
The Effects of Praise

“Sharper Than a Two-Edged Sword”

You can check a person's spiritual pulse by examining how thankful they are. The amount of time you spend praising God is the greatest single indicator of where you are in your relationship with the Lord. Anyone who isn't praising God and operating in thanksgiving—regardless of what is going on in their life—doesn't really understand what God has done for them. Most people are content to praise God when things are going well, but their praise stops when the stress of life starts pressing in. Yet times of conflict are when we should be praising God the most.

Praise builds your faith, runs off the devil, and ministers to God.

Praise shouldn't be the caboose that follows along the circumstances in your life. It should be the engine driving your life. Praise will take you places. It will change your circumstances. Scripture says:

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7

Notice that we abound in faith through thanksgiving. Praise is a high form of faith. During difficult trials, abounding in faith includes praising God as you wait for the manifestation of His power to bring you through. Praise causes faith to thrive, and numerous scriptures say we should give thanks in every situation. For instance:

I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. Psalm 34:1

This verse doesn't say praise God when you feel like it, or when things are going great. It says to praise at all times. The Word tells us to praise God because it makes us focus on what God says rather than on our problems. If the doctor tells you that you are terminally ill, remember that the Word says to give thanks in all circumstances. Start praising God, and it will redirect your attention to God's will for you and build your faith to receive a miracle.

Your life is going in the direction of your dominant thoughts (Proverbs 23:7). Whatever you think about and focus your attention on determines the course of your life. Thoughts that focus on the circumstances around you only lead to discouragement. Focusing on your circumstances is only going to hinder faith. Praise, on the other hand, will establish you in faith. It will draw on God's power and allow you to receive the provision that Jesus purchased for you on the cross.

Praising God doesn't mean you say, "Thank You, Father, that I've only got six months to live. Praise You that I'm going to die." It means you look beyond your problem to the promises in God's Word and say, "Thank You, Father, that even though the doctor says I'm sick, Your Word says 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD' (Ps. 118:17). Your Word says that You wish above all things that I prosper and be in health even as my soul prospers (3 John 2). By Your stripes I was healed (1 Peter 2:24)." As you praise God and focus on His Word, it will turn your attention to the promise instead of the problem. Focusing on the Word builds your faith because faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17).

Faith is the assurance of what you are hoping for, and the conviction that it has happened—even if you can't feel it or see it (Hebrews 11:1). Think about that for a moment. How would you respond if you were believing God for one million dollars, and I walked up to you and handed you a check for that amount? If you knew my check was

good, and believed it was the answer to your prayer, you would celebrate. One person might jump and shout. Someone else might begin to cry. Another would fall to their knees and lift their hands to Jesus. It would differ from person to person, but there would be some response of praise. In the same way, faith isn't complete until it is mixed with praise.

If you aren't praising God—even before you see the physical manifestation of what you are believing for—then your faith isn't complete. You haven't yet abounded in faith. I really can't overemphasize how important praise is to faith.

I've had bad circumstances pop up in my life, and I have praised my way through them. During difficult times, I focus on God and think, What's the worst thing that could happen? The worst thing would be that I die—but if I die, I get to go be with the Lord. I start thinking about how, in heaven, there is no more sorrow and no more pain. I won't have any problems in heaven. As you think about the promises of God, it shrinks the problem you're facing down to a manageable size. It takes huge issues that look like mountains, and reduces them into tiny little anthills you can step right over. Suddenly, you'll realize the problem you are facing is no big deal.

Praise powerfully affects the believer, but it is also a weapon against the devil. When Jesus entered into Jerusalem upon a donkey in the days before He was crucified, people lined the way and laid palm branches on the path before Him, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David." The crowds followed Jesus all the way to the Temple and continued to praise Him. When the chief priests and the scribes heard the things that were being said, they asked Him, "Do you hear what they are saying?" Jesus answered them,

"Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?'" Mat 21:16

He was quoting from an Old Testament passage, which says, "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger." Psalm 8:2

These two scriptures together show us that praise is strength to still the enemy and the avenger. The reason for this has to do with why Satan transgressed against God in the first place. Isaiah the prophet tells us that Satan was envious of God because he wanted for himself the praise that God was receiving (Isaiah 14:13-14). Pride made Satan want to be like God.

I believe the reason that praise affects the devil so powerfully is because when we praise God, it rubs the devil's nose in what he has always wanted but will never get. It's like taunting the devil, and it infuriates him.

We've all known self-centered people who think that life revolves around them. They need all the attention, and if they aren't the center of the conversation, it upsets them. It's an attitude that comes from the devil. Satan is the most egocentric personality in the universe. He is jealous of God, and when you start giving God praise, it drives the devil crazy. He can't stand to hear God praised. It makes him mad, and he flees.

Praising God puts to flight all of the hurts, pains, and demonic oppression with which Satan has tried to bind you. It opens up your heart and prepares you to receive from God.

One of the classic examples of this is when Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison in Philippi. After whipping them, the jailer threw them in the inner dungeon and put their feet in stocks. At midnight, Paul and Silas began to pray and sing praises unto God (Acts 16:25). Suddenly, there was a great earthquake and all of the prisoners' doors opened and their chains dropped off.

When the miracle came, Paul and Silas didn't quit praising God and they didn't run out of the prison. The jailer assumed everyone had escaped and was about to take his own life, but Paul called out for him to stop because all of the prisoners were still there. The greatest miracle here is that none of the other criminals fled. They were so affected by the praise and the power of God that they would rather stay in prison where the anointing of God was, than take advantage of the situation to flee.

This shows that Paul and Silas didn't praise God just to get out of their chains. They praised God because they were in love with Him. Their love for God drove them to praise Him—even though their backs were bleeding and they had been thrown in prison unjustly.

God inhabits the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3), and when you start praising God, it draws the power and the anointing of the Lord into manifestation. Praise is powerful, and it releases the anointing of God.

**Praise will break your chains, it will drive the devil off and get you out of bad situations.
Still, praise has another, more important benefit: it blesses God. It's a way for us to give back to Him.**

God is the Almighty, but that doesn't mean we can't do something that ministers to Him. Jesus had needs while He was on earth, and many people ministered to Him by doing things such as cooking and caring for Him. God is love (1 John 4:8), and love likes to be reciprocated. God loved us so much that He gave His only Son to die for us, to bring us back into proper relationship with Him (John 3:16). Our praise is a thanksgiving that lets God know how much we appreciate what He has done for us. It reciprocates the love that He first loved us with, and it ministers to Him.

Many Old Testament scriptures exhorted Israel to "bless the Lord." This has become a religious cliché today. Now, people say "Bless the Lord" all the time, but the words themselves are not necessarily a blessing to God. Blessing the Lord is saying, "Father, I love You. Thank You that You are a good God. Thank You for moving in my life." Thanking God is what blesses Him.

God has emotions. He isn't bound by His emotions the way that people are, but He has them. It ministers to God when you give Him praise. God gave everything for us. The least we can do is be thankful. In our own lives, we like to be thanked when we go out of our way to do something for somebody else. It's nice when someone acknowledges what we've done and says, "Thank you." Praise is simply a way of thanking God for all that He has done.

On one occasion, as Jesus was traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem, ten lepers called out to Him to have mercy on them (Luke 17:12-19). Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priest (the priest had to examine anyone who had been cured of leprosy to determine if they were clean). As they went on their way, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned to Jesus and cried out in a loud voice giving thanks to God. Jesus replied:

"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." Luke 17:17-19

Leprosy is a disease that rots the skin and eventually causes digits and appendages to fall off. The Scripture says that ten were cleansed, but only the one who returned to thank God was made whole. I believe this is saying that the leprosy was stopped for all of them, but only one person was restored. Meaning, any part of his body that had fallen off was brought back. Restoration occurred because he came back to bless the Lord.

I remember taking my sons horseback riding one day when they were about six and four years old. It was a great day. We played in the creek, got dirty, ate junk food, and rode horses all day. At the end of the day, we got cleaned up and I put them to bed. As I was leaving my son Peter's room and turning out the light, he said, "Dad, you're a good dad!" Those words blessed me. It made me want to get him up out of bed and go do it all over again, just so I could hear him say it once more. Since that night, I've said to the Lord, "God, you're a good God," thousands of times.

I guarantee you that it blesses God when His children thank Him for how good He is. You were created for God's pleasure (Revelation 4:11), and blessing God makes Him want to bless you even more. In addition to building your faith to receive from the Lord and putting the devil to flight, praise ministers to God. It's a way for you to thank Him for what He has done in your life, and it will open up your heart to receive even more from Him.

Andrew Wommack