

## **GOD SENDS OUT HIS COMMANDS**

Psalm 147: 1-20 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Embedded in Psalm 147 is one of the strongest illustrations of the sending out of God's commands to creation and to us. Notice verse 15. "He sends out His command to the earth; His Word runs swiftly." The living Word of God is Jesus and the written Word of God is the Bible. The Bible is our authority as believers. Millions of evangelicals and fundamentalists profess to believe in the authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice, but many deny the authority of the Bible in their practice. A leader in the Emerging Church movement recently spoke to T. A. McMahan. T. A. prayed he would be a blessing to this man who was out of alignment with the Word in his practice. T. A. began the discussion saying, "I think it would be helpful if we acknowledged to what spiritual authority each of us is submitting." Pointing to his Bible, T. A. said, "This book is my authority. What's your authority?" The man looked around, searching for a response. Finally, he said, "My God is bigger than that Book." Shocking, huh? Yes, but it happens all the time. It's easy for believers to hang on to the belief in the authority of God's Word, but to functionally bail out on it. If we go elsewhere for answers, wherever it may be—if we turn to our own understanding, to our favorite authors, to our favorite radio or television preacher, or to our favorite blog, to find our answers, we are doing what? We are looking for another authority, denying the sufficiency of God's Word. When a position we follow or a decision we make contradicts the clear teaching of God's Word, we are like a person working off-line. We are on our own. We may use the Word to bolster our position, garnering scores of verses to support our point—but in the end, to deny one clear teaching of scripture on any point is dangerous to our spiritual walk, to our physical health, and to our future.

None of us who name the Name of Jesus Christ can claim full autonomy. None of us can say, "Because I am a man or a woman, I can do whatever I want to do. Christ is our Head, our covering. We are all as Christ's Bride, answerable to Him. Each of us is under authority. We must all answer to a hierarchy. A hierarchy is an order that runs within prescribed alignments. In our cars and trucks, unless they are properly aligned, we are unfit for driving. Paul explains to us in I Corinthians 11: 3 "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." Even in the Godhead, the Trinity, there is economic subordination or a chain of command. God the Father is the Head of Christ. God works through a chain of command even within Himself to accomplish His plan and program in history. If any of us rebelliously break God's chain of command, we automatically lose the fullness of God's blessing and we come out from under His covering for us. Even as Lucifer, son of the morning,

rebelled against God's order, we can too. When we stay within God's chain of command, God opens the flow of all His blessings to us.

Every believing disciple of Jesus, at one time or another, acts hypocritically. It's far easier to accuse others of hypocrisy than to admit it in ourselves. A common hypocrisy is accusing a pastor or preacher or teacher of preaching falsely when the Word of God they are teaching is a direct confrontation of a sin within one of us. Leonard Sweet in his book, "Faithquakes," told of a minister in France with little education, but whose ministry was irritatingly convicting—stepping on the toes of his congregants. Some of his members circulated a petition declaring him unfit for his post. As the petition circulated, unknowingly, someone who took up the cause, who didn't know the minister, showed the petition to this minister. Promptly, he signed the petition. He was right to sign it, for no pastor—no not one, is fit to hold our post—and perfectly fulfill our calling. We all have frailties and each of us have failed in one way or another. When Moses was about to be stoned by his people, it was because three well-known leaders in Israel led 3,000 Israelites to oppose him and God's chain of command. Korah, Dathan and Abiram became jealous of Moses and Aaron, (Psa. 106: 16) and said, Numbers 16: 3, "Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord...For all in the congregation are holy, everyone of them." God wouldn't allow it. The earth opened-up and swallowed the three men and their multitude of followers. Hebrews 13: 17 is clear, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will-have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." How many of us have rolled our eyes, chuckled or grumbled under our breath at the idea of submitting to one of our pastors? What if every time a believer secretly met at home to plan to dump, undermine, or secretly replace their pastor, the ground would open-up to swallow them for getting out of God's chain of command? Would many of us still be alive?

One other great hypocrisy is finding a tradition or a teaching that fits our selfish purpose and thus we connive a way to do "an end around," God, and deny the clear teaching of scripture. Jesus faced it in His own day. Listen to Matthew 15: 1-9. "Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," need not honor his father.' So, for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far

from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” Today, I want us to examine this mighty Psalm 147: 1-20 to see three ways God commands His creation and creatures, and to see the beauty of what happens when His we follow His commands and stay within His chain of command.

**WHEN GOD COMMANDS AND WE OBEY, A SONG OF PRAISE IS FITTING BECAUSE HE RESTORES HIS PEOPLE.** (I.) Notice Psalm 147: 1-6. “Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. 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. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; His understanding is beyond measure. The Lord lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked to the ground.” The timing of this psalm is doubtless after the exile of Judah and during the time following the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, restoring the gates, resettling the people and this psalm may well have accompanied the singing at the dedication of the post-exilic new temple.

When we read of the gathering of the outcasts of Israel in verse 2, the same verb, **kanac** was used by Ezekiel in Ezekiel to speak about the regathering of His people after the exile—which we call the restoration of Judah. Kanac means to collect, enfold, to assemble, or to whistle and call forth or together by command. Ezekiel 39: 28 prophesied, around 587 BC, “Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then kanac-assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations any more.” The very reason for the writing of this psalm by this unknown psalmist is that God commanded and King Cyrus of Persia—a pagan king obeyed God. It is amazing to read in Ezra 1: 2-3 how God stirred up the heart Cyrus, King of Persia, who proclaimed in writing, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people, may his God be with him, and let him to up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—He is the God who is in Jerusalem.” Can you imagine it. Believers today get out of God’s chain of command and refuse to obey Him or to follow His promptings, but God commands this pagan king and he unswervingly obeyed.

Notice our text now! “Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. This Hebrew word “fitting” or comely, is **naveh**. Naveh means to be at home, beautifully suitable. It reminds of my Grandma Hildur who used to always say, “Come on in and make yourself at home, where you ought to be.” Beloved, when we sing praises to Jesus for restoring us, it

ought to be the most at home thing we ever do. It ought to warm our hearts like chicken or turkey soup on a cold snowy day. Now notice with me, the way God commands our restoration in verses 3-6, and the psalmist uses nine participles. What are they? (1) **Building up**—v. 2. The Hebrew word is **banah**. It means to make or fashion, and when it is used of God, it calls us back to creation when God banah fashioned Eve out of Adam’s rib. Notice God spoke in Genesis 2: 18, saying, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make—**asah** – meaning create a helper or help-meet for him.” Husbands, every time we see our wife, we ought to remember the restoration of a lonely man named Adam in the Garden. One word from God and a rib out of Adam’s side became a helpmeet beside him. Here is Psalm 147: 2, we read, “The Lord banah—builds up Jerusalem. (2) **Gathering**—v. 2. The Hebrew word is kanac and it means to gather back together, to assemble and call forth by command—God whistles and Cyrus obeys His command.

Notice a third participle (3) **Healing**—v. 3. The Hebrew word is **raphah**. The Lord is the God, our healer. Raphah means to mend by stitching, to restore to normal, to make whole. So often Jesus just spoke the word and a person was healed. He didn’t even have to be there. Matthew 8: 7-13 tells us about a centurion’s servant who was paralyzed. The man said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.” Jesus said, “Go, let it be done, as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.” Here in v. 3 we read, “He heals the brokenhearted.” Think of it—pray God will speak the word of healing into the life of those you are praying for. (4) **Binding**-v. 3. The Hebrew word is **chabash**. It means to wrap firmly, to heal, to stop a wound from bleeding, to rule, or speak the word to overrule. God often binds up our wounds and He overrules even what the doctor says is inevitable.

A fifth participle is **Determining**—v. 4—the number of the stars. The Hebrew word is **manah**. It means to appoint a number by telling or speaking the word—speaking them into existence. The earth was without form and void, and the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light! And Genesis 1: 16 says He made or determined the stars. Imagine speaking a star into existence that is larger than our earth. Oh the power and restoring power of God’s word and command. (6) **Giving**—v. 4, “He gives to all of them their names. The Hebrew word is qara. It means to call out and proclaim. (7) **Understanding**—v. 5. The Hebrew word is **tabuwn**. It means to bring discernment by instruction. Think of it. “Great is the Lord and abundant in power; His understanding is beyond measure. Pray with me that God would bring His understanding—and command it into areas where all of us are broken. He can. He has. Believe with me that He will.

(8) **Lifting**—v. 6. The Hebrew word is **uwd**. It means to bear witness, to testify, to admonish and assure protection. Claim it. The Lord testifies to us that He lifts up the humble. (9) **Casting**—v. 6. The Hebrew word is **shaphel**. It means to debase, to humiliate, to cause to sink, and bring low those in rebellion to Him. Think of it! A song of praise is beautifully suitable as our God by His command, is always restoring, which includes building up, gathering, healing, binding, determining, giving, understanding, lifting, and casting the wicked to the ground. Secondly,

**WHEN GOD COMMANDS AND WE OBEY, A MELODY OF THANKS IS NEEDED ON STRINGS BECAUSE HE REFRESHES US AND OUR LAND.**

(II.) Notice Psalm 147: 7-11. “Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! He covers the heavens with clouds; He prepares rain for the earth; He makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor His pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love.” The psalmist now wants an accompaniment on the harp or lyre. Why? God does more by His commands than just restoration. He **refreshes** us and our land. What a demonstration this past week. God commanded the clouds, covered the heavens and the sky dumped snow on Sweetwater County. But you who struggle with winter, don’t despair. Spring will arrive by God’s command. Temperatures will rise, snow will melt. Rain will come by God’s decree, and grass again will grow on the hills. The beasts kicking at the deep snow to get to the sage tops and high grasses, will now have abundance of food. Even the scavenger ravens, God used to feed Elijah, the young ravens that cry and beg for food, God will speak, and command a meal for them too. In the alpine tundra above the treeline in the mountains, God will spread a thin covering of lichen over the naked rocks and the mountain sheep and goats will browse there.

But strong as horses are, v. 10 and strong as a man’s legs are, God’s refreshing delight is not found because He observes horses as such incredible creatures or He observes men with amazing muscled up legs who do knee bends and press hundreds of pounds. No! Verse 11 states, The Lord rather takes pleasure in those who fear and reverence Him. The Hebrew word is **yare**. Strong’s Concordance states, “To revere, with submission, rendering proper respect.” What God delights in is **when we do what He commands us**. Remember the words of the angel of the Lord to Abraham after God stopped him from slaying his son. Genesis 22: 12, 15-17 states, “Now I know that you fear (yare) God...By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore.” Jesus adds in John 15: 14, “You are My friends if you do what I command you.” When nature obeys God,

it is marvelous, but when we obey God as His children, the Lord takes pleasure—  
v. 11 in us who fear Him, in us who hope in His steadfast love.” Thirdly,

**WHEN GOD COMMANDS AND WE OBEY, PRAISES ARE IN ORDER,  
BECAUSE HIS POWERFUL WORD IS REVEALED IN ITS MAJESTY.**

(III.) Notice Psalm 147: 12-20. “Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! For He strengthens the bars of your gates; He blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders; He fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends out His command to the earth; His word runs swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down His crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before His cold? He sends out His word, and melts them; He makes His wind blow and the waters flow. He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes, and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know His rules. Praise the LORD!” Just the power of God’s Word when we obey His commands can unleash protection of our national security—God strengthens the bars of our gates. Just obeying His commands can open the womb. He blesses your children within our home. Obeying His commands can end war and strife and God can say—“Peace, be still, and make peace in our borders—v.14. Obeying God can bring greater crops—for He fills us up with the finest of wheat.

Do you understand, beloved, that God is our Commander in Chief and He wants us to accept His authority, His chain of command for each of us. Now the Psalmist starts to become eloquent in verses 15-20. Listen. V. 15—He sends out His command to the earth; His Word runs swiftly. Then what happens? Nature obeys Him. The disciples said, “Even the winds and the waves obey Him.’ (Luke 8: 25) So watch nature in v. 16—God speaks and snow comes down like wool and He scatters hoarfrost like ashes—as we saw Friday morning. V. 17—God hurls down his crystals of ice (hail) like crumbs—at 39 below Friday morning, “Who can stand before His cold?” Then by God’s decree as I just read Genesis 8: 22 this week, God promised, after the flood he would never again strike down every living creature as He did in the flood, but “while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will not cease. The psalmist is coming to a crescendo. Just when the cold is ready to freeze us to death, by God’s command, v. 18—“He sends out His word and melts the snow. He makes His wind blow and the waters flow.” Wow! He declares, v. 19 His word to Jacob, His statutes and rules to Israel, and to us. V. 20—“He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know His rules. Praise the Lord.” And out of the world, God has brought a new nation of believing saints. I Peter 2: 9—“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession.” Will we receive this Word from God’s lips? Will we get back in line? Will we obey His commands? The majesty of God is on the line when we obey or disobey, when we submit or when we rebel against God’s chain of command. I close with a

devotional by Walter A. Henrichsen from Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> in Thoughts From the Diary Of A Desperate Man.” Pastor Larry reminded me of these words based on Romans 15: 6 which says, “That you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Listen as I close with his devotional.

“Agreement and submission are frequently confused in those relationships in life where one is under the authority of another. For example, a wife says, “I submit to my husband most of the time.” What she means is, most of the time they are in agreement, and the infrequent occasion when they are not in agreement, she finds cause not to submit. You test submission by doing what you don’t want to do, not by doing what you agree needs to be done. Many know how to pretend to submit when in fact they are only agreeing. Few know how to cooperate in a spirit of submission; many know how to rebel. You can easily yield to your authority in an act of submission without being willing to cooperate. When told you must do it, you obey in a perfunctory manner with no heart to make it work properly. (Like King Amaziah in II Chronicles 25: 2) “And he did that which was right in the sight of God, but not with a perfect heart.” Submission is more than an act; it is an attitude of the heart. Only you and God know your heart, and He will judge you, in part, by the heart attitude you carry into the execution of the request. (Colossians 3: 23-24) “And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ.” Roger Staubach led the Dallas Cowboys to the World Championship in 1971. He admitted that his position as a quarterback who didn't call his own signals, was a source of great trial for him. Coach Tom Landry sent in every play. He told Roger when to pass, when to run and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!). Even though Roger considered Coach Landry to have a "genius mind" when it came to football strategy, his pride said that he should be able to run his own team. Roger later said, "I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory."

Once we face up to the fact that God is worthy of commanding all our lives in whatever ways He wants through those He has placed over us, the majesty of His commands will be revealed, the refreshment of obeying His commands will set us free to praise Him, and the restoration found in submission to His will be beautiful in our lives. May this be true in your life and mine and in His church today. Amen.