

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Praise of God in Book II of the Psalter, Session 2: Call to and Cause for Praise, Podcast Audio Overview

Sponsored by Biblicalelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

If you ever feel like you're drowning in information and just need that quick cheat sheet to get to the good stuff, that's what we're doing today. We're giving you the express lane to understanding one of the parts of the Bible that's super complex and often misunderstood: the Psalms, specifically book two. That's Psalms 42 through 72.

We're going to uncover the three main characters with the help of Dr. Ted Hildebrandt's lecture on the praise of God and the soldier. Awesome. So, Dr. Hildebrandt kicks things off by pointing out a metaphor for God that might even surprise those of us who've been studying the Bible for a while.

He said the king metaphor is actually even more central in the Old Testament than the father metaphor that we see in the New Testament. That's so true. And it really does change how we look at those texts.

Thinking of God as king really shapes how we understand prayer, obedience, and trust. It's not just about asking for things, but recognizing his authority, his sovereignty, and seeking his will. So, if we're picturing God as a king, what are some of the qualities we see in him? Okay.

Well, Dr. Hildebrandt points out he's a protector, a defender, especially of the vulnerable, like widows, orphans, the needy. He's also a conqueror of enemies, bringing justice and deliverance. And he gives this really cool example in 1 Kings 3: Solomon's judgment, the two mothers arguing over the baby.

Oh, right. Right. So, it's not your typical victory on the battlefield, but it is a victory.

It's a victory of justice. It showcases the king's wisdom and mishpat, which means righteous judgment. Yeah.

It really highlights that wisdom. It's not just about power. It's about discerning truth and upholding what's right.

Absolutely. Now, Dr. Hildebrandt also emphasizes God's attributes: hesed, zedek, and mishpat. Okay, I got to admit, I always struggle with remembering those Hebrew words.

Yeah. So, can you remind me what they mean? Sure. And why they're so significant? Hesed is often translated as loving kindness, but it's so much more than that.

It's unfailing. It's stubborn. It's this covenant love God has for his people.

And it's not just a feeling; it's an action. Then you have zedek, which is righteousness, and mishpat, his just decrees. It's God's character, his very being, that drives his actions as king.

Ah, okay. That helps. Yeah.

It's like the foundation of his rule. And Dr. Hildebrandt makes an interesting connection here to the New Testament. He says *hesed* and *emet*, which mean truth or faithfulness.

They actually foreshadowed Jesus coming with grace and truth. Yeah. It's like the songs are setting the stage for these really deep theological concepts that are going to come into full view later on.

Exactly. And that brings us to the most unexpected connection of all, Psalm 23. You know, the one we all know: the Lord is my shepherd.

Oh, yeah. Dr. Hildebrandt argues that shepherd is actually a metaphor for the king. It's not just about gentle guidance.

It's about provision, protection, even conquering enemies. Now, that's a thought-provoking take on that passage. I've always loved that imagery of the shepherd.

But to think of it as like a picture of the king has a whole new level of meaning. It's like, I don't know, seeing a painting in a new light. Yeah.

You suddenly notice things you never saw before. Totally. And it unites these, like, seemingly different pictures in the Psalm.

You have the king, like a shepherd, guiding and caring for his people, but he's also the ultimate host, preparing a banquet for them in the presence of their enemies. Wow. So we've met the king, you know, the one we turn to for help, the ultimate source of justice and protection.

Yeah. But who are we in this story? Right. Like, who's crying out to the king? Yeah.

That brings us to our second character, the psalmist, or as Dr. Hildebrandt calls him, the suppliant. Okay. The one who pleads for help.

And I think we can all relate to that feeling of needing help, right? Being in that tough spot where you just desperately need someone to step in. Oh, absolutely. And it's in the Psalms that we see that raw, honest expression of the human experience.

Dr. Hildebrandt points out this powerful image of thirsting for God. It's more than just wanting something. It's a deep, visceral longing for connection, for relief, for life itself.

Yeah. And the Psalms, they don't shy away from those raw emotions. Like, think about the opening lines of Psalm 42.

Yeah. As a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. Or how that longing kind of echoes in Psalm 63.

That image of thirst for God, I mean, it's so powerful, so vivid; I've definitely felt that longing myself. Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

Totally. I mean, there have been times when things felt so overwhelming, and my heart just cried out for God, you know, for his presence, for his help. And what's so comforting is that the Psalms, they give us permission to express those feelings.

Like, it's okay to acknowledge that need for God. It's not all sunshine and roses. Right.

And it's not just about longing. Dr. Hildebrandt emphasizes this whole range of emotions. The psalmist experiences, you know, anguish, fear, betrayal, even feeling crushed by God.

And it's a good reminder that even in our faith, we're not immune to doubt or despair. Absolutely. And it's sometimes in those dark moments where you can connect with the Psalms even more deeply; you know, they remind us we're not alone in those struggles.

Like, people have been wrestling with these same emotions for centuries. It's like finding solace, like in a shared experience, knowing that others have walked this path. Exactly.

But Dr. Hildebrandt also points out this haunting taunt from the enemy. Oh, yeah. Where is your God? It's a reminder that even when we're clinging to faith, doubt can still creep in.

It can. And that taunt highlights the presence of a third character in this whole drama: the enemy. And Dr. Hildebrandt makes it clear that this enemy, he's not just some vague, like, bad guy.

They're very clearly characterized in the Psalms, often using these striking metaphors. I was just thinking about those descriptions: ravenous beasts, lions, venomous snakes, growling dogs. It's like you can almost feel the danger, the threat.

Those images, they stick with you. They do. And Dr. Hildebrandt suggests those metaphors actually have a purpose.

You know, it's not just to scare us. It's to highlight the power of God's deliverance. When we're facing those enemies in our own lives, whether it's like external forces or internal struggles, we can find hope in knowing that God is bigger.

He triumphs over them. So the enemy isn't just a literary device. It's a representation of those forces that are opposed to God, that are trying to undermine our faith and our well-being.

And we can actually gain confidence from seeing how God delivers the psalmist. Exactly. And Dr. Hildebrandt doesn't just stop with those like metaphorical images.

He points to specific actions, qualities of the enemy. They're described as devouring, ruthless, constantly conspiring, attacking, spreading nets like traps to catch the unsuspecting. They trust in wealth instead of God, boast of their evil, love falsehood, destroy others just to get ahead.

It's so fascinating, though, how those descriptions still resonate today. I mean, it's like you're reading a headline, right? You see the same patterns of greed, corruption, and violence playing out all around us. It's timeless.

It's a timeless struggle. And Dr. Hildebrandt also points to Psalm 50, which gives this detailed picture of the wicked. They hate instruction.

They just disregard God's words. They join with thieves. They slander.

Dr. Hildebrandt even asks a listener, like, have you ever encountered people like this? I think we all have at some point, whether it's someone who is actively trying to hurt us or just someone who seems to embody those negative qualities. I think we've all encountered enemies in some form. We have, which brings us to, I think, a crucial point.

The psalmist's deliverance from the enemy is the very cause of their praise. So it's not just praising God when things are good; it's praising him in the middle of conflict and struggle. So it's about recognizing, okay, I'm in a tough spot.

There are these enemies, but I'm still going to praise God. I'm going to trust in his power to deliver me. Exactly.

And Dr. Hildebrandt, he quotes Psalm 65.9 to 14, where the psalmist makes this vow to praise God even when going through fire and water. Powerful. It's a declaration of faith and trust in God's ability to come through.

It's that recognition that praise isn't just a feeling; it's an action; it's a choice. And it's not dependent on our circumstances. We can praise God even when things are really hard, even when we're facing those enemies.

And Dr. Hildebrandt links this back to the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt in Exodus. Oh, right. How that became their foundational story of rescue, of redemption, the basis for their praise.

It's like building up a muscle memory of faith. By remembering those past deliverances, by recounting those stories, we actually strengthen our own belief that God can deliver us today. But Dr. Hildebrandt takes it even further.

He points out how even creation itself is praising God. If even creation is praising God, what does that say about the power of praising him in our own lives? It's like this universal chorus that we can join in with no matter what we're going through. It's amazing when you think about it that way.

It suggests that praise isn't just something we do in church on Sundays. It's woven into the fabric of everything, a way of aligning ourselves with the very rhythm of the universe. Yeah.

It's like tapping into this ancient current of faith, all these raw emotions, these struggles, this hope. It's all so human, so relatable, even thousands of years later. That's the beauty of the Psalms.

They give us a language for our own experiences with God, allowing us to express the full range of emotions, from the depths of despair to the heights of joy. And through it all, we're reminded that we're not alone. I mean, the psalmist faced enemies, felt abandoned, and questioned God, but ultimately he found comfort and strength in praising him.

It's a powerful reminder that praise isn't just about words. It's a posture of the heart. It's a choice to focus on God's goodness and faithfulness, even when our circumstances don't make sense.

It's about saying, God, you're still on the throne, even when things are falling apart. So as we wrap up our deep dive into these three characters of the Psalms, I'm left with this thought. What if we saw our own lives as kind of a psalm, a tapestry woven with moments of joy and sorrow, victory and defeat, but through it all, the song of praise rising to God? Oh, I love that.

And within that tapestry, so many reasons to praise, for his creation, for his deliverance, for his unfailing love. Even in those darkest threads, there's a glimmer of his grace. It's like each of us has a song to sing, a story to tell, a symphony of praise waiting to be unleashed.

And maybe it's not always, you know, this triumphant melody, but it's a genuine expression of our heart toward God. Yeah. And maybe by embracing the psalmist's honesty, their vulnerability, their unwavering hope, we can start to compose our own psalms of praise.

You know, finding strength in the face of any challenge and knowing that even when we don't have the words, creation itself is singing his praises. So as we head back to our everyday lives, maybe we can listen for that symphony of creation a little more closely. I love that.

And just maybe we'll find ourselves joining in, you know, adding our own unique melody to the chorus of praise that echoes throughout the universe. Until next time, keep writing deep.