

Psalms 146:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

Analysis

This verse extends the personal commitment to perpetual praise: 'While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.' The phrase 'while I live' (Hebrew 'be'odi) establishes temporal boundaries - human praise is limited to mortal existence. 'I will praise the LORD' and 'I will sing praises unto my God' uses parallel verbs emphasizing different aspects of worship: praise (halal) involves celebration and declaration, while singing (zamar) brings musical and emotional expression. 'While I have any being' ('ad ishlat i') repeats and extends the temporal frame, ensuring no ambiguity about the commitment's duration. The psychological effect is to establish praise as the fundamental life-orientation: as long as conscious existence continues, worship persists. This verse acknowledges human mortality while simultaneously transcending it through the determination to praise. Unlike verse 1's imperative mood, this shifts to personal intention ('I will'), making the commitment deeply personal. The repetition creates mnemonic reinforcement for this theological principle.

Historical Context

This verse reflects awareness of mortality and the limit of earthly existence, themes prominent in wisdom literature and the later Psalms. The phrase 'while I live' echoes the memento mori tradition - remembering one's finite existence. In Jewish thought, the acknowledgment of mortality was not morbid but spiritually clarifying, directing energy toward eternal rather than temporal concerns. The commitment to praise 'while I have any being' takes on special significance in light

of Israelite beliefs about Sheol (the afterlife), where praise of God was understood to be limited (Psalm 6:5, 30:9, 88:10-12). This verse thus emphasizes that earthly life is the opportunity for worship and testimony; death's silence makes present praise particularly urgent. In the context of Jewish martyrdom (especially during the Maccabean period, contemporary with this psalm's likely final composition), the determination to praise 'while I have any being' became particularly poignant. Some rabbis taught that continuing to praise God despite suffering was itself a form of witnessing to God's worthiness.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does acknowledging human mortality ('while I live') affect our urgency and commitment to worship?
2. Why does the psalm distinguish between 'praise' (declaration) and 'sing praises' (musical expression)?
3. What does it mean to 'sing praises unto my God' personally, rather than in corporate worship?
4. In what ways does the repetition of this commitment throughout the verse reinforce its theological importance?
5. How should the awareness that our worship is bounded by mortal existence shape our approach to praise today?

Interlinear Text

אֶהְלֵל הַ	יְהוָה הַ	בְּחַיִּי	אֶזְמַר הַ	לְאֵלֵה י	בְּעוֹדִי:
will I praise	the LORD	While I live	I will sing praises	unto my God	
H1984	H3068	H2416	H2167	H430	H5750

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 63:4 (Parallel theme): Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

Psalms 104:33 (Resurrection): I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

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