

PSALM 47

The scope of this psalm is to stir us up to praise God, to stir up all people to do so; and,

I. We are directed in what manner to do it, publicly, cheerfully, and intelligently (v. 1, 6, 7).

II. We are furnished with matter for praise.

1. God's majesty (v. 2).

2. His sovereign and universal dominion (v. 2, 7-9).

3. The great things he had done, and will do, for his people (v. 3-5). Many suppose that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion which v. 5 seems to refer to ("God has gone up with a shout"); — but it looks further, to the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world, to which the heathen should become willing subjects. In singing this psalm we are to give honour to the exalted Redeemer, to rejoice in his exaltation, and to celebrate his praises, confessing that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

~~1970~~ PSALM 47:1-4

EXHORTATION TO PRAISE GOD

To the chief musician. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

The psalmist, having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise, as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others' backwardness to and barrenness in this work. Observe, in these verses,

I. Who are called upon to praise God: "*All you people, all you people of Israel;*" those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he has an influence. Whatever others do, he and his house, he and his people, shall praise the

Lord. Or, “All you people and nations of the earth;” and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles and the bringing of them into the church; see ^{<51>}Romans 15:11.

II. What they are called upon to do: “*O clap your hands*, in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you, of your approbation, nay, your admiration, of what God has done in general, and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, ^{<52>}Job 27:23. *Clap your hands*, as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; *shout unto God*, not to make him hear (his ear is not heavy), but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. Shout *with the voice of triumph* in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph.” Note, Such expressions of pious and devout affections as to some may seem indecent and imprudent ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because, if they come from an upright heart, God will accept the strength of the affection and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

III. What is suggested to us as matter for our praise.

1. That the God with whom we have to do is a God of awful majesty (v. 2): *The Lord most high is terrible*. He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be revered by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice, that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him.
2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion. He is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power, *a King over all the earth*; all the creatures, being made by him, are subject to him, and therefore he is *a great King*, the King of kings.
3. That he takes a particular care of his people and their concerns, has done so and ever will;

(1.) In giving them victory and success (v. 3), subduing the people and nations under them, both those that stood in their way (^{<53>}Psalm 44:2) and those that made attempts upon them. This God had done for them, witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered which way soever he turned his victorious arms. But this

looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles; he shall bring *them in as sheep into the fold* (so the word signifies), not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them a *willing people in the day of his power*, shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce those who had gone astray, under the guidance of the *great shepherd and bishop of souls*, ^{<4025>}1 Peter 2:25.

(2.) In giving them rest and settlement (v. 4): *He shall choose our inheritance for us*. He had chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel; it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them; see ^{<598>}Deuteronomy 32:8. This justified their possession of that land, and gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable; they had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which Infinite Wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it made it *the excellency*, the honour, of *Jacob* (^{<308>}Amos 6:8); and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob because he loved him, ^{<808>}Deuteronomy 7:8. Apply this spiritually, and it bespeaks,

[1.] The happiness of the saints, that God himself has chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage: *he* has chosen it who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy; and he has chosen so well that he himself has undertaken to be the *inheritance of his people* (^{<365>}Psalms 16:5), and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, ^{<100>}1 Peter 1:4. This will be indeed the excellency of Jacob, for whom, because he loved them, he prepared such a happiness as eye has not seen.

[2.] The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, "God shall choose my inheritance for me; let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is good for me better than I do for myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his."

PSALM 47:5-9

EXHORTATION TO PRAISE GOD

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises; so backward are we to this duty that we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here (v. 6): *Sing praises to God*, and again, *Sing praises, Sing praises to our King*, and again, *Sing praises*. This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition if it be done with new affections. Should not a people praise their God?

^{278B}Daniel 5:4. Should not subjects praise their king? God is our God, our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined (v. 7): *Sing you praises with understanding*, with *Maschil*.

1. “Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God and what is the meaning of the service.” This is the gospel-rule (^{434B}1 Corinthians 14:15), *to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also*; it is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, ^{419B}Ephesians 5:19. It is not an acceptable service if it be not a reasonable service.

2. “Instructively, as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him.” Three things are mentioned in these verses as just matter for our praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense: —

I. We must praise God going up (v. 5): *God has gone up with a shout*, which may refer,

1. To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself dancing before it, the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him he might be said to *go up*. The emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more

public and solemn administration of them, is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in and give thanks for.

2. To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven, when he had finished his work on earth, ^{<400>}Acts 1:9. Then *God went up with a shout*, the shout of a King, of a conqueror, as one who, having *spoiled principalities and powers*, then *led captivity captive*, ^{<408>}Psalms 68:18. He went up as a Mediator, typified by the ark and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, *into heaven itself*; see ^{<392>}Hebrews 9:24. We read not of a shout, or of the sound of a trumpet, at the ascension of Christ, but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God, that then shouted for joy, ^{<386>}Job 38:7. He shall come again in the same manner as he went (^{<411>}Acts 1:11) and we are sure that he shall come again with a shout and the sound of a trumpet.

II. We must praise God reigning, v. 7. 8. God is not only our King, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is *King of all the earth* (v. 7), over all the kings of the earth, and therefore in every place the incense of praise is to be offered up to him. Now this may be understood,

1. Of the kingdom of providence. God, as Creator, and the God of nature, *reigns over the heathen*, disposes of them and all their affairs, as he pleases, though they know him not, nor have any regard to him: *He sits upon the throne of his holiness*, which he has prepared in the heavens, and there he rules over all, even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the extent of God's government; all are born within his allegiance; even the heathen that serve other gods are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government; it is a throne of holiness, on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgment, in which we are sure there is no iniquity.

2. Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose *throne is for ever and ever reigns over the heathen*; not only he is entrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes that were bred up in heathenism, ^{<402>}Ephesians 2:12, 13. This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery that the *Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, ^{<406>}Ephesians 3:6. Christ *sits upon the throne of his holiness*, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are

intended to show forth God's holiness and to advance holiness among the children of men.

III. We must praise God as attended and honoured by *the princes of the people*, v. 9. This may be understood,

1. Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes, at the solemn feasts, or to despatch the public business of the nation. It was the honour of Israel that they were *the people of the God of Abraham*, as they were Abraham's seed and taken into his covenant; and, thanks be to God, this blessing of Abraham has come upon the isles of the Gentiles, ^{<R14>}Galatians 3:14. It was their happiness that they had a settled government, *princes of their people*, who were the *shields of their land*. Magistracy is the shield of a nation, and it is a great mercy to any people to have this shield, especially when their princes, *their shields, belong unto the Lord*, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service, for then he is greatly exalted. It is likewise the honour of God that, in another sense, the *shields of the earth do belong to him*; magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, which way soever he pleases. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation in the things that belong to its peace is a very happy omen, which promises abundance of blessings.

2. It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the New Jerusalem, that they should all become *the people of the God of Abraham*, to whom it was promised that he should be *the father of many nations*. The *volunteers* of the people (so it may be read); it is the same word that is used in ^{<R10>}Psalms 110:3, *Thy people shall be willing*; for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing, to be his. When the *shields of the earth*, the ensigns of royal dignity (^{<R12>}1 Kings 14:27, 28,) are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign, when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.