

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

2 Praise the LORD with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

3 Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully, and shout for joy.

4 For the word of the LORD is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.

5 The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.

6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathers the waters of the sea into jars;
he puts the deep into storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.

9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

10 The LORD foils the plans of the nations;
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.

11 But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart through all generations.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people he chose for his inheritance.

13 From heaven the LORD looks down
and sees all mankind;

14 from his dwelling place he watches
all who live on earth—

15 he who forms the hearts of all,
who considers everything they do.

16 No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.

17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.

18 But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,

19 to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.

20 We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.

21 In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.

22 May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.

END BY READING TOGETHER

Psalms Breakdown – with help from David Pawson, ‘Unlocking The Bible’

The word Psalms literally means ‘to pluck’ or ‘twang’ as in the strings used to accompany the Psalms. Martin Luther said, ‘In the Psalms we look into the heart of every saint.’ It’s the one part of the OT that everyone can identify with in the varied seasons of life. Luther also described the Psalms as ‘The Bible within the Bible.’ The Psalms took 1000 years to write and are Israel’s hymn and prayer book – but ones we too can use today. In Hebrew the word used for ‘Psalms’ means Songs of Praise.

G Campbell Morgan says, “The Hebrew word translated worship literally means *prostration*.”

Psalm 45.1 says, ‘My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the King; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.’ Sounds suspiciously like someone carefully crafting their words poetically for the glory of God and then using their tongue and intonation skillfully to deliver the rhymes to music... Both the Psalms and rap are poetry set to music.

As David Pawson writes, “Poetry is more easily remembered than prose, especially when set to music.”

They walked down the lane together
The sky was full of stars
Together they reached the farmyard gate
He lifted for her the bars
She neither smiled nor thanked him
Indeed she knew not how
For he was just a farmer’s boy
And she was a Jersey cow!

“Poetry touches the heart, the mind and the will by making words beautiful as well as meaningful...” (Pawson)

Rhyme – start of Psalm 103 rewrite:

Praise the Lord, with all of my soul
With everything I have, Lord, you're in control
My whole being praises you cos you're all-seeing
Day to day, in all you do, your kindness is exceeding

Rhythm – eg Psalm 23: (4/4, 4/3 rhythm)

The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green, he leadeth me
The quiet waters by

Or a song: (8,6,8,6 syllables) – Amazing Grace (*give example of this not rhyming*)

Repetition – eg Psalm 136, ‘His love endures forever’ refrain

Wonder – Mike Bickle, ‘The Seven Longings of the Human Heart –

“There is a craving in our spirit to be fascinated, to marvel and be awestruck and filled with wonder. The entertainment industry has identified this longing and made much profit from it. When God reveals God to the human spirit we experience “divine entertainment” at its highest. David’s heart was preoccupied with God while his hands were occupied with leading the nation. Without having a sense of awe, we live aimlessly and in boredom. A spiritually bored believer is weak and vulnerable to Satan. A fascinated believer is strong and equipped to face temptation.”

Story – of climbing Scafell and then the lake on the way back – in awe of God

Think of ‘Indescribable’ – think of what it means, imagine...

From the highest of heights, to the depths of the sea, Creation’s revealing your majesty
From the colours of Fall to the fragrance of spring,
Every creature unique in the song that it sings

Poems are much better for worship than writing or prose, they also point to wonder beyond us, even the simplest rhymes can do this: (twinkle, twinkle little star)

Psalm 42 – As the deer pants for water, so my soul longs for you (God)

We think of the deer panting, tongue out, longing for water. We need God that much!

Sound and sense – Hebrew poetry focuses on the sense, not the sound. This works so well as it can then be easily translated across to any language.

Musicality of Psalms – the Psalms are poems set to music, in much the way that Wesley wrote and set his writing to the tunes of the day or the medieval ballads.

The Psalms provide one pattern of planned worship. The themes of the Psalms cover corporate, personal, God magnifying and personally challenging themes that help us.

‘Praying together in agreement’ – Matthew 18.19 talks about the power of God made manifest where one or two agree. The Greek word for agreement used is ‘sumphoneo’ from where we get the word ‘symphony’. Its literal meaning is being in harmony with someone. The Greek reveals that this kind of agreement is a deep unity and that’s why corporate worship can have power. **Story – of band unity**

God loves poetry, music, song, emotion etc. Poetry is used in the Psalms and in the prophetic books of the Bible too.

Zephaniah 3.17 (as seen in Leah’s song, ‘Lead me like a lamb’) says, “**The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.**”

(Pawson p340) states, “So God is musical. Music... is part of what it means to be made in the image of God. So when God addresses us with poetry we know that he is communicating his feelings from his heart to our hearts... Understanding Hebrew poetry can be a key to understanding the very heart of God.”

David, musicians and the Psalms – helping us understand more of the Psalms

2 Samuel 23.1 we read that David was the ‘0

Of the Psalms, David’s name is by 73 Psalms plus Psalm 2 and Psalm 95. In David’s life, we see the mix of the warrior, the prophetic and the musician. Early in his life, David learned the harp, playing for Saul

1 Samuel 16.23 - Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.

Today we should read the Psalms out loud, singing or shouting them as directed. Other Psalms call us to bow down, to lift our hands, to clap and to dance. We need to open our mouths to receive and praise - and run to him!

Psalm 138.2 - I will **bow** down towards your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.

Psalm 134.2 - **Lift up your hands** in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.

Psalm 47.1 - **Clap your hands**, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

Psalm 149.3 - Let them praise his name with **dancing** and make music to him with tambourine and harp.

Psalm 34 - **Open your mouth and taste**, open your eyes and see how good God is. Blessed are you who run to him.

Psalm 33

Sing joyfully to the LORD (or 'rejoice in the Lord'), you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

2 Praise the LORD with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

3 Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully ('on the strings'), and shout for joy.

We start with an expression of why and how we are to praise God. The Psalm then continues into more detail as to why God is worthy of praise as well as some of the results of praise.

Rejoicing in the Lord is the first thing we're commanded to do. The Hebrew speaks of a ringing loud sound and of praise coming from a deep place. The Psalms 4 chapters on speak of delighting yourself in the Lord. The Lord is looking for worshippers in spirit and in truth (John 4.23-24). The truth being that we can only really worship God in spirit. 1 Corinthians 6.17 says, "But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him." In the OT, there's a sense of it being fitting to praise God, but with the Holy Spirit in us, we cannot help but worship because of Jesus in us.

What is worship?

Derek Prince says, "Worship is the act by which we are joined to the Lord in one spirit. That is why worship is the highest activity of human beings. Again, when we are joined to the Lord in worship, we begin to bring forth (or birth) the things that God wants brought forth. Worship is not an appendix to the Christian life; it is not a little addition to services. It is the culmination. It is the confirmation." (of the union to God)

Praise the Lord with the harp. Spurgeon said, "Men need all the help they can get to stir them up to praise..." After speaking of the human voice as the sweetest instrument of all, he continued that, "The Lord must have a full octave, for all notes are his, and all music belongs to him. Where several pieces of music are mentioned, we are taught to praise God with all the powers which we possess."

There is a poetic parallelism in verse two, but we do get a sense of the different ways in which we are to praise God and the many instruments and ways we can do this.

In verse 3, we are encouraged to sing a new song. The word 'new' means fresh, a new thing. I like new songs; they inspire me. I respect the need to sing and worship through well-known songs and fully support this to aid our corporate worship. However, new songs can bring new life.

Who is this worship directed to? The Lord. The focus of our worship is God. The world blindly worships things to the extent it doesn't even realize it. I watched a great programme about the impact of Kate Middleton when in Canada. It was great to see the Royal couple enjoying their visit and each other, but the focus was on Kate and what she wore etc. Unwittingly people could worship the Royals or what Kate wears. But our worship is of God.

Tim Hughes wrote, “Jesus you alone shall be my first love, my first love. The secret place and highest praise shall be yours, shall be yours..”

But there is a second part to this that Spurgeon picks up, “Let us not present old worn out praise, but put life, and soul, and heart, into every song, since we have new mercies every day, and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord.”

There are 3 physical aspects to our worship. Derek Prince points out that every mention of worship in the Bible involves a posture of the body. Our worship has been designed to be very physical. In Psalm 33, we read that we: sing, play and shout!

Spurgeon wrote, “*Play skillfully*. It is wretched to hear God praised in a slovenly manner. He deserves the best that we have. Every Christian should endeavour to sing according to the rules of the art, so that he may keep time and tune with the congregation. The sweetest tunes and the sweetest voices, with the sweetest words, are all too little for the Lord our God; let us not offer him limping rhymes, set to harsh tunes, and growled out by discordant voices. *With a loud noise*. Heartiness should be conspicuous in divine worship. Well bred whispers are disreputable here. It is not that the Lord cannot hear us, but that it is natural for great exultation to express itself in the loudest manner. Men shout at the sight of their kings: shall we offer no loud hosannahs to the Son of David?”

Playing Skillfully is important:

1 Chronicles 25.7-8 – Along with their relatives—all of them trained and skilled in music for the LORD...

1 Chronicles 15.22 – Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it.

So we learn about training and skill, musicians and vocalists coming together and iron sharpening iron. Our worship and our lives should be about wanting to grow and do the best – Jesus ‘grew in favour with men and with God.’ (Luke 2.52).

We’re commanded to shout for joy. Why? Because of what God has done and our response back to him. God is very visual, very sonic in his actions – he laughs at the nations according to Psalm 2; Jesus is the lion of the tribe of Judah and lions roar and can be very gentle. Let’s not forget that Jesus will roar. The same disciple that Jesus loved was the same disciple that fell on his face in awe in Revelation.

Why should we praise God?

G Campbell Morgan writes, “The permanent values of the Psalter, then, are its revelations of truth about worship. First it reveals the conception of God that produces worship; - Secondly, it reveals the attitude of man in worship; and - Finally, it reveals the activities of worship, initially on the part of God, responsively on the part of man, and finally on the part of God.”

- It breaks chains (Paul and Silas)
- It leads people out into battle (Old Testament)
- It brings down the walls (as in Jericho)

Psalm 33 provides many reasons why God deserves and is worthy of praise...

He made the heavens and the earth; he spoke and the world came to be; he foils the plans of nations and people.

The Lord's plans stand forever, the purposes of his heart throughout all generations. David Pawson once said that God is not in a hurry. To him, 1000 years is like a day. In which case, he only sent his son 2 days ago...

There is also blessing in a nation (or person) whose God is the Lord. Just as an eagle swoops up and looks down on everything below, so God looks down and sees all mankind. Often we can't see what's going on, but God has a plan – for us, for our nation and a plan that is so much wider and bigger than we can comprehend.

God will deliver and keep those whose eyes are on him, who fear him and hope in his unfailing love. Just like an orchestra keeps an eye on the conductor, just as troops on the battlefield have their eyes on the commander, just like a baby keeps its eyes fixed on its father.

Story David Pawson told about Nazi war criminals getting saved- David Pawson tells a true story about how some Nazi war criminals were saved after the end of WW2. There were 16 men who needed a chaplain. An American chaplain was sent for but he didn't want to go initially as some of his family had been killed in Germany. But God sent him. That day, 14 of the 16 war criminals gave their lives to Jesus amazingly. David Pawson retold this story once at his church. A man came up to him at the end who'd been in Nuremberg at the end of the war. The man told him that him and other Christians had prayed for the Nazi war criminals regularly. This was the first time he'd found that God had answered their prayers. At a further meeting a young couple whose uncle had been one of those Nazi war criminals was freed from her years of shame. She was so encouraged she decided to use the testimony to point people to Jesus.

So what are we to do in response?

We wait for the Lord as he is our help and shield. In every season, every circumstance and situation, God is faithful. He helps us and he shields us. In American football, there are defensive ends, tackles and a nose guard whose job is to stop offensive players getting down the middle or to the quarterback. The difference with God is that his shield never fails even when it seems it has!

We also rejoice in our hearts and trust in his holy name. The greatest act of worship is to praise God in every season but more than that, to trust him in every season.

So let's say Psalm 33 together !!

PSALM 33 – STEVE’S REMIX OF THE PSALM IN SONG

My heart will sing to the King
With joy my heart will rhyme
We praise him, lost in the wonder
Of his glory that goes beyond time
Our worship springs from our strings
Make music with instruments and our lives
Our offering is this new song
With skill, with joy, we arise

By his word the heavens were made
His mouth breathed out the stars
The waters flowed from his storehouse
The world created at his command

The Word of the Lord is right and true
He’s faithful to the end
The earth is filled with his great love
Unfailing and Holy best friend

Let all the earth stand in awe
To bring honour to his name
His word stands forever as the truth
His people will never be ashamed

He foils the plans of nations
And resists the evil heart
But his will stands forever
He fulfils what’s in his heart

Blessed are those who hope in God
The people he sets apart
The Lord looks down and watches
Sees inside the human heart

No king can save himself
No warrior’s power is greater
No horse can bring deliverance
Like God, the liberator

The eyes of the Lord look down
On those who fear his power
Whose hope is on his unfailing love
He delivers them every hour

We wait and hope for the Lord
He is our help and shield
In his name our hearts rejoice
Through his unfailing love we’re healed