

# THE POWER OF PRAISE IN THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN

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It is easy to praise God when the sun is shining, our children are making good grades in school, and we have received a promotion at work. But when the storm clouds gather, the grades start to slip, and the pink slips are read, the last thing we feel like doing is praising God. Yet, this is the very time when we need to lift our voices to Him in praise. When we praise God, we proclaim our faith in Him. The psalmist writes, *"As for me, I will always have hope. I will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure"* (**Psalm 71:14-15**).

## **Praise is a part of us.**

The roar of the crowd when their team wins the Big Game. The cheers at the dining room table as you take the Scrabble championship. Could you still remember Atlanta 1996, when the Dream Team won the Olympics, the streets were filled with people singing the team's praises. There was unity among Nigerians because of their victory. Consider a mom and dad cheering wildly as their son takes his bow as a star in the Kindergarten play. The tears and exuberant "YES" as he asks her to be his wife.

Praise is inherent in each and every one of us. It is something we were created to do.

## **Life is Full of Praise.**

Parents praise their kids. Grandparents praise them more. Teachers praise their students. Coaches praise their teams. Praise is something we were born with deep in our spirit-man. It is an integral part of life. We praise what we value. We praise what we support. We praise what we love.

## **But what about our praises to God?**

Most would agree that He is what we love and value the most. So why is it so difficult for so many of us to praise Him? In *Reflections on the Psalms*, C.S. Lewis writes that praise is "inner health made audible". Isn't that beautiful?

## **PRAISE IS INNER HEALTH MADE AUDIBLE**

For those with a healthy spiritual life, praise is natural. It easily flows from the heart of one who has a relationship with God. For others, "religious training", lack of understanding, fear of embarrassment, and pride inhibit the spirit-man from thriving in health - causing praise to be silenced.

Praise affects you, it affects the devil, and it affects God. It touches everything and every part of your life. Likewise, a lack of praise affects you in a negative way, turns the devil loose in your life, and doesn't bless God. *You have to get this area of your life right.*

## SOME TRUTHS ABOUT THE POWER OF PRAISE

In this lesson, let's look at some truths about the power of praise. Of course, there are many more! Books could be and have been written about the power of our praise. But for the sake of this lesson, let's focus on some truths that will encourage you as your inner health become audible.

### 1. PRAISE GIVES US ACCESS TO GOD

**Psalm 100:4** says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise". This verse refers to Moses' Tabernacle in the wilderness. The Tabernacle was divided into three parts. The Outer Court, The Inner Court, and The Holy of Holies where God dwelled. There was only one gate - one entrance - into The Outer Court. If you wanted to approach God, you had to go through the gate, into the courtyard, and finally into The Holy of Holies.

*(In the days of Moses, only the High Priest could enter into The Holy of Holies. It was not accessible to everyone. However, when our Great High Priest died (**Hebrews 4:14-16**), the veil to The Holy of Holies was torn allowing US access to God. Hallelujah!)*

The gate you come through to approach God is thanksgiving and the court you enter is praise. **Psalm 100:4** should be so much more meaningful in light of its historical context. **Praise and worship is not the opening act to the teacher's message! Praise softens the soil of your heart so the seeds of the message can be planted.** To have direct access to God, it is essential to come through praise.

#### ***Make It Personal.***

How can you incorporate praise into your everyday life giving you access to God? You can turn on praise music while you clean the house, while you are in the car, while you are cooking in the kitchen, while you are sitting by the pool.

You can praise Him before your prayer or Bible Study time. You can sing to Him before you pray. You can praise Him before you open your Bible. You can turn on praise music as you are driving to church. Till up the soil of your heart with praise, and then allow God to plant His words into fresh soil.

### 2. PRAISE CHANGES YOU.

Praise can change you if you allow it to. **Praise changes relationships. It changes hearts. It changes mindsets. In praise, our focus shifts from us to the Lord. From problems to The Solution. From pain to promise. From hurt to hope.** **Proverbs 27:21** says, "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." Judson Cornwall says it this way in *Let Us Praise*. "So often, when we have heated our Spirits in worship . . . thoughts,

*desires, and attitudes rise to the surface.*” As we are broken and heated in the presence of the Lord, those negative attitudes rise to the surface of our hearts. We are then able to bring them to Jesus to be forgiven and cleansed.

**In the fires of praise, God reaches out and melts down our jagged edges until we become smooth and pliable in His hands. Only then can we be molded into His image. We become so smooth and clear that when others look at us - when we look at ourselves, we see a mirror reflecting the image of Jesus.**

### ***Make It Personal.***

Do you feel like you are always being heated? Your jagged edges are constantly being worked on? Every worship service turns into tears at the altar?

That is okay. Be patient. God is working to purify you into His image. Let Him do His work. Let go of everything you are holding onto that doesn't look like Him. Remember, you are growing, you are changing, you are being moulded! Keep praising until the work is done!

### **3. PRAISE IS A RELATIONSHIP. IT IS NOT A RITUAL.**

***Psalm 81:10*** says, *“I am the Lord, YOUR God . . .”* Isn't it wonderful to know that He is ours and we are His? Praise brings us into a closer relationship with Jesus. I love ***Exodus 25:8***. God tells Moses to build a sanctuary that “I may dwell among them”. He didn't want a cathedral shining with jewels to show His awesomeness. He didn't ask for massive monuments or statues made of gold.

God asked for a simple tent. It wasn't about the structure. It was about the relationship. He wanted a tabernacle just so He could be with us. That brings such tears to my eyes. The God of all of the earth could be anywhere, could have anything, could do anything, and yet He chooses to be with us.

God doesn't want anything to dwell in this building but us. He wants relationship with us. That relationship comes through praise. The problem comes in when ritual takes the place of pure praise. A.W. Tozer said, *“Worship is no longer worship when it reflects the culture around us more than the Christ within us.”* In 1962, Tozer grieved, *“It is scarcely possible in most places to get anyone to attend a meeting where the only attraction was God.”* Oh Lord, forgive us.

How true are Tozer's words fifty-five years later. On one hand, you have modern *“praise and worship”* movements that at a quick glance looks more like a rock concert than a worship service. We *“praise”* the singers of the songs more than The One we are singing about.

When churches alter their worship services to *“fit in”* with the culture of the day, it ceases to become worship. When our praise becomes ritualistic in how it is displayed, it becomes less and less about relationship with The Father.

On the absolute other hand, you have *“religion”* which has dictated why, where, and how we should worship including a list of do's and don'ts. Most congregations strictly abide by a

“three fast songs, two slow songs” pattern that leaves no room for God to move. There is no relationship, just man-made religion.

Can God move in the rituals of our worship? Of course, He can do whatever He wants to do. He is God. I am not arguing how you should praise. I am stating that if your cultural rituals replace relationship, it no longer becomes praise. True praise doesn't come from modern culture or a rigid religious system. True praise comes from relationship with Jesus.

**He inhabits the praises of His people. (Psalm 22:3). He dwells in, lives in, and abides in our praise. Brethren, He just wants a relationship with us.**

### ***Make It Personal.***

Any relationship needs communication. Our relationship with Christ needs communication. Talk to Him. Don't utter a laundry list of “*I need and I want*”. Instead, like you would to your spouse, children, or best friend . . . tell Him through your praise how wonderful He is. Tell Him that you thank Him for saving you. Tell the Lord that He is worthy. Then, give Him a chance to talk back to you!

### **4. PRAISE DEFEATS THE ENEMY.**

The first mention of praise in the Bible is at the birth of Jacob's son, Judah, in **Genesis 29:35**. Judah means praise. No matter where you see the name Judah in the Bible, it always means praise.

**Revelation 5:5** tells us that our Lord Jesus, The Lion of the Tribe of Praise (Judah) has overcome! So many of us walk around in fear of the enemy. Whether it is “the devil” you fear, your own thoughts, or your next-door neighbour, we often walk around fearing our enemy and what he/she could do to us.

Non-praisers often worry about their enemy who walks around AS a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (**1 Peter 5:8**). As I mentioned in THIS article, the enemy walks AS a roaring lion. He is an imposter. He has no power. Praisers know that their Lion of the Tribe of Judah is the real thing and He has already overcome every single enemy that may come in their path.

In **2 Chronicles 20:21**, King Jehoshaphat “*appointed singers unto the Lord, that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever.*” The choir and the orchestra went ahead of the warriors! It worked. The enemies were defeated and Judah never even had to take out their swords!

How many battles do we needlessly fight; drawing our swords of worry, our shields of fear, and our words of war? What would happen if we simply trusted that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has already won the battle?

**What would happen in our lives if we put away our warring words, and lifted our voices in praise?**

Judson Cornwall said, “Saints who would learn to do battle for the Lord should first learn how to praise, for God sends praise as the shock troops to drive the enemy back before the rest of the army is allowed to join the battle.”

***Make It Personal.***

Brethren, what are you battling today? Fear? An unsaved spouse? A co-worker? Your kids? Your weight? Your self-defeating thoughts? Try this, instead of battling in your own power, put on an amazing praise song and start singing! Sing over your situation. Sing over your spouse, your kids, your fear, and your thoughts! Rejoice over your life, and lift up an encouraging praise.

**PRAISE DEFEATS THE ENEMY.**

**5. It paves the way for God's power to be displayed, miracles happen.** People's lives are affected and changed. God shakes things up through praise. As Paul and Silas sat in prison, shackled, and chained, they kept right on praising God. And God sent an earthquake that shook the cells and broke the chains. The jailer and all his family came to know Christ that very night.

*“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.” Acts 16:25-26*

We have a choice every day in this life. To live absorbed in worry and stress, on the fast track of busy, focused only on what surrounds us, tuned into the roar of the world. Or, we can ask God to help us take our eyes off all that may be swirling around, our problems and mess, or the voices of others. And we can look up...to Him, the One who holds it all together, and who holds us in his hands. God desires our whole heart. He waits for us to return. He longs for us to know the power of His presence over our lives. He desires to bless us more than we could imagine. His Spirit urges us onward, calling us closer.

**Closing Thoughts**

How is your praise life? We start with a step, with a song in your heart and a song in your lip for our God is mighty, He is mighty to save.

May He help us to look up...open our mouths...and sing.