

## How To Be Happy In The Lord

### Psalm 146

**Introduction:** 1) One of the greatest musicals ever written is George Frederic Handel's (1685-1759) "Messiah." Of course the most famous song of that oratorio is the "Hallelujah" chorus. The text of the song is drawn from Revelation 19:6; 11:15 and 19:16. The song both begins and ends with the word "Hallelujah."

2) However, it would not have been surprising had Handel's inspiration come from the closing psalms of the Hebrew hymn book, for the final 5 songs both begin and end with the word "Hallelujah", translated "praise" in English versions such as the *NKJV*, *NASV*, *ESV*, and *NIV*.

3) Psalm 146 is the first of this hallelujah quintet. It is appropriate that the psalter end in this way. Two other sections of psalms bunched hallel psalms (113-118 and 120-136), and now we come to the end of our journey thru the psalms with the "double Hallelujah psalms," psalms that each begin and end with the word "hallelujah."

4) Those who have experienced the grace and goodness of God should be a happy people, a people happy in the Lord. Our world is filled with sin and sorrow to be sure, but we serve a Great God who made everything (v. 6), keeps His word (v. 6), does what is right (v. 7) and helps those who are hurting (v. 7-9). For such a God we can say "Hallelujah!" For such a God we can say "Praise the Lord."

**Transition:** What exactly does this unknown psalmist (146-150 are all anonymous) teach us so that like him, we can be happy in the Lord? What does he tell us should be our life-long response to the God who has made us and saved us thru His Son the Lord Jesus Christ?

#### I. I will praise the Lord

146:1-2

- The psalm begins literally “praise yah”, a single word in Hebrew. It is pronounced hallelujah. The psalmist vows to praise Yahweh (Jehovah), the Lord, “as long as I live” (*ESV, NIV*). This is not a bad way to live!
- Interestingly the Lord is mentioned eleven times in this psalm. A happy life will be a theocentric life, a God-centered/God focused/God intoxicated life.

1. I will praise Him from my soul 146:1

- The call to praise the Lord is in the form of an imperative, a word of command. Praising the Lord is not optional for the happy Christian, it is essential.
- From the depths of our soul and with all that we are we should praise the Lord. We should not just challenge others and call others to praise the Lord. We should challenge ourselves and commit ourselves to praise the Lord.

2. I will praise Him with my singing 146:2

- What lives in our soul will find its way to our lips. We must determine to praise the Lord with our singing “as long as we live,” even when we hurt, sorrow and are confused. It is not always easy, but it is absolutely necessary to our spiritual health and vitality.
- Genuine praise to our God will:
  - 1) Engage the mind
  - 2) Stir the emotions
  - 3) Move the will
  - 4) Require work
  - 5) Be rooted in God’s revelation of Himself

## II. I will trust the Lord

146:3-4

- The psalmist calls us to trust the Lord but does so by negative examples. These examples highlight the finitude, impotency and transitory nature of human life.
- These verses are meant to humble us and humble us they do.
  1. I will not trust those who cannot save me 146:3
    - Kings and princes, presidents and governors are powerful and influential. By the command of their voice and the power of their pen they can make decisions that influence thousands, millions, even billions. Still, they are mere mortal men, the meaning of the phrase “son of man” in verse 4.
    - They are men not gods. They are flesh and blood humans like you and me. Ultimately they cannot save us either in this life or the life to come.
    - Sadly many put more hope in the Capitol Hill than Calvary’s hill! They put more hope in a government than they do God! They forget Proverbs 21:1 which says, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.”
  2. I will not trust those who cannot save themselves 146:4
    - Not only can mere mortals not save us, they cannot even save themselves. The *ESV* says it well, “When his breath departs (*NIV* “spirit departs”) he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.”
    - Death comes to us all. Presidents, princes, and the powerful are no different. Genesis 3:19 is a sober reminder , “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you

are, and to dust you shall return.” We are *adam* (man) and to the *adamah* (ground) we must return.

- *First Maccabees 2:63*, an intertestamental Hebrew writing, says it well, “Today he may be high in honour, but tomorrow there will be no trace of him, because he will have returned to the dust and all his schemes come to nothing.” If these men cannot save themselves, why would I trust them to save me?

### **III. I will hope in the Lord**

### **146:5-9**

- These verses constitute the heart of the psalm. They inform us concerning the character and conduct of our God, who He is and what He does.
- The student of the Bible will immediately see a connection between vs. 5-9 and the Messianic text of Isaiah 61:1-3, as well as the words of Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 and 7:22-23.
  - Isaiah 61:1-3 “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that He may be glorified.”
  - Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to

proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

- Luke 7:22-23 “Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”
- Here in Psalm 146 we are charged to find our help, our place our hope, in the God of Jacob, Jehovah (Yahweh) our God (v. 5). The God of Jacob is a reminder that our God is a covenant-keeping God who helped the patriarchal schemer in his times of need and even desperation.
- The title “God of Jacob” appears at least a dozen times in Psalms.
- The beatitude or blessing of verse 5 is the last of 25 in the Psalms beginning with Psalm 1:1.
- Twelve glorious affirmations of why this God is the only God we should hope in provide a magnificent basis for why we can be happy in the Lord.

1) He helps His covenant people 146:5

The God of the Fathers is faithful even when his people are unfaithful. He helps us and we rightly and wisely hope in Him.

2) He made everything 146:6

He is the Creator God of Genesis 1-2 as well as the covenant God of Genesis 12 and 2 Samuel 7. As the maker of everything, including the sea and all that is in them, something the Hebrews feared and saw as dangerous and uncertain, He has omnipotent power to meet any and every need we may have.

3) He keeps His word 146:6

- “He keeps His truth forever” (*NKJV*)  
 “Who keeps faith forever (*ESV; NASV*)  
 “Who remains faithful forever” (*NIV*)  
 “He always does what He says” (*The Message*)

- You can trust Yahweh to keep His word. One example: Romans 10:13!

4) He helps the oppressed 146:7

- Those who would abuse the oppressed should recognize they make God their enemy. He will see that justice is done and carried out for those pushed down and held down by wicked oppressors. Some meet his justice in this life. All will face his justice at the Great White Throne (unbelievers) of Revelation 20:11-15 and The Judgment Seat of God (believers) of 2 Corinthians 5:10.

5) He feeds the hungry 146:7

- Our Lord gives food to those who are hungry. Thru His body on earth, the Church, he dispenses both physical bread and spiritual bread (the Bread of Life of John 6:35).
- In Matthew 25:34-46 Jesus teaches us, “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Then the righteous will answer Him saying, Lord when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?”

When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick , or in prison, and come to You? And the King will answer and say to them, assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me. Then He will also say to those on the left hand, depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me. Then they also will answer Him saying, Lord when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to You? Then He will answer them, saying, assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

6) He frees prisoners

146:7

- Working for justice, our Lord sets free those wrongly imprisoned by evil and unjust rulers, often thru His people. William Wilberforce (1759-1833) who led the abolition of slave trade comes to mind.
- Of course the greatest liberation is that of the Lord Jesus who thru his cross and resurrection sets us free from sin, Satan, death, hell and the grave.

Ephesians 4:8 wonderfully reminds us, “When he ascended on high, He led captivity captive.”

7) He gives sight to the blind

146:8

- Jesus came as the “Light of the World” (John 8:12). Giving physical healing to some, He gives spiritual healing to all for, “He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of Life.”

8) He exalts the humble 146:8

- Those who are humbled and brought low in this life are raised to a new status as they place their hope in the Lord.
- Consider the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31
- Hear the words of James 4:6, But [God] gives greater grace. Therefore He says: “God resist the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

9) He loves the righteous 146:8

- The Lord loves those who are made righteous in Christ and pursue righteousness in all they do. They are not spiritual carnal pragmatist who believe the ends justifies the means. No, they know and understand as those who trust and hope in a righteous God, we promote righteous means as well as righteous ends.

10) He cares for the aliens 146:9

- God watches over the alien, “he protects the stranger” (*NASV*). God cares for the outsider, the minority, the foreigner. He has a unique and particular concern for them. Do you? Do I?

11) He sustains the fatherless and widows 146:9

- Lose a daddy or mother? God will sustain and uphold you. Allow Him and He will become your parent, your perfect Father.



- Lose a spouse by death, desertion or even divorce? He knows. He cares. He will help you make it.

12) He frustrated the way of the wicked 146:9

- God ruins the way of the wicked (*ESV*), He frustrates (*NIV*) their plans. They think they have it all figured out and in a heartbeat, it all falls apart.
- Proverbs 14:11-12 teaches us, “The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

**IV. I will exalt the Lord**

**146:10**

The psalm ends as it begins, on the high note of a hallelujah or praise of the Lord. And yet a new note is added, the note of Yahweh’s eternal kingship and reign.

1) He reigns forever

- Earthly rulers come and go. They are here today and gone tomorrow. Regardless of their wisdom, power, personality and influence they eventually pass off the scene. Eventually they die.
- This is true of every king but one: Our King, Jehovah who is King, our King Jesus.
- Revelation 11:15 says it so beautifully, “Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever!”

2) His reign is from Zion

- Zion is the earthly home of the King. Echoes of Psalm 2:6-8 can be heard in the corridors of heaven, “Yet I have set my King on My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.”
- Wiersbe notes, “This statement comes from the song of victory that Israel sang at the Exodus... Think of it: the sovereign Lord of the universe is our heavenly Father! (378).
- What can we say to this? That’s easy. Praise the Lord!

### **Conclusion:**

#### **Praise to the Lord, the Almighty**

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
 O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!  
 All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;  
 Join me in glad adoration!  
 Praise to the Lord, who o’er all things so wondrously reigneth,  
 Shelters thee under His wings, yes, so gently sustaineth!  
 Hast thou not seen how all thy longings have been  
 Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;  
 Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.  
 Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,  
 If with His love He befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!  
 All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him.  
 Let the Amen sound from His people again:  
 Gladly for aye we adore Him.