

GLORIFY GOD WITH PRAISE

- A. Introduction: We began this year by asking the question: What's the point? Why are we here? What are we, as Christians, supposed to be doing? We've covered a lot of ground and have more to go.
1. Let's start this part of our discussion with the fact that we have been created to know God (relationship with Him) and to show God (demonstrate His character and power to the world around us so others can come to know Him and show Him).
    - a. John 17:3--And this is eternal life: [it means] to know (to perceive, recognize, become acquainted with and understand) you, the only true and real God, and [likewise] to know Him, Jesus [as the] Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah, Whom You have sent. (Amp)
    - b. I Pet 2:9--But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, [God's] own purchased, special people, that you may set forth the wonderful deeds and display the virtues and perfections of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (Amp)
  2. One of the ways we show God is by living in a way that brings honor and praise to Him. We have been called to bring glory to God. That's part of our destiny.
    - a. Eph 1:12--So that we who first hoped in Christ—who first put our confidence in Him—[have been destined and appointed] to live for the praise of His glory. (Amp)
    - b. Eph 1:11,12--In him it was our lot to be called, singled out before hand to suit his purpose ...we were to manifest his glory, we who were the first to set our hope in Christ. (Knox)
  3. How do we bring honor, glory and praise to God? There are lots of good answers to this question. But we're going to focus on one specific answer.
    - a. John 15:8--Jesus said that the Father is glorified and honored when we bear fruit. We can demonstrate many kinds of fruit (lots of lessons for other days).
    - b. In this lesson we're going to begin to talk about glorifying God through the fruit of our lips.
- B. Heb 13:15--Through Him therefore let us constantly and at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name. (Amp)
1. The fruit of our lips is continual praise to God. We glorify the Lord when we continually praise Him. This is a struggle for us for several reasons, the primary one being: We don't know what it means to praise God.
    - a. We think of praising God as something we do because we feel good and all is well or because they're singing our favorite worship song in the service. By all means praise Him at these times.
    - b. But there is much more to praising God. To praise means to commend or express approval. When you praise someone you extol their virtues by talking about their character and actions.
      1. I taught high school history for many years and there were times when it was appropriate to praise a student or commend him for a character trait or an academic achievement. It had nothing to do with how I felt or what was going on in my life. It was the appropriate response.
      2. Praise is not an emotional response to God. It is the appropriate response to God. It's always appropriate to praise Him for who He is and what He does. Ps 107:8,15,21,31
  2. The Greek word translated praise in Heb 13:15 is AINEO. A form of this same word is used in Eph 1:12. The root word means to tell s story, tale or narrative.
    - a. We praise God by telling the story of His goodness, by talking about what He has done. We testify of His goodness and wonderful works. We testify or tell what we know.
    - b. Heb 13:15 says praise to God is continually giving thanks to His name (KJV). Giving thanks in the Greek is HOMOLOGEO (made up of two words, HOMO=same and LOGEO=word). It literally means to say the same things as, or to assent, to acknowledge. To acknowledge means to own or admit the truth or existence of; to take notice (Webster's Dictionary).
      1. The fruit of lips that make confession to his name (Berkeley); the tribute of lips which acknowledge his name (NEB).

2. God's names are a revelation of His character and work (example--Jesus means Savior). To acknowledge or confess God's name means to talk about who He is and what He does.
  3. Heb 13:15 refers to the sacrifice of praise. Sacrifice literally means the act of or thing sacrificed. But it can be used metaphorically of service, obedience, praise. Consider these thoughts.
    - a. This epistle was first written to Jewish believers who had been raised with the Temple system of sacrifices. Under the Law of Moses they would have offered a sacrifice known as a thank offering (Lev 7:12; 22:29). They would have heard the writer's words in that context.
      1. Thank offerings were made when things were going well to help you remember God. They were also made when troubles arose. The purpose of the offering was to help you stay focused on God's and presence with you and His willingness to help.
      2. The original recipients of Hebrews were facing increasing persecution and pressure to renounce Jesus as Messiah. The message they would have gotten was: Praise Him (talk about who He is and what He has done) to help you stay focused on His presence with you and His help directed toward you no matter what comes your way.
    - b. This can be a sacrifice in that it takes effort when don't feel like it and can't see any reason to do so. But it's always appropriate to praise and acknowledge God for who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do. You are bearing fruit and God is glorified.
  4. Ps 50:23--Whoso offers praise glorifies me (KJV); He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honors me (RSV); He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God (NIV).
    - a. Not only is God glorified when we praise Him (talk about who He is and what He has done), there is power in praise. Praise prepares the way, opens that door, to God's power in our situation.
      1. God works in our lives by His grace through our faith. Praise is the language of faith.
      2. When you acknowledge God by testifying or talking about who He is and what He does, you are in agreement with Him, saying what He says. Faith is agreement with God.
    - b. Ps 8:2--The Psalmist David wrote about a strength that can stop the enemy and still the avenger. This strength is such that babes and unweaned infants can express it.
      1. Matt 21:16--Jesus identified this strength as praise to God (praise is from the word AINEO). Note that when Jesus quoted David's psalm He changed the word strength to praise.
      2. Jesus made this statement in response to criticism from religious leaders about children crying out: Hosanna to the Son of David (v15). Hosanna means "Oh save Lord", it was an exclamation of adoration and praise. They were proclaiming who Jesus is (the Messiah, the Son of David) in response to what He had done (healed the blind and lame). v14
  5. Rom 15:4 says the things that are written in the Old Testament were written so that we may learn some things. In II Chron 20:1-30 we find a spectacular example of praise to God in action.
    - a. Three enemy armies (Ammonites, Edomites, and Moabites) banded together to attack Judah (the southern kingdom of Israel) and their King Jehoshaphat.
      1. The king called the people to fast and gather together to ask God's help. God spoke to them through His prophet: I will help you. I will fight for you. I will save you.
      2. Judah went to the battlefield and sent praisers out ahead of the army. The three enemy armies began to fight each other. Every enemy was killed and Judah took great spoil off the field.
    - b. Judah won the battle with praise to God. What's the "back story"? How did this unfold? We'll spend the rest of this lesson answering these questions.
- C. This incident is not merely a "Bible story". It is a historical record of a real event that happened to real people, many of whom we will meet in Heaven. We can get out maps and follow the route the invading armies took to attack Judah. We have archeological evidence of Jehoshaphat. This incident is recorded in part to teach us some important things about praising God. Consider these points.
1. People mistakenly think that praising God in the face of difficulty means denying that there's a problem, denying the fact that you are emotionally distressed. That's not what happened in this event.

- a. These people were very afraid (v3). Not only were they outnumbered, when we examine the terrain the invaders had to cross to get to Judah we can see that it took great effort for them to get to Judah. These armies REALLY wanted to attack Judah. The people knew that.
- b. They knew that they had no power against the invaders. v12--We are powerless against this mighty army that is about to attack us (NLT). They had no idea what to do (12).
2. None of this is a “bad confession”. Many wrongly think that the solution to problems is to simply not say the words. That idea is not found in the Bible.
  - a. In every situation there is “true” and “truth”. “True” is what you see, the actual circumstances you are facing. “Truth” is God’s Word. “True” is temporary and subject to change by the power of “Truth”. We don’t deny “true”. We recognize that it is temporary and subject to change by the power of God. John 17:17; II Cor 4:18
  - b. This isn’t a “technique” we try in an attempt to get relief in our situation. It has to do with your perception of reality, with knowing that there is more to the situation than what you see and feel in the moment.
3. Jehoshaphat knew: This is a potentially catastrophic situation and we’ve got to have God’s help. So Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah sought the Lord, came to Him for guidance. Note how he prayed.
  - a. v6--Jehoshaphat did not start out with the problem. He began with the bigness of God. No matter what we are facing there is nothing, no power greater than God. Jehoshaphat magnified God.
    1. To magnify something means to make it bigger in your eyes. When you magnify a bug on the sidewalk, the bug doesn’t get bigger. He is what he is. He simply looks bigger to you.
    2. God is big. We just can’t see or feel Him. But we can see and feel the problem so it seems much bigger and more powerful than God. That’s why we need to magnify God -- not to make Him bigger -- but to make Him bigger than the problem in our eyes.
    3. You magnify something by talking about it. Most of us start our conversations and prayers with how big the problem is and how bad we feel about it. So the problem and the feelings grow bigger in our eyes. Jehoshaphat was scared. But he talked about the bigness of God.
  - b. v7-9--Then Jehoshaphat recounted God’s past help and promise to help in the future: You drove out enemy armies when our ancestors entered this land. And you gave this land to us. He recalled how when Solomon’s Temple was dedicated it was declared that if God’s people were in trouble, and they sought Him, He would hear and help them.
  - c. v10-11--Finally, after magnifying God, Jehoshaphat stated the problem: These people whom we have in no way wronged have come to attack us. We can’t stop them. So we are looking to you.
4. v15-17--God spoke to them through His prophet Jahaziel: Don’t be afraid or discouraged (hopeless) by this mighty army. This doesn’t mean they didn’t feel fear. The account says they were afraid.
  - a. The point is: Don’t get your picture of reality from what you see or feel. There is more to the situation, more to reality than what you see or feel. There are more facts involved. It’s like this: You see someone get hurt. You feel all the emotions generated by what you see, but you call 911. Although you are still emotionally stirred up, there is a sense of relief because help is on the way.
  - b. The Lord will be with you. v17--See the deliverance of the Lord [Who is] with you (Amp). This phrase is literally Jehovah Shammah. We mentioned earlier in the lesson that God’s names are a revelation of His character: I am the Lord who is with you.
    1. By this point in their history these people already had the history and the psalms of their ancestor David. The historical record contained numerous examples of God delivering David from his enemies in impossible circumstances.
    2. David wrote these words: Ps 42:5--Wait patiently upon God, for I shall yet give Him thanks; My present Salvation, and my God (Spurrell). The Hebrew literally says: His presence is salvation. If God is with you (and He is) you have the help you need.
  - c. God’s names are meant to inspire faith and confidence in us. Ps 9:10--Those who know what thou art can trust in thee (Moffatt); And they who know Your name [who have experience and

acquaintance with Your mercy] (Amp); Those who acknowledge your name can rely on you (Jerusalem).

5. Jehoshaphat sent the praisers out ahead of the army as they went up to the battlefield. v21--They went out before the army, saying, give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy and loving-kindness endure for ever! (Amp)

a. What would have been in their mind, what would they have been conscious of as they did this? Everything that had been stated in Jehoshaphat's prayer as well as God's promise Jahaziel to fight for them.

b. They fought and won their battle with praise to God. That's the way the writer of Chronicles was inspired by the Holy Spirit to assess their victory. v27--For the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

c. Not only did Judah win a victory, God was glorified, God was magnified by what happened. v29

1. The fear of God came on all the surrounding nations round about. They recognized that Judah's God was big and powerful.

2. God's primary goal in the Old Testament was to reveal Himself as the Only, All-Powerful God to a world of idol worshippers in the hope of bringing men to saving knowledge of Him. Through this victory many heathens got a greater revelation of the True God.

D. Conclusion: We have much more to say about all of this. But consider some thoughts as we close.

1. We agree with the main points in this lesson when we're talking about what the other guy should be doing in the midst of his problem. And we agree with it when we feel good and things are going well.

a. The challenge is when **I** am facing a huge problem and feeling all the accompanying emotions. It's much more natural to talk about what's wrong, how it's going from bad to worse, and I don't know how I'll get through. So that's what we do -- with a "Help me please, Lord" at the end.

b. But according to this account in Chronicles we can face our situation with praise to God -- by talking about who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do.

1. This account (which was written in part to teach us by example) illustrates the power of magnifying and praising God.

2. This situation is not bigger than God. Although it's an impossible situation from my vantage point, it's not to God. He sees a solution. He has helped me in the past. He'll help me now.

2. This became real to Judah (as opposed to a technique they were trying) as they magnified God. They fought their battle with praise. Praise stopped the enemy and stilled the avenger. Praise prepared the way for God to show them His salvation. Through praise, God was glorified. Let's heed their example. More next week.