

Dr. Bruce Waltke, Psalms, Session 7, Hymns' Call and Cause to Praise 20-min. Podcast Audio Overview

BiblicaleLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right. Ready to dive deep into the Psalms? Where are we headed today? Specifically, Hymns of Praise. I feel like we often kind of just skim the surface, you know? Oh, yeah, for sure.

But today we're going deep, like all the way down. Awesome. We're going to uncover the structure, the meaning, why they still matter, all that.

Love it. And to help us out, we've got insights from Dr. Bruce Waltke. He's a renowned Psalms scholar.

Think of him like our guide, you know, leading us through all the twists and turns. And trust me, there are some seriously surprising things we're going to uncover. Did you know the Psalms urge even non-believers to praise God? Yeah.

And it's not about stroking God's ego or anything. There's a much deeper purpose. Okay.

Color me intrigued. Let's unpack this. Let's do it.

So one of the things Dr. Waltke does is he breaks down the Psalms into different categories, and today we're focusing on those Hymns of Praise. Right. And he points out that a lot of them follow this really cool three-part structure.

Three-part structure. Yep. First up, we've got the Call to Praise.

It's like an invitation pulling you in, you know, to join this giant chorus of adoration. Gotcha. Like setting the stage.

Exactly. Then we've got the Cause for Praise. Basically, the why.

Why are we lifting our voices? What are we celebrating? The fuel for the fire. Yes. And finally, to wrap it all up, we get the Concluding Hallelujah.

It's like this powerful affirmation of that initial call to praise. Oh, I like that. So it's like a conversation almost, back and forth between God and us.

You got it. And the coolest thing is, you see this perfectly in Psalm 117.

The shortest Psalm in the whole Bible. Really? Yeah. Just two verses.

But it's packed with meaning. Like, it totally embodies that whole three-part structure. Wow.

Okay. I'm ready. Break it down for me.

Okay. So it starts with that Call to Praise. Praise the Lord, all you nations.

Extol him, all you peoples. Right off the bat, it's not just for a select few. This is universal.

Everyone's invited to this party of praise. I love that. Everyone's in it.

Everyone. All right. So we got the call.

Now for the cause. Why are we praising in this Psalm? Verse two. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Boom. Straightforward: God's unwavering love and faithfulness. Powerful stuff.

And then, bam, it ends with praise the Lord. That concluding hallelujah brings it full circle. So simple, yet so profound.

Right. Two verses. Huge impact.

But okay, it gets me thinking. Why all this emphasis on praise? Why is it such a big deal? Yeah. Good question.

It seems a little odd at first, right? Totally. Like, why would God, this all-powerful being, need our praise? What does he get out of it? Right. Exactly.

It's not like we're boosting his ego or something. Exactly. So what's the point? What does it do for us? Well, Dr. Wake and C.S. Lewis, who actually wrestled with this same question, both make this super interesting point.

They say there are things in this world that are just inherently worthy of admiration. Okay. And to not acknowledge that, to just ignore it, it actually diminishes us.

Hmm. I think I get that. Like imagine you're standing in front of this incredible work of art.

Just breathtaking. Okay. But you ignore it.

Does that make the art any less beautiful? No, not really. No. But you're robbing yourself.

Right. You miss out on that experience of awe and wonder, that connection to something truly magnificent.

So it's not that the art needs our praise; it's that we need to recognize and appreciate its beauty. Exactly. And it's the same with God.

It's not about inflating his ego. It's about us waking up to the reality of his goodness, his power, all the things that set him apart. So it's about opening our eyes to how awesome God really is.

And when we do that, it changes us. We connect with something so much bigger than ourselves and our whole perspective shifts. Wow.

This is making me see the Psalms in a whole new light. I told you, deep dive. Yeah, you weren't kidding.

And we're just getting started. Can't wait to see where we go next. Me neither.

So praising God actually changes us. Not just singing songs, but like recognizing God's qualities out in the world. You got it.

And Dr. Waltke, he's really big on this idea that God wants praise from, well, from everything. Right. Not just us on Sundays.

Right. The Psalms are packed with these calls for everything, like the heavens, even sea creatures, to praise God. Oh, it's like this massive, like cosmic symphony happening all the time.

Totally. And it makes me think of that story with Miriam in the Old Testament after they crossed the Red Sea. She leads this, like, this totally spontaneous eruption of singing and dancing.

The whole community just letting loose. It's like they couldn't contain their joy, right? It had to come out somehow. That wasn't a ritual.

That was pure outpouring. Exactly. And Dr. Waltke, he makes this really important point.

True praise. It has to come from a heart that's changed, you know? Not just going through the motions. He's pretty harsh on those who are just faking it.

Oh yeah, definitely. Like in Psalm 50, God actually calls out those people offering sacrifices, but without real devotion. He's like, what right do you have to even say my laws? It's pretty intense.

True praise. It's about how you live, not just what you say. Okay.

So we're getting this picture of what praise is, why it matters, but what about what we're actually praising? What did the Psalms say about God? Oh man, there's so much there. The Psalms offer this amazing view of God's attributes. We could talk for hours, but one way to think about it is in two categories: incommunicable and communicable.

Okay. Two big words. Break it down for me.

So incommunicable, those are things about God that are totally unique to him. Things we can't share. His eternity, being self-existent- theologians call that aseity; knowing everything, omniscience.

Wait, hold on. Aseity, what's that? Oh, good catch. It basically means God just is.

He exists on his own. He doesn't need anything or anyone else. He's the ultimate source of everything.

Well, okay. Mind blown. Right.

It's a huge idea. And the Psalms, they talk about this all the time. Then there are the communicable attributes, stuff we can actually reflect, like his grace, mercy, justice, love.

So we can become more like God in those ways. Yes. And the Psalms, they give all these vivid examples, describing God's power over nature, over nations, his faithfulness, compassion.

You get this incredible picture of who God is. Dr. Waltke even compares the Psalms to Bach's music. Like layers upon layers of meaning just waiting to be discovered.

It's like a symphony, but with words, revealing God's heart. Exactly. And you know, one of the most powerful themes in the Psalms is God's grace.

Think about that story of the golden calf. Big mistake. Right.

God's angry, and rightfully so. Oh, it seems like it's over for them. But it doesn't end in just punishment.

Instead, we get this amazing revelation of God's character. That's where the mercy comes in. Yes.

In Exodus 34.6, God's talking to Moses. He proclaims his compassion, grace, patience, love, and faithfulness. All of that, while still upholding justice.

So it's not like he's ignoring the sin, but he chooses mercy and forgiveness. Precisely. And this ties right back into the Psalms.

They're not just about God's power, but about those very qualities that allow him to forgive us, restore us, and have a relationship with us, even when we mess up. Reminds me of Psalm 103, where David's praising God for being so compassionate. He does not treat us as our sins deserve.

Like we're getting a break we don't deserve. Beautiful example. In Psalm 132, if you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? Heavy stuff.

But then, with you, there is forgiveness so that we can, with reverence, serve you. Talk about a reminder that God wants to forgive us, set us back on track. It's not about earning it, but recognizing we need his grace.

And responding with, I guess, humility and thanks. Exactly. Which brings us back to praise being transformative.

It's about aligning our lives with what's true about God, letting that change us. And you know, sometimes that change, it's a shift in perspective. What do you mean by shift? Well, look at Psalm 118, the psalmist.

He goes from fear and uncertainty to confidence and joy. He declares, "The Lord is my strength and my defense. He's become my salvation.

That's powerful stuff. Going from relying on yourself to realizing God's got you covered. So instead of getting stuck on problems, we focus on God's power, his goodness, like putting on new glasses and seeing everything differently.

Yes. From darkness to light, from despair to hope. And that's what's so amazing about the Psalms.

They give us this language for all our emotions. From the lows to the highs. Always pointing us back to God, the source of our strength.

Starting to see why these ancient songs still matter today. They help us process life, good and bad, and get closer to God. Exactly.

And Dr. Walke points out something else cool about them. They're not just about praising God in isolation. They often celebrate what he's done in history, especially saving his people.

So it's not just me and God, but recognizing he's working in other people's lives throughout history. Yes. You see this a lot in songs about the Exodus, like Psalm 114.

It describes the Red Sea parting, the earth trembling before God. It connects personal praise with this big story of God being faithful. It's like this shared identity reminding us we're part of something much bigger.

You got it. And that idea of praising God for historical stuff, it's also in Psalm 78. It's almost like a history lesson for the Israelites, reminding them how God kept his promises even when they messed up over and over.

It's like the spiritual inheritance, you know? Faith and praise passed down through generations. Makes you wonder how we can weave those stories into our lives today. Like, how can we connect with that in a real way? That's a great question.

And it leads to another thing Dr. Waltke talks about. These Psalms, they're not just ancient poetry. They're meant to be lived out.

They shape how we understand God, our place in the world. They're a guidebook for living out faith, right? A source of comfort when things are tough and a wellspring of joy and gratitude too. Exactly.

And get this, the Psalms don't just encourage us to express praise, but also to perceive it all around us. Wait, what? Perceive praise? Remember how we said God desires praise from everything? Well, the Psalms, they kind of train us to see and hear those praises everywhere. You mean like seeing God's glory in nature, hearing it in birdsong, feeling it in the changing seasons? Exactly.

The Psalms challenge us to move beyond just human-centered thinking. Praise is woven into the very fabric of creation. So it's not just us singing in church.

It's like listening to the symphony of praise from the whole universe. And that leads us to a really interesting question Dr. Waltke asks. If everything's praising God, are we even tuned in to hear it? Whoa! It makes you stop and think.

Are we paying attention to all those subtle melodies of praise out there? Right. It's a challenge to look closer, to see those glimpses of God's glory, even in unexpected places. Like a hidden symphony, just waiting to be discovered.

And the Psalms, they give us the ears to hear it, the eyes to see it. It really makes you think, you know, all this praise happening around us. It's like, how do we join that symphony? Not just with songs, but like with our lives? Powerful question.

Remember those things we can reflect on God. Grace, mercy, love, justice. When we live those out, it's like a form of worship.

So our actions can be praised. Totally. We become like living hymns, showing God's goodness through what we do, what we say.

That's amazing. And that's really what this whole deep dive is about, right? Not just learning facts about the Psalms, but actually experiencing them in a new way. Yeah.

Sometimes people think they're just old poems, but there's so much more. They're full of joy, comfort, and guidance. It's a way to connect with God that's like really personal and real.

And we've only scratched the surface here. Any tips for our listener as they keep digging into the Psalms? One thing that always helps me is remembering the context. These were written thousands of years ago by real people with real struggles and joys.

Put yourself in their shoes. What were they going through? How did they feel? That's a great idea. It helps us connect with them, you know, on a human level.

And don't be afraid to ask questions like, why does this Psalm hit me so hard? What's God saying to me through these words? The Psalms, they're meant to be wrestled with, thought about, prayed over. Here's something to chew on. We talked about how even non-believers are called to praise God and how all creation joins in.

But what if that praise isn't always like something we can hear? What if it looks different? Oh, that's interesting. How do you imagine praise could be expressed beyond just words? Hmm. I'm picturing a tree standing strong in a storm, a bee pollinating a flower, even a mom working hard to take care of her kids.

That resilience, beauty, love- could that be a form of praise too? I love that. It's like looking for those fingerprints of God's glory everywhere, even in the little things. Like this hidden symphony of praise just waiting to be heard.

Exactly. And the Psalms, they give us the ears to hear it, the eyes to see it. So to our listener, as you keep diving deep into the Psalms, listen for those little whispers of praise, those echoes of God's goodness.

They're all around you. Let them wake you up to the wonder of God's presence in creation and in your own life. Until next time, keep searching, keep asking questions, and keep praising.