

What is it that leaves you totally speechless? Something that is so incredible, it takes your breath away. Something that is truly awesome!

In 1714 King Louis XIV (**picture**) died after a reign of some 72 years. He had called himself “*the Great*” and was famous for the statement, “*I am the State.*” His court was the most magnificent in Europe of his day and his funeral was equally spectacular. As his body lay in state in a golden coffin, orders were given the cathedral should be dimly lit with a single, solitary candle set above his coffin to dramatize his greatness. At the memorial service thousands waited in hushed silence. Then, the preacher, Bishop Jean Baptiste Massillon (**picture**), began to speak, slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle and said, “*Only God is great!*”

Only God is great! Though we haphazardly use the word awesome about nearly everything, only God is awesome! **We praise Him because He is truly awesome.** As J. I. Packer (**picture**) said, “*This is where most of us go astray. Our thoughts of God are not great enough; we fail to reckon with the reality of His limitless wisdom and power. Because we ourselves are limited and weak, we imagine that at some points God is too, and find it hard to believe that He is not. We think of God as too much like we are. Put this mistake right says God; learn to acknowledge the full majesty of your incomparable God and Savior.*”

Psalm 145 is David’s crown jewel of praise (p. 524). In the Old Testament book of Psalms, this is the last psalm with King David’s name associated with it. The title, “*A psalm of praise,*” is only used of this psalm. This holy hymn is characterized by praise, not thanksgiving or even prayer. It’s has a specific purpose, much like Psalm 86 is referred to as “*a prayer of David.*”

It’s magnificent in its beauty and almost breathtaking in its grandeur. It has a special blessing associated with it. According to the ancient Israelites, who recited this psalm twice in the morning and once in the evening, a person who sang this psalm out loud three different times during the day would be “*happy.*” Maybe we should follow that suggestion today. Maybe we’d become more joyful if we read this psalm three times a day for a month.

Psalm 145 was written with one purpose in mind – to praise God! The last six psalms in the Psalter are songs of praise. Psalm 145 is the *introduction* to that series. This section of psalms follow five songs of prayer (Psalms 140-144). Prayer and praise always go together. There are no requests or confessions of sin in Psalm 145. It’s pure praise of our awesome God!

Just listen to the psalmist as he speaks to the Lord! “*I will extol you, my God and King, and bless Your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless You and praise Your name forever and ever.*” (vss. 1-2). David doesn’t want to wait until he gets Home to praise God forever. He starts expressing his praise to God now, every day! Praise is one earthly occupation we’ll continue in heaven, so we ought to begin practicing now.

Some Christians praise the Lord and some don’t. Perhaps the difference is believers who praise the Lord have their eyes of faith fixed on Him, while silent saints look only at themselves. When God is the center of your life, you can praise Him every day, because you’ll always find blessings no matter how difficult your circumstances. To a praising saint, the circumstances of life are a window through which he sees God. To a complaining saint, these same circumstances are only a mirror in which he sees himself, and that’s why he complains.

What is it about God that motivated the Psalmist to praise Him? He found himself caught up in **four different aspects** of God's person and work.

1. God is truly great, vss. 3-6. If God is God at all, He has to be great. People like to use the word *great* when speaking of themselves, but there’s not much about sinful man that’s truly great. About the only thing God names about man that’s great is his wickedness. **How is God great?**

a) God is great in His Person, vs. 3. Augustine began his famous *Confessions* with Psalm 145:3, “*Great is Jehovah!*” He found himself lost in the greatness of God. The more you learn about God, the deeper your relationship grows with Him, the greater you realize He is. No one can measure or fully describe His greatness. It’s beyond our comprehension. Paul knew God as few knew Him and he confessed, “*O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments, and His paths beyond tracing out!*” (Rom. 11:33).

b) God is great in His works, v. 4. Modern man substitutes *science* for God. A Christian sees the wisdom and power of God displayed in creation and in human history. The history of Israel is a record of the mighty acts of God: the call of Abraham (Gen. 12); the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21); the Exodus (Ex. 12-15); the wonders in the wilderness (Num. 10-15); the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of the land (Joshua); and the mighty acts of God in delivering His people

and establishing the kingdom. How wonderful it is when one generation tells the next generation of the greatness of God's works, as Psalm 145:4 advocates.

c) God is great in His Majesty, v. 5. This word translated *majesty* means "that for which a person is admired and celebrated." The word *glory* is a good equivalent. The glory of God is the sum total of all God is and does. Majesty or *glory* is not a separate attribute of God, because all God is and does is glorious and majestic. God is glorious in His holiness (Ex. 15:11), His work (Ps. 111:3), and His name (1 Chron. 29:13).

The word "meditate" can mean "dwell on." Do you take time to meditate on the glory of God? Our human glory is not worth dwelling on. Man's glory is temporary, but God's glory is a wonderful focus for meditation.

d) God is great in His judgment, v. 6. The "awesome deeds" referred to are God's mighty acts of judgment. In order to deliver His people, God had to judge their enemies. While Passover meant *redemption* for Israel, it meant *ruin* for Egypt. Some so emphasize the love of God, they forget the holiness of God, "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome" (Deut 10:17). Because the people of Israel were special to God, He defended them and fought for them. He also judged and chastened Israel when the people sinned.

We must recapture this "fear of the Lord" that recognizes Him as a God who judges sin. Too often our worship is shallow and sentimental; our confession of sin superficial. Could it be we've forgotten the greatness of God's holy judgment?

How can we grow in our appreciation of the greatness of God? By getting to know Him through His Word, by seeing Him at work in our world. The Psalmist saw the greatness of God in a storm (Ps. 29), as well as in the history of His people (Ps. 106).

2. God is truly good, vss. 7-10. "God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for this food." Have you ever stopped to think what a profound faith is expressed in that simple prayer? Aren't you thankful God is not only great, He's also good? Greatness without goodness would make God a selfish tyrant. Goodness without greatness would make Him willing to help us but incapable of acting. Whatever God thinks, says, does, plans, and accomplishes is good...because God is good! He can never will anything evil for us because He's the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). Though there is evil in the world, and evil often seems to be winning, "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. 33:5). If this were not true, we could never quote Romans 8:28 and believe it!

a) God's goodness is abundant, v. 7. "They shall eagerly pour forth the memory of Thy abundant goodness" (literal translation). It's a picture of God's people celebrating the goodness and generosity of God. They "shall sing aloud of your righteousness." God doesn't ration out His goodness like some celestial miser. Instead, He liberally shares His goodness – material and spiritual – giving us "richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

In His goodness, God gave man dominion over the earth, the privilege of learning God's laws (we call this "science"), and extracting and employing the riches God has placed in the world (Gen. 1:28). But when man broke fellowship with God, man ceased to be a king and became a slave. Instead of ruling over nature, he's ruled by his own sinful desires. As a result, man exploits nature, wasting what he's to manage. In spite of man's failures as a steward of creation, God is still good in His care for creation. He causes the sun to rise on both the evil and the good; rain to fall on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). He's still "abundant in goodness" (Ex. 34:6).

b) God's goodness is compassionate, v. 8. God is certainly not good to us because we deserve it, but because He's merciful and compassionate. It's when we realize this our hearts are filled with praise to God. Who are we, that He should be so good to us? Pride is the great enemy of praise. When we get some distorted idea God ought to bless us or we deserve His blessing, then we can only praise ourselves. We can't sincerely praise God.

c) God's goodness is universal, vss. 9-10. The word *all* is used a dozen times in this psalm. That's evidence God's blessings are universal. Whether we look through a microscope or a telescope, we see the good hand of God at work. All of nature praises the Creator with the exception of man; and he has the most to gain by worshiping the Lord!

All of God's works or living things praise Him, whether or not we hear their praises. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Ps. 19:1). Psalm 19:1-3 says the voice of nature is not heard, yet the message covers the earth. All of creation is united in a hymn of praise to the Creator! No wonder David added, "all Your saints shall bless You" (v. 10). As believers, we can join the mighty chorus of praise.

Sometimes, it seems like nature is not revealing the goodness of God. There are terrible storms, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and other occurrences insurance companies call "acts of God." Yes, sometimes nature praises God in a somber minor key. Because of man's sin creation is enslaved, awaiting the return of Christ (Rom. 8:18-25). The "music

of the spheres" will not be in complete harmony until King Jesus establishes His righteous kingdom. Meanwhile, God's goodness is still being poured out on His creation and His people, and we have every reason to praise Him.

If anything should lead sinners to repentance, it's God's goodness (Rom. 2:4). We often think it's the badness of man that makes people repent. That's not true. Judas knew he was a bad man, but went out and committed suicide. When the prodigal son of Jesus' parable realized how generous and good his father was, he repented and went home. As we worship God and praise His goodness, we ought to repent of our own sins and forsake them. How can we sin against such a good and generous God?

The goodness of God also enables us to face life without fear. We sing "*This is my Father's world*" and it's true. The world is not a prison, built to make us miserable; it's a school in which the Father is training us for glory. Because He's good, all things are working together for good for those who love and obey Him (Rom. 8:28). God goes before us "*with the blessings of goodness*" (Ps. 21:3). When we look back, we see only "*goodness and mercy*" (Ps. 23:6). Why should we worry or be afraid when God's goodness goes before us and follows behind us? As Solomon prayed, "*may your saints rejoice in your goodness*" (2 Chron. 6:41).

3. God rules in righteousness, vss. 11-13. The emphasis is on God's kingdom, His righteous rule in this world. Many have the erroneous idea God is not reigning today, that Satan is somehow in charge and God will not rule until Jesus returns. I've heard sincere teachers say, "In the past, Jesus was the Prophet. Today in heaven, He is the Priest. When He returns, He will be the King." That's not completely accurate because Jesus Christ is enthroned today (Eph. 1:19-23). "*For He [Christ] must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet*" (1 Cor 15:25). He's not simply a priest; He is the King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1-10). Though it seems like Satan is in charge, the government of this world is in the hands of God. This doesn't mean there will be no future kingdom, when Jesus will reign in glory. God will fulfill His promises (Matt. 19:27-30). We need to keep in mind Jesus is enthroned today and has completely defeated all of our enemies.

a) God's Kingdom is a glorious Kingdom, vss. 11-12. All of the *glorious* kingdoms of men have faded and turned to dust, but the glory of God is everlasting. Because He is a glorious God, He can't do anything that's not glorious. In the book of Esther, the great Xerxes spent 180 days showing his guests "*his glorious kingdom*" (1:1-8), but where is his kingdom today? It's described briefly in the Bible and recorded in the pages of history, but most people have never heard of it. Such is the glory of man's kingdoms.

Whatever God does, He does for His glory. Is this selfish and egotistical? Of course not! There's nothing greater than God, so whatever He does must magnify His greatness and glory. For man to act for his own glory is sin; for God to act other than for His own glory is impossible.

We certainly can't understand all the complexities of God's government in this world. We walk by faith. Often our faith is tested by events and experiences that seem wrong. We must remind ourselves God is on His throne and that He's working all things for our good and His glory.

b) God's Kingdom is a powerful Kingdom, vs. 11. One evidence of God's power is that He is able to accomplish His purposes while still giving mankind a measure of freedom. Human freedom doesn't deny God's power—it affirms it. Only an omnipotent God could rule and overrule in this world of satanic opposition and human disobedience. His "*power*" does not violate man's freedom or hinder God's purposes. He is in control!

c) God's Kingdom is an eternal Kingdom, v. 13. What God does will last forever. Today His kingdom in this world may seem weak and failing; but it will endure long after the kingdoms of men have fallen into ruins. One day, Jesus Christ will "*set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed*" (Dan. 2:44). Only then will the full revelation of His glory and power be exhibited. "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever*" (Rev. 11:15). There's a conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. When a sinner trusts Christ, he's delivered "*from the power of darkness*" and is "*translated*" into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13).

The kingdom of darkness tries desperately to overcome the kingdom of light, but God is the victor. Christ completely vanquished Satan and his hosts when He died on the cross and rose again. As children in God's family and subjects in God's kingdom, we share in that victory!

This kingdom idea is an important one in this psalm. The very first verse introduces God as the King. As New Testament Christians, we're prone to forget the kingship of our God, since we emphasize the fatherhood of God and the fact Jesus is the Savior. But He is King! Our Father is King!

4. God is gracious, vs. 14-20. It's interesting to see how David balanced the seeming contradictory attributes of God in this psalm. He opened praising the greatness of God, and then turned to the goodness of God. Now we move from God's sovereign government to His sovereign grace!

He's a great God on the throne, yet He's a God who is near us, concerned about our needs. Isaiah caught this same wonderful balance when he wrote, "*For this is what the high and lofty One says—He who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite'*" (Isa. 57:15). Our worship must be balanced. If we only exalt God and extol His greatness and holiness, we may isolate Him from man and his needs. On the other hand, if we fail to exalt Him and recognize He is "*high and holy,*" we're prone to bring Him down to our level and treat Him with undue familiarity.

Theologians refer to this as the "*tension between the transcendence and the immanence of God.*" This "tension" is solved by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ; He's "*Emmanuel...God with us*" (Matt 1:23). Our God is so great, that He is high above us and yet right with us at the same time!

a) God is gracious to those who fall, v. 14. He "*upholds all who are falling*" and "*raises up*" those who are bowed down. (Ps. 146:8.) Abraham fell when he doubted God, fleeing to Egypt for safety. Yet, God graciously restored him. David fell into adultery and murder, yet God raised him up and forgave him. Peter denied Jesus three times, yet Jesus restored him and used him to win many lost souls. Our God is gracious when we're knocked down with cares and responsibilities. He loves us, even when we blow it.

In his book (**picture**), *A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World*, Ron Lee Davis retells the account of a priest in the Philippines, a much loved man of God who carried the burden of a secret sin he'd committed many years before. He had repented but still had no peace, no sense of God's forgiveness. In his parish though was a woman who deeply loved God and who claimed to have visions in which she spoke with Christ and He with her. This priest, however, was skeptical. To test her he said, "The next time you speak with Christ, I want you to ask him what sin your priest committed while he was in seminary." The woman agreed. A few days later the priest asked, "Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?" "Yes, he did," she replied. "And did you ask him what sin I committed in seminary?" "Yes." "Well, what did he say?" "He said, 'I don't remember'" My friend, what God forgives, He forgets! As we worship Him and wait before Him, He gives us the strength we need for the demands of this life so that we don't have to fall (Isa. 40:31).

b) God is gracious to those who hunger, v. 15-17. The Jews were an agricultural people who depended on the soil and rain. God promised to send rain and bless the harvest if they'd obey and serve Him. He promised to meet the needs of those who were faithful to Him. Everything in creation looks expectantly to God for needs to be met. Nature depends on Him. And how easy it is for God to meet our needs! All He has to do is open His hand! But how difficult it is for God to get people to the place where His gifts are not misused or where the gifts take second place to the Giver. "*The Lord is gracious and compassionate*" (v. 8) but His grace can't promote sin. That's why David alludes to God's righteousness (v. 17): whatever God does is righteous and holy, including His acts of grace.

Grace doesn't mean God overlooks or tolerates sin, like a benign grandfather smiling at the disobedience of his grandchild. Grace means God has paid the price for our sins. He has upheld His holy Law while at the same time fulfilling its just requirements. How? In the work of Jesus Christ on the cross! It was at Calvary that "*mercy and truth are met together,*" and "*righteousness and peace have kissed each other*" (Ps. 85:10). Grace and truth come through Jesus (John 1:17). If God waited until His people were worthy of His blessings, He'd never be able to bless us. Grace means God gives us what we don't deserve, on the basis of the work of Christ on the cross. What He gives us and what He withholds, both reveal His grace and His righteousness. We can never complain about the way God deals with us! Yet, sadly, we often do complain but we shouldn't. Our Heavenly Father is far better to us than we deserve!

c) God is gracious to those who pray, vs. 18-19. David emphasized two aspects of prayer: *honesty* before God, and the *fear* of God. To "*call on Him in truth*" means "*to call on Him sincerely.*" If we want revival in our lives, we must begin by being totally honest with God in our praying. Yet we must not allow this "honesty" to degenerate into undue familiarity; we must "*fear Him*" and show the proper respect and reverence.

d) God is gracious to those who love Him, vs. 20-21. Our love does not earn God's grace. Grace can't be earned. Rather, our love strengthens our personal relationship with God and deepens our prayer life (John 14:21-24). God promises to protect and guard those who love Him. This doesn't mean they'll be pampered and never face any troubles, but rather that they'll escape the sad consequences of disobedience. They'll receive special help and strength in times of trial and testing.

How strange that in a song of praise, David should mention the judgment of the wicked! But even in His judgments, God is to be praised (Rev. 19:1-5). The more we love God, the more we ought to hate evil and will want to see it judged and destroyed.

Conclusion: In the comic strip *BC*, a caveman is having a crisis of faith. *"God, just show me You exist, and I'll believe!"* he cries. Suddenly there's an earthquake, a volcano erupts, lightning strikes, and a rainbow appears...and the caveman cries out, *"Just give me a sign, God!"*

In Psalm 145 David points out we have all the *"signs"* we'll ever need. He opens this psalm with personal praise (*"I will exalt You"*) and closes it by asking *"every creature"* to praise God's holy name! Halfway through the psalm, he called on all of creation and all the saints to praise God (v. 10)! What a privilege we have to praise the Lord! Let's just praise the Lord together! Let's continually offer **Praise to our Awesome God!**

Our words are so important. We have the opportunity to use them in praise to God, or we can be careless and end up doing real damage to His Kingdom. Are your words typically advancing God's Kingdom or limiting it? As Christians we must live in, *Praise God with everything you have whether you feel like it or not.*

Maybe you can't praise Him because you don't know Him. God wants to pour out His grace on you but you must first trust His Son as your personal Lord and Savior. You must come to the cross. Have you done that?

How sad when we who do know Him are so stingy with our praise. Recently, I read of a Christian conference held at a church in Omaha, Nebraska. Attendees were given helium-filled balloons and told to release them at some point in the service when they felt like expressing the joy in their hearts. All during the service balloons ascended, yet when the service was over, a third of the people were still holding on to their balloons!

Friends, don't hold back let's let our praise rise up to God!

"Let every creature praise His holy name for ever and ever!" And all God's people said, "Amen and Amen!"