

NOTHING IS IRREVERSIBLE

- A. Introduction: We're discussing the fact that we've been created to bring glory to God. One of the primary ways we glorify God is by praising Him (Eph 1:12). In this lesson we want to add to our discussion.
1. When we say "Praise the Lord" we aren't talking about what we do in church on Sunday morning or what we do when we feel good and things are going well for us. This is something we're supposed to do continually. Ps 34:1
 - a. To praise God, in its most basic form, means to proclaim who He is and what He does. Praise is the appropriate response to Him. It's always appropriate to praise God for His character and works.
 - b. Praise glorifies God and opens the door to His help in our circumstances. Praise is a powerful weapon we can use in life's battles. Ps 50:23; Ps 8:2; Matt 21:16
 2. The Bible records an incident that gives us insight into the value of praising God (proclaiming who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do) despite what we see and feel.
 - a. In II Chron 20 King Jehoshaphat and his people (Judah) defeated an overwhelming enemy force through praise to God. When faced with an impossible circumstance (three enemy armies coming against them) they sought God. v3-13
 - b. They put their focus on the Lord and magnified Him instead of the problem. God spoke to them through His prophet saying: You don't need to fight. The battle is not yours but mine. v14-17
 1. These weren't "church words". God was assuring them: This is impossible for you, but not for me. When God said "it's my battle" He meant: I will do what you can't do.
 2. Before they went up to the battlefield Jehoshaphat exhorted them: Believe His prophet (what God told us through the prophet) and we will succeed (prosper). v20
 - A. The king put the praisers out ahead of the army as they marched to the field. Praise helped them keep their focus on God and His Word, His promise to help.
 - B. Praise is the language of faith. Praising God for help before you see it is an expression of faith. Praise prepares the way for the God of the impossible to work in your situation.
 3. We must learn to praise God no matter what we see or how we feel. Praise is not a technique we use to "fix things". It comes out of our view of reality, out of our perspective.
 - a. If we truly believe that nothing can come against us that is bigger than God, that means there is no such thing as an impossible or hopeless situation because, whatever it is, it's not bigger than God.
 - b. In the hands of the God of the impossible, there is a solution to every problem and situation we face. Therefore we can praise Him before we see His salvation because we know we will see it.
- B. Instead of praising God when troubles come our way, people often begin to ask questions: Why is this happening? Is God upset with me? Does He not love me? Am I doing something wrong?
1. We focus on trying to get answers to these questions instead of praising God. But there's no hint of those issues coming up in the incident with Jehoshaphat and Judah.
 - a. In order to praise God in the hard times we must have a clear understanding of the nature of life in a world that has been damaged by sin. Impossible, and even irreversible situations come up.
 1. In this fallen world we must regularly deal with the effects of Adam's sin. Moths and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal (Matt 6:19; Whole lessons for another day).
 2. Enemy armies came against Judah because that's life in a sin cursed earth. Due to Adam's sin the whole region around Judah was populated with war-like tribes of men with sin natures, under the dominion of the devil, who acted aggressively toward neighboring countries.
 - b. You can do everything right and troubles still come you way. That's the nature of life in this world. (More on that in a moment.) So much of the popular teaching in Christian circles today gives the impression that if you do everything right nothing bad will happen to you.
 1. But that is contrary to what Jesus said. He clearly stated that "In the world you will have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration" (John 16:33, Amp).

2. This doesn't mean there's no protection or provision for us. However there's no such thing as a problem-free, trouble-free life in this sin damaged world.
 - A. Not only do "impossible to solve situations" come our way, irreversible things sometimes occur. But even those aren't bigger than God.
 - B. Some things can and will be rectified in this life even though they are impossible for us. And, irreversible things will be made right in the life to come. You must know this in order to praise God continually.
 - c. For example, other people sometimes make choices that bring issues into our lives which we can't avoid — even if we are doing everything right.
2. The generation of Israelites that came out of slavery in Egypt made bad choices that affected a lot of people. As you recall, God supernaturally delivered them from Egyptian slavery and led them to Canaan, the land God had promised to them through their ancestor Abraham.
 - a. Based on the report of a reconnaissance mission that told of walled cities, war-like tribes and unusually large men, these people refused to cross the border into Canaan. Num 13; 14
 1. Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who said Israel should go into Canaan as God instructed. Both knew they'd be successful because God was with them. Num 13:30; 14:8,9
 2. The people rejected their counsel. As a consequence of their unbelief, God sent them all back into the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan for the next forty years. Num 14:26-35
 - b. Even though Joshua and Caleb did everything right their entry into the promised land was postponed. They lost forty years in Canaan. Because of the behavior of other people they were old men (in their eighties) when they finally took possession of the land.
3. Consider two other men who did everything right yet their lives were greatly affected by the poor choices of others, two prophets, Jeremiah and Habakkuk.
 - a. Just before Israel finally crossed the border into Canaan to take possession of and settle the land, God, through Moses, warned them: If you abandon Me to worship the gods of the people around you, you will be removed from the land (Deut 4:25-28). That's exactly what happened.
 - b. After Joshua's death (thirty years after they entered Canaan) no national leader arose and Israel functioned as a tribal society ruled by judges or heroic military deliverers who were raised up in times of trouble. During these years the people struggled with idol worship.
 1. In 1043 B.C. the tribes united under Israel's first king, Saul, who was succeeded by David and then Solomon. After Solomon's death in 931 B.C. civil war broke out and Israel divided into a northern and southern kingdom known as Israel and Judah, respectively. Idol worship began immediately in Israel (the north) and eventually spread to Judah (the south).
 2. Just as God promised, in 722 B.C. Israel was overrun by the Assyrians and its inhabitants scattered throughout Assyria's empire. In 586 B.C. Judah was conquered by the Babylonian Empire. After a nineteen month siege, Jerusalem and the Temple were burned to the ground, the city walls pulled down, and all but the poorest people taken as captives to Babylon which was hundreds of miles away.
 - c. During the years of the divided kingdom God raised up a number of prophets and sent them to His people, calling them to come back to Him and warning of coming destruction at the hands of their enemies if they did not. Jeremiah (ministered from 627 B.C. to 586 B.C.) and Habakkuk (609 B.C. to 605 B.C.) were two prophets sent to Judah after the destruction of Israel.
 1. Both men did everything right. They served the Lord, faithfully carried out their charge to prophesy an unpopular message. Yet because their countrymen chose to reject their messages and persist in idol worship, both men experienced all the calamity that came on Judah.
 2. They saw the destruction of their country. We don't know what happened to Habakkuk. Jeremiah witnessed, but survived, the attack on Jerusalem.
- A. His message had been: Submit to Babylon and save your country. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon said Jeremiah could come to Babylon and be honored or stay in Judah.

B. Jeremiah chose to remain in Judah but was soon taken captive by fellow countrymen trying to resist Babylon through guerilla warfare tactics. They fled to Egypt for protection and took the prophet with them where he eventually died.

C. I'm relating this information about Israel's history because, for many, the Bible is only a collection of stories that seem to have little to do with real life. But it's a record of real people who experienced real trouble and got real help from God, written in part to inspire hope in us by showing us how God works in impossible and irreversible situations. Rom 15:4

1. You may be thinking: "It didn't work out so well for these spies and prophets." Actually, it did.
 - a. All four of them are in Heaven now. In comparison to the life they now live, the hardships they faced in life are nothing. And they are awaiting the return of Jesus to earth when they will come with Him, back to this world made free from sin, corruption and death, to live forever.
 - b. This eternal perspective helped them keep focused on the bigness and faithfulness of God in the challenges of life, gave them hope in the midst of hardships, enabling them to praise God which in turn opened the door to His help in their situations.
 1. Heb 11 is sometimes called the "faith hall of fame" because it refers to Old Testament men and women who did exploits for God through faith and trust in God (lessons for another day).
 2. One of the chapter's main points is that, although these people saw God's power demonstrated in their lives, they had an awareness that they were passing through this life as it is and that the best was ahead for them (v13-16). This perspective enabled them to praise God no matter what came their way. Whether it was impossible or irreversible, it wasn't bigger than God.
2. Let's consider several examples of how Joshua, Caleb, Habakkuk and Jeremiah viewed their situations which will help us learn to praise and acknowledge God no matter what we see or how we feel.
 - a. Jeremiah—Before Judah was destroyed, God instructed Jeremiah to buy land in Judah. God said men would one day live again in the land, an impossibility considering what was about to happen. Their nation was going to be destroyed and the bulk of the people removed to Babylon. Jer 32:6-15
 1. v16-25--Jeremiah did as instructed and praised God—His bigness and His faithfulness to keep His Word—declaring that nothing is impossible for God. God spoke to him again: You're right, Jeremiah. Nothing is too difficult for me (v26,27).
 2. We all know Jer 29:11--I have a future and a hope for you. The historical condition described above is the context in which the Lord made that statement to Jeremiah and His people (v10).
 3. God brought a remnant of people back to their land after seventy years in captivity. Jeremiah didn't live to see the restoration. But he knew there's more to life than just this life.
 - b. Habakkuk—This was his response to the coming calamity which was coming on Judah and would affect his life. Hab 3:17-19
 1. Habakkuk wasn't writing a poignant poem, he was describing Judah's pitiful state during the coming captivity. The nation would be destroyed, the people exiled. Consequently there will be no flourishing fig trees, no fruit on the vine, and the olive crop will fail. The flocks will die in the field and the cattle barns will be empty.
 2. His response: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I choose to acknowledge and praise the God of my salvation (deliverance). I will exult in my Saving God. (NAB).
 3. Notice, he made a choice to rejoice as opposed to praising God because he felt like it. This expression of faith brought him to a place of peace: v19--The Lord God is my strength, and will guide my feet to the end. He maketh me walk in high places; that I may triumph with his song (Septuagint).
 - c. Joshua and Caleb—When they left Egypt their view of reality was: Whatever we encounter in the land of Canaan, it's not bigger than God (Ex 15:14-18). They kept that view all the way to Canaan (Num 13:30; 14:8,9). And they kept that view during the forty years they lost.
 1. Both men were still praising God by talking about His faithfulness and His works, how He

had kept them and kept His word to them during those forty years. Josh 21:45; 23:14; 14:9-13

2. They will one day live in the land again as young men at the return of Jesus when they are reunited with their bodies raised from the grave. And, they'll be joined by Habakkuk and Jeremiah.
3. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to Jews who had accepted Jesus as their Messiah. They were experiencing increasing pressure from their fellow countrymen to reject Jesus and His sacrifice at the Cross and return to Temple worship. The whole purpose of the letter was to encourage them to stay faithful to Christ no matter what. Any loss you experience as you serve Jesus is temporary.
 - a. Heb 10:34--Paul reminded them they'd responded joyfully to previous loss of material goods at the hands of persecutors.
 1. Joyfully comes from a word that means to be cheerful or full of cheer. To cheer means to give hope. Cheer is a state of mind and heart as opposed to a feeling.
 2. Paul reminded them that they could respond with praise to God because they knew they had better and permanent possessions in the life to come.
 - b. At the beginning of this series we made reference to Heb 13:15 where believers are instructed to praise God continually by giving thanks to His name. The original recipients heard it in the context of thank offerings which were made to God in good and bad times (Lev 7:12; 22:29).
 1. Praise comes from a word meaning to tell a story. Giving thanks is a word meaning to say the same things as or to acknowledge. God's names are a revelation of His character and work. We praise God when we talk about who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do.
 2. Note the verse that comes right before this one (v14). We praise God with the awareness that we're only passing through this life as it is. Our eyes are on what's ahead in the life to come.

- D. Conclusion: I'm not advocating for troubles in this life. But people can and do make decisions that affect our lives in negative ways with consequences that can't be undone in this life.
1. That doesn't mean we can't have victory in the midst of it. We can if we will learn to praise the Lord. And we have the hope that all will be made right in the life to come. Rom 8:18
 2. No matter what comes your way, it's not bigger than God. Even if someone makes a choice that produces an irreversible result in this life, it's not bigger than God. All loss is temporary. In the life to come all will be made right. Therefore we can praise God no matter what we are facing.
 3. More next week!!