

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 146 — Entering the Final Hallel

1.0 Introducing Psalm 146

- The Psalter's "Final Hallel" consists of five psalms (Pss 146–150) that each begin and end with "Hallelujah" (= "Praise the LORD").
- Psalm 146's praise focuses on the trustworthiness of the LORD Who, in contrast to transient human leaders, always controls His creation for the good of His people.

2.0 Reading Psalm 146 (NAU)

146:1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

146:2 I will praise the LORD while I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

146:3 Do not trust in princes,
In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.

146:4 His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;
In that very day his thoughts perish.

146:5 How blessed is he whose **help** is the God of Jacob,
Whose **hope** is in the LORD his God,

146:6 Who made heaven and earth,
The sea and all that is in them;

Who keeps faith forever;
146:7 Who executes justice for the oppressed;
Who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free.

- 146:8** The LORD opens *the eyes of* the blind;
 The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;
 The LORD loves the righteous;
146:9 The LORD protects the strangers;
 He supports the fatherless and the widow,
 But He thwarts the way of the wicked.
- 146:10** The LORD will reign forever,
 Your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Praise the LORD!

3.0 Understanding Psalm 146

3.1 Outline

- I. Praise Is Worthy of Commitment (vv. 1–2)
- II. The LORD Is Worthy of Praise (vv. 4–10)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “O my soul”
 - The literal order of the line is: “Praise, O my soul, the LORD.”
 - ✓ Thus, the command to praise harmonizes with the opening “Hallelujah” and “my soul” comes in an emphatic location for an address.
 - ✓ Compare Psalms 103:1 and 104:1 where the Hebrew has the same order, but a different verb (“bless”).
 - ***Why is it significant that the psalmist focuses on himself?***
- **v. 2** “I will praise . . . I will sing”
 - The psalmist reveals his determination to praise the LORD—praise is purposeful, intentional.
 - Compare Psalm 104:33.
- **v. 2** “while I live”
 - The Hebrew actually says “with my life.” The translators of the NAU took the reference to be temporal (perhaps based upon the parallel in the next line of the text), but it could be instrumental.
 - ***What are possible differences between praising God “while I live” and praising God “with my life”?***
- **v. 3** “Do not trust in princes”
 - The psalmist addresses this warning to a plurality. Its wording implies that there might be times when politicians can be trusted.
 - The word for “princes” can refer to any influential leader.
 - Compare Psalm 118:10.
 - “[I]f we trust in men we will get what men can do, but if we trust in God we will get what God can do.”—James E. Rosscup, *An Exposition of Prayer* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2008), 982.



■ *What is the point the psalmist makes about trust in political leaders?*

- v. 4 “he returns to the earth”
 - Compare Genesis 3:19 and Ecclesiastes 12:7.
- v. 4 “his thoughts perish”
 - “Thoughts” (only 1x in the OT) may be translated as “plans.”
- v. 5 “How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob”
 - Beatitudes occur 25 times in Psalms distributed as follows (correcting the list in Psalm 112 notes):
 - Book 1 (8x): 1:1; 2:12; 32:1, 2; 33:12; 34:8; 40:4; 41:1
 - Book 2 (1x): 65:4
 - Book 3 (4x): 84:4, 5, 12; 89:15
 - Book 4 (2x): 94:12; 106:3
 - Book 5 (10x): 112:1; 119:1, 2; 127:5; 128:1; 137:8, 9; 144:15[2x]; 146:5.
 - What kinds of blessings do these beatitudes represent?
 - ✓ Beatitudes of compensation: Psalms 1:1–2; 41:1; 84:4; 106:3; 112:1; 119:1, 2; 128:1; 137:8, 9.
 - ✓ Beatitudes of pure grace: Psalms 2:2; 32:1, 2; 33:12; 34:8; 40:4; 65:4; 84:5, 12; 89:15; 94:12; 127:5; 144:15(2x); 146:5.
- v. 5 “help . . . hope”
 - NT writers speak of help and hope from the OT: Acts 26:6, 7, 22; Romans 15:4, 12, 13; Hebrews 2:16; 4:16; 6:11, 19.
 - God is our help in the present and our hope in the future. No human person, no matter how influential, can provide such help and hope.
 - The specific word for “hope” here occurs only in Psalm 119:116.
- vv. 6–9 Characteristic Divine Actions
 - In typical Hebrew hymnic style, participles (9 of them) describe the characteristic deeds of the LORD.
 - A different Hebrew verb form identifies the tenth and eleventh characteristic actions. Perhaps the psalmist intends this change of verbs to highlight the contrast between the last two divine actions and bring the psalm to a climax.
 - ✓ Compare Psalm 145:20 and 147:6.
- vv. 7–9 Divine Identity
 - Verse 5 closes with the divine title “the LORD his God.”
 - Verses 5–7b assume that “the LORD his God” is the subject of the participles.
 - Verses 7c–9 specify the “LORD” as the subject of five characteristic action statements.
 - LORD is the title expressing God’s covenant relationship to His people as well as His eternality. The eternal God cares for His people.
- v. 10 “The LORD will reign forever”

- Divine sovereignty comprises the final theme of Psalm 146. It repeats the declarations of Psalm 145:1 and 11–13.

4.0 Singing Psalm 146

“I’ll Praise My Maker”

(Tune: “The Solid Rock”)



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| <p>1 I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures,
<i>Or immortality endures.</i></p> <p>3 Happy the man whose hopes rely
On Israel’s God: He made the sky,
And earth, and seas, with all their train:
His truth for ever stands secure;
He saves th’oppressed, He feeds the poor,
And none shall find His promise vain,
<i>And none shall find His promise vain.</i></p> <p>5 He loves His saints, He knows them well,
But turns the wicked down to hell;
Thy God, O Zion! ever reigns:
Let every tongue, let every age,
In this exalted work engage;
Praise Him in everlasting strains,
<i>Praise Him in everlasting strains</i></p> | <p>2 Why should I make a man my trust?
Princes must die and turn to dust;
Vain is the help of flesh and blood:
Their breath departs, their pomp, and power,
And thoughts, all vanish in an hour,
Nor can they make their promise good,
<i>Nor can they make their promise good.</i></p> <p>4 The Lord has eyes to give the blind;
The Lord supports the sinking mind;
He sends the labr’ing conscience peace;
He helps the stranger in distress,
The widow, and the fatherless,
And grants the pris’ner sweet release,
<i>And grants the pris’ner sweet release.</i></p> <p>6 I’ll praise Him while He lends me breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
My days of praise shall ne’er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures,
<i>Or immortality endures.</i></p> |
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— Words: Isaac Watts

5.0 Praying Psalm 146

- Father, I praise You with all my being. [vv. 1–2]
- Lord, teach me to trust You rather than mortal man. [v. 3]
- Thank You for help and hope as Your blessings. [v. 5]
- Lord, I praise You for creating all things, executing justice, helping the helpless, loving the righteous, and protecting the vulnerable. [vv. 6–9]

6.0 Applying Psalm 146

- Our God is totally praiseworthy for His characteristic actions.
- Our praise for God must be personal and total.