

Power of Praise

By Pastor Alan Utting



'Praise releases God's presence and power. It shifts the atmosphere of the heart.'
Jack Hayford

Praising God is easy in good times, but harder when facing difficulties. That is the challenge. Terry Law states, 'Praise says You are the Most High. It puts the world back into orbit around God.' I forget that sometimes and I'm sure you do to. Offering praise is considered a sacrifice that honours God, as it often involves giving up something valuable or praising even in difficult times. The significance of praise is underscored by its frequent mention in scripture, appearing 207 times in Psalms, 299 times in the Old Testament, and 56 times in the New Testament (NIV).

Bible Perspective

2 Chronicles chapter 20 has an inspiring lesson for us all. King Jehoshaphat along with his people are faced with impending disaster of an invasion by a neighbouring army. In desperation they sought the Lord for answers:

'After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: 'Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.' (verses 21,22). Can you imagine what faith that took! As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. Praise during hard times is irrational, unnatural, but very effective.

Observation

1. Praise generally is expressed through speaking, singing and proclaiming. It extols, affirms and treats God with high honour.
2. We do not normally praise God for painful situations, but we must learn to praise Him in painful situations. In doing in time we get God's perspective.
3. During the Lord's supper Jesus was able to 'give thanks' to His father for the bread and bring words of encouragement to others even on the eve of the cross! (Matthew 26:26).
4. Everyone carries burdens but only some people manage to hand them over to God. Practising praise is a habit that truly helps our spirit become free of heaviness.
5. A declaration in the heavens wins battles. I was pastoring a deeply divided church as an interim pastor for 10 months. Due to the deep conflict and largely not knowing what else to do, I would regularly go early to the empty church building and sing out praises to God for 30 minutes with volume and conviction. My favourite song was simply 'Hallelujah'. Other times I made up songs. I did the same at the beach when I was alone. Not only did this change my mental and spiritual disposition, but I believe it eventually brought great release to the church. Try it if you haven't done so already. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength' (Nehemiah 8:10).

6. Isaiah 61:3 is a prophecy about the coming work of Jesus, 'to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.' That is God's gift to you. By faith choose to wear that garment! Despite often wanting to quit, two decades of daily prayer have now resulted in a loved one embracing faith at last. Praise the Lord.
7. Learn to praise God in prayer and set an example for your team as this inspires faith. Don't simply ask God for what is needed.
8. The book of Psalms constantly refers to praise, but a careful reading shows that there is not a denial of heartache. For example, 'Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me. (Psalm 142:7). Quite often I read and even memorise parts of Psalms as a means for contemplation, declaration and encouragement.
9. A 'liturgy' usually refers to the order or form of worship used particularly in public services like in the tabernacle and temple in the Old and New Testament. A liturgy includes prayers, readings, songs, and rituals offered to God. Although they may include elements of confession and petition, they often include words of praise. We can adapt some of these elements for our private devotions when we do not have the words to express our praise and thanks to God. This is a creative way to help us praise and there are other useful aids you can use.
10. When feeling down, inspiring worship music from the Internet can lead us into an atmosphere of praise. Those who have learnt to play a musical instrument will also find that a great benefit in praising God.
11. Those who have the gift of speaking in tongues often see this as a praise language used to glorify God and personal edification. 'For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God' (1 Corinthians 14:2).
12. Again, I like Terry Law's statements on praise:
 - Praise silences the devil – 'Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger' (Psalm 8:2).
 - Praise leads us into Christ's triumph – 'But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere' (2 Corinthians 2:14).
 - Praise prepares us for miracles – 'About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose' (Acts 16:25,26).
 - Praise leads us into God's presence – 'Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name' (Psalm 100:4).

I challenge you to time yourself and set aside '5 minutes a day' to praise God in whatever way is most suited to you. It will make a difference.

Resources

Terry Law, *The power of praise and worship*

Brother Lawrence, *Practicing the presence of God*