

The Power of Praise Part 2

Welcome to part 2 of this series, The Power of Praise. Last Sunday we talked about Paul and Silas singing praises to God at midnight in the prison cell in Philippi. As they chose to praise God even in the midst of their trouble, their feet in stocks, their hands chained, in pain, beaten and bleeding, the Lord caused an earthquake to shake the foundation of the prison, the doors flew open and the chains came off, not just off Paul and Silas, but off of all the prisoners. Something powerful happens when God's people praise the Lord, especially when things aren't going as we want or expect. How many of you know what I'm talking about?

I told you last week we would look deeper into what the bible teaches concerning praise. What is praise all about? Stop and think about it. You know something about praise because it is part of your everyday life whether you realize it or not. You praise your children for doing well in school. You praise your employees for a job well done. You praise your friends for helping you, your team mate for making that play, your spouse for getting the "honey-do" list completed. When we praise someone, we commend, applaud, extol or honor them. We praise them directly or commend them and their efforts to someone else. Our praise to the Lord can be in the same fashion. We praise Him directly for who He is and what he has done for us personally, or we declare to others the greatness of God and his faithfulness, or we praise Him for what he has done for others. Praise is an expression of gratitude, thankfulness, approval, an expression of admiration, awe and reverence. It is declaring with gratitude and joy what God has done! It's telling him with thankfulness how we appreciate all he has done. It is lifting him up with our words and our heart and our lives. Simply put, **Praise is an expression of the attitude of our heart.**

Praise is something we do and something we live out. It's more than just the time in the service when we stand and sing songs. Our whole lives are to be lived as an offering of praise to God. We are to order our behavior and communication so that God constantly and continuously receives glory and honor and praise from our life, our choices, our words. Of course, this aspect of praise, that it includes the way we live out our life, isn't always practiced. We see people who are skilled at praising the Lord in church but when they get home or to lunch at a restaurant they are rude, inconsiderate, gossips, selfish, prideful. That isn't offering praise.

Praise is filled with honesty, integrity, thanksgiving, gratitude, passion, emotion, enthusiasm, awe and wonder for who God is and for what he has done. Praise is personal

and corporate, an outward expression and an inward attitude. Praise is offered because we want to praise him for what he has done. Praise is offered because he is worthy of all of our praise.

I taught last year on prayer on Wednesday nights and shared from a book by a pastor named Peter Lord. He said, “**Praise is my response to the person, presence, position, power, greatness, majesty and the love of God.**” ...Peter Lord Praise doesn't always have to be in response to something he has done, but look at his list. Praise is always the correct response to who he is – to his person, his presence at work in your life, to his power and greatness and majesty and love. Praise is offered because it is the only rational, logical and obedient response to the revelation of God, his character, his greatness, his majesty, his compassion and mercy. Look with me at Psalm 145. It is described as a psalm of praise. You can't read it and reflect on what David is saying without offering praise to God. (Read Psalm 145)

Have you ever seen something so beautiful, heard something so wonderful that it demanded a response from you? A gasp, tears, applause, a shout, (perhaps a last second comeback by the LA Rams tonight) something that caused you to leap to your feet or fall to your knees or something that literally took your breath away? That's what praise as a response to God is all about. It is that gasp that acknowledges the incredible character and nature and beauty and splendor of our God. The shout that celebrates his wonderful works, his great deeds. The overwhelming response to the knowledge that our sins are forgiven by his sacrifice, we've been rescued from hell and redeemed by his mercy and grace. Praise is the right response to the God of whom David said, “His greatness no one can fathom!” Consider the adjectives David uses, “mighty acts, glorious splendor, wonderful works, awesome works, great deeds, abundant goodness.” David testifies of God's nature, “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love, good to all, showing compassion to all he has made, faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made, he upholds all who fall and lifts up those who are bowed down, he is near to all who call on him.” What else can you do but offer praise to a God who loves us like this? No wonder David says, “Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever!” If you get to know God, you can't help but respond with praise.

Why do we praise Him? The bottom line: **We are commanded to do so in the Word of God.** Read Psalm 150. Praise is required of every living creature, everything that has breath in it is to praise the Lord. But have you ever wondered why? Does God need our praise? The truth is, God instructed us to praise Him because we needed the benefit, not Him! Let me share with you some benefits of praise. Why do we praise Him?

Praise is becoming. The Psalmist declares, **“Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him.” Psalm 147:1.** King James Version translates that last phrase like this, **“Praise the Lord for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.”** We don’t use that word much anymore. It sounds Old English. “She was a comely lass.” Attractive. Fitting. Lovely. Becoming. “That is becoming on you,” meaning something made you more attractive. Praise in our life has that effect.

Everyone has known someone that was bitter, negative, angry, unforgiving. There was nothing of praise in their life and there was nothing becoming or attractive about them either. C. S. Lewis wrote, “the most balanced and capacious minds praised most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised least.” (*Reflections on the Psalms*) Even if a person is physically attractive, their negativism makes them unattractive. You don’t want to be around them. But praise brings about a change in your attitude and will produce a change in your personality. It results in a different outlook on life. Constantly hearing and feeding on criticism and gossip and negativism will make you ugly, inside and out. Filling your heart and mind with the goodness of God and praising Him will make your spirit beautiful and will make you beautiful, inside and out. Praise has an effect on you. It looks good on you. Praising the Lord is fitting, becoming, lovely. It will change your life and your outlook! Another benefit of praise...

Praise puts things in proper perspective. Praise has a way of putting life’s circumstances into a proper perspective. The Psalmist wrote, **“My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ These things I remember...for I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving...Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.” Psalm 42:3-5.** I looked back in a bible I used to carry and preach from to find the date. January 4, 1982, drowning in depression and despair, God directed me to this passage of Scripture. Crying, wondering where God was and how I could make it out of the pit and through the darkness. “Why are you in despair?” There was reason for hope and praise was the way through. Praise would put things in proper perspective. My soul was in despair, but praise reminded me that I would be leading the procession to the house of God once again. Praise lifted my eyes from the despair to the majesty and power of the Eternal God who had promised to never leave me nor forsake me. As I offered praise to the Lord it was a continual reassurance that He was with me. Praise him and he will lift your head, He will lift your eyes,

He will alter your perspective. Praise will lead you through the darkness. Hope in God and give praise to him for the help of His presence. Another benefit of praise...

Praise will renew and refresh your mind. The apostle Paul writes, **“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:4-7**

Rejoice in the Lord. Offer praise to the Lord. In everything. Don't be anxious, but in prayer, with thanksgiving, i.e. the offering of praise to the Lord, present your requests and the peace of God will guard your heart and mind. As you spend time praising the Lord and giving thanks to him, your mind is renewed. Fear and anxiety gives way to the peace of God which passes understanding. Praise redirects your thoughts. It refocuses your thoughts and it renews and refreshes your mind. How many times have you come from a time of praise and worship and said, “I feel better now.” Did circumstances change? Perhaps not, but your perspective changed and your mind was renewed with God's peace. Another benefit of praise...

Praise brings peace. Look at the rest of this passage in Philippians. **“Finally, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things...and the God of peace will be with you.” Philippians 4:8-9** Fill your mind with what is praiseworthy. We already know God and his mighty works and his promises and his faithfulness and his character is praiseworthy. Look at Paul's list of things to think about. God is true and noble, right and pure, lovely and admirable, he is worthy of praise, so think about him, praise him, speak of him, talk to him, thank him, worship him, fill your heart and mind with praise for the Lord and the peace of God will be with you. His peace will guard your heart, his peace will keep you and give you a sound mind. Praise can become like finding the right channel where we tune in to heaven. We tune out the noise of the world and the voice of the enemy and we tune into that place of peace as we offer praise to the Lord. Another benefit of praise...

God is enthroned upon our praise. I mentioned this at the close of the service last Sunday. In a Psalm that we recognize because Jesus quoted it from the cross, David declared, **“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but Thou dost not answer; And by night, but I**

have no rest. Yet Thou Art Holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel.”

Psalm 22:1-3 (NASB)

I want you to see and hear the raw truth and integrity of the Scripture. David feels as though God has forsaken him. He hasn't gotten an answer to his prayers. He is awake half the night, tossing and turning, troubled. And yet in the face of his trouble, David offers praise, “Yet thou art holy.” Yet I will praise you. In spite of the delays and no answer, I will praise you, because I know who you are. You are the one who is enthroned upon the praises of Israel. King James version say he “inhabits the praises of Israel.” He inhabits our praise – he is present when we praise him. It is there, in the praise, that we see Him. He is revealed to us, made plain to us. David said in Psalm 27, **“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”** Psalm 27:4 David goes on to say it is there he will “sacrifice with shouts of joy and will sing and make music to the Lord.” It is there, in praise we behold the beauty of the Lord. He is revealed to us in our praise. But hear what else I'm saying about him being enthroned upon our praise.

I believe that when we praise him, we are introducing and establishing his throne, meaning his lordship, his authority into our circumstances. He is not just inhabiting our praise, he is enthroned in our circumstances and where his throne is, that's where he rules and reigns, that's where his kingdom is established, that's where his will is performed and carried out. I believe when we praise him God's power and presence and authority is released into our situation.

“It is good to give praise to the Lord and to make music to your name” Psalm 92:1.

It's a good thing to praise him. It's becoming. It will change your perspective, it will renew and refresh your mind, it will bring peace to you and keep you in peace, it will change your circumstances because he is enthroned upon your praise.

Listen, you want to know why you ought to lift your voice and your heart to God in praise? **Praise is what you were created for!** God speaks of us as “the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.” Isaiah 43:21 Peter said, **“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”** 1 Peter 2:9

Praise is what you were made for. Looking for your purpose in life? Become a worshiper! Looking for meaning to your life? Start praising him. He brought you out of

darkness and into his wonderful light so we could praise him, so we could discover fully who we are and what we were meant to be and meant to do. The fullness of our humanity is found when we step beyond all the chains we've put on ourselves and we just freely begin to praise the Lord. I'll say it again, something begins to happen, a change comes, when God's people offer him praise! He is revealed to us in our praise. We can gaze upon the beauty of the Lord when we praise him. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. That's us. Let's praise him!