

Psalm 144

“I will sing a new song”
A [Psalm] of David.

Psalm 144: This royal psalm appears to be a compilation from other psalms (8, 18, 33, 102 – 104; but mainly 18). This is not unusual, since a portion from one psalm may be readily excised and adapted for a different usage. In general, the psalm may be described as the prayer of a king for victory and blessing. The call to God (verses 1-4), expresses both David’s trust (verses 1-2), and his human weakness (verses 3-4). Having placed himself in a position of dependency, he is then prepared to offer his petition for divine retaliation against his enemies (verses 5-8), his own promise of thanksgiving (verse 9), his petition for victory (verses 10-11), and his petition for the blessing of the people (verses 12-15).

Verses 1-15: This Davidic psalm, in part (144:1-8), is very similar to (Psalm 18:1-15). It could be that this psalm was written under the same kind of circumstances as the former, i.e., on the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul (compare 2 Sam. 22:1-18).

- I. God’s Greatness (144:1-2);
- II. Man’s Insignificance (144:3-4);
- III. God’s Power (144:5-8);
- IV. Man’s Praise (144:9-10);
- V. God’s Blessing (144:11-15).

Psalm 144:1 "Blessed [be] the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, [and] my fingers to fight:"

“My strength”: David’s foundation is God, solid and unshakeable (Psalms 19:14; 31:3; 42:9; 62:2; 71:3; 89:26; 92:15; 95:1).

“Teacheth my hand to war”: David lived in the days of Israel’s theocracy, not the New Testament church. God empowered the king to subdue His enemies.

My strength, my Rock, my salvation; Bless the Lord who brings this to me. David knows where his strength came from to fight the good fight of faith. Hands show ability to work. In this, it appears it is the ability to fight the enemies of David, who are also the enemies of God. The fingers are more detailed than just mentioning the hand, so this would possibly have to do with skill, as well as ability.

Psalm 144:2 "My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and [he] in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me."

God provided 6 benefits:

- (1) Loving-kindness;
- (2) A fortress;
- (3) A stronghold;
- (4) A deliverer;
- (5) A shield; and
- (6) A refuge.

These are showing the character of the Lord. He is goodness to the extreme. Notice that David uses the word “my” in connection with each of these traits. David is fully aware that the victory he has experienced, is through the Lord. He says, I trusted Him and He came through for me. It is the Lord, through David, who subdued the enemy.

Verses 3-4: Eternal God is contrasted with short-lived man (compare Psalm 8:4).

Psalm 144:3 "LORD, what [is] man, that thou takest knowledge of him! [or] the son of man, that thou makest account of him!"

Man, that is at most and best but a creature, made of the dust of the earth, is but dust and ashes. Yea, a sinful creature, that drinks up iniquity like water. And yet the Lord not only knows him, as he is the omniscient God, but takes notice of him in a way of providence, and in a way of grace. His chosen people are no other nor better than others, of the same original, and of the same character. And yet he owns and acknowledges them as his peculiar people, and makes himself known unto them. And so it is rendered by the Septuagint version, "that thou shouldst be known unto him?" Or, "appear to him?" as the Arabic. Reveal thyself to him, not only by the light of nature and works of creation, but in Christ. And by the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

"Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?" As the Lord does, especially of some of the sons of men. Whom he reckons as his portion and inheritance, his jewels and peculiar treasure, and who are as dear to him as the apple of his eye. Whom he "magnifies" (as in Job 7:17). And makes them kings and priests. Raises them from the dunghill, and sets them among princes, to inherit the throne of glory. On whom he sets his heart, and loves them with an everlasting love: or, "that thou shouldst think of him?" Thoughts of peace, and not of evil. So as to provide a Savior for men, and send down the Spirit of his Son into their hearts to quicken them. So as to bless them with all spiritual blessings, and at last to glorify them. David no doubt had a special respect to himself. And wondered at the goodness of God to him, in taking him from a family of little or no account. From a mean employ, from a shepherd's cottage, and raising him to the throne of Israel. And especially in making him a partaker of grace, and an heir of glory (see Psalm 8:4; which is applied to Christ, Heb. 2:6).

Now we see a strong contrast between what David has just said about God and man. There really is no comparison. Man is God's creation. That is why He is mindful of man. God made man in

His image. That is another reason He is mindful of man. God wants a family composed of man, that is even another reason God is mindful of man. Man is made a little lower than the angels. He is the end of God's creation. God made the world, and all that is in it, for man. Then to ask me what is man in comparison with God? There is no comparison possible. God is the ultimate in intelligence, in power, in wisdom, in understanding, in goodness, in mercy, and in ability. Man is the least in all of these same things. The only greatness that man has is in association with God. We have been made His sons through the shed blood of His only begotten Son.

Psalm 144:4 "Man is like to vanity: his days [are] as a shadow that passeth away."

Is vanity itself, in every age, state, and condition. Yea, in his best estate (Psalm 39:5). Or, "to the breath" of the mouth, as Kimchi. Which is gone as soon as seen almost. Or, to a vapor; to which the life of man is compared (James 4:14).

"His days are as a shadow that passeth away": As the former denotes the frailty and mortality of man, this the shortness of his duration. His days fleeing away, and of no more continuance than the shadow cast by the sun, which presently declines and is gone.

He is but an allusion. Man's life on this earth is but a vapor, and gone.

Verses 5-8: Highly figurative language is used to portray God as the heavenly warrior who comes to fight on earth on behalf of David against God's enemies.

Psalm 144:5 "Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke."

Come to my aid "as if" the heavens were bent down. Come down with all thy majesty and glory (see the notes at Psalm 18:9). "He bowed down the heavens also, and came down." What it is there declared that the Lord "had" done, he is here implored to do again.

"Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke (see the notes at Psalm 104:32). "He toucheth the hills, and they smoke." It is there affirmed as a characteristic of God that he "does" this. Here the psalmist prays that, as this belonged to God, or was in his power, he "would" do it in his behalf. The prayer is, that God would come to his relief "as if" in smoke and tempest, in the fury of the storm.

At the mere presence of God, even the mountain smokes. The heavens, the earth, the sea, and all of God's creation is at His command. If He says, bow, they must bow.

Psalm 144:6 "Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them."

The mountains, the kings and kingdoms of the earth. The enemies of David, and of Christ, and of his people. Particularly the Jews, who have been scattered all over the earth by the judgments of God upon them. Cast forth like lightning, which is swift, piercing, penetrating, and destructive.

"Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them": Or, "trouble them"; as the Targum, Septuagint, and Arabic versions, nearer to the Hebrew. These also design the sore judgments of God. The arrows of famine, pestilence, and sword. Which fly swiftly, pierce deeply, cut sharply, and, like fiery darts, give great pain and trouble. So Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret them of the decrees which come down from heaven. As Aben Ezra does (Psalm 144:5). And by "arrows" the thunderbolt, which he calls a stone hardened in the air like iron.

As terrible as the weapons are that our country has accumulated to fight a war, they would be nothing compared to the weapons at God's disposal. Even the lightning moves at His command. The volcano erupts, when He commands. The earth Quakes at His command. It would be of no consequence at all for the Lord to destroy all on the earth. He created them, He could destroy them, by just speaking the Word.

Psalm 144:7 "Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;"

Margin, as in Hebrew, "hands" (see the notes at Psalm 18:16). "He sent from above."

"Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters": Thus (Psalm 18:16). "He took me; he drew me out of many waters." As God had done it once, there was ground for the prayer that he would do it yet again.

"From the hand of strange children": Strangers. Strangers to thee; strangers to thy people, foreigners (see Psalm 54:3). "For strangers are risen up against me." The language would properly imply that at the time referred to in the psalm he was engaged in a warfare with foreign enemies. Who they were, we have no means now of ascertaining.

God, with all this power, can certainly destroy a few enemies of David. The strange children mean people of other nations. The great waters, symbolize large groups of people.

Psalm 144:8 "Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand [is] a right hand of falsehood."

Vain words, lies, flatteries, and deceit (Psalm 12:2). When they speak loftily of themselves, and contemptuously of others. When they deliver out threatenings against some, and make fair promises to others. It is all vanity, and comes to nothing.

"And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood": Their strength and power to perform what they boast of, threaten, or promise, is fallacious. Is mere weakness, and cannot effect anything. Or their treaties, contracts, and covenants, they enter into and sign with their right hand, are not kept by them. They act the treacherous and deceitful part. Whether they lifted up the hand to

pray, or to swear. Or gave it to covenant with, to make contracts and agreements. Or stretched it out to work with; it was a right hand of falsehood.

The right hand has to do with the spiritual blessings and is the hand of preferential treatment. The Hebrews that received the right hand inheritance were granted twice the blessings as ordinary. Those who speak vanity here, are liars. Their hand that should be such a blessing, was instead a curse.

Psalm 144:9 "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery [and] an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee."

“A new song”: A song of victory that celebrates deliverance/salvation (compare Psalms 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

He has jumped from these who deal in falsehood to the fact that he stands for truth. These praises that David will sing, will be a happy song of redemption. He is so happy, that he will accompany himself on the 10 stringed instrument. Whatever he is speaking of could be similar to our guitar.

Psalm 144:10 "[It is he] that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword."

“David” only mentions his own name in two psalms (18:50). Here he used it to highlight some of the ways he personally experienced God’s protection.

Salvation for everyone is received in the very same way, whether you are a king, or a peasant. It is a free gift from God by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. This same Savior of the king is the very same One who delivered David.

Psalm 144:11 "Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand [is] a right hand of falsehood:"

This is repeated from (Psalm 144:7); and is done to show the vehemence and importunity of the request, and the danger David was in. And his sense of it (see notes on Psalm 144:7).

"Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood" (see notes on Psalm 144:8).

The deliverer will be the One to do this for David as well. These foreigners who are liars, and who bring curses, instead of blessings are the ones David wants to be rid of.

Psalm 144:12 "That our sons [may be] as plants grown up in their youth; [that] our daughters [may be] as corner stones, polished [after] the similitude of a palace:"

“Sons ... daughters”: God’s rescue of David’s kingdom from foreigners would bring blessing on families.

“Polished after the similitude” may include either good looks or regal stature or both.

This to me, is speaking of the training and upbringing of the boys as a tree planted. It must grow straight and strong in its youth, if it is to be the upright strong rooted plant, or tree that it should be. Jesus is the chief Corner Stone. This mention of the girls as corner stones means that they are to secure the walls together. They help to hold the framework of the palace together. The fact that they are polished would mean that they are pretty to look upon, while being useful to holding the home, or palace together.

Verses 13-14: “Garners ... sheep ... oxen”: Blessing would also come to the agricultural efforts.

Psalm 144:13 "[That] our garners [may be] full, affording all manner of store: [that] our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:"

That our fields may yield abundance, so that our granaries may be always filled.

"Affording all manner of store": Margin, "From kind to kind." Hebrew, "From sort to sort;" that is, every sort or kind of produce or grain. All, in variety, that is needful for the supply of man and beast.

"That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands": A great part of the wealth of Palestine always consisted in flocks of sheep. And, from the earliest periods, not a few of the inhabitants were shepherds. This language, therefore, is used to denote national prosperity.

"In our streets": The Hebrew word used here means properly whatever is outside. What is out of doors or abroad, as opposed to what is within, as the inside of a house. And then, what is outside of a town, as opposed to what is within. It may, therefore, mean a street (Jer. 37:21; Job 18:17; Isa. 5:25). And then the country, the fields, pastures, etc. (Job 5:10; Prov. 8:26). Here it refers to the pastures; the fields; the commons.

Psalm 144:14 "[That] our oxen [may be] strong to labor; [that there be] no breaking in, nor going out; that [there be] no complaining in our streets."

To draw carriages, to plough with, and to tread out the corn. Or "may be burdened"; fit to carry burdens. Or burdened with flesh, be plump and fat, and in good condition to work; or burdened with young, as some understand it. And then it must be meant of cows, as the word is used (Deut. 7:13). And so here an increase of kine is wished for, as of sheep before. Ministers of the word are compared to oxen for their patience in suffering, and their laboriousness in working (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:17). And happy is it for the churches of Christ when their ministers are laborious ones. Are strong to labor, and do labor, in the word and doctrine. Standing fast in the faith, and acquit themselves like men, and are strong.

"That there be no breaking in": Of the enemy into the land to invade it, into cities and houses to plunder and spoil them.

"Nor going out. Of the city to meet the enemy and fight with him, peace and not war is desirable. Or no going out of one's nation into captivity into a foreign country, as Kimchi. Or no breaking in to folds and herds, and leading out and driving away cattle, to the loss of the owners thereof. Some understand both these of abortion, of any violent rupture of the womb, and an immature birth.

"That there be no complaining in our streets": On account of famine, pestilence, the sword, violence, and oppression. Or no crying, no mournful cry or howling and shrieking on account of the enemy being at hand, and just ready to enter in, or being there, killing, plundering, and spoiling.

This is speaking of abundant blessings that come from God alone. This is speaking of families who operate by God's plan and have plenty from the labor of their hands. Even their oxen cooperate with the plan and work, not destroy.

Psalm 144:15 "Happy [is that] people, that is in such a case: [yea], happy [is that] people, whose God [is] the LORD."

Whose families are in good order and behave well. Who enjoy plenty of all good things. Whose flocks and herds increase, and who live in peace and prosperity. These are temporal blessings highly valuable, and for which those who have them should be thankful. As being happy in comparison of others that are destitute of them (Deut. 28:3). And especially who besides these are blessed with spiritual blessings, signified by them, and of which these were typical.

"Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord": Whose God is Yahweh. Who worship and serve Him as their God. The worship of Yahweh, the religion of Yahweh, is "adapted" to make a people happy; peaceful; quiet; and blessed. Prosperity and peace, such as are referred to in the previous verses, are, and must be, the result of pure religion. Peace, order, abundance, attend it everywhere. And the best security for a nation's prosperity is the worship of God. That which is most certain to make a nation happy and blessed, is to acknowledge God and to keep his laws.

This just shows the happiness, peace, and joy that comes from following closely with the LORD.

Psalm 144 Questions

1. What does David call the LORD in verse 1?
2. The LORD teaches his hands to _____.
3. What does he call the LORD in verse 2?
4. Compare God and man.
5. What are man's days likened to in verse 4?

6. What happens to the mountains at the presence of God?
7. Who are the strange children?
8. Their right hand is a hand of _____.
9. What would their 10 stringed instrument be like today?
10. In verse 12, we read that the sons should be like what?
11. In the same verse, what are the daughters to be as?
12. What blessings are mentioned in verse 13?