

PRAISE HELPS US STAND

- A. Introduction: For several weeks we have been discussing the fact that part of our created purpose is to bring glory to God through praising Him continually. Eph 1:12; Heb 13:15
1. To praise God, in its most basic form, means to proclaim who He is and what He does. It's not based on how we feel or what is going on in our life. It's based on who God is. It's always appropriate to praise the Lord for His character and works.
 - a. 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
 - b. Continual praise to God comes out of our view of reality. When we know that nothing can come against us that is bigger than God it means there's no such thing as an impossible situation.
 1. No matter what we are facing, there is hope because, whatever it is, it's not bigger than God.
 2. In the hands of God there is a solution to every problem we face. Therefore we can praise Him before we see His help because we know we will see it.
 2. Praising God is hard if you don't understand the parameters of life in a fallen world. Many have the idea that if we do everything right nothing bad will happen and are confused in the face of troubles.
 - a. But according to Jesus: "In the world you will have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration" (John 16:33). This doesn't mean that there is no provision or protection for us (there is). However, there is no such thing as a problem-free, trouble-free life in this sin damaged world.
 - b. We must learn to respond to life's challenges with praise to God. That is our focus in this lesson.
- B. The Bible instructs us to answer the difficulties that come our way by praising God. Consider several key points in James 1:2,3.
1. Temptations means trials. Fall means to come across, to fall into something that is all around: When ever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort (Amp); surrounded by (Weymouth).
 - a. In other words, trials are the kinds of difficulties that we run into in life. You were minding your own business, living your life and, without warning, found yourself in the midst of trouble.
 - b. When we encounter a trial we are to count it all joy. Count means to consider, reckon or deem. Joy comes from the Greek word CHAIRO (CHARA) which means to be cheerful or full of cheer.
 1. Cheer is a state of mind as opposed to a feeling. When you cheer someone you encourage them with the reasons they can have hope or an expectation of coming good.
 2. That's what you do when you praise the Lord or talk about who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do. You recount the reasons why you can be hopeful even in the face trials.
 3. Paul used this word in the context of the many trials he faced as he preached the gospel. He talked about being sorrowful yet rejoicing (II Cor 6:10) and rejoicing in hope (Rom 12:12).
 - c. To count it all joy means: Consider this an occasion to rejoice or to cheer yourself by talking about God's character and works. It's another way of saying: Respond to trouble with praise.
 2. The passage says: Count it all joy knowing that the trying of your faith works patience. Before we talk more about praising God we need to briefly deal with a common misinterpretation of this statement.
 - a. People wrongly interpret this verse to mean that God sends or allows trials in our lives to test our faith and make us patient. But trials don't come from God. They are part of life in a sin cursed, fallen world. (Whole lessons for another time.)
 1. Trials do test our faith in the sense that when trouble comes and it looks and feels like God has forgotten us or doesn't care, what we truly believe gets exposed. It's easy to believe the Word of God when all is well. Will you continue to believe despite when things aren't good.
 2. Trials don't create patience any more than exercise creates muscles. If trials made us patient everyone would be patient because we all have trials.
 - A. Patience is cheerful or hopeful endurance. The Greek word translated patience means to remain under. Worketh means to work fully, accomplish. v3--(trials) bring out

endurance and steadfastness and patience (Amp).

B. Trials give us an opportunity to exercise patience or our “staying power” and thereby strengthen our ability to remain faithful to God no matter what happens to us.

3. If you stay faithful to God (endure) you will see the deliverance of God. v4--Let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (NASB).

b. In the past few lessons we’ve talked a lot about the incident in II Chron 20 where Jehoshaphat and Judah defeated an overwhelming enemy force through praise to God. v15,17

1. God told them through His prophet: This battle is not yours; you need not fight. You can’t do it. I will do what you can’t do. Then He told them what they should do: Set, stand, see.

A. Set means to place so as to stay. Stand means to stand by, firm, fast. Both words convey the same idea as patience: Don’t be moved.

B. To see means to see with the eyes. If you will stand firm you will see God’s deliverance.

2. This is what James 1:2-4 says. Make the decision that you will not be moved away from what God says no matter what you see and feel — and you will see His deliverance, His salvation.

3. Count it all joy knowing this. There are many things we need to know to help us respond to life’s trials with praise, beginning with knowing what God is like and how He works.

a. The Old Testament is filled with accounts of real people who faced real problems -- impossible circumstances (something that you do not have the power and resources to deal with) and irreversible circumstances (life-altering events that can’t be undone).

b. Their stories were written to encourage us and give us reasons to hope. Rom 15:4--For all those words which were written long ago are meant to teach us today; so that we may be encouraged to endure and go on hoping in our time. (J.B. Phillips)

C. Let’s consider three examples. Don’t hear these as “Sunday School” stories. Hear them as what they are: historical accounts of real people we will one day meet in Heaven, people who got real help from God in impossible and irreversible situations. These accounts are meant to inspire hope in us and give us reason to rejoice and stand firm in the face of trouble.

1. David faced both impossible and irreversible situations that were turned around in the hands of God, with whom nothing is impossible and nothing is irreversible.

a. I Sam 17--The Philistine champion Goliath challenged the Israeli army: Instead of our entire armies fighting each other, send a man out to fight me. David volunteered to fight.

1. It was an impossible situation. Goliath was nine feet tall. His coat of mail weighed 125 lbs. His spear was tipped with a 15 lb iron spearhead. His shield was so large a man walked in front of him carrying it. Grown men, battle hardened soldiers, were afraid of him. v1-11

2. David was a teenager with no military training or experience. Goliath had been in the army since he was a boy (v33). David had never before worn military armor (v39).

b. David responded by praising God. He recounted God’s past help in impossible circumstances and proclaimed: God delivered me from a lion and a bear, He’ll deliver me from Goliath (v34-37).

1. v47--David knew the battle was the Lord’s. He knew God would do what he couldn’t do.

2. v51--The sword brought onto the field to kill David became the weapon he used to cut off Goliath’s head. Evil was turned to good in the hands of the God of the impossible.

c. II Sam 12--David had an affair with Bathsheba, another man’s wife. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son who became gravely ill. David sought God desperately, but the child died.

We need a quick note of explanation before we continue. This passage is not proof God may refuse to heal you or your loved one. This is a unique situation.

1. As the king of Israel David was responsible for leading the nation in godliness and charged with showing the True God to the nations around Israel. David failed miserably in his duties by his blatant disobedience of God’s Law. He brought reproach to Israel and the Lord. v14

2. God didn’t make the boy sick; He didn’t intervene when the boy became ill. It was connected

to David's disobedience through Nathan the prophet so all nations would know: I am God and I keep My Word. The wages of sin is death. If David died at that point the line through which Jesus will come would have been broken because Solomon has not yet been born.

d. In his grief, David acknowledged God. He "washed himself, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. Then he went to the Tabernacle and worshipped the Lord" (v20, NLT).

1. When questioned by his servants about his actions, David responded: I can't bring my son back, but I will go to him (v23). David knew he'd see the child again.

2. For those who know God loss of a loved one is a temporary, ultimately reversible situation. This knowledge doesn't take away the pain of the loss but it gives hope in the midst of it.

2. Joseph faced both impossible and irreversible situations that turned around in the hands of God with whom nothing is impossible and nothing is irreversible.

a. Joseph's brothers, jealous of him, intending to kill him, changed their minds and sold him into slavery. Joseph was overpowered and overwhelmed. This was an impossible situation. Gen 37-50

1. None of this was God's doing. It was simply life in a sin cursed earth. Men with sin natures motivated by envy made freewill choices that affected Joseph and his life in a negative way.

A. Why didn't God stop it all? One, God truly has given men free will. Two, it wouldn't have solved the problem. The brothers still had murder and envy in their hearts. Three, God saw a way to use their choice to produce maximum glory and maximum good.

B. Their choice was the start of a series of events that ultimately lead to Joseph being placed second in command in Egypt, saving multitudes of lives in during a famine (including his own family), being reunited with his father and brothers (now repentant), and multitudes hearing about Jehovah the true God. Maximum glory and maximum good resulted.

2. Joseph was able to proclaim to his brothers: You meant this for evil but God turned it for good. Gen 50:20 is the Rom 8:28 of the Old Testament.

b. God didn't abandon Joseph and even caused him to thrive in the midst of his ordeal. As we study his story we find that Joseph acknowledged God in a demonstrable way. Gen 39:2-4; 21-23.

1. To acknowledge God means to praise Him by talking about who he is, and what He has done, is doing and will do. Clearly Joseph praised God in the presence of Potiphar and the jailer.

2. Prosper (Gen 39:3,23) means to push forward. It is same word is used in II Chron 20:20 when Jehoshaphat instructed his people: Believe what God told us and we will prosper or succeed.

3. Praise is the voice of faith. God had promised Joseph greatness (Gen 37:5-11) and a home in the land of Canaan (Gen 28:13). Joseph knew God would keep His word to him.

c. Greatness was achieved in his lifetime, but Joseph never went back to Canaan. He died in Egypt. (irreversible). On his deathbed he made his family promise to take his bones with them when they returned to Canaan as God promised they would. Gen 50:24-26; Gen 15:14; Ex:13:19; Josh 24:33

1. Heb 11:13-16--Although these Old Testament saints saw God's power demonstrated in their lives, they had an awareness that they were passing through this life and the best was ahead for them. 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. Heb 11:22--[Actuated] by faith Joseph, when nearing the end of his life, referred to [the promise of God for] the departure of the Israelites concerning the burial of his own bones.

(Amp); Faith inspired Joseph when he was dying to tell of the future migration of the Israelites (Goodspeed).

3. Heb 13:15--The root word for praise means to tell the story, tale or narrative. Joseph died proclaiming God's Word: When my body is raised from the dead and I am reunited with it, I'll stand in Canaan again. God will reverse this temporarily irreversible circumstance.

3. Job faced both impossible and irreversible situations that turned around in the hands of God with whom nothing is impossible and nothing is irreversible.

a. We have many misconceptions about the Book of Job. (Whole lessons for another day). Consider

a few points. We read Job and ask: Why did it happen? But the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament, tells us to look at how Job's story ended. James 5:11; Job 42:10

1. Job wasn't written to explain suffering. It was written to give us hope. It is a mini-story of redemption. God set a captive free from the kinds of calamity that befall us in this world.
2. Job lost his health, wealth and all his children. Why? Because that's life in a sin cursed earth. Men with fallen natures stole from Job. Natural disasters (wind storm and lightning strike which are present in the earth because of Adam's sin) took his family. His body was subject to sickness because of Adam's sin. Rom 5:12,19; Gen 3:17-19; etc.

b. Job's circumstances were both impossible and irreversible. He had no power to heal himself or to recover his material wealth. He couldn't bring his children back. But God delivered him and restored to him twice what he lost. Job 42:12; Job 1:2,3

1. Job lost ten children, yet he only had ten more. How is that double? Because some restoration comes in this life and some in the life to come. Job had ten more children in addition to the ones in Heaven, temporarily gone from him, but not lost to him forever.

2. Job is the earliest book of the Bible. He didn't have all the light we have. He wrongly thought God was behind his troubles. But he had two things right:

- A. Job 19:25,26--He knew that there's life beyond this life. Even though his body would die and disintegrate in the ground he knew he will one day stand again on this earth in his body with his Redeemer. Job and his family are presently awaiting their return to earth with Jesus and for reunion with their physical bodies to live forever on this earth once it is made new.

- B. James 5:10,11--According to the New Testament, the take away from Job's story is the benefit of staying faithful to God no matter what you face. Job is commended for his patience or endurance. The result: Job ended up perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

D. Conclusion: We must learn to respond to life's trials with praise to God by acknowledging Him and proclaiming who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do. These Old Testament accounts were written to show us how this worked out for real people living in this fallen world.

1. Praise to God glorifies Him and strengthens you by building your trust and confidence in God.
 - a. When you see trouble and feel all the emotions engendered it, its easy to forget God's presence and help. But praising God helps you remember Him and His power.
 - b. Praising God magnifies Him or makes Him bigger in your eyes and makes the problem smaller giving you hope that there is a solution.
 - c. Praise helps keep your focus on God making it easier to set yourself and stand (endure, exercise patience) until you see with your eyes the salvation of God. Rom 12:12
2. More next week!