

## Week 3 – Praising

### WEEK 3 – DAY 1 – THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAISE AND THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

**Psa. 22:3** But You are holy, You who sit enthroned / Upon the praises of Israel.

**Psa. 119:164** Seven times a day I praise You / For Your righteous ordinances.

Praise is the highest work carried out by God's children. We can say that the highest expression of a saint's spiritual life is his praise to God. God's throne is the highest point in the universe, yet He sits "enthroned upon the praises of Israel" (Psa. 22:3). God's name and even God Himself are exalted through praise.

David said in a psalm that he prayed to God three times a day (Psa. 55:17). Yet in another psalm, he said that he praised God seven times a day (119:164). David was inspired by the Holy Spirit when he acknowledged the importance of praising. He prayed only three times a day, but he praised seven times a day. Furthermore, he appointed Levites to play psalteries and harps to exalt, thank, and praise God before the ark of His covenant (1 Chron. 16:4-6). When Solomon completed the building of Jehovah's temple, the priests carried the ark of the covenant into the Holy of Holies. When the priests came out of the Holy Place, the Levites stood beside the altar, sounded the trumpets, and sang with cymbals, psalteries, and harps. Together they sounded praises to God. At that moment, the glory of Jehovah filled His house (2 Chron. 5:12-14). Both David and Solomon touched God's heart and offered up sacrifices of praise that were pleasing to God. Jehovah is enthroned upon the praises of Israel. We should praise the Lord all our life. We should sing praises to our God. (*Praising*, Chapter 1, Sec 1)

We should not only pray to God but also learn all the more to praise God. We need to see the significance of praise at the very beginning of our Christian walk. We must praise God unceasingly. David received grace from God to praise seven times a day. It is a good exercise, a very good lesson, and a very good spiritual practice to praise God every day. We should learn to praise God when we get up early in the morning. We should learn to praise Him when we encounter problems, when we are at a meeting, or when we are alone. We should praise God at least seven times a day. Do not let David beat us in his praise. If we have not learned to praise God every day, it is hard to have the kind of sacrifice of praise spoken of in Hebrews 13.

As you learn to praise, you will find that there are days in which you cannot gather yourself to praise. Perhaps you praised God seven times today, yesterday, and the day before. Perhaps you praised Him a week or a month ago. But one day you will find that you cannot utter a praise. On such days you are in pain, total darkness, or dire trouble. On such days you suffer misunderstanding and slander. You are busy shedding tears of self-pity. How can you praise God on such days? You cannot praise because you are wounded, suffering pain, and in difficulty. You feel that the most obvious response would be complaint rather than praise. You feel that the most obvious thing to do would be to murmur rather than give thanks. You do not feel like praising, and you have no intention to praise. You feel that praise is not suitable under this kind of circumstance and mood. At that very moment, you should remember that Jehovah's throne has not changed, His name has not changed, and His glory has not changed. You should praise Him simply because He is worthy of praise. You should bless Him simply because He is worthy of all blessings. Although you are in the midst of difficulties, He is still worthy to be praised. Although you are in distress, you still have to praise Him. At that moment, your praise becomes a sacrifice of praise. Your praise is like the slaughter of your fattest calf. It is like putting your dear Isaac on the altar. Your praise in tears is a sacrifice of praise. What is an offering? An offering implies wounds, death, loss, and sacrifice. You are wounded before God. You die before God. You suffer loss, and you sacrifice before God. But you realize that God's throne is established in the heavens and cannot be shaken, and you do not hold back your praise. This is the sacrifice of praise. God desires His children to praise Him in everything and through situation. (*Praising*, Chapter 1, Section 1)

## WEEK 3 – DAY 2 – PRAISE AND VICTORY

**Acts 16:25** And about midnight Paul and Silas, while praying, sang hymns of praise to God; and the prisoners were listening to them.

**2 Chron. 20: 22** And when they began to shout in song and to praise, Jehovah set ambushes for the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who were coming out against Judah; and they were struck.

We have seen that our praise is a sacrifice. But there is more. We have to see that praising is the way to overcome spiritual attacks. Many people say that Satan is afraid of the prayers of God's children; he flees whenever God's children kneel down to pray. This is why he often attacks God's children and frustrates them from praying. This is a common attack. But we will point out another fact: Satan's greatest attacks are not aimed at prayers; his greatest attacks are aimed at praise. This does not mean that Satan does not attack prayers. The moment a Christian prays, Satan begins to attack. It is very easy to talk to people, but the moment one prays, Satan comes with problems. He will make one feel that it is hard to pray. This is a fact. But Satan does not attack just prayer; he also attacks the praise of God's children. The ultimate goal of Satan is to stop all praises to God. Prayer is a warfare, but praise is a victory. Prayer signifies spiritual warfare, but praise signifies spiritual victory. Whenever we praise, Satan flees. Therefore, Satan hates our praising the most. He will use all his strength to stop our praising. God's children are foolish if they stop praising when they suffer under adverse environments and downtrodden feelings. But as they come to know God more, they will find that even a Philippian jail can become a place of songs (Acts 16:25). Paul and Silas were praising God inside the jail cell. Their praise broke loose all the jail doors.

When you pray, you are still in the midst of your situation. But when you praise, you soar above your situation. While you are praying and pleading, you are bound by your affairs; you are not out of them. The more you plead, the more you find yourself bound and pressed. But if God takes you above the jail, the chains, the painful wounds on the body, the suffering, and the shame, you will offer praises to His name. Paul and Silas sang hymns. They sang praises to God. They were brought by God to the point where the jail, the shame, and the pain were no longer a problem to them. They could praise God. When they praised in such a way, the doors of the jail opened, the chains fell off, and even the jailer was saved.

Many times praise works where prayer fails. This is a very basic principle. If you cannot pray, why not praise? The Lord has placed another item in your hands for your victory and for you to boast in victory. Whenever you run out of strength to pray and you find your spirit heavily oppressed, wounded, or sagging, praise Him. If you cannot pray, try to praise. We invariably think that we should pray when the burden is heavy and praise when the burden is over. But please bear in mind that there are times when the burden is so heavy that you cannot pray. That is the time for you to praise. We do not praise when there is no burden; we praise when the burden becomes too heavy. When you encounter unusual circumstances and problems and are bewildered and feel like collapsing, just remember one thing, "Why not praise?" Here is a golden opportunity. If you offer your praise at that moment, God's Spirit will operate in you, open all the doors, and break all the chains. (*Praising*, Chapter 1, Section 2)

Let us look at 2 Chronicles 20:20-22...Here was a battle. The nation of Judah was coming to an end at the time of Jehoshaphat's rule. It was very weak; everything was in a state of shambles. The Moabites, Ammonites, and the people of Mount Seir came to invade Judah. Judah was completely in despair; they felt that defeat was certain. Jehoshaphat was a revived king and a God-fearing person...He told Judah to believe in God. What did he do? He appointed singers to sing praises to Jehovah. He also asked these ones to praise the beauty of holiness and to walk out before the army and to say, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever." Please note the words *when they began* in the following verse. It is a very precious word. "And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir." *When they began* means at that very moment. When everyone was singing praises to Jehovah, He rose to smite the Ammonites, Moabites, and the people of Mount Seir. Nothing moves the Lord's hand as quickly as praise. (*Praising*, Chapter 1, Section 3)

### WEEK 3 – DAY 3 – FAITH PRODUCING PRAISE

**Psa. 106:12 Then they believed His words; / They sang His praise.**

**Heb. 13:15 Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name**

New believers should not think that they have to pass through many years before they can learn the lesson of praise. They should realize that they can start praising immediately. Every time you encounter a problem, you should pray for mercy that you would stop manipulating and plotting and that you would learn the lesson of praising instead. Much warfare can be won by praise. Many battles are lost because of the lack of praise. If you believe in God, you can tell the Lord in the midst of your problems, "I praise Your name. You are higher than everything. You are stronger than everything. Your lovingkindness endures forever!" A person who praises God transcends everything. He overcomes continually by his praise. This is a principle, and this is also a fact. (*Praising*, Chapter 1, Section 3)

Psalm 106:12 is a very precious word. "Then they believed His words; / They sang His praise." This was the condition of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They believed, and they sang. They believed, so they praised. Praise has a basic ingredient—faith. You cannot praise vainly with the mouth. You cannot say in a flippant way, "I thank the Lord! I praise the Lord!" You must believe. Only after you have believed can you praise. When you have some problems or when you are sorrowful, you pray, and as you pray, a kind of faith rises up in your heart. At that moment you open your mouth to praise. This is the living way, but do not do this in a light manner. When a man is faced with a problem, he should pray. But as soon as he finds a little faith, as soon as he begins to believe in God and in His greatness, power, compassion, glory, and manifestation of His glory, he should begin to praise. If a man acquires faith but does not follow it up with praise, he will soon find that his faith is gone. We are saying this from our experience. Once you have faith within, you should praise. If you do not praise, you will lose your faith after a while. You may have faith now. But after a while, you will lose that faith. Therefore, we must learn to praise. We must learn to utter words of praise. We have to open our mouths to praise. We should have not only a mind to praise but also actual audible words of praise. You have to praise God in the face of all your problems and in the face of Satan. You should say, "O Lord! I praise You!" Do this until you turn from having no feeling to having feeling, or from having a feeble feeling to a strong feeling. Do this until you turn from little faith to full faith.

Once God's glory fills your eyes, you can believe. Once His glory fills your spirit, you can praise. You have to see that God is above everything and is worthy of your praise. When you praise, Satan flees away. Sometimes we need to pray. But when our prayer reaches the point where we have faith and assurance, we know that the Lord has answered our prayer, and we should praise: "Lord! I thank You! I praise You! This matter is already settled!" Do not wait for the matter to be over before you praise. We have to praise as soon as we believe. Do not wait until the enemy runs away to sing. We have to sing to chase him away. We have to learn to praise by faith. When we praise Him in faith, the enemy will be defeated and driven away. We have to believe before we can praise. First we believe and praise, and then we will experience victory. (*Praising*, Chapter 1, Sec. 4)

The Christian life soars through praises. To praise is to transcend everything to touch the Lord. This was the pathway our Lord Jesus took when He was on earth. We should take the same way. We should not murmur against heaven when we are under trials. We should soar above the trials. Once we praise, we are above the trials. The more others try to put us down, the more we should rise up before the Lord and say, "I thank You and praise You!" Learn to accept everything. Learn to know that He is God. Learn to know the works of His hands. Nothing can ripen and mature a man like sacrifices of praise. We need to learn not only to accept the discipline of the Holy Spirit but also to praise the discipline of the Holy Spirit. We need to learn not only to accept but also to glory in the Lord's dealing. We need to learn not only to accept the Lord's chastisement but also to accept it willingly with joy. If we do this, a clear and glorious door will be opened to us. (*Praising*, Chapter 1, Sec. 4)

### WEEK 3 – DAY 4 – OFFERING CHRIST-FILLED PRAISES

**Heb. 2:12** Saying, “I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You.”

**Heb. 13:15** Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.

[Heb. 13:]15 is a continuation of vv. 8-14. Since in the church life we enjoy the unchanging Christ as grace and follow Him outside religion, we should offer through Him spiritual sacrifices to God. First, in the church we should offer up through Him a sacrifice of praise to God continually. In the church He sings in us hymns of praise unto God the Father (2:12). In the church we too should praise God the Father through Him. Eventually, in the church He and we, we and He, praise the Father together in the mingled spirit. He, as the life-giving Spirit, praises the Father in our spirit, and we, by our spirit, praise the Father in His Spirit. This is the best and highest sacrifice that we can offer to God through Him. This is greatly needed in the church meetings. (Heb. 13:15, footnote 1 in the Recovery Version)

In this matter we need to afford Him the best cooperation. I have already used the illustration of the three-legged race. If my partner is capable and clever, yet I am slow and dull, I cannot cooperate well. He will be bound by me. Have you realized that you have always bound Christ? He is your companion and you are His partner, but what kind of a partner are you? When you come to the meeting and He wants to sing within you, do you offer Him adequate coordination? Or do you shut your mouth and quench your spirit? If so, He is imprisoned by you. How then could He sing hymns of praise in the midst of the church? We may, however, open our mouth and sing in the spirit, and undoubtedly Jesus will sing within us. But our singing may yet be so poor and lacking in adequate content, for we are not yet accustomed to higher praises...

Brothers and sisters, let us consider our praises. In one sense we are short of praises, and in another sense we are so poor in the utterance of our praises. Not only must we know Christ as everything better than everything, not only must we labor to enter into the good land and all the enjoyment of Christ, not only must we come together filled with His praises, but we must also practice composing our praises from the new vocabulary of our experiences of Christ. We need to practice this. Practice praising Christ out of your experience of Him; then you will become accustomed to it, and when you come to the meeting, you will praise with richer and higher phrases, utterance, and expression. How we need this! This is the best way to strengthen our meetings, uplift our meetings, and make our meetings so convincing and living. Will you practice? (*How to Meet*, Chapter 17, Section 4)

What is the meaning of, “Through Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God”? It means that we must pass through Christ, we must experience Him, we must partake of Him and enjoy Him in order to have the adequate praises of Him. Then what we will have as praise to the Father will not be according to our nature or any religious concept, but something composed from the subjective experiences of Christ. (*How to Meet*, Chapter 16, Section 1)

The church is the ranch: much grass is growing there and we have many cattle feeding all the day. The cattle produce the milk, and out of the milk we have the cream, the praises. If we would have adequate praises, we need the adequate experiences of Christ. We need the ranch, we need the grass, and we need cattle feeding on the grass to produce the milk. Then we will have an abundance of praise. If you are void of Christ in your experiences, it is impossible to offer praise when you come to the meetings; you are simply flat and empty. If you experience Him daily, if you are filled with the subjective experiences of the sweet enjoyment of Christ, you will have the milk, and out of the milk it is so easy to obtain the cream...

The proper way for us to meet is with the cream of praises which issue from the adequate experiences and enjoyment of Christ. It is not a matter of learning, knowledge, sound teachings or scriptural doctrines. (*How to Meet*, Chapter 16, Section 3)

### WEEK 3 – DAY 5 – MEETING MAINLY FOR PRAISING

**1 Cor. 14:26** What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

**Heb. 2:12** Saying, “I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You.”

I am expecting and looking to the Lord that one day in our meetings three-fourths of the time will be for praising and one-fourth left for prophesying. You may say that that is too much time for praise, but I hope that it will be so much. Whenever we come together we must be full of praise and most of the time praising. You may ask, what about encouraging one another, what about exhorting? Should we just praise without exhorting or encouraging? I tell you, the proper praising is the best exhortation, the best encouragement. If someone stands up to exhort me, I am not so deeply impressed. But if they sing praises from the spirit, if the Lord Jesus sings in their singing, that is a real exhortation, a real encouragement to me. Do you not agree? The real edifying, the real building up of the church is in the praising. If we would and if we could praise adequately and properly so that the Lord Jesus could continually sing hymns in our singing, the church would be wonderfully encouraged and built up. This is why the Apostle Paul lists psalms as the first item mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:26. Singing and praising must be on the top. We must consider praising the first item we need in the meetings of the church.

In the beginning of this book [Hebrews] it says that the Lord Jesus sings praises to the Father in the midst of the church. Then at the end we are told that we must offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually through Him. Between these two passages we have the verse in chapter ten telling us that we must build up a meeting habit. By these three passages we are abundantly clear that whenever we meet there must be the possibility of the Lord Jesus singing praises to the Father, and whenever we come together we must be praising, not talking, witnessing or prophesying so much, but praising—praising through Him. (*How to Meet*, Chapter 15, Section 2)

First Corinthians 14:26 says that when we all come together everyone has something, and the first item is a psalm; therefore, the psalm is the primary function in the meeting. What is a psalm? A psalm refers to singing, to praising. By this we must realize that the first thing we must do in the meetings is to sing praises.

In our meetings we come far short in singing. We need to spend much time singing. While I am speaking in the meeting or while others are speaking, at a certain point you may just start to sing. At a certain point when your spirit is touched and you are in a kind of ecstasy, simply break forth into singing and the whole congregation will follow. In Revelation chapter five, we read that when Christ ascended to the heavens the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sang a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy...” They did not give a sermon or listen to a message; they just praised, praised, praised! “Blessing and honor and glory be unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” How good it would be if we could have a meeting just for praising. This kind of praising will simply bring you into an ecstasy; you will be in the third heavens with everything under your feet.

The main thing in 1 Corinthians 14 is to prophesy, and the first thing is to praise. The central matter in the meeting of the church is to prophesy, to speak something for Christ, that the church might be built up, but the first thing in the meetings of the church is to praise. When we come together, everyone has a mouth to praise and a psalm for praising. Do you see the contrast between God's way and our present situation? We all must drop our background and linger no longer in the present, degraded situation. We must be brought back to the original way. We have not invented this; we have only discovered what has been here for nearly two thousand years. (*How to Meet*, Chapter 12, Section 1)

### WEEK 3 – DAY 6 – THE PRACTICE OF PRAISE IN THE CHURCH MEETINGS

**Psa. 45:1-2 My heart overflows with a good matter; / I speak what I have composed concerning the King. / My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the sons of men; / Grace is poured upon Your lips; / Therefore God has blessed You forever.**

The Lord is going to revolutionize Christian meetings. He will work this out—by what way, we do not know. The principle, however, we do know: it will be by the release and demonstration of the human spirit. The best way of demonstrating the spirit we also know—by praising the Lord, not in the old way with long prayers, but in a new way with short and living sentences. This requires firstly a daily walk in the Lord with daily experiences of Christ, and secondly, that we open our mouths to praise the Lord, not only in the meetings, but also in our homes, schools, and places of employment. If we have daily experiences of Christ and the exercise of opening our mouths to praise Him, we will have the capital with which to conduct the meetings.

Let us suppose now that we are having a meeting. We have learned already that we need not wait for the stated hour to begin—as soon as some brothers and sisters are together we may start to praise. In fact, we may even begin the meeting on the street while we are coming in. It may be started at any time and by any way—it must be something of the Spirit without forms and regulations. We may begin with a hymn, with a testimony, by calling on the Lord, or by praising the Lord. No one is designated to lead; we are all participants. We all must get into the flow, open our mouths, and go right ahead... (*How to Meet*, Chapter 23, p. 244)

Let me mention now several important points to remember in order to achieve and preserve a good coordination in praising.

Firstly, we should never behave in the meetings in an independent and individualistic way. Seek to be sensitive in your spirit and sense the flow of the meeting. Once anything is begun in the meeting, simply follow and coordinate with others. Sometimes you may come to a meeting and begin to speak; but after just two sentences you will sense that you are out of the flow. You must stop immediately and seek to bring yourself into the flow. Forget about all your thoughts and intentions. The meetings of the church are not a place for an exhibition of your knowledge, but where we all may exhibit Christ in the flow of the life-giving Spirit.

Secondly, for a good coordination we must care well for others, using not only our mouth but also our ears. If you begin to speak and you hear others speaking, immediately stop your voice and let the others finish their praise. This is quite important. After they have finished, you need then to continue in a suitable way. Perhaps what you had begun to say would not be fitting now. You need to be sensitive to the feeling both of the church and of the Spirit. This is not a small matter... (*How to Meet*, pp. 245, 246)

Now I must speak a word concerning our utterances while pray-reading or praise-reading the Word. I do believe it would be more impressive if we would on the one hand use the very words of the verses as our prayers or praises and on the other hand mingle the Word with our fresh experiences. It is good to quote the Word and pray the very Word, but it is also good to apply it to our experiences.

For instance, suppose we are pray-reading Psalm 45. One brother may exclaim, “O my heart is bubbling over!” Then another may follow, “We do have a bubbling heart.” That is the time then for someone to continue by applying the Word to their current experience: “Lord, today my heart was bubbling over with Your presence.” You see, this is not just a kind of quotation, repetition, or interpretation of the words of the verses, but an application to experience... (*How to Meet*, p. 247)

Now I do believe that we all have the idea. We need more and more practice, however, that we may obtain a better coordination one with another and render the best cooperation to God. If we learn to meet together in this way with the proper skill, our meetings will be so sweet, so rich, so inspiring, and so edifying. They will be much more effective than the meetings merely with teachings and messages. (*How to Meet*, p. 252)