

Praise the Lord!
Psalms 147

Intro

You may be aware that through a number of sermons and in a recently released book, a popular author and influential pastor has been proposing that the church needs to “unhitch” the Old Testament Scriptures from New Testament Christianity

As I understand it - his argument - essentially - is that because the OT contains the Old Covenant dealings with the people of Israel - it is therefore obsolete and if we want to reach unchurched, biblically ignorant people with the gospel we need to eject the difficulties present in Old Testament - the many seemingly strange laws, the conquering of Canaan, and so forth.

The center of the faith he proposes is the historic, physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead and anything that interferes with that essential proclamation should be faded from prominence.

Appears to come from a heart to react the lost with the gospel - hard to knock. Don't want to be the guy who argues against reaching people with the good news of Christ, but I would propose that if your whole paradigm for ministry is reaching the lost and not making and maturing disciples through the means that God has given us including the proclamation of the whole counsel of God, one will fail to accomplish that which they care about most. And to minimize or relegate to the background that which is understood as the very Word of God is to place one's ministry - indeed one's soul in a frightful and precarious position.

This would appear to be simply the latest in a long line of supposedly enlighten Christians who throw shade at the OT in the name of progress.

Let me assure you, in this church the coupling between the OT and our NT Christianity is strong and secure. My aim by God's grace will always be to reverence and proclaim the whole counsel of God. 5 reasons that we treasure and revere the OT - there are more - merits a whole series. 5 briefly:

1. The OT Scriptures self-attest that they are the inspired words of God and it should follow that we dare not undermine or bypass this revelation. It is understood that there aren't things that can be difficult to understand or that the Scriptures can be misapplied - the fact remains. SHOULD BE ENOUGH - God has spoken we listen.
2. While it is true, we are not under the Old Covenant and live in the good of what the author of Hebrews describes as a better covenant with better promises, the OT is still vital for us in its prophetic testimony and as it contains wisdom we should desire if we aim to live godly and faithful lives.
3. Jesus and all of the authors of the NT had the highest regard and reverence for the OT Scriptures. So much of their teaching fails to make sense without an understanding, appreciation and respect for those Scriptures.
4. Jesus informs us in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus following his resurrection that all of the OT - the law, prophets and Psalms testify about him which means, for those who want to know everything we can about our precious Savior - the Lord Christ - we need the testimony of the OT Scriptures.
5. One more, we lose the OT we lose the Psalms, we lose the Psalms we lose our divinely inspired book of prayers and songs, these Psalms that comfort our souls and reveal the character of God.

UNTHINKABLE. The Psalms provide us with content for our prayers and praise, emotional vocabulary in our joys and in our sufferings. This OT is precious!

It is in light of this, on this Thanksgiving weekend we are going to turn to the Psalms and examine Psalm 147 - a Psalm of praise and thanksgiving - indeed a vocabulary for thanksgiving

INVITE YOU TO STAND OUT OF REVERENCE FOR GOD'S WORD. Let us read this OT Scripture with reverence and anticipation for this is the Word of God

READ TEXT

3 Reasons unshakable to be grateful - 3 reasons to be thankful - 3 reasons to praise the Lord this Thanksgiving weekend. Martin Luther "this is a very blessed Psalm of thanksgiving"

1. Praise the Lord for His Grace 2. Praise the Lord for His Provision 3. Praise the Lord for His Word

I. Praise the Lord for His Grace

- A. v. 1 our Psalm begins with a command - Praise the Lord! And really this Psalm is about providing reason enough to obey this command to praise the Lord. 3 internal realities for the one who praises the Lord.
 - 1. It is good to sing praises to God - you know this
 - 2. It is pleasant to do so - other translation - it is delightful
 - 3. It is fitting - it is only right the one praises the Lord
 - a) A kind of sanctified self-interest - you were created to praise the Lord, and God desires you to find satisfying joy in the praise and singing we offer up to him. When we are praising the Lord it is good, pleasant, and fitting because we are engaged in that which we were created to do
- B. V. 2 - the Psalmist looks beyond the personal satisfaction of praising the Lord to behold God himself - the object of our praise - the Psalmist in effect invites us to behold his kindness - to behold the grace of God
 - 1. The LORD - Yahweh - covenant name of God - the Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel - in this the Psalmist speaks to a people devastated by judgment. Judgment they brought upon themselves for their rebellion and idolatry.
 - a) Jerusalem the capital city of the people of God destroyed and taken desolate
 - b) People of Israel taken into captivity - scattered to the nations out of their promised land
 - (1) YET, though his anger was rightly kindled against his rebellious people - here, his grace shines through in brilliance. Though his anger be for a moment his favor is for a lifetime.
 - (a) He rebuilds that which was broken down because of their sin
 - (b) He gathers again to himself those wandering outcasts and refugees
 - 2. V. 3 those brokenhearted by sin and suffering - THOSE PEOPLE? Those he heals - he ministers to sin-sick, heartbroken people - he rushes in to meet those in heart-broken suffering and bandages their wounds of despair, and regret, and disgrace.
- C. V. 4 not just willing but able to do it! Transcendently able - infinitely capable - want evidence? He determines the number of stars - he knows them all so well he has named each one.

Illustration: The best astronomers can only estimate how many stars there are in the universe. Our milky way - the galaxy we reside in - has 100 billion-200 billion or more - not exactly precise. One somewhat informed guess by an astronomer at Ithaca College, David Kornreich is that when one adds up the number of estimate stars estimated galaxies, we have 1 septillion stars - 1 with 24 zeroes - but even Kornreich acknowledges that this likely a gross underestimation.

1. Literally countless stars created by God - displaying his creative might and glory - God knows - he knows each one - he spoke each one into existence - knows them so well he knows them by name
- D. V. 5 in light of the expansive all-encompassing realities of his Sovereign creative decrees and omniscient knowledge - great is the Lord! HE IS GREAT - infinitely abundant in power and might - understanding beyond measure - off the charts - can't be measure by an IQ test.
- E. V. 6 And this one - most great and mighty and wise - condescends to us - he stoops down to us by his grace - he reaches down and lifts up the humble to sustain them - he lifts up all who cast themselves down before his greatness and grace - all who abase themselves in need he lifts up - in their pain and broken-heartedness - he gathers in all those wandering outcasts who kneel before him
 1. In his greatness he is not an aloof deity - in his greatness he shows the humble his grace - he draws near
 - a) The wicked? Those who are not humble before him - the proud - he casts them down. Terrifying for when God casts down in judgement who stay his hand - who will lift themselves up?
- F. Application
 1. Remember your conversation - remember that you were broken and sick in your sin - you were wandering far from him - he came to you by his grace in Christ and by the power of his Spirit he has brought you restoration and fellowship with him - GRACE. As we continue in this broken world experiencing the continuing reality of indwelling sin
 - a) Broken-hearted - suffering, weary with sin he doesn't despise or ignore - he is eager to heal and bind up
 - b) Wandering - all of prone to wander Lord we feel it - brings us back
 2. Aware of weakness neediness - sustains
 3. ALL OF THIS FOR THOSE WHO WILL HUMBLE THEMSELVES BEFORE HIM. Listen to his will for his people his heart toward his sheep

[15] I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. [16] I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice. (Ezekiel 34:15-16)

- a) Oh, it is good, pleasant, fitting, to praise and sing with grateful hearts for his mighty heart is full of grace for us! PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS GRACE

II. Praise the Lord for His Provision

- A. v. 7 another command - sing to the Lord w/ thanksgiving - make melody to God on the lyre - sing grateful songs to God and get the band involved!
 1. Note - not just singing as religious duty - with thanksgiving - with gratefulness - disposition of the heart

- a) Singing is inextricable from the Christian faith - Bible doesn't have a category for non-singing Christians - well there is one category - a Christian outside the will of God.
 - (1) Don't tell me that men don't sing and shout - watch the Eagles sing the fight song - we sing with thanksgiving for that which we esteem worthy of our voices to extol - no one worthier than God
- B. Sing with Thanksgiving for his provision
 - 1. v. 8 look at how he sustains, maintains, provides for his creation
 - a) He covers the heavens the skies with clouds that burst forth in rain that causes the grass and indeed all things to grow. The rain which causes verdant fruitfulness that provides life-giving sustenance for the creatures of the earth. In that day grass for fuel to cook and keep warm
 - 2. He gives to the beast their food, he feeds the dependent, young ravens that cry to be fed as worms and insects are plucked from the ground of his creation to nourish so seemingly small and insignificant as these - even the raven considered among the least of all birds
 - a) Luke 12 last week - consider the Ravens they don't have a means of food production but God provides for them - how much more will care for you
 - 3. The psalmist calls us to consider the life-sustaining interplay and ecosystems of creation and remember that all is created by, provided for, sustained by God
- C. v. 10-11 What God delights in is completely different than how we are wired - we admire and move towards strength and power - but he doesn't delight in strong horses that pull war chariots that carry the rider across the landscape - not does he take pleasure in the strong legs of the powerful warrior
 - 1. RATHER - the LORD - Yahweh - the great I AM - takes pleasure, delights in those WHO FEAR HIM! Those who hope in his steadfast love.
 - a) As the supreme and all-glorious Sovereign, he's not impressed with our biggest and brightest - who are we to compete with him who created and sustains the earth? He has no need of anything.
 - (1) Rather he delights in those who esteem him w/ humble admiration, awe and trembling worship and who hope in his steadfast love - depend on his steadfast and faithful and unfailing love.

Surely he who is able to do all these things in immensity is able to accomplish his merciful designs toward his people, to whom he has so long and wondrously manifested his special and gracious presence. He who has perfect dominion over universal nature can whatever he pleases for his people. (William Plumer, *Psalms*, p. 1198)

- 2. What he pleases to do for his people is to provide and delight in them as the fear and hope in him

D. Application

- 1. For all those who know that we are not impressive - and in fact needy, poor, and undeserving in our weakness and remaining sin - we are reminded that we have reason enough for thanksgiving filled praising of the triune God for he is our provider and sustainer and HE TAKES PLEASURE IN US. HE TAKES PLEASURE IN YOU CHRISTIAN. SOMEONE NEEDS TO HEAR

- a) He provides for our needs and he rejoices over us with loud singing - Zephaniah - he takes pleasure in us - he delights in us - DOES NOT THE HEART LEAP AT THIS REVELATION?
- (1) Sing to the Lord with Thanksgiving for the gracious provision of God for our needs and Praise the Lord for the unthinkable wonderful provision of his pleasure in us. Praise the Lord for His Grace, Praise the Lord for His Provision

III. Praise the Lord for His Word

- A. v. 12 - third command - Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem, Praise your God, O Zion!
 - 1. Jerusalem - Zion - the abode of his presence in Israel
 - a) Questions - maybe you've been wondering - addressed to Jerusalem and Zion - can we actually apply this Psalm to us - converted gentiles a world away separated by 1,000s of years
 - (1) Those who are of faith are the offspring of Abraham the Father of Israel. Ethnic Israel plays a central role in God's redemptive purposes but in Christ the promises made to Israel for their good are now extended to all those of the household of faith - THE ISRAEL OF GOD
 - (a) Some discernment - 2 chronicles 7:14 people called by name
 - 2. But with joy we find yes - all of God's promises are yes and amen in Christ - so the OT is full of treasures and precious promises V. 13-14
 - a) He strengthens the bars of your gates - he protects his people
 - b) He blesses your children within you with grace
 - c) He makes peace in your borders - his people are a place where reconciliation and peace reign in a world gone mad
 - d) He fills you with the finest of wheat - he satisfies his people with the best
 - 3. V. 15 reveals the instrument of his power - it is his word of command that directs the realities of the universe - he sends out his command his word runs swiftly
 - 4. V. 16-17 we are again directed towards the workings of God's omnipotent superintending of creation
 - a) He gives snow - he scatters frost - he hurls down crystal of ice like bread crumbs - who can stand before the cold of God - answer no-one

Illustration: If one stood in the Antarctica during the coldest part of year without proper clothing one would be dead in half an hour. We are very small.

- B. Again, how does he accomplish his work? V. 18 he sends out his word
 - 1. At the word of his command Nor-Easters erupt across the eastern seaboard and at his word he melts them all - he speaks and winter descends in power - he speaks again and winter becomes spring - at his command the winds of March usher in warm fronts that cause water to break free from the constriction of the cold and flow with life-giving supply.
 - 2. The Psalmist would exhort us this winter to examine the ice and snow as it falls in abundance and even incapacitates our "advanced technological culture" and to wonder and to wonder again as that ice and snow melts and spring comes again - the reality of spring and summer after the long winter is evidence of the powerful Word of God. It is the expression of his mighty Word of command

**Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,**

And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again. (C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*)

- C. v. 19-20 and this mighty word of God which directs the affairs of the universe and accomplishes his sovereign will - THIS WORD. THE WORD OF GOD HAS BEEN DECLARED TO JACOB - HIS STATUTES AND RULES TO ISRAEL

1. What a privilege!

[7] For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? [8] And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:7-8)

2. No other nation has been spoken to by God in this way and we - 1 Peter - now joined to the people of God in every age - a royal nation has received this awesome and mighty word.
3. PRAISE THE LORD THAT HE HAS SPOKEN HIS WORD TO HIS PEOPLE! HE DOES NOT HAVE TO SPEAK TO US!
- a) His Word is to be treasured and marveled at not relegated to that which is optional - not unhitch from our faith from the testimony of his Word whether OT or New.

D. Application

1. It would seem that God intends this Psalm to build faith, gratefulness, praise, and devotedness to the Word of God. Do you see the Bible in your hands this way? Do you praise the Lord every day that he has spoken to us? Behold the power of his Word!
- a) Preaching - come on Sunday with expectation and anticipation that insomuch that the preacher speaks God's words after him - there is power at work - expect to meet with God, hear from God, be changed by God under the authority of this Word
- b) Devotions - come in faith - no mere words of men - mighty word of God
- c) Parenting - do not grow wear in persistently setting this mighty Word before them - the instrument through which God accomplishes his will - keep his Word before them so that they hear his voice and know him - don't ever leave off that which accomplishes his will - his holy Word
- (1) John Wesley speaking of the treasure and privilege of having this word

I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God, just hovering over the great gulf 'till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen; I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing — the way to heaven, how to land safely on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! (John Wesley, *The Works: Volume 5*)

2. The Word the OT people of God had was not yet complete for they were only able to peer into that which we now know in the coming of Christ. Jesus says the Psalms point to him and so Psalm 147 does.
- a) He is the one the Great Shepherd who gathers the outcasts
- b) He is the one who died on our place, bearing our sin and judgment so that we through his wounds would be restored to God and by his stripes our souls are healed and restored
- c) He is the great physician who heals the brokenhearted and binds up our wounds
- d) He is the one who sustains all things by the power of his Word and brings his people into every spiritual blessing

- e) He is the one who never leaves or forsakes, who protects and blesses and satisfies - he is the finest of wheat - the bread of life that comes down out of heaven
 - f) He is the one who with a word rebuked the storm - of whom the marveling asked what manner of man is this who even the winds and the waves obey him - he is the Christ - the Son of God
 - g) He is the Word become flesh - the fullest and final declaration of God's grace - the wisdom of God that instructs our lives
- (1) PRAISE THE LORD FOR HIS WORD!

SPEAKING OF THESE COMMANDS TO PRAISE THE LORD!

There are so many reasons for praising God, and so many calls to that work that it will prove us guilty of an exceedingly strong and wicked aversion to that spiritual service, if we yield not to so urgent commands. (William Plumer, *Psalms*, p. 1199)

WE REMEMBER AND HAPPILY YIELD

Close

Not gonna unhitch - NO SIR!

We hold as precious this OT revelation

We behold our God. Vocabulary for gratitude and thanksgiving.

Praise God for his grace
Praise God for his provision
Praise God for his Word.

NOT JUST THANKSGIVING - OUR DUTY AND DELIGHT TO PRAISE HIM NOW AND FOREVER

INSTANT APPLICATION AS WE CONCLUDE

[1] Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! [2] Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! (Psalm 95:1-2)

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