

SCRIBBLING PRAISES TO GOD

I can't think of anything more important to talk about than praising God, can you? In Ps. 119:164 David said, "Seven times a day I praise you." On another occasion in Ps. 71 he said, "My mouth is filled with Your praise, declaring Your splendor all day long." Ps. 115:2 "Praise God for His mighty acts. Praise Him for His surpassing greatness." The idea of worshipping God means to compliment Him, not to show up at a service at a particular time, but to compliment Him for His mighty acts, for His wondrous deeds, for His surpassing greatness - to select something about Him and adore Him or to attribute worth to Him. That's what worship really is. "Worth-ship" - to attribute worth to God. There is really nothing more important in the entire universe than to praise God for who He is and for His mighty acts. Remember Jesus, who knew the Father and was in the Father and the Father in Him, said, "My Father seeks worshippers." He has to go out and look for them because they are so hard to find. They don't come pounding on His door wanting to worship Him. He had to seek them. "My Father seeks worshippers, those that would worship Him in spirit and in truth."

..Praise is kind of like fingernails on a chalkboard to satan. He hates that stuff, and he effectively has us caught up in liturgy sometimes where we have forgotten the spontaneous love and adoration of a Creator that so loved the world. That's really what praise is. It has to be from the heart. You can't program praise. It has to be something that bubbles up on the inside.

How do we do that? I know we have some functional ways that we try to channel our praise. We do it through pretty songs, through our prayers. We have some beautiful singing... I can picture people listening to the music saying, "This is so nice. I just love to hear God's people praise Him." So we take the pretty boxes of praise that are all wrapped up nice with glittery foil and bows and we put them in a big wheelbarrow and wheel it up before the altar of God and say, "These are the praises from Your people!"

What do you do when you get a package that is very pretty and has a beautiful bow on the top? You open it! That's what God does. He takes the pretty boxes with the bows and the glittery foil on it, and He accepts those and says, "Oh, this is nice. My people praise Me." And He opens the boxes. But what is *in* the boxes? That's my question. That's really what I want you to think about right now. Are they filled with praise, and adoration, and love, and thanksgiving? Are your praises overflowing from a thankful heart that is filled with faith and excitement, or are they pretty boxes? When He opens them are the boxes empty because the "praise" just came out of a songbook - and it was nice, sounded good, and looked good, but there was no heart and soul behind it?

Love, encouragement, and praise are as contagious as the measles. As we are on fire, people are going to see that it is worth having. If you would like to test Him and see whether your boxes are empty - very pretty on the outside, but empty - or whether they are full, you can do what I did just recently. I sat down and

decided, "Okay, I open the gates, I go through the gates into the courtroom of God by praise. I wonder if I know how to do that." I decided I was going to praise God for five minutes. I wasn't going to do anything but praise Him. I wasn't going to use any songs out of a songbook, wasn't going to use any psalms out of David's psalms, I was just going to praise Him for His mighty acts and for His wondrous deeds and for all the splendor that He has, and I was just going to see if I knew how to do that. Do you know what I discovered? I found out there was poverty in my heart. I could talk about it, but I needed to look really hard to see if what was there were mere words or whether it was really written on my heart. There was a famine in my soul. You need to ask yourself if you could sit down and make out a list of all the praises of God for His mighty acts for the last five years that He has been involved in your life. Are they empty boxes, or are they full? Are they just songs, or is there really something to it? How much does God really mean to you? How long have you been a Christian? Five...ten years? a few days? I have to think as I ponder things, how much can we learn about praise in that five or ten years? That's really what it's all about. We are founded on being God's people and adoring Him.

Did it take us ten years to learn how to read words off the pages of a songbook? We can do better than that, and I know many of you do. I just want you to think about what is really going into those boxes – your boxes. There needs to be energy, joy, sincerity - and not just on cue. That's what some of these “worship songs” are - praise on cue. That's okay. BUT, if it is bubbling over from the heart then it can't be just on cue. It's going to be there all the time, it will be part of who you are.

I think many of the times we come to a time of the whole church being together and think we have worshipped. **But in God's definition of worship - the adoration, the praise, the thanksgiving must be love that turns to Him unselfishly without any demands on Him.** No selfish requests, but just love directed toward Him saying, "We owe You this!" - bubbling from our hearts. "We compliment You for Your mighty acts and Your wondrous deeds and Your splendor."

...Praise is to recognize a virtue or characteristic of God. Remember David said to praise Him for His mighty acts. So therefore just to say, "We praise You, we praise You, we praise You", that's not praise. That's the word "praise". That's not praise, that's talking about praise. It's like if you went to the dentist and you said, "Well, I praise you, I praise you, I praise you. Amen." And he looks at you and says, "Wow, this guy is crazy." But what if you said to the dentist, "Your staff is very professional, you are virtually painless, :) you are very inexpensive...I really appreciate your professionalism and the quality of work that you do." And he says, "That was really nice." That's what praise is. Why? Because you are praising him for his acts, or for his particular characteristics. That's what praise is. It's not to say the word "praise, praise, praise", but it's to actually recognize a quality of God and to say, "That's who You are, and I love You for that." That in truth is what praise is, and that is what we want to grow to learn about and to

walk in. You have to recognize and visualize who God is to be able to praise Him and that's the bubbling over that we are talking about.

Phil. 3:8 talks about knowing the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ our Lord. When I think about that, in the whole book of Philippians eighteen times he talks about rejoicing. **Part of praising is rejoicing in all circumstances.** That has to be the pivotal verse in that letter, that he wants to know the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ. Someone who knows the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ our Lord doesn't have to be told to praise any more than you have to tell a dog to bark or a bird to sing. If they know the surpassing greatness of Jesus Christ our Lord, they can't help but praise. It's just going to be a very natural thing. That's really what praise is. You have to praise Him for His mighty acts or it's not praising. You have to recognize His attributes, or it's not praise. To say the word "praise" or to put a melody to the word "praise" doesn't make it praise. It has to be something that you recognize about God; His mighty acts or His qualities of who He is that turns it into praise.

Praise is an attitude, it is a relationship, and I think in a lot of ways it's a language. Maybe that's where the confusion comes in. It actually is a language. What is the language of Brazil? Portuguese. What is the language of Mexico? Spanish. The language of the kingdom of God is praise. That is how you enter into the gates. That's the language of the kingdom of God. And really that's what the problem is with thinking you "know how to praise God", that somehow or other we have reserved it for when we are all together as a church, and so we don't really understand the language. When I was in Germany, I saw someone at the train station and said "Good Day" to them in German. And he began to converse with me! I said, "Hold on! I don't know the language! I just learned a few words in school." I couldn't **communicate** in that language; I didn't know that language. That's really what has happened a lot of times to the people of God. They learn some words in "church school", they know a few words, but they don't really know the language. We spend all day talking in another language and then "Whoa! Stop there! I talk another language all day long. I only know a few words." We are not going to be able to praise from the heart if we spend our whole life talking another language, then come in and try to say a few words in this other language. It's not going to work that way.

What's the other language? There are two languages. One is the language of the kingdom of God. That's praise. The other language is the language of the kingdom of darkness. That's the opposite. If the language of the kingdom of God is praise, which is to recognize or to compliment an attribute of God, then the language of the kingdom of darkness, which is the opposite of that, is to criticize a virtue or attribute, or to complain about a circumstance of some sort, etc. **That's satan's language - the opposite of praise - complaining and criticizing and being pessimistic.** The whole world speaks that language. If you spend all day speaking a different language, you can't come in and adequately converse in a brand new language

called praise. My language shouldn't change because of circumstances. It's either my language or it's not my language.

Traffic at the intersection backs up and you are complaining about it - that's the language of the kingdom of darkness! It's really nothing new. If you remember, even back in the wilderness they were wandering around for forty years. Do you remember what they had to eat day after day? Manna. No one ever had to ask what was for dinner, did they? They baked it, poached it and made it into pies. Day in and day out it was manna. Everyone complained about it. They said, "Hey, let's go back to bondage in Egypt. At least we had decent food to eat and we weren't running for our lives." That was the language of complaining. No matter what it was. Here they were, just on the verge of the Promised Land, and they were still complaining. They were still speaking the language of darkness. That's always the way it is. Sometimes we feel like things just don't happen our way, and so we let our circumstances control our language. That doesn't make any sense. I don't start speaking French because someone did something I didn't want them to do. My language shouldn't change because of circumstances. It's either my language or it's not my language. I either speak in the language of praise, or I speak in the language of complaint. It's only going to be one of those two things. There are a lot of circumstances that tend to influence us, and so we begin to speak that other language.

There are a lot of situations of life in which we may typically want to respond in a manner of complaining, rather than a positive attitude that involves praising God. The weather is such a simple illustration - "Boy, what an ugly day it is out there." Who made that day? The Lord made that day (Ps. 118). God said that He looked at His creation and said it was good. Who are we to say what's an ugly day? God said it was good. This language thing is so important. We sing the song, "This is the day the Lord has made let us complain and criticize it." Is that how it goes? How in the world can we sing songs of praise when the church is together, and then go away and criticize the very same God? He made the world. He made these situations, these circumstances. His very best is poured into it.

Praise is not something you can turn off and on like a switch, but it is something that overflows from a condition of the heart and it is not based on any circumstances whatsoever other than Jesus died on the cross. That hill of Calvary puts everything else in a shadow, no matter what else it is. Some people call it optimism. You are not seeing things right if you belong to God and you are not optimistic, because everything God made is **absolutely good!** He is all-powerful, He is worthy of praise, and so we don't praise Him because it is part of our liturgy, we praise Him because our hearts are overflowing because of His mighty acts and attributes.

"Rejoice in all circumstances." "Praise God at all times." "Rejoice!
Again, I say, Rejoice!" "Be anxious for nothing." "Be content in all

circumstances." In every case, we have a choice of whether we are going to spend our time speaking the language of the kingdom of God or the language of the kingdom of darkness, which is to complain. It's almost a way of evaluating your own salvation in some respects. So many things turn out to be that way. We tend to speak the language of the country we are a citizen of. Are we a citizen of the kingdom of God, or are we a citizen of the kingdom of darkness? That's the language we are going to be automatically speaking.

Praise God for His mighty acts. If I ask you to make a list of God's mighty acts, could you do it? I'm not talking about what He did in parting the Red Sea, I'm talking about what He has done in the last five or ten years. What would your list look like? Would it be empty? Because if it is, your heart is empty. **God is not empty. God is full of great and mighty acts.** God is full of abundant blessings for all of His children, and it is having eyes to see them and a heart to recognize it and appreciate it that makes us into people that satisfy Christ's request to find people that would worship God in spirit and in truth. Not empty boxes, not borrowed praises.

What's borrowed praise? Borrowed praise is maybe one of the songs in a songbook. Maybe it's one of King David's psalms. Maybe it's a prayer that you heard ever since you were a knee-high to a grasshopper so that's part of your prayer now. I'm sure if we were to ask David if we could borrow one of his praises out of the psalms, he would probably say, "Yeah, that would be okay. Go ahead and use it." I wonder what God would say? We are looking up to God and we are praising Him through one of David's psalms or out of the songbook, and God looks down and says, "Well, that's David's praise 3100 years ago. I already heard that. **What's your praise?** That's David praising Me for the mighty acts I did in his lifetime." We are not talking about something that is this all-time praise list. He is talking about specific things in his life, and we are to learn from those, not mimic, not copy them.

David was praising God for His mighty acts in David's time. A borrowed praise is to look at David's time and say, "Hey, that was great what He did for David. That's tremendous." But that's borrowed. God says, "Hey, David already praised Me for that. What are you going to praise Me for?" That's not to say we can't use the psalms. The people who wrote the songs in the songbook, they had praises on their lips and hearts. That's great. That's their praises. God has already heard those. We can rejoice and participate in those. But that can't be all, because those are borrowed. Where are **our** praises? David said to sing to the Lord a **new song**. He said that twice in Ps. 33 and 144. **"Sing to the Lord a NEW song."**

Praise is a language, and it is based on our relationship with God and our participation with Him in who He is. To praise God in all circumstances means not just borrowing from songwriters and the psalmist, but

praising Him for His mighty acts in our life. And as we grow in Christ, we are going to have a new song to sing. What if we do sing to the Lord a new song? What if we do have praises in our heart today for circumstances today and we do decide to share that together as the Lord's people rather than depend on something written in 1723? "Well, it won't sound as good." Complaining again? Whose language is that? What does how good it sounds have to do with anything? Does that really make any difference? Are we really caught up in that?

I really think that God will call His angels together and say, **"Listen to them! They are singing to Me a new song!" I think He would be anxious to hear a brand new song. Lips of praise - heartfelt, honest, and sincere praise. We need to learn to sing a new song, not just borrowed praise.** What if we do stutter a little? What if, in trying to praise God and figure out exactly what to say, we don't sound that great? I know some of these things are hard and we are not used to doing it because it's a language that we are maybe still learning. What if it doesn't sound just right? What if we get a little embarrassed because we try to praise God in a public time and we sing to Him a new song that was on someone's heart? What if it doesn't sound just right?

(READ THIS! YOU'LL KNOW IT'S TRUE!)

Recently it was my birthday, and I got a card from my two-year old and four-year old. My son drew an egg-shaped smiley face and signed his name, and half the letters were backwards. Then my daughter took a colored pencil and scribbled. Did I get that card, look at it, and say, "Look what you did Ha ha. The scribble, oh, that's ridiculous." No. It brought tears to my eyes. I thought it was really something special. It wasn't the printed poem on the card that brought tears to my eyes. It was probably a pretty poem, but I don't remember that, because it didn't mean anything to me. Someone else wrote that. It was a borrowed praise. But my children wrote to me something very, very special in the way that they could. I appreciate exactly what they did for me, and I think that somehow or other as God's people we need to spend our time learning to praise and adore Him and attribute worth to Him and to compliment Him, and if we stutter a little bit, that's okay.

A new song is always going to have its problems. We need to slow down on the borrowed praises and we need to slow down on the pretty boxes that have nothing in them. We need to stop reading the poem on the inside of the card. Somehow, I just feel like our scribbling is going to be very, very special to God if it is from the heart even as little children. Jesus said, "Unless you become as little children, you won't find the Kingdom of heaven, because it is reserved for such as these." We need to do some scribbling together. I praise God for His

glorious people, His holy nation, and that is you, and you are special. We need to give God what He is worth. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to us is the way that James put it. We need to be a people of praise. Let's do what we can and scribble as best we can, and sing to the Lord a brand new song!!!!!!!



Almighty God, we pray that Your praise will always be on our lips seven times a day and from dawn until dusk and in the middle of the night. We will worship You, adore You, and unselfishly give you the praise of which You are worthy, but just because You are who You are. Father, please paint the picture of Your awesomeness and impress it on our hearts and on our minds. Help it to blind us to all the things of the world so that we can't even see the temptation and the sin that so easily besets us. Father, we pray for a pure heart and a sincere faith. We pray that you will fill us with the love that will be expressed in good deeds and good works and good words to each other, but also in an unceasing praise and adoration of Yourself. We praise You for Your Son Jesus Christ who loved us so much while we were still standing against Him and standing full of pride and sin and selfishness and lust and greed. We thank you that that Son of Yours was willing to die for us anyway. We thank you for the friendship that we find with Him and with You through Him, and we thank you for the common bond that we share with each other as Your people. Father, we pray that we will be servants that none will ever compare to and that through Your love and will and Your power and Your determination to save this city that somehow we will be useful to you in our own meager ways, but that Your hand will always be with us strengthening us. Father, we beseech You, show us Your glory. We thank You for all that You have done for us, and we praise You and thank You because of, and in the name of, Jesus Christ Your Son. Amen.