

Chapter 3

PRAYERS OF PRAISE

“In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.” Psalm 62:7

MAYBE what we should do first is take a look at a few prayers of praise in Scripture. Psalm 8 begins: “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth!”

Wouldn't you know the first psalm includes another consideration and that is God's name. Maybe you've never thought about His name, but there are several Bible texts that refer to its importance.

When Moses was at the burning bush in the desert he had the temerity to ask the voice what its name was. He said, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘the God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”

The Lord wasn't offended by the question, but answered, “‘I am who I am.’ This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

What does that name mean? Can anyone fully answer this

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question? The only response I've heard anyone posit is that the Lord always IS. It implies eternal history and an eternal future. It also implies an eternal presence; that He is everywhere at all times or what the theologians call omnipresent.

When the new tabernacle was dedicated and King Solomon spoke, he praised God by saying: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who with his own hand has fulfilled what he promised with his own mouth to my father David. For he said, 'Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built for my name to be there, but I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.' "

Did you notice the reference to the word 'name' in that passage? The Lord didn't say the temple was built for 'my presence' or 'my 'being' or my 'body' to reside. No, He referred to His 'name.'

When the descendants of Noah built the tower they said, "let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

The 23rd Psalm tells us that "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Psalms 124:8 says, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

Names are both labels that become a rallying point, and they are descriptions.

I am a Christian and it defines me as a follower of Christ.

But it is challenging to find a name that adequately describes

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God. As soon as we think of the trinity, we're at a loss for words. We don't have enough superlative words at our disposal. We need to invent new words. The Hebrew language also didn't have adequate words, so the Lord just said "I AM."

So when we praise God, we search for words to use and that's a healthy thing. It's good to stretch our language and our emotions as we respectfully approach His majesty and greatness.

Our Creator made the human race in order to have a genuine (I like that word) relationship with us. Although He knows the end from the beginning, He likes a dynamic relationship with His creation. We aren't playthings, or an experiment. No, we're loved and respected in a genuine manner.

The life and suffering of Jesus also wasn't a charade. It could have been; but Jesus really did suffer; It wasn't pretended. He really did live a life like those around Him. It was real. It was genuine.

And so we praise Him. Not only for being who He is, but for lowering Himself from His position of glory to a poverty stricken child. A child with no comforts. A child with all of the challenges that you and I face. He "hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Has an artist ever drawn a picture of him that wasn't handsome and good looking?

Can you imagine how dramatic was His sacrifice just to come here as a child? In heaven he was respected, honored, worshipped and obeyed. The glory and brightness of heaven was His home. The glory of the Father was His place of honor, and had been forever.

Now imagine the dusty little town in Galilee, with the dusty

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little street and a dusty little path leading up to a tiny house made of dirt and a primitive roof.

What a contrast!

Yes, there is much to praise. We need to stretch our imaginations; it's healthy to try to imagine the glory of Heaven. The brilliant light and the reflection of light off streets of gold and buildings of stone or silver.

Imagine a place with no rust, no dust, no trash, no litter. A place with constant music as heavenly beings sing, as angels rejoice.

In the Bible each of the four creatures near the Father have "six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

We could talk about this text for a long time, but I want to point out that these four beings are always with the Father and know Him best. It is comforting to me to consider that those who best know Him can't help but praise Him constantly. These four creatures are obviously very intelligent and know more about God than I will ever know; and they can't stop praising Him.

This is the green light for you and me to join them. This allows us to praise God to our heart's content! The more I know Him, the closer I get to Him, then the more I will praise Him. Doesn't that make sense?

We can praise Him day-in and day-out. We can praise Him as we look at a flower; we can praise Him when we see sunshine; we can praise Him when looking into the face of a child; we can

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praise Him when tasting food.

It's great therapy to praise God. It makes me feel better. It makes my day!

Psalm 9 begins, "I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart."

Psalm 16 begins, "Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust..." This is another reason to praise God. He can be trusted! Just look at the Old Testament stories and notice how the Lord was trustworthy throughout. In every generation He could be trusted. He never once broke His word. He was ever faithful with His people. Not only was He trustworthy, but He was very patient. His plan for Israel was to establish a holy nation that would lead the entire world into a peaceful setting, a place where there was no war or taxes, and where blessings abounded.

Another Psalm begins, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." And that gives us another reason, or another way of describing His glory. Look at the sky and ponder the greatness. Scientists tell us that the universe is expanding as objects travel faster and faster away from each other. They don't understand it, and can't figure it out. They pointed the Hubble telescope toward a black spot in space and took a picture; a time exposure of seven days, and when the picture was finalized by computers they were astonished to find millions of galaxies, not just stars, where they assumed was nothing. The more they look, the more they find, and this is a good way to stretch our imaginations when considering the greatness of God.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" is a familiar

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phrase that reminds us of another attribute of God. He cares about us. He cares about our children, he cares about our grandchildren. It is proper for us to praise Him for His attention to our families, or should I say for the way He loves them more, actually, than we do.

“The Lord is my light and my salvation” is another reminder that He, through the Holy Spirit, gives us guidance and comfort. The ‘Spirit of Truth’ also assists us on our spiritual journey. The fact that He is my salvation opens a door where more praise gushes through. You and I have a lot to say about how we feel about the salvation provided through Jesus Christ. Yes, we have a lot to say about that.

“I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” This is how David felt, and it makes me wonder how can I possibly have any qualifications to ‘bless’ the Lord. What are MY blessings worth? I’d guess not much, but that doesn’t stop me from praising Him anyway. I can add my voice to the prophet’s and praise God. If I have any influence let it be in that direction.

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry” is a beautiful Psalm. As the Lord was patient with Israel, so we need to be patient with Him. He is not a genie to be used at our beck and call. No, we need to be patient and wait; we should be calm and gentle souls. Ones who know that God hears our cry. When I’m suffering He knows, and I pour out my heart to Him and praise Him for always listening and comforting me.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” is yet another reason for praising Him.

I’m sure you’re getting the idea that there are many reasons

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why and how to praise God, and if you have difficulty in putting your feelings into words, then just open the Bible to the book of Psalms and start reading.

Bible texts are prayers. Reading them is a prayer, so when you want to praise God and can't think of what to say, or if you want to express your feelings in a fresh way, then just open the Word and read a prayer using the words of a prophet.

You can even sing a song of praise to add variety to your expressions, and I do this quite often. Of course, we also sing songs of praise in church each and every week. I haven't talked much about singing, but this is how I praise God the majority of the time. Maybe I do it because I like music.

My wife sometimes asks me to change tunes as I hum or whistle the same hymn over and over while working around the house.

So, it's easy to praise God throughout the day, and it keeps my mind moving in His direction.

As we praise God, it's good for us to keep in mind the overriding importance of the Cross and the need for us to spend more time praising Him for His loving sacrifice that we might have eternal life. Mrs. White tells us: "When on this earth, Christ did not make God's power and greatness the chief theme of his discourses. He speaks of him oftenest as our Father, and of himself as our Elder Brother."⁽¹⁾

This helps us understand better where to place our emphasis as we offer prayers of praise.

REFERENCES

- 1 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 19, 1911.