

Israel's Hymnal  
 Biblical Research Monthly  
 October, 1946  
 Dr. David L. Cooper

### PSALM ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SIX

[Pss 146:1] Praise ye Jehovah. Praise Jehovah, O my soul.

[Pss 146:2] While I live will I praise Jehovah: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

[Pss 146:3] Put not your trust in princes, Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

[Pss 146:4] His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; In that very day his thoughts perish.

[Pss 146:5] Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in Jehovah his God:

[Pss 146:6] Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that in them is; Who keepeth truth for ever;

[Pss 146:7] Who executeth justice for the oppressed; Who giveth food to the hungry. Jehovah looseth the prisoners;

[Pss 146:8] Jehovah openeth (the eyes of) the blind; Jehovah raiseth up them that are bowed down; Jehovah loveth the righteous;

[Pss 146:9] Jehovah preserveth the sojourners; He upholdeth the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

[Pss 146:10] Jehovah will reign for ever, Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye Jehovah.

#### The Psalmist Praises Jehovah, The Abundant Helper Of Man

I. Put not trust in man (vss. 3, 4)

II. Put trust in the God of Jacob (vs. 5)

III. The works of the God of Jacob (vss. 6-10)

Psalm 146, like 147-150, begins with the exhortation: "Praise ye Jehovah." In the Hebrew this expression is the word which is transliterated *Hallelujah* and is well rendered into English by the words "Praise ye Jehovah." God is indeed praiseworthy! This fact we saw in our study of Psalm 145. He wants to deal with His people upon the basis of grace, mercy, truth and love. He is long-suffering to us, willing to blot out all of our sins and deal most graciously with us. For such a Being as He is, praise is preeminently correct. The praise which the psalmist urged to be given to God is from the soul. There is such a thing as praise and worship which comes from the lips only. Adoration which comes from the soul, and which bursts forth in words like these:

As the hart panteth after the water brooks,  
 So panteth my soul after thee, O God,

is the praise which wells up from the deepest recesses of one's inner most being. God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

In verse 146:2 we hear the psalmist saying:

While I live will I praise Jehovah:  
I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

The writer had one primary purpose in life which was to pray and to worship His God. All other things were secondary. Praise therefore came first and foremost and always with him. It was not simply a matter of doing his duty. But it was a delight to his heart to worship and praise God. It was normal for him, a redeemed soul, thus to desire to serve the Lord in worship and praise. He affirmed that he intended to do that as long as he had any being, as long as he lived. Is that your and my attitude, dear friend? If it is not, may the Lord bring us to that point in our spiritual life and development that we do want to worship Him and to serve Him above everything else.

#### I. Put not trust in man

Put not your trust in princes,  
Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.  
His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;  
In that very day his thoughts perish (146:3,4).

In these verses the psalmist urges men not to put their trust in princes, or in anyone. In other words, he warns against the danger of trusting men who are fallible and sinful. In giving this exhortation, he does not mean to say that there is no one who is trustworthy. There are men and women who are true and faithful, and who are absolutely dependable. Of course, these are the rare exceptions. But the rule is that it is a mistake to put one's trust in men. As stated above, men are fallible. Men still have the old nature and in times of stress and strain most will fail another. While these statements are true, this is not the reason for the Psalmist making this exhortation. This fact is seen by the statement, "In whom there is no help ... in that very day his thoughts perish." Man is here for a short while only. He may have the very best of intentions. He may be true and good, but he has no guarantee of his life. He may have his plans laid in all arrangements made for doing good to someone else. But his life might be snuffed out in a second of time by some accident. Under those conditions His plans and purposes fail ordinarily. Only when one has made his will, and the administrators are conscientious in executing it can his plans be carried out. And sooner or later, in most instances, even one's will is not carried out by those appointed to do so. In some cases the letter of the will may be carried out, but in a different spirit.

Man is frail. He is here for a few days. He is certain to go into the great beyond. He cannot always do what he desires. It is therefore absolutely unwise to put one's faith in men. Trust God. He alone is able to fulfill His promise. He is faithful and will make good every promise which He has made. He designs everything for the good of His people and works everything together in order that all may contribute to their well-being. (See Romans 8:28 and its context).

Some have thought that verse 3 and 4 teach soul-sleeping. This is incorrect. The psalmist is not simply talking about death, but that is involved. The reason that one is not to put his trust in man is that he may die at any time so far as other individuals know. When he does pass out of this life, he can no longer carry out his good intentions and purposes with reference to another period. The death of man is set forth in the words, "his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth." This really is a conditional sentence and

might be stated thus: "If his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth." He is simply frail and cannot be depended upon on this account. Man continues consciousness after death. This is seen in the case of the last world ruler of whom we read in Isaiah, chapter 14. We see that he is slain, his body lies unburied, his spirit goes down to Sheol, and those spirits which are in Sheol know about him and his career upon earth. Thus when he makes his descent into Sheol, they arise, speak to him, and remind him of his godless, cruel acts. Again, the facts concerning the rich man and Lazarus (Luke, chapter 16) show that the soul is conscious after death. There is no passages of scripture which, when properly interpreted in the light of its context, lends any support to the doctrine of soul-sleeping.

## II. Put trust in the God of Jacob

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help.  
Whose hope is in Jehovah his God (vs. 5).

In contrast to the exhortation not to put trust in men, even in princes, are the positive instructions to put trust in the God of Jacob. The Lord speaks of Himself as the God of Israel very frequently. In this expression is echoed the experience which Jacob had at the ford of the river Jabbok: "And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (Gen. 32:24). This one who wrestled with him was none other than one of the Divine Beings, because Jacob named the place "Peniel: for, *said he*, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:30). When all the facts concerning the marvelous experience recorded in Genesis 32:22-32 are thoroughly studied and evaluated in the light of parallel passages, one immediately sees that this one who appeared to Jacob and wrestled with him during the night was none other than the "angel of Jehovah," the Lord Jesus Christ in His prenatal state. He appeared here to Jacob as He did to others of the ancient patriarchs. Such a manifestation is called a *theophany*.

According to Genesis chapter 32, this wrestling match continued throughout the night. In appearing on this occasion the angel, having assumed the form of a man, limited Himself so far as exercising strength and energy were concerned. Of course he would not exceed the strength of a mortal in wrestling Jacob. He respected his will and his human limitations.

On the other hand, Jacob seems to have been strengthened supernaturally in answer to his faith. The result was that he overcame, or was more powerful than the angel and prevailed. At the break of day the angel asked Jacob to turn Him loose and let Him go. Jacob at that time, as he was beginning to recognize the supernatural character of Him with whom he had been wrestling, gripped Him the tighter and refused to let Him go, stating that he would release his grip upon Him only after He had blessed him. To the angel's question as to Jacob's name the patriarch said that it was Jacob, which means *supplanted*. The angel told him that his name from henceforth would be Israel, since he had striven with God and had prevailed. The word, Israel, therefore came to mean *a prince with God*.

Much light is thrown upon this incident by a statement found in Hosea: "In the womb he [Jacob] took his brother by the heel; and in his manhood he had power with God: ye, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Beth-el, and there he spake with us, even Jehovah, the God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial *name*" (Hosea 12:3-5). In verse 4 we see that Jacob in the wrestling match had power over the angel and prevailed. Of course he could not have prevailed had not the angel, in assuming temporary human form, limited himself; but under the limitations of this theophany Jacob did prevail. When we remember his character, we may be certain that

he, since he was prevailing, maintained his same self-reliant spirit throughout the struggle—until he began to see that his contestant was a supernatural visitor. When he realized this fact, he broke down and wept (we may well believe in real, genuine repentance) and began his supplication to the Lord for His blessing. In the physical contest he, like David in fighting against the lion and the bear, had been by faith strengthened physically. When he realized the situation, he prevailed through his tears in genuine supplication. Jacob conquered, and yet he was conquered. He was a different man from that time onward. He was spiritually ready to return to the land of the fathers and begin life anew in carrying out the plan of God for him and his descendants. Upon his return to the land, he went to Bethel, where God appeared to him and made further revelations concerning His plans and purposes for his descendants (Gen. 35:1-15). Hosea said that this one, who is called God in Genesis, chapter 35, was none other than the angel with whom Jacob had wrestled, and who spake to the nation in the person of Jacob. This angel he called "Jehovah, the God of hosts; Jehovah is his memorial *name*" (Hos. 12:5). From the Genesis account and also from Hosea's statement it is clear that the God of Jacob who appeared to him at the river Jabbok, and who also appeared to him at Bethel, was none other than the angel of Jehovah. Since the expression, "the God of Jacob," is usually an echo of Jacob's experience at the Jabbok, one is to understand that this God of Jacob was none other than the angel of Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate state.

With all these facts and truths before us, we are now ready to turn to verse 5 of Psalm 146 and to evaluate it correctly.

The psalmist declared, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help." That man is in a blessed condition. This God of Jacob is the Lord Jesus Christ who appeared as a man to Jacob. In the fullness of time, however, He came to earth, and entered the human family by miraculous conception and virgin birth. Finally, having accomplished the work for which He came to earth, He gave up His life for the redemption of mankind—or all who will accept His atonement. He appeared as a man to Jacob. He assumed the form of a servant, taking on the nature of man when He came nineteen hundred years ago. Since He has done these things, we are not to trust in any man—put our absolute confidence in man to do things for us—but we are to put our trust in the God-man, this one in whom Jacob put his trust. Only those who thus put their trust in Him are blessed. Have you, my friend, been brought to the end of self? Have you had the "Jabbok experience" similar to that of Jacob? Have you conquered by faith in prevailing prayer? Have you thus become a "prince with God"? If you have not may the Lord lead you into that experience is my prayer.

### III. The works of the God of Jacob

*"Who made heaven and earth ..."* (vs. 6a): In verse 6 we are told that this God of Jacob is the one who created the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is. This is in perfect agreement with the first chapter of the Gospel according to John. It was Christ, the Eternal Word, who created all things. Apart from Him nothing was brought into existence that has been made.

*"Who keepeth truth for ever"* (vs. 6b): God observes truth. But what is truth? As an immanent characteristic of the Almighty it is that characteristic by virtue of which His being and His knowledge are always in perfect accord and agreement. Truth in relation to men is God's veracity and faithfulness in action. Through the principles of His divine being in His dealings with man God always acts in accordance with the truthfulness of His nature.

"*Who executeth justice for the oppressed*" (vs. 7a): The Lord knows all about the situation in which every child of His finds himself. We are to turn our cases over to Him in every instance, whenever we think that an injustice has been done to us. Vengeance belongs to Him. He will recompense—in the due course of time.

"*Who giveth food to the hungry*" (vs. 7b): In Him we live and have our being, for it is He who gives food to the hungry. Man may plant, water, and cultivate, but it is God who gives us the increase and our daily food.

"*Jehovah looseth the prisoners*" (vs. 7c): According to verse 7, Jehovah is the one who looses the prisoners. He did that in the case of the Apostle Peter (Acts, chap. 12). He has providentially done things like that on many occasions. He will do that for His oppressed people who will be thus imprisoned in the Tribulation, when He returns in glory and in power. He does the same thing in a spiritual sense for those who come to Him and trust Him. He gives them His truth and His truth makes them free.

"*Jehovah openeth the eyes of the blind*" (vs. 8a): The Lord opens the eyes of the blind, as we see from verse 8. Who restores our sight? It is He, who healeth all our diseases. Physicians tell us that they cannot cure anybody. They can only tell us how to live in accordance with the laws of physical being and assist us in conforming to them. But they admit—all believing physicians—that it is God who does grant the cure, even though He uses them in getting people to conform to the laws of their being.

"*Jehovah raiseth up them that are bowed down*" (vs. 8b): Whenever one of God's people is thus bowed down and oppressed if he will but call upon Him and look to Him in simple faith—childlike faith—He will not disappoint him. He may not bring the desired deliverance at the moment, when the request is made; but, when the time arrives for such a one to be relieved and raised up, the Lord will act in his behalf.

"*Jehovah loveth the righteous*" (vs. 8c): Here we see that the Lord loves the righteous. But in Psalm 11:5 we are told, "But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth." It is difficult for us to understand and comprehend this statement. Nevertheless, it is true and must be taken at its face value. Men's attitudes towards God determine His attitude and dealings with them.

"*Jehovah preserveth the sojourners; He upholdeth the fatherless and widow*" (vs. 9a): The widows and orphans, humanly speaking, are left to their fate at the hands of—usually—unmerciful and unrighteous people, who take advantage of them in their helplessness. But, when such turn to the Lord and trust Him for divine preservation and deliverance, He will be their helper. "*But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down*" (vs. 9b).

This marvelous statement of the work of the God of Jacob concludes with the statement:

"Jehovah will reign for ever,  
Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations." (vs. 10a)

Since this psalm is talking especially about the Lord Jesus Christ, we can understand what is meant in this verse. When the time comes, then Christ will return to earth, will establish His throne in Jerusalem, and will reign forever, that is, unto all generations—for the thousand years of which we read in Revelation, chapter 20.

The concluding refrain is: "Hallelujah"—Praise ye Jehovah"! May He be the object of our praise and adoration at all times:

Come, sound His praise abroad,  
And hymns of glory sing,  
Jehovah is the sovereign God,  
The universal King.

He formed the deeps unknown;  
He gave the seas their bound;  
The watery worlds are all His own,  
And all the solid ground.

Come, worship at His throne,  
Come, bow before the Lord;  
We are His works, and not our own;  
He formed us by His word.

Today attend His voice,  
Nor dare provoke His rod;  
Come, like the people of His choice,  
And own your gracious God. (—Watts)