

Psalm 147 • The LORD takes pleasure in those who hope in his steadfast love

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Psalm 147. This is an interesting Psalm because it talks about... Have you ever stopped to think about what the Lord takes pleasure in? I mean, you know what you take pleasure in. You probably know what other people take pleasure in. What does the Lord take pleasure in? Does the Lord experience pleasure? Sure He does. And if so, what is His pleasure in?

Verse 1,

"Praise the LORD!" (ESV)

That's, by the way, that's the Hebrew, hallelujah! Alright?

"For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting."

It's actually fitting to do what we did here tonight. It was fitting to do.

"2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

5 Great is our LORD, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. (And good news there. Right?)

The LORD lifts up the humble; (he says,) he casts the wicked to the ground.

7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre!

8 He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills.

9 He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.

10 His delight is not in the strength of (a) the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,"

And those are talking about strong things that we might be proud about. Look at this.

"11 but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love."

Let's pause there for just a minute, can we? Because this is not one of those verses you want to just run, too quickly, past. Because you just found out by revelation, through God's Word, what gives God pleasure. And it's not the things that give man pleasure.

We tend to get very pleased with things that, to us, speak of strength. And you know, I love horses. They're great. When I was a kid, I rode horses a lot. And they're incredible animals, powerful. We tend to put our pride in other human sort of related things.

And he talks here about things that man might very well put his pride in and, so forth. But what does the Lord take pleasure in? Those who fear Him. That's the first thing, *"those who fear him."* Which doesn't mean to be terrified of God. It means to bring reverence and awe before the Holy One. And to honor Him. To acknowledge Him in all of our ways. To live our lives like there is a God. That is really to fear the Lord.

And then he says,

"but the LORD takes pleasure in those who hope in his steadfast love."

Again, what is your hope in? Even as Christians, we come to know Christ as our Savior. And then we start trying to... We start recognizing that the Word of God has to say something about living a Christian life. And we read verses about living a Christian life. And there are many exhortations in the Word of God about, living the life that we ought to live and so forth.

And what happens very subtly is we begin to try to live a Christian life. And it's an exercise in futility because we can't. You and I can't live a Christian life apart from God. We have to constantly trust in Him. We have to... The Bible talks about the obedience that is by faith, not by effort. Right? (Ephesians 2:8)

As we put our faith in God, we begin to walk in a greater expression of obedience toward Him and so forth. But we forget that. And we stop putting our hope in His steadfast love. And we start somehow, just subtly putting our hope in our own ability to do it. Take care of it.

And we recognize as we walk through this life areas of sin in our lives. Because the Holy Spirit convicts us of them. And He's faithful to do that. But do you know why He convicts you of sin? It's not so that you would pull yourself up by the bootstraps. It's so that you would confess that sin, repent of that sin, which is to turn away from it.

And then lastly, to trust Him, to make whatever changes are necessary in your life. And to empower you to make those changes to do that change. You can't do it on your own. You have to put your hope in Him. Your hope in His steadfast love. Right?

You got areas of sin in your life? Of course you do. We all do. Are you trying hard to be a Christian? (Pastor Paul using a defeated voice) I'm just hanging on with all of you. Okay, God? You're taking the white knuckle flight through life. And, (Pastor Paul speaking through clinched teeth with vigor) okay God, I'm going to try harder tomorrow. I'm not going to sin anymore!

Have you ever done that? Have you ever made promises to God? Oh, I tell you. If God got a dollar for every time I made Him a promise, He'd be rich! Of course, He's rich already. But You understand what I'm saying. I've made lots of promises that I couldn't keep. That I was helpless to keep.

Because, in my flesh dwells no good thing. (Romans 7:18) And the only power over sin in my life is Him. His Holy Spirit living in me. Working through me as I yield to Him. And trust in His ability and His power to overcome the power of the flesh. Right?

Do you know that gives God pleasure? Do you know that He takes pleasure when you and I very simply say, Lord, I can't do this, but You can. You can do this. I can't. I'm a weak man.

And God, when He hears that from you and I, He's like, oh, finally! And He says, do you remember what I said to my servant Paul, Saul of Tarsus? I told him, My power is made perfect in your weakness. So be weak before me, My son, or My daughter, as the case may be. Be weak before Me, that I might be strong in you. Right? (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Oh, what a wonderful, glorious freedom it is to finally realize what God wants me to do is be weak, so that He can be strong. That's really very freeing. You got a sin issue like we all do? Come before the Lord, and just say, I am such a weak person, Lord. I have the...

Here's what Paul said, I have the desire to do what is right, but I can't carry it out. Right? (Romans 7:18) Because in my flesh, that is my sinful nature, dwells no good thing. I have to rely on Him, His power, His ability, His strength. Oh, God takes great pleasure, *"in those who hope in his steadfast love."*

Verse 12,

"Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!

13 For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you.

14 He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat.

15 He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly.

16 He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes.

17 He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold?"

Not me. My kids tease me because I am the coat nazi. They call me the coat nazi at home because I'm always telling them to put their coat on. My kids, when they were young. Of course, my kids are all grown. But now I do it to my grandkids.

I have this one granddaughter; she's 13. She goes barefoot all year long. And I'm like, Olivia, put your shoes on girl! Oh, I'm fine, Grandpa. And it's just crazy. I just, I don't know what these kids are doing, but...

Speaking of *"who can stand before his cold"* I was texting my brother today who teaches in Minnesota. Yeah, on little house on the Prairie. I mean, literally in Walnut Grove, Minnesota. Guess what their high was today? I checked. 3 o'clock in the afternoon. It was 1 below. That was their high today. Tonight, they're going to get down to 18 degrees below zero. I don't know what that is for you people that understand celsius. You'll just have to figure it out yourself.

It's cold, is what it is! Right? And I think about that. He told me... He texted me, he said, yeah, they actually canceled school because of it. Too cold! Too frigid. I thought, God, I'm so glad I live here. I texted him. I said, sunny and 51 partner. He's retiring next year. I'm going to try to get him to move out here. Keep telling him, you got to move to the desert, dude.

Verse 18,

"He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. (Don't you love springtime?)

19 He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel.

"20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD!"

This is an interesting statement. Because there was a time when Israel was the only nation that actually had a unique understanding of the revelation of God's Word. And even though the revelation of God's Word is now universal, Israel is still the only nation that has had a special revelation from God. They're the only ones.

God never appeared to the United States of America, or to Germany, or Austria, or England. None of those nations have received a special revelation from the Lord. Only Israel. They remain special in that sense. That they were singled out to receive that revelation from God.

He ends by saying, *"Praise the LORD!"*