

Psalm 9:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

Analysis

I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works. This opening declaration establishes David's wholehearted commitment to praise. The psalm is an alphabetic acrostic (though incomplete), where successive verses begin with consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet—a poetic device that suggests comprehensive, ordered praise covering the full range of God's character and works.

"With my whole heart" (bekhol-libbi, בְּכָל־לִבִּי) emphasizes undivided devotion. The Hebrew lev (heart) represents not just emotions but the whole inner person—mind, will, affections. David commits his entire being to praise. This stands in contrast to half-hearted, distracted, or reluctant worship. Genuine praise engages the whole person, holding nothing back.

"I will shew forth" (asapprah, אָסַפֵּה) uses the verb saphar, meaning to recount, declare, tell, or number. Praise is not merely feeling but proclamation—verbally recounting what God has done. "All thy marvellous works" (kol-nifle'otekha, כָּל־נִפְلָאוֹתֶיךָ) refers to God's wonderful deeds that inspire awe—acts of power, wisdom, and grace that transcend human capability. These works provide the content of praise.

The verse introduces a psalm celebrating God's justice and deliverance. David writes not from theory but from experience—God has acted on his behalf against

enemies, and this reality compels comprehensive thanksgiving. True praise flows from genuine encounter with God's saving power.

Historical Context

Psalm 9 (along with Psalm 10) forms an extended acrostic poem in the Hebrew text, suggesting they may have originally been one composition. The superscription attributes it to David, "upon Muth-labben" (meaning uncertain—possibly a musical notation or reference to the death of a champion, perhaps Goliath).

The alphabetic acrostic was a common Hebrew poetic device found in several psalms (9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145) and in Lamentations and Proverbs 31. This structure served multiple purposes: it aided memorization, suggested completeness (covering the topic from A to Z), and demonstrated literary artistry as an offering to God.

The historical setting likely involves David's deliverance from enemies, possibly during Saul's pursuit or his early kingship when enemies surrounded Israel. The psalm's themes of divine judgment on nations and vindication of the oppressed fit David's experience as both fugitive and king. Early church fathers saw messianic implications in the psalm's celebration of God's universal judgment and eternal kingship.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to praise God with your 'whole heart' rather than with divided affections?
2. How does recounting ('showing forth') God's works function as a form of praise distinct from simply feeling grateful?
3. What 'marvellous works' in your own experience compel you to comprehensive thanksgiving?
4. Why might David structure his praise as an alphabetic acrostic, and what does this suggest about ordered, thoughtful worship?

Interlinear Text

כָּל אֶסְפֶּנֶת הַיְהוָה אָזַד הַיְהוָה בְּכָל לִבִּי יְשַׁבֵּת
I will praise thee O LORD H3034 H3065 with my whole heart H3820 I will shew forth H5608 H3605
נְפָלָאֹתֶיךָ:
all thy marvellous works H6381

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 86:12 (Resurrection): I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

1 Chronicles 16:24 (Parallel theme): Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations.

Psalms 111:1 (Resurrection): Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.

Psalms 26:7 (Parallel theme): That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

Hebrews 13:15 (Resurrection): By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Isaiah 43:21 (Resurrection): This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

Psalms 7:17 (Resurrection): I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

1 Chronicles 16:12 (Parallel theme): Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

Psalms 51:15 (Resurrection): O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

Psalms 138:1 (Resurrection): I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

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