, Hallelujah*, but the last, and in it the whole book, concludes with only *Hallelujah*, because the last six psalms are wholly taken up in praising God and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think that this last psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God, and that the musical instruments here said to be used are no more to be understood literally than the gold, and pearls, and precious stones, which are said to adorn the New Jerusalem, ^{<21>}Revelation 21:18, 19. But, as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate that the praises the saints offer there are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness — hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are doing whom we have been acquainted with on earth, but who have

gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth as those do it that are in heaven. And let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. *Hallelujah* is the word there (⁶⁹¹Revelation 19:1, 3); let us echo to it now, as those that hope to join in it shortly. *Hallelujah, praise you the Lord.*