

Biblical Principles Of Praise

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FOREWORD

The increased emphasis on praise and praise services has led to much confusion as to what praise is and how it should be offered. Not to mention the all important issue as to who is to be the object of our praise in a pluralistic and increasingly heathen society. With an almost "*anything goes*" approach to worship and praise, even amongst Christians, it is good to have our attention turned to what the Bible has to say about this pressing matter. So many are more concerned about their personal feelings and the personal pleasure they can derive when they come to praise Almighty God that we must cut through the emotion and hype again to discern our God's requirements as we draw near to Him. One is concerned about the lack of discernment in many areas of Christian living but I suggest that this lack is most clearly seen in this particular area.

Peter Gadsden has sought to bring Biblical guidance in this important area of Christian life and worship by setting out again the principles that should govern our thinking and activity as we "*Praise God from whom all blessings flow*". We all do well to return to first principles and take heed to what is written here. Reading this booklet will challenge you but do not pass it by. Too many do that when their hearts and consciences are pricked by the teaching of God's Word. It will be better to sit down and ponder over what is before you. It has been well said that we should not "*fall out with the Word but fall under it*" If these short studies should stir us up to reconsider the matter of praise with a view to reforming it and bringing their own worship more into line with God's will, it will not have been produced in vain.

Pastor Howard R Sayers
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INTRODUCTION

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT PRAISE

"I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised." (2 Samuel 22:4)

Praise, we hear a lot these days about *Praise Services, Praise Meetings and Celebrations*. Many of these meetings are often of a questionable nature, leading to excess and spiritual abuse which are far from glorifying to God. The question is, what does the Bible teach about this important yet often neglected subject?

What is Praise? What is the purpose of praise? Why should we offer praise to God. These are important questions, so what does the Bible teach about praise. This little booklet, a compilation of articles that first appeared in *Our Inheritance* magazine seeks to bring some understanding on this important subject.

THE

PERFECTION OF PRAISE

Praise, as has been implied in the introduction, is a much abused and misunderstood word and activity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines praise as being the expression of “*Warm approval, to glorify God in words.*” The origin of the English word is to be found in Latin “*Premium*” which simply means price or something of value. Praise then is the warm approval of something, or in this case of someone, who is of great value. We can further say that praise is the placing of value on someone. It also means “*To Express approval and commendation, of gratitude and devotion, it means to applaud, to extol and glorify.*” We can therefore summarise praise as “*extolling and glorifying that which is of value.*” or put another way, praise to God, is the acknowledging with gratitude and devotion, His perfection, works and blessings. It is heartfelt adoration for Him who is of greatest value to heart, soul, mind and spirit.

GOD ALONE WORTHY OF PRAISE

The Bible is punctuated by outbursts of praise, rising spontaneously from the blessings and joy, that mark the lives of God’s people. God the Triune God, alone is worthy to be praised and is of the highest value, He is of the greatest price, therefore the praise offered should be worthy of Him. David, in 2

Samuel 22 is full of praise for God. This Psalm, for that is what it is, can be found again in the book of Psalms in almost the exact wording as Psalm eighteen. It is a Psalm composed, sung and used by David in the early days of his reign.

After many trials, David was seated on the throne of Israel. He was finally triumphant over Saul. The victories over the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites were still fresh in his mind, and he gives God all the praise. He takes none of the glory to himself. He does not see these victories as the result of the bravery and skill of his armed forces, but gives all credit, gratitude and devotion to God, for he knows that God alone is worthy.

This was not orchestrated praise or a worked up emotion, but an appreciation of God and what God had done, that welled up from the very soul of the King. The result was this outpouring, this mighty torrent of praise, words that acclaim God. God is worthy of our praise because of who He is, because of His glorious nature, because of His infinite majesty, because of His eternal glory. He is the God of heaven and earth. He is the Lord of the universe. He is the Almighty Father. There is none like Him. He alone is worthy.

Look at the many blessings that we have, all of which have come from the Father of Lights. Meditate on His gracious love for you. Think long on His wonderful care. Consider His mercy to you. Ponder long on the grace that saved you and linger long at the place of sacrifice seeing there the passion that He had for you. Peer deep into the empty tomb

and note the wonder of your justification. Do not these things fill your soul with joy unspeakable full of glory? These are all of God and all for us. These are wonderful gifts of Grace. We do not deserve them, but He has given them. As you contemplate them, is there not within a deep feeling of adoration, of gratitude, thankfulness to God? Is it not true that *“the Lord is worthy to be praised?”* As the saints of the Lord we should magnify and exalt His name before all the earth.

The perfection of praise is that which is given to God and God alone.

THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.” (Psalm.50:23.)

Two things need to be noticed, the first is that praise is sacrificial. The word translated *offereth* is a word that means sacrifice. The application being of bringing or presenting a sacrifice of praise, it is therefore the sacrifice of praise that glorifies God. Praise is not a mere external form of words. Neither is it a mere external form of homage.

Praise proceeds from the heart and soul of a person. We do not engage in praise or worship that we might feel good, or to have an emotional high. True praise emanates from the very heart of the person, as a result of true thankfulness, adoration and love for God. Praise gives, and expands to God honour and glory. It empties one of self and elevates everything to God. True praise costs, for it acknowledges that all is from God, all blessings are from Him, and that He

alone and no other person is worthy of it. True praise lays man aside. All man made ideas, hopes and aspirations, are laid on the altar of sacrifice and all is given to God. It asks nothing in return. True praise acknowledges our nothingness and God's almighty and glory, true praise seeks only God's glory. True praise calls for our all, for our best. Praise is a sacrifice because it is a sacred thing, something that is holy, pleasing and acceptable to God.

The second thing we need to consider is that praise glorifies God, look at that verse in Psalm 50: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me," v23. True praise, sacrificial praise, glorifies God. Not that His glory can be increased, for His intrinsic glory remains unchangeable, it can never be added to or subtracted from. The Christian does however set forth the glory of God for human beings to see, when He is praised in the correct manner. The praise of God's people sets in motion the great glory of God for others to see. Therefore by definition all praise that is offered to God, is to be glorying to God and glorifying of God. It is in the words of Jesus to be in *Spirit and Truth*. It is not to be artificial, not to be vain, but that praise that furthers or enhances the glory of God in the world.

The Perfection of Praise is that which is both sacrificial and Glorifies God.

THE MEDIATOR OF PRAISE

In Hebrews 13:15 we read these words "by him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks

lips, may God purify them so that they may be fit instruments for His praises, so that prompted by His Spirit we can say "*so will we render the calves of our lips*" (Hosea 14:2), that is the strength of our lips.

Let all that has breathe praise the Lord.

Amen and Amen

We have in Jesus a greater cause for rejoicing than we had back in 1945. We have today more cause to make a “*joyful noise*” unto the Lord, because He has gained victory for us over both sin and death. Through Him we have peace with God, and are reconciled to the Father. In Him we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God, and become joint heirs with Him to the riches in glory. Yes the soul that is redeemed is an heir with Christ!

Surely this calls for great rejoicing; it calls for the singing of His praises. It not only calls for the ringing of church bells but for the blowing of the trumpet, the striking of the great cymbals, and the playing of the harp, it calls for the sound of the mighty organ. “*Oh clap your hands all ye people ... Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.*” rejoice and sing His praises.

PRAISE CALLS FOR INSTRUMENTATION

“*My lips shall praise thee*” (Psalm 63:3). Our lips are to be the instruments of God's praises. So often the lips are polluted, using the phrases and terminology of the world, often torn with words of bitterness, words of cursing, and sometimes words even of blasphemy, frequently by words of falsehood. We have to cry in the words of Isaiah, “*woe is me ... a man of unclean lips.*” Yet these same lips are to be the instruments of God's praises. Therefore they need purging, so that acceptable words may issue forth, making unto our God a sacrifice of praise.

Dear readers, may God set a guard to the door of our

to his name.” Notice again in the verse the quality of praise in that it is sacrificial. In old times the Jews approached God, by the blood of sacrifice, through the mediation of the High Priest.

We approach God today through the mediation of the Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by Him and through Him, and by none other that we drawn near to God. Praise is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ, without Him we can make no advance to God. We cannot make a step without Him. He is the altar that sanctifies both the Gift and the Giver. The Perfection of Praise is when praise is made in and through our Great Priest.

THE DURATION OF THIS PRAISE

Still in Hebrews 13:15 we are told we are to offer the sacrifice of praise “*continually.*” Here is something that we all need to take notice of. We are not to offer praise to God when we feel like doing so. When we think it is convenient for us to do so. When we seem to have time to put our minds to it, or when we may be in happy frame of mind, when all is going well. We are not to offer praise just at special praise services, or when we are on a spiritual-emotional high, but *continually*. To Praise God continually, means we need to cultivate a perpetual gratitude, surely not a difficult thing to do?

The Perfection of Praise may be said to be when we praise God continually. The Lord has done so much for us that to praise Him continually should be as natural as breathing, which brings us to our

fifth thought.

PRAISE IS A FRUIT

True God glorifying praise cannot be forced, it cannot be manufactured by human means, true praise is a fruit, the fruit of our lips, the fruit of grateful hearts. In Hebrews 13:15 we read "*The fruit of our lips.*" Heart worship and adoration are to be manifested with our lips. One of the meanings giving to the original word is, without ever a word of praise or thanksgiving passing their lips. Pliny, in his *Natural History*, reported that a certain people in India called Aotomy, had no mouths, but fed on the smell of herbs and flowers. Many are the Christians who enjoy the blessings of God, but seem to have no mouths to Thank Him.

Have we thanked Him? Are our lips full of His Praise? The Perfection of Praise is seen in the Praise and Thanksgiving of our lips.

A Lady on hearing that a Gypsy lad lay close to death, in a nearby tent, was eager to visit him. In her endeavours to do so she met with much verbal abuse from the family and friends of the boy. After prayer and a great deal of persuasion the father allowed her to enter the tent. She found the boy lying on a heap of damp straw, in great pain, and close to death. She spoke to him about Jesus. She told how He loved sinners and suffered and died shedding His blood for them. She related the death of Calvary and spoke of the glorious resurrection. As she spoke she was surprised to see that little body begin to shake with deep sobs, She asked him why he wept so, he gasped. "*Oh, miss, and I've never thanked Him.*"

at the Cross and by grace been to that place and been washed from our sins by that precious blood; having had placed upon us that new and perfect robe of His righteousness, and having been granted, in Him, access unto the Father, let us boldly enter into His courts with Praise. There we can praise Him who is just, and yet the Justifier of all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAISE IS TO BE CARRIED OUT WITH JOY AND GLADNESS

The Programme of Praise requires that our praises be mingled with Joy. "*Make a joyful noise unto the LORD all the earth, make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise,*" (Psalm 98:4). The gospel of the Evangel is one of good news and of glad tidings to all men. It is the joyful message of liberation, emancipation and of peace with God through the Blood of the Lamb, and through the grace of the Almighty Father.

I remember on V.E. day in 1945, after Europe had been liberated from the tyranny of Hitler and his Nazi regime, the great rejoicing in England. Church Bells rang, people shouted and there was great joy at the good news that there was peace in Europe after more than five years of war and bloodshed. It was infectious, there were great street parties. It was a time of intense joy. No longer were bombers coming over and dropping their terrifying loads. No longer was there the scream of fighters and the rattle of machine gun overhead. The air raid sirens ceased their plaintive wailing and the anti-aircraft guns ceased firing. Tanks, troop carriers and the paraphernalia of modern war stopped rattling through the streets. Great joy swept the nation.

“upright”, it is a heart that is unjustified and therefore in spiritual terms unrighteous. It is a heart that has no real feelings of affection towards God and therefore no real gratitude towards or for God. It may be true that there is some primitive form of gratitude for the basic things of nature and the providential supply of our needs. This is often seen at harvest time, when people who have not set foot in a church building for twelve months or more, will be seen at special Harvest Thanksgiving services. They will sing with great enthusiasm harvest hymns of praise and worship, yet for the other three hundred and sixty four days of the year they live in the ways of the ungodly, having few if any thoughts of God.

Fourthly, a heart that is not upright has no praise to bring. Such a heart is like the heart of Cain, a man who simply went through the motions, doing in his eyes what he thought was right, but the sacrifice is unacceptable. There is no altar upon which it may be laid with acceptance to God. The only acceptable altar of praise is the Lord Jesus Himself.

Only a heart made right with God, through His Son, can bring praise that is acceptable to Him, as the old hymn puts it:

“Oh for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free;
A heart that always feels the blood
So freely shed for me.”

Dear reader, having learned God’s righteous judgement

Friends have you thanked Him?

THE PEOPLE OF PRAISE

“I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.” (2 Samuel 22:4)

If ever there was a Psalm that exhorted the Lord’s people to praise Him, it has to be Psalm 150, *“Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord”*. The only reason Christians can have for not praising the Lord is that *“they have no breath.”* In our first consideration of this subject we looked at the *Perfection of Praise*. This study will consider the *People of Praise*. The question is who should praise the Lord?

THE SERAPHIM AND ANGELS PRAISE GOD

In Psalm 148:2 we read *“praise ye him all his angels, praise ye him all his hosts.”* Yes; the angels are called upon to praise the Lord, they are instruments of praise before His everlasting throne. It is interesting to learn from the Scriptures how they praise the Lord. In Isaiah 6:1-3 we are given a description of this, *“In the year that king Uzziah died*

I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto the other, and said holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory. ”

Notice with what reverence these holy Creatures come before Almighty God, to praise Him. They come humbly, covering themselves, there is no arrogance, no insincerity, but in deep humility, reverencing God for whom and what He is. Their faces and feet are covered. The covering of one's face was a natural expression of reverence, as was the covering of one's feet or body. Now if the pure and holy seraphim should display such reverence as this as they drew near to the throne of God's majesty and grace, what profound awe and veneration should we sinful creatures have, as we presume to draw near and worship Him.

The Seraphim's attitude ought to reprove us of any presumption that Christians have as they rush thoughtlessly and irreverently into God's presence, doing their own thing. These holy creatures hid themselves in token of their nothingness and unworthiness in the presence of God. The angels of heaven not only worship God, but give us an example of how we should draw close to Him. The whole throne of God seems to be encircled with the praises of the heavenly host, praise permeating and radiating through the whole celestial system, heaven being saturated with the praises of God.

Lord Jesus Himself is imputed to us. It is with a heart made upright in Christ, by faith and trust in Him that we are able to praise our God.

THE HEART CONDITION

Here we must face a crucial fact, that the heart that is not upright, is unable to praise God. No soul that remains unjustified can really praise God, because we are told very plainly in scripture that they who worship God are to do so *“in spirit and in truth.”* There is by nature no heart capable of claiming such perfection. The unregenerate heart has sinful qualities that are unacceptable to God. Let us consider just four aspects of this heart.

Firstly an unregenerate heart is a *divided heart*. It may have religious overtones, but it is also very much centred upon self, and has no real love or joy in Christ. In fact the reality is that such a soul is at enmity with God.

Secondly, such a heart has no right of access to the presence of God, for the only way to the Father is in and through the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as He says *“no man cometh unto the Father but by me.”* Unless you know Christ, you cannot know God, and unless you know God, there is no real way in which you can offer praise to Him. The very best that one can do in a situation like this is to pretend, put on a show, and go through a purely mechanical act. Simply offering some outward act without any understanding, satisfying some basic, primitive religious need.

Thirdly, an unregenerate heart is not in any way

driven by feelings rather than gratitude for who God is and what He has done.

When we praise God our whole heart is to be concentrated on one grand, unified effort of praise, magnifying the Lord our God. No part of the heart must be allowed to wander into other areas, particularly the area of self. Every part of the heart must be fully committed to praising Him who has redeemed us from all our iniquity, and has cleansed our hearts by His precious sin-aton ing blood.

PRAISE IS TO BE EXERCISED WITH UPRIGHTNESS

This, I suggest is the third aspect of the Programme of Praise, "*I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I have learned thy righteous judgements,*" (Psalm 119:7). Notice again the element of understanding that is involved here. Praise, real acceptable praise can only be offered to God on the basis of righteousness, and righteousness can only be experienced when we learn God's righteous Judgements. At the Cross we first view this, for here we see God's perfect righteousness in action, taking our sin and placing it upon His Son, when "*He that was without sin became sin for us.*" This was in order that we who are dead in trespasses and in sin, might be translated out of his present world into the kingdom of His dear Son. Not only is it at the cross that we learn about God's righteousness, but it is there that we obtain our righteousness. When by grace we come to God in Christ by faith, the perfect righteousness of the

NATIONS ARE TO PRAISE GOD

"O praise the Lord all ye nations." (Psalm 117:1) All nations are called upon to join in this mighty orchestra of praise. The praising of God is not limited to just a few people, and not just Israel, but all nations should praise God. Every so often the Queen will call upon the nation's entertainers to put on a Royal Command Performance. She commands her subjects to engage in a certain thing, that of entertainment.

Praise is a Royal Command, for it comes from the greatest of all Kings. This is the Royal Command that all nations bow, worship and praise the Living God, the God of Heaven, "*Let every kindred, every tribe, in this terrestrial ball, bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.*"

YOUNG AND OLD ARE TO PRAISE THE LORD

"Both young men and maidens, old men and children, let them praise the Lord." (Psalm 148:12-13). From cradle to grave there is to be a chorus of praise. Even the smallest child is called upon to add his or her voice to the great chorus of praise. I like watching an orchestra playing some great piece of music. It is fascinating watching each player perform. Sometimes you will see a musician playing an instrument that seems hardly to make a sound and you have to strain hard to hear it, but without its contribution the piece of music would not be complete. The sound is small, but it is an essential part of the whole. So it is with childlike praise, it

needs to mingle with the voices of the angels and the saints, to make the final output pleasing and acceptable to God.

The praise of youth is also essential. A soul loses out if in youth the heart is not filled with praise. Do you ever look at faces, I mean really look at them? They tell a story. Look at the faces of many of our young people. I was watching two teenagers on television the other day, their eyes were empty, their faces expressionless, nothing but emptiness. It was like looking into a large dark bottomless pit. So it is with youthful lives that are taken up with those things that do not bring praise and glory to our God. Eventually their lives suffer.

As age begins to overtake us, and from young men, children and maidens, we become old and as the weakening process takes hold, there is no excuse not to praise God. Physical strength may diminish, we may not be able to do the things of our youth, but the strength to praise God should grow and deepen. So young and old join their voices in this great choir of praise, praise to the excellent name of our God.

THE GREAT AND SMALL ARE TO PRAISE THE LORD

“And a voice came out of the throne saying, praise our God, all ye servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.” (Revelation 19:5). No matter what our station may be in this world’s society, we are to praise God. Simply because our social position among the sons of men may be mean, poor and lowly, that does not

able to praise Him as we ought. Only then will the heart be aroused and awakened to the full sense of the reality of God’s work in us by Christ, and only then will we be able to sing His Praises.

Understanding of the purposes and promises of God

Here we have a lifetime’s work and study. God has for each of His redeemed a plan and purpose. There is a work for each and everyone to do, and to each plan God has attached glorious promises. Likewise for the Church, God has a Plan and Purpose, which is revealed in His Word. When as individuals and churches we are obedient to these things, there is a peace, a joy, and understanding that prompts praise to our God. To be in God’s Will is the most wonderful experience, and it causes the soul to praise our King.

Part one of the Programme of Praise is, understanding, an understanding of what God has done for each of us.

PRAISE IS TO BE WHOLEHEARTED

The Psalmist says, “*I will praise thee O Lord with my whole heart,*” (Psalm 9:1) not with divided affection, partial gratitude, or fickleness but with a whole heart. James tells us that a “*Double minded man is unstable in all his ways*”, he is driven like a wave of the sea, by the winds and tossed to and fro. The impression is sometimes given, that “*Praise Services*” are designed for the emotional feelings and satisfaction that man can obtain from them, rather for the praise and worship of God. They are

which combine to make praise that which is acceptable to God.

The combined concentrated effort of the soul redeemed by the Lamb of God, summoning up all its powers, gratitude, strength and love, pours out from the heart praises to the Lord our God. This is the praise that brings delight to the Father, joy to the Son and rejoicing in the Holy Spirit.

PRAISE IS TO BE GIVEN WITH UNDERSTANDING

“For God is the king of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding.” (Psalm 47:7) Here we have an important statement. God is to be praised with “understanding”. Praise is not blind, or unintelligible, but is to be exercised with comprehension and in an intelligent manner. We are to know why we are praising God. Let me suggest one or two things about which we should have understanding so that we are able to praise God.

Understanding of the scheme of redemption

We all need to understand God’s plan of redemption, and though none can fully comprehend the greatness and magnificence of this, we should all have grasped something of the blessedness of it. When we have some idea of the great sacrifice on God’s part to bring us back to Himself, His great Love for us as individuals and the terrible price that was paid to buy back His elect from the curse of the Law, when we see His perfect Justice and Grace and Mercy, only then in the spirit of that understanding will we be

relieve us of the solemn duty of praising our God. The praise coming from the heart of a poor man, or a small man is just as precious in God’s eyes as that coming from a great man.

Was it not the small gift from the widow that found more acceptance with Jesus than the large gifts of the rich and famous? The small and insignificant are to praise God and by so doing they lose that smallness and insignificance as they launch out into the vastness of that which is eternal.

The great must praise the Lord. No man is too great to be exempt from the duty of praise. Kings, Queens, Presidents are all obligated to offer praise to God. Why? For what and who He is, for His providential care and mercy.

ALL CREATION IS CALLED TO PRAISE HIM

“Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). Here is the universal call, a call to all in the universe who have breath to praise the Lord. The universe that was brought forth by the Word of God is commanded to praise Him.

Let the whole of God’s creation, let all creatures great and small, the angelic host, the seraphim, the cherubim, the archangels, men, women, boys and girls, unite their voices in one great anthem of praise. Let them join in one immense hallelujah, the swelling hosanna, to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let that hosanna reverberate around the universe, let it reach the lofty vaults of Heaven, reaching into the lofty dwelling place of God. Let all

people know that there is praise in our souls for our God. Let the whole world know that He who made us, and loved us, and redeemed us should receive from His creation, the fullness of praise, pouring forth, out of the depths of our love and adoration for Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us, "*let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.*"

ALL MEN SHOULD PRAISE THE LORD

"*Oh*" that men would praise the Lord for *his goodness and wonderful works*," (Psalm 107:8). All men should praise the Lord, because all men are partakers of His goodness and mercy. It is the grace of God and the grace of God alone, that which is known as the common grace of God, that keeps every man, woman and child alive, fed and clothed. It alone prevents the curse of sin falling immediately upon them, and gives them a span of life, so that they might better prepare themselves for the great eternity that awaits them.

How good is God in His great providence. How good is God in His gracious care, and His tender mercies. How good is God in His wonderful works to all the children of men, in His infinite compassion. Oh that the children of men might have their eyes anointed with heavenly eye-salve, so that they might see the glorious providential works of God, and so direct their thoughts, thanksgivings and praise to Him.

Oh, that they might see the wonderful work of Grace, that special grace of God providing for them a "*Saviour Who is Christ the Lord*".

THE PROGRAMME OF PRAISE

Psalm 47

In this series of studies we have considered the *Perfection of Praise*, the *People of Praise*, the *Purpose of Praise* and the *Prompting of Praise*. In this our final study we are to look at the *Programme of Praise* by which I mean the constituency of praise.

PRAISE EMANATES FROM THE SOUL

"*Bless the Lord O my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name*," (Psalm 103:1). True praise, comes from the soul of the redeemed of the Lord, from the very heart of our being. Outward praise though it may have all the perfection and exactness obtained through practice, will not reach any higher than the ceiling of the building. Externals have little or nothing to do with real spiritual praise. It is the internals that matter. What is in the soul makes praise what it ought to be, "*all that is within me.*" It is all the faculties of the heart and soul and mind,

all our needs will be met according to "*His riches in glory by Jesus Christ*".

He cares for us His children as a loving Father. Therefore, let us praise the One, who provides and cares for us, educates and instructs us, leads and guides us, and who will in the bye and bye, bring us in Jesus to those mansions being prepared for us in Heaven. Praise the Son who in obedience to the Fathers wishes, came into this world. Adore the Lamb that was slain. Kneel at the cross, and see afresh those wounds in hands and feet and side, made there by our sin, and because of the Fathers love for us. Magnify in songs of praise the Immortal who took on mortality that He might die so that we might live. Look at the cross again and see there the majesty of the King of Glory, pouring out His life, shedding His blood for the remission of your sin, "*Sing unto the Lord a new song*," for sin and death hath no longer power over us; all was defeated at Calvary and the empty tomb stands witness to this glorious fact.

Truly our Lord "*is great and greatly to be praised*."

THE SAINTS ARE TO PRAISE GOD

"Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holy name," (Psalm 30:4). If there is one group of people above all others that should give praise unto God, it is surely the *saints*, it is you and I. You alone He has called out of darkness into His marvellous light. He has loved us above and beyond anything that we might have reason to expect. He has taken our feet out of the miry clay and set them upon a rock that cannot be moved.

We have much, very much, to praise the Lord for. The hymn of praise should for ever be swelling up in our hearts and be heard on our lips. Dear saints we have been called to show forth the praise of our God and King, we should be a people of praise. The Songs of the saints are to catch fire in song, songs of sweetness, songs of the Saviour, scriptural songs, songs of love, songs of beauty, songs of adoration, songs of exaltation.

Listen to the popular songs of the world and hear praises sung to death, despondency, misery, violence, carnal love and sex. The songs of the world praise war and violence and all that is ungodly. The songs of the saints are songs that elevate the greatness, the glory, and the majesty of the Lord. They lift Him higher, glorify Him and His goodness and mercies. We have something to sing and rejoice about, and all praise be unto Him who has loved us and who gave Himself for us.

Saints are to sing praises to the Almighty Covenant keeping God, and each song of praise is to be salted with thanksgiving, reaching the highest note of gratitude that can be brought forth from a grateful

soul. Dear saints, only such songs of gratitude are suitable to pass from our lips, for such praises shoot their way, as it were, into the starry sky, penetrating deep into the celestial regions where God dwells in light and majesty.

Let every song we sing be girded with thanksgiving, let every song be a song of praise, and every act be an act of worship. We of all people have much to praise the Lord for. He is our God, we are His people. He is our shepherd, we are the sheep of His pasture. He is our Redeemer, we are His redeemed. He is our Father, we are His children in Jesus Christ. So let all that hath breath praise the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord.

praise and worship acceptable, such lives are beautiful to our God.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD IN OUR SALVATION PROMPTS US TO PRAISE HIM

“Shew forth his salvation from day to day,” (v2) If we are to praise the Lord our God, then our tongues and lips ought to be flavoured with the gospel of God’s saving grace. Readers, let us *“Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.”* Let our songs of praise reverberate around the world as we praise our God and Father who *“gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Let us never forget that it is by His grace and mercy that we are saved. Of ourselves we have nothing worthy of salvation. We are unable to do anything to merit salvation. Of ourselves we are *“dead in trespasses and in sin.”* That which we deem worthy, namely our own righteousness, is before the holiness of God as *“filthy rags.”* If any man is to be saved then it is a sovereign and gracious act of God. This in itself should prompt us to praise Him.

There never has been and never will such a mighty majestic act as this, God stooping down to the level of man in the form of His Son to take upon Himself the curse and condemnation of the sinner in order that some might be brought to salvation. But it does not stop there for *“His mercy endureth forever”* says His Word. Our Lord continues to meet and supply our every need, for He has given us the assurance of His Word that He *“will never leave us nor forsake us”* and

and the songs we sing are to be a witness to these people, examples, and a persuasive power for them to come and know Him. Our acts of worship, godly habits, songs of praise are to say to these folk, “*come let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our maker.*”

The praise of God’s people is a tool of evangelism, reaching the unbeliever, with the knowledge of God. All too often, the churches that should be resounding with God’s praises are seen by the world as lifeless mortuaries, or as being filled with ungodly noise and confusion. The praise of God’s people should be wholesome, in accordance with God’s Word, not unseemly, but honouring to God.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD PROMPTS US TO PRAISE HIM IN HIS HOLINESS

“*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,*” (v9). Notice the emphasis here, one that we all need to heed. The worship offered to God is, to be offered, not in the power of the flesh, or a spirit of worldliness, nor as an act of human entertainment, but in Holiness. How can we who are so deformed by sin, unholy, defiled and corrupt, possibly meet this requirement? God’s Word replies, He whose conscience is purged from dead works by the sprinkling of Blood, can worship God in such a manner, because his soul is clothed in the perfect and glorious righteousness of Christ. Only such are acceptable to God. Those whose lives are lived in Holiness, as the Word says we are to “*be holy as he is holy,*” From the lips of people whose lives are to be lived reflecting and showing forth holiness, is

THE PURPOSE OF PRAISE

What is praise about, what is the objective behind it? What is the design of praise? Unless we have some understanding of the basic concept of praise it is futile to try and offer it.

The word praise, itself has a number of meanings, for example if one goes back to Old Testament times, we find that the Hebrew word “*yadah*” translated “*praise*” is a word that describes a physical act, namely that of holding out ones hands, whilst the other most common Hebrew word is “*hilluwl*” which has the meaning of celebration, thanksgiving, merriment, and vocal expression, such as in singing. In the New Testament praise maybe summed up in the Greek word “*epainos*” which has the meaning of applaud, that is the physical expression of approbation by the clapping of the hands, commendation and lauding, that is extolling someone or something especially by the use of hymns. The English word for praise, has its origins in the Latin and French, in French “*Preisier*” and the Latin “*Prettium*” both of which have the meaning

of price and prize.

If we bring these qualities together, we can quickly see that the initial purpose of praise is the demonstration of joy, of thanksgiving, often expressed through singing, sometimes through a more overt physical acts, such as clapping in appreciation of something, namely a prize, that being something that is valued very highly, as opposed to something won in a lottery, a price, that is to be understood as something of great value or worth, such as described as "*a pearl of great price*" something that is priceless. Praise is the giving of approval, it is the expression of admiration for something or someone.

THE PARTIES OF PRAISE

The act of praise always comprises of two parties, the recipient or recipients of praise and the giver or givers of praise. The party that receives praise, has not only met with the approval of the giver, but also receives the admiration of the giver and in the eyes of giver is glorified, because it is the glory of what the recipient has done in the first place that prompts the praise. It is the distinction of something that has been accomplished that prompts praise in the first place. In ordinary everyday life situations the things that prompts men to praise others are of little or no value, the praise given to these people often elevating them far above their station in life and what they really deserve, the object of praise given to men is often to make them what they are not.

The purpose of praise may be defined as the placing upon someone the worthiness, the honour, that is due

should break forth in a melody of praise.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD PROMPTS US TO PRAISE HIM IN HIS SANCTUARY

"Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary" (v6). Notice how the majesty of God is defined in this verse *"Strength and Beauty."* There is no strength or beauty like that of our Lord. Notice where this is to be found, *"in his sanctuary,"* that is the place of worship. In Isaiah six, we read of the effect of this great majesty. The Lord is seen seated upon His throne, and the heavenly being *"covered his face ... and feet"* before him. Today God is still on the throne. Now whilst it is right and proper that we should pray and praise the Lord in private, it is also of equal and maybe of greater importance to praise Him, in public places where the Lord's people have for years joined their voices with others in songs of praise. The sanctuary, the meeting place of God's children is a place that should resound with His praises. How sad it is, that so often church buildings dedicated to the praise and worship of God resound with bitterness, strife, recrimination and argument, when they should be places of praise to the One and Only Living God.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD PROMPTS US TO PRAISE HIM IN PUBLIC

"Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people." (v3) This may be seen as a command, a witness that has to be made before those who neglect God, before those who do not know Him. The praise of our lips, melody of our hearts,

THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD PROMPTS US TO SING HIS PRAISE

“O sing unto the lord a new song; sing unto the Lord all the earth.” (v1) God is honoured not only when we speak to others about Him and about His glory, honour and power, God is not glorified only when His Word is preached to others in the power of His Spirit, but it seems that He is also honoured when His people sing His praise. There is something wonderful and pleasing to God when His people express their joy and love to Him in songs of praise and adoration. There is something about singing praises to God that surpasses the mere articulation of words.

When I preach, I often get excited and feel the words welling up within my soul, all trying to get out together. Sometimes at prayer, I find the same thing, as I am sure you all do. Yet no matter how clear those words are, they often seem lifeless and dull, when compared with the praise that comes from singing. Music seems to make the words come alive. They harmonise, and seem to rise higher than mere words. Singing the praise of God employs the whole body, mind, heart and our soul as well as our voice. When we think of the majesty of our God, our whole being needs to sing His Praises. All ye that love the Lord, give vent to your heart and soul’s emotion by singing songs of praise. Let the melody in your heart become melody in song. As we stand to sing, there should be a fixed intent in our souls a positive volition in our minds, an absolute determination in our hearts, that all the flame that is kindled in us

to them for some act or service they have done. Furthermore, the purpose of praise is to give the person or the object the distinction and approval that they are worthy of, it is also to give to the person the thanks that is theirs by right. It can also be argued that not to render praise when it is due, is an act of rejection, of alienation, it marks out those who are in a right relationship with the recipient and those who are not.

The wonderful acts of Almighty God are invaluable, they are priceless. The Lord alone is worthy to be praised, there is none like Him, all glory and honour are due unto Him, He alone is worthy of our devotion, He alone is to be exalted, He alone is to be adored, all tribute is to be His as is thanksgiving. Praising God is one of the distinguishing marks of the Christian *“ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”* (1Peter 2:9). By the same token it is the hall mark of the unregenerate to refuse to give the Lord the praise that is due to Him *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened.”* (Romans 1:20-21).

Despite the fact that all are called upon to praise the Lord, the unregenerate, the heathen, the ungodly refuse to do so. This fact is manifested every Lord’s

Day, by the decreasing numbers in places of worship and the growing number to be found in places of leisure and commerce. Let us consider some of the reasons for praise.

GOD'S CREATION IS AN OBJECT OF PRAISE

One of the great pleasures of God if His creation, this is expressed in clear words in Psalm 104 “*The glory of the LORD shall endure forever; the Lord shall rejoice in his works, He looketh upon the earth, and it trembleth: He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.*” (vv. 31-32). The praise of God for this creative work is given it Him very clearly in Psalm twenty-four. However probably more importantly, the first two chapters of Genesis are also to be seen as words of praise, even though the word praise is not mentioned. These two chapters clearly place the glory, honour and power of creation firmly in the hands of God, man is nowhere to be seen taking glory or praise to himself. How very different that is today, man, and this includes many professing Christians have taken from God the honour and glory of creation and placed this wonder act in the hands of some unseen power of chance. In so doing they have elevated man, Gods crown of creation, to little more than an evolutionary freak, a freak in which they glory, a freak to which man gives the praise. Today mans hymn of praise goes something like this:

*Once I was a little tadpole,
Beginning to begin;
Then by chance became a frog,
With my tail tucked in.*

threatens a Holy War against the Jews. Yet he inspired the authorities of the Peace Prize Council to honour him as a Peace Maker. How puny, how fragile, how worthless and trivial is the majesty of man, yet we pour our praise and honour on it.

None of these men or women are worthy of the reverence which is often ascribed to them, all are shallow, fickle sinners, who brought nothing into the world and will surely take nothing out.

The definition of majesty does not end here, but continues, for the word speaks of “*impressive dignity*”, of grandeur and sovereign power. A description that is suitable only for Almighty God. It is the definition suited only to Him who is eternal, unchangeable and infinite in His being. It is the majesty of the One whom Heaven and earth cannot contain, the majesty of Him of whom it is said that “*the clouds are the dust of his feet.*” The majesty of Almighty God is far beyond our comprehension, far more wonderful than anything that man’s mind can conceive. This great majesty of God should inspire, and prompt praise from our hearts.

Verse six further tells us that “*honour and majesty are before him,*” that is, these things are continually in His presence. Wherever He manifests Himself, there exhibits His majesty. Look to the heavens and see there in the magnificence of the sky the majesty of God. Look to the earth and the glory of nature and see the majesty of God. Look to the sea and see in the waters the majesty of God. Not one earthly monarch, no matter how great and powerful, can in anyway compare with the majesty of God. All that they have is but a poor imitation of the majesty of God.

“Honour and majesty are before him, strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” (v6) Surely the first thing that should prompt the praises of the heart is the majesty of God! Majesty is described in the dictionary as being that quality which inspires awe and reverence. We see here two qualities that majesty cultivates in the eye and heart of the beholder, and should take a little time to consider these qualities.

Have you ever stopped to think about how puny man’s majesty is? It is but a facade, and like the film sets in Hollywood, all show and nothing behind it. Mans glory is empty and nothing more than tinsel, a thin covering of gold paint. Look at the glory of human Royalty. Outwardly it looks fine, with all the glitter of wealth, the magnificence of Royal events, and the pomp and circumstances that accompany these things. If we take away the glitter, we find sin, corruption, spiritual filthiness on a scale no better than our own. Yet we look to Royalty with a certain amount of awe and reverence.

The same applies to all those whom men look to in this world and give praise and honour. Think of the praise and honour given to film stars, footballers and those whose names are emblazoned in Halls of Fame. Consider the praise given to religious leaders, to politicians and world leaders. These men and women at some level or another have a hold over us and seem to hold us spell-bound. They inspire in many awe and reverence. It was only a short while ago that the praise and honour associated with the Noble Peace Prize was given to Yasser Arafat, a man with much Jewish blood on his hands, and who still

*Then a monkey in a Banion tree,
And now a man with a Ph.D.*

Here we see the truth enacted that the mark of an unbeliever is to avoid praising God.

The Bible, God’s Word sets forth the truth, and gives the praise to God, as we learn in John 1:3 *“All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.”* This is the testimony of all true Christians, the mark of a believer, for such understand the true purpose of praise.

GOD’S GLORY A QUALITY OF PRAISE

“Yea they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord,” (Psalm 138:5). The word “Glory”, has the original idea of “heaviness, weight and worthiness”. It is sometimes used by men to describe their wealth, splendour and reputation. On special occasions, we will see both men and women attired in what we often call all their glory, those glittering occasion where the ladies wear all their best jewellery, we would say that they were *“dripping in them”*. Meaning that they were weighed in them, and having all there finery on, telling the world just how far they had got on in the world, and people will come and admire them and praise the person who is wearing them.

Now there cannot be in the mind of any honest man, particularly in the mind of a Christian, any who is more glorious than Almighty God. God is weighed down in the greatest and purest of finery, His

majesty is clothed in the most glorious finery, so much so that even fine Gold and the best of all the precious stones are but dust in His presence. Such is the Glory of God that the Seraphim, who worship Him day and night, cover their faces before it. Words cannot even begin to express the Glory of God, it is beyond both our imagination and words to describe it. God is weighed down with those things, those qualities and characteristics that make Him glorious beyond all human expression.

It can however be said that the Glory of God is twofold, the first is the Intrinsic Glory, in Acts 7:2 He is described as the “*God of glory*,” glory being an essential quality of God, just as light is to the sun and God without glory is no God.

It can however be said that the glory of God is twofold. The first is His Intrinsic Glory. In Acts 7:2 He is described as the “*God of glory*”, glory being an essential quality of God, just as light is to the sun. The sun without light is no sun, and God without glory is no God.

The glory of God is seen in the splendour, magnificence and grandeur of who He is. His fame is greater than the fame of any man, His grandeur greater than any other. His honour far outreaches the honour of any creatures, so that none can stand in the presence of His glory and live. Nothing man can do can add to or detract from this glory, for God is unchanging and unchangeable.

Moses saw something of the glory of God on Sinai, and on returning to the people had to cover

We then went on to consider the “*Purpose of Praise*” and noted that praise requires two parties, the giver and the recipient the purpose of which is the placing by the giver the worthiness and honour, that is due to the recipient, in our case Almighty God.

In this study our thoughts turn to the *Promptings of Praise*, those things that cause us to Praise the Lord. The verse that we have taken as our key verse gives us the pattern, in that the “*LORD is great*.” It is the greatness of the Lord that first and foremost prompts us to praise Him.

THE GREATNESS OF THE LORD PROMPTS PRAISE

“*The LORD is great, and greatly to be praised.*” The word “*Great*” can be translated “*majesty or majestic*”. This reminds us of the awesome majesty and power of God. The God of creation, and of the Bible is the majestic God. All others that would be considered as gods fall into insignificance before His majesty. It is this greatness or majesty of God which is the prominent feature of this Psalm. It should be the prominent feature of and in our worship, and the thing that prompts us to praise. Let us take this a little deeper, and notice several things about this Psalm and the praise that the majesty of God encourages and prompts us to engage in.

THE MAJESTY OF THE LORD PROMPTS PRAISE

THE PROMPTING OF PRAISE

“The LORD is great and greatly to be praised.”
(Psalm 96:4)

In this short series of studies we have considered the *“Perfection of Praise.”* God alone is worthy of praise, and the praise offered unto Him is to be Sacrificial. Such praise can only be offered through a mediator, one who stands between God and man, being the Man Christ Jesus. This praise is also to be continual. We have also looked at the *“People of Praise,”* all men, all nations, all the angels in heaven and in fact all creation are to praise God. There is to be from the universal a great orchestra of praise. Above all Christians, those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, are to be the leaders of this great and mighty chorus.

his face because it shone with the glory of the Lord. Peter, James and John, saw a little of the glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, and fell before the Lord in worship. Saul on the way to Damascus also caught a glimpse of the glory of God. The glory of the Lord so dazzled this great sinner that he fell in the dust. So brilliant was the glory he saw that he lost his sight, and he cried out *“Lord what wilt thou have me to do?”* He had seen the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus, but having lost his physical sight he gained spiritual sight.

For any man to see the glory of God in all its fullness, would mean instant death, for we would not be able to bear the magnificence of it. Many years ago when I was just seven years old, my father worked in a steel foundry, and he would often take me in with him on a Saturday morning. He was in charge of a Blast Furnace, and would allow me to stand and watch as the molten metal was poured out in to the carrying hods. It was the most glorious thing I had ever seen, yet it was the most dangerous. I could only look at that boiling metal for a moment, it was so brilliant. The first time I saw it, it brought gasps of sheer delight from my heart, and whenever I think of the Glory of God I see that molten metal pouring out of the furnace, so brilliant that it is not possible to look at it, so dangerous that one little slip and there is instant death.

Paul saw the glory of God, yet he did not perish. Why? because he saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus. So with us, we see the glory of God in the face

and person of Jesus, and as we do so it should prompt from our hearts that same submission so readily given by Paul. *“Lord what wilt thou have me to do.”* The glory of God as it is seen in Jesus, is a great cause of praise to God.

The second aspect of Gods Glory is summed up in the Catechism, *“What is the Chief end of Man?”* the answer *“to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.”* As we have said, there is nothing that man can ever add to the glory of God, God’s glory is of itself infinite and unchangeable, nevertheless the glory of God is seen in His new creation. You and I, no matter what we do. or where we are, are to live lives that will show forth His glory and bring to Him praises from men. As Paul tells us in 1Corinthians 10:31 *“whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”*

Christians are living testimonies. We are to reflect in our lives something of the glory of God. Men should see that we are different, that there is in us a likeness of God. After all we are a new creation and have been made His children for His praise and glory.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD DEMANDS US TO PRAISE HIM

“Oh give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever,” (Psalm 136:1). God is so good that He is devoid of all and everything that is bad. The

Lord Jesus reminds us of this fact when He says, *“there is none good but one, that is God.”* His goodness is unique, perfect goodness and infinite. It is unchangeable goodness, perpetually manifested in grace and mercy. He is the giver of all good gifts, for all good gifts are from Him who is the *“Father of lights”*.

of all the good things that God has in Grace bestowed upon you, the things that we so often take for granted, the food we eat, the air we breathe, the clothes we wear, the homes in which we live, the friendships we have, the fellowship of God’s people. Do they not both thrill your souls and cause praises to rise from your hearts? If they do not then I humbly and sincerely suggest that there is something deeply wrong with your soul. Think of the goodness of His grace, His compassion and tender mercy, in that He loved you and gave His Son to die in your place. The very fact of God’s goodness demands our praise, a praise that is to be heard from our lips, the testimony of His saving grace.

If space permitted we should also consider that the Holiness of God, the Righteousness of God, the Justice of God, the Love of God all merit the praise of His creation.

The purpose of praise is to glorify God, in the eyes of the world, the manifestation of His glory to the unsaved, the church is the effulgence of God’s glory and our praise of God before men show this forth.