

How Praise Brings Miracles

Miracles of every sort have occurred when men and women offered up their praises to God.

Have you ever noticed in reading the Bible how important fragrance is to God? His Word speaks about it in both a negative and a positive sense. For example, the sin of the Israelites is often described as a stench in the nostrils of God. Esther's preparation for her audience with the king, on the other hand, is shown to be at least part of the key to her receiving his favor. She bathed in special lotions and oils to give herself a pleasing scent.

The Wise Men gave frankincense and myrrh, two delightfully scented oils, to the Christ Child as a gift. And Mary broke an alabaster box of fragrant oil to anoint the feet of Jesus. Have you ever thought about the fragrance that filled the room as Mary poured her love on the feet of Jesus that day?

In the same way, we can send up a sweet-smelling savor to God when we praise Him.

If this image is hard for you to grasp, think of how you feel when you go to the home of a friend or relative where a special meal is being prepared for you. The wonderful smell of the cooking food that greets you when you arrive permeates the home and causes your mouth to water.

It is the same way with God. When He "smells" the praises of His children, His mouth begins to water, in a sense, and a beautiful thing happens. He comes to dwell in the midst of His people. The Bible tells us that He is "enthroned in the praises of [His people]" (Ps. 22:3, NKJV).

Imagine that: As we, the created ones, worship the Creator, He rewards us with His presence! And just as the fragrance in a room can permeate our clothes and remain with us long after we

have left it, so the presence of God remains with us after we have ceased to praise.

This is why I believe it is important not only to pray to God every day and to thank Him for sending His precious Son to redeem us, but also to spend time praising Him. Though the rewards of praising Him are many, we praise Him because of who He is, not because of what He gives. We praise Him because He is our Creator.

Do you remember God's words to Job? "'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb?'" (Job 38:4-8).

I'm sure you agree that it's hard to comprehend a God who fashioned the universe with the wave of His hand—and yet longs to fellowship with us each day. How do we meet with Him? Through praise, fellowship and thanksgiving.

In meditating on God's words to Job, we come to understand our finiteness next to His infiniteness, and we can't help but praise Him. The Bible says that when Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, "the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen" (Luke 19:37). Some of the Pharisees wanted Jesus to rebuke the people for praising God. But Jesus replied, "'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out'" (v. 40).

He says the very rocks will cry out and praise Him if we don't!

THE BENEFITS OF PRAISE

What happens when we praise God? As I mentioned before, He

rewards us with His presence—and in His presence is power. It is the power of God that brings provision. So we have what I call the “Four Ps”: praise, presence, power and provision. We offer the praise; God supplies the rest.

As we praise God, we sense His presence. In His presence we experience fullness of joy (see Ps. 16:11). His power becomes apparent to us, and we realize He can “supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). We are released to place our trust in Him.

In that place of trust, there is perfect peace, regardless of whatever storm we are going through in our lives. Praise is a powerful tool and an incredible blessing to those who offer it with a sincere heart toward our heavenly Father.

Would you like to experience God’s presence in your life today? Then I invite you to praise Him as David did. You can read David’s praises in the Psalms. His secret was that he praised God in both the good times and the bad times. Psalm 30:3 gives us an example: “O Lord, you brought my soul up from the grave; you have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.”

David knew how to praise God even when he was in distress. Think about it: Aren’t the bad times the times we most need God’s presence in our lives?

Sometimes it’s easier to sing a praise than to say a praise. I believe that’s what David did. During those long nights out in the field as a young shepherd boy, David learned how to praise his Creator. Let a song ring out of your heart today!

And don’t think it has to come only when you’re on your knees during your devotional time. I get tickled listening to my husband sing praises in the shower. Sometimes I have had sweet moments of praise and fellowship with the Lord while I was riding around in my car. It really doesn’t matter where you praise or how you praise—just praise Him!

If we would take time each day to praise the Lord, we would be amazed at the results. Not only would we be affected in a powerful way but those around us would experience a blessing as well. This is what happened when Paul and Silas were in prison. As they praised God in spite of their circumstances, a powerful earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, and both they and the other inmates were released from their shackles!

Some of the greatest stories I have read from Foxe's Book of Martyrs include men and women who were praising God as their lives were taken. The story of Polycarp is one of my favorites. Polycarp was one of the apostle John's disciples and the pastor of the people of Smyrna. When he was being burned at the stake for refusing to renounce Christ, he said: "Wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee and the Holy Ghost be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen."

When the fire was kindled around Polycarp, a flame blazed forth, but eyewitnesses said, "He gold or silver glowing in a furnace. Moreover, we perceived such a sweet odor coming from the pile, as if frankincense or some such precious spices had been smoking there."

The men who watched could not believe that this "strange man" would not burn. They commanded an executioner to pierce him through with a dagger. When the man obeyed, a dove came forth, along with such a great quantity of blood that the fire was completely extinguished.

You may feel as if you just can't praise God because what you're going through is too difficult. Open up your heart and begin to think of the good things He has done for you. He loves you so much that He gave His only Son to die for your sins. That is reason enough to praise Him.

Purpose in your heart to praise God every day. Put in a worship CD, turn on a Christian radio or TV station, sing in the shower, your prayer closet or your car, but take time to praise Him as Psalm 68:4 encourages us to do: "Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name Yah, and rejoice before Him."

I promise you will never be the same.

Joni Lamb is co-host of the Daystar Network's program *Celebration*.