



We are as a vapor of steam, but steam, when escaped, rises up to heaven if the nature of the water is true.

Psalm 103:1-5 *The Benedic, anima mea.*
Morning and Evening Prayer, 1928 Book of Common Prayer

PRAISE the LORD, O my soul; * and all that is within me, praise his holy Name.
2 Praise the LORD, O my soul, * and forget not all his benefits:
3 Who forgiveth all thy sin, * and healeth all thine infirmities;
4 Who saveth thy life from destruction, * and crowneth thee with mercy and loving-kindness;
5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, * making thee young and lusty as an eagle.

This notable and classic hymn of praise was composed by Henry Francis Lyte in 1834. The music, *Lauda Anima* (Praise my Soul), is by John Goss. Its expressive sentiments reach to the lowest levels of our hearts and souls. The soul that pines for the Lord can find its fullest expression in this wonderful and descriptive hymn. Both Morning and Evening Prayers of the Book of Common Prayer incorporate the *Benedic, anima mea* (from Psalms 103 & 104). It is one of those great hymns that consist of scriptural truth magnified in song by the people of God.

Praise, my Soul, the King of Heaven

*Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
evermore his praises sing:
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King.*

*Praise him for his grace and favor
to our fathers in distress;
praise him still the same for ever,
slow to chide and swift to bless:
Alleluia, alleluia!
Glorious in his faithfulness.*

*Father-like, he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hand he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Widely yet his mercy flows.
Angels, help us to adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace.*

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; to his feet thy tribute bring; ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, evermore his praises sing: Alleluia, alleluia! Praise the everlasting King. Praising the Lord in prayer and hymn singing is the most exalted form of worship. The lips may sing praises all day long, but unless the lips are expressing the deep emotions and faith of the heart, the words will be meaningless. The heart of God is a DEEP Heart, and, unless our hearts have corresponding depth, we cannot praise him truly. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." (Psalms 42:7-8) We have no tribute to bring to a Holy God but that of our undivided love and loyalty to Him as sovereign and Savior. I read an illustration once about a young poor boy who came in tattered clothing to church. It was the first time he had gathered the courage to venture in to such an esteemed gathering. He had no money. When the offering was taken, the boy took the offering plate, placed it upon the floor in front of him, removed his shoes, and stood in the plate. Those adjacent to the boy were appalled, but the pastor sensed the meaning and applauded the boy for giving all that he had, and was, to the Lord – HIMSELF. The tribute we bring is simply that which He has ransomed, healed, restored, and forgiven – our immortal souls!

*Praise him for his grace and favor to our fathers in distress; praise him still the same for ever, slow to chide and swift to bless: Alleluia, alleluia! Glorious in his faithfulness. Had Abraham not received the Promise and passed the same down to us, we may have been left orphans and outcast in the spirit; But Abraham had a greater faith to believe a promise not yet realized in his day; but certainly manifested in our day through the redemption and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. That same promise was passed down, not from carnal man to carnal man, but from believing soul to believing soul. Therefore, those who have received and believe that Promise are accounted the true Children of Abraham, and sons and daughters of the Most High God. It is a great disappointment to have a dear friend who betrays our friendship and turns to our enemies. Jesus knew how that felt in Judas. But He is not One who changes with the winds of time. *He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.* (Hebrews 13:8) He is far more long-suffering than any dear friend or parent. He awaits our understanding of our sins and gives opportunity for repentance. He blesses more promptly than He condemns.*

*Father-like, he tends and spares us; well our feeble frame he knows; in his hand he gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes. Alleluia, alleluia! Widely yet his mercy flows. God not only tends and spares us LIKE a Father, but AS our Father indeed! He is the Father of all who call upon the Name of His only Begotten Son! He knows, not only our outward behavior, but the motivations of the heart that prompt that behavior: *7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward**

appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. (1 Sam 16:7) If your heart has been given over as the Temple of God, do you believe that He has not owned every secret vault and chamber thereof? He bears us gently in His hands as a mother eagle bears her young on her back (not talons for fear of crushing them). God is our Fortress and Christ our strong Rock of Defense – He is our Ark into which we flee from the wicked conflagrations of the world. His mercies are endless, and more abundant than the waters of the seven seas.

Angels, help us to adore him; ye behold him face to face; sun and moon, bow down before him, dwellers all in time and space. Alleluia, alleluia! Praise with us the God of grace.” Alleluia means “God be praised! it is an expression, in the greatest sense, of worship and devotion. It is a heavenly utterance which can be uttered on earth by heavenly hearts: ⁵ *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.* ⁶ *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* (Rev 19:5-6) We stumble along on paths not well lit, now; but one day, we shall behold Him face to face. *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* (1 Cor 13:12)

Unfortunately, in my view, the 1940 Hymnal omitted the original fourth stanza of this masterpiece of hymnody:

*Frail as summer's flowers we flourish;
Blows the wind, and it is gone;
But while mortal rise and perish,
God endures unchanging on.
Praise Him, Praise Him!
Praise the High Eternal One!*

It may be a subconscious motivation for men to omit those strong reminders of our carnal mortality; however, we need the warning long before the train approaches the fallen bridge. This last verse is a strong reminder of our mortality and the temporary nature of our dwelling made of clay. *All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.* (Isaiah 40:6-8)

We are as a vapor of steam, but steam, when escaped, rises up to heaven if the nature of the water is true.