

PRAISE...The Mark of a Saint

By

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“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6).

To know God is to praise Him. To behold His works in what we call “nature” is cause for spontaneous praise to well up in our hearts and burst forth from our lips. The more the true scientists teach us of the intricate and perfectly balanced order of things, the more we feel the necessity to praise the Creator of such perfect order, and sing with the Psalmist, “All thy works praise thee.”

PRAISE WITH PURPOSE

Even the unconverted must give praise to God when he considers the works of God’s fingers. But if the mere worldly observer has cause to praise the Creator, the Christian has a thousand times more.

The philosophy of modern education is that life is purposeless, that it originated in a swamp of primordial ooze and arrived to its present state by accident, and if given enough time, say 50 billion years or so, it might eventually evolve into something with purpose, or accidentally discover a purpose for its existence. Of course, this is of no value to the present generation, who will not be around for the fulfillment of such purpose. Such is the despair of the evolutionary thinking of our day.

But the Christian knows the purpose of life. He knows that God created man in His own image in a setting that afforded every possible joy, and that all of creation displayed a harmony in peace and perfection “When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

While the world vexes itself over sin and pollution, the saint praises God because he knows the solution to the problem. He knows that all such problems stem from man’s rebellion against God. He knows that the individual penalty for sin is death in the Day of Judgment, but that Christ underwent that penalty in His own death, thus freeing believers from the judgment and finality of death. If he knows and believes this, the gospel, then every adverse circumstance but drives deeper the awareness that he owes his life to Christ, who made null and void the charges against him so that instead of impending judgment and death, there lies before him assurance of immortality in the image of Christ.

Instead of an attitude of despair, so common on the campus and in the lives of the elite of our day, the Christian attitude is one of praise for the mercy of God who saves from the sin and the consequences. There is never a time in the true saint’s life when he is totally unconscious of this mercy. It is the center of his worship, in celebrating the Communion,

and all his activities are grounded on this fact that he is redeemed by God's act of grace through Christ's death.

It is just this assurance of God's purpose and its fulfillment that filled the apostles and early Christians with praise even in the prison and on the rack.

Why the absence of such spontaneous praise today? Could it be that men are unconcerned with the resurrection of the dead and unconvinced of their own salvation from death? The doctrine of atonement, the full penalty for sin being met by Jesus, is disregarded to the point that many have no assurance of their salvation, and the common concept of "soul-immortality" in a spiritual state negates the simple doctrine of a resurrection to immortality as the hope of the saints. But one who comes to the understanding of the fullness of Christ's sacrifice in undergoing his judgmental death is filled with a constant desire to offer praise to the One who saves. When added to this is the assurance of a real resurrection to immortality the believer is ever seeking ways to exalt and praise the Savior.

**"O for a thousand tongues to sing
My Great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace."**

Thus it is the basic meaning of the gospel, the death and resurrection of Jesus that gives the greatest incentive to praise.

But there is more. Those who recognize Jesus as King of the world have a natural desire to praise Him, as loyal subjects to a righteous ruler. The exaltation of Jesus as King was the gist of the first Gospel sermon, preached by Peter on Pentecost. He said that David's prophecy that one would sit on his throne, was now fulfilled by Jesus (Acts 2:24-36). "God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." In this knowledge the saints went forth in a hostile world singing His praise and rejoicing in the Kingdom. Today we can thank God that He has put all creation in the hands of the Righteous One, that power does not belong to me, nor to you nor to any other man, but "all authority has been given unto me (Christ) in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18) Praise God!

THE MARK OF REBELLION

Just as the first evidence of Christian faith is praise to God, conversely, the first sign of rebellion is the refusal to give Him such praise.

Only the rebel can look upon what God has created and feel no desire to praise Him. The evil of man is seen in this, that he knows that he is created by God, but refuses to admit it. For the minute that he recognizes the fact that God is, he must acknowledge that he is subject to God. Even a child knows that if he cuts out paper dolls or makes mud pies, he must be superior to the objects he makes. If I praise God, then I admit that He is my Creator and that I must bow down to Him in submission.

Thus the effort to remove God from schools is arrogant rebellion against God. The removal of any teaching concerning Christ is a move against God, for Jesus is God in the flesh, and clearly stated that “He that honors not the son honors not the Father that sent Him” (John 5:23). The rebels know very well that if they remove Christ they have removed God and any need to submit to Him. This is the evil intention of those who present the false and unscientific doctrine of evolution. To teach that “In the beginning God created will compel praise from the children, and make them subject to the Creator. The rebels start early to deny God and repress any praise due to Him.

It is a sign of a Christ-orientated church that in its meetings spontaneous praise pours forth to God. By contrast, the carnally-orientated church is concerned with the praise of men and the approval of society. Often it hires its singers, or it will have no praise at all. Its services and literature are vehicles for praising certain leaders, for extolling the accomplishments of the group and emphasizing various projects and social needs. While honor and appreciation should be shown to those due them, the center of church activity should be praise and thanksgiving to God and not to men.

A truly spiritual church is marked by constant praise for God through Jesus Christ. The hymns do not so much speak of our feelings and experiences as they do of Christ, His power and glory and work. Unfortunately, many hymnals are filled with songs which relate the experiences of man and overwork the pronoun “I” to the neglect of the Lord to whom the praise is due.

PRAISE IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

God’s saints do not limit their praise to the stated hours of corporate worship. It is a common thing for men to sing the Doxology on Sunday, but in the dread circumstances of the week to question God. “Why this sickness?” “Why this death?” “Why does God allow war?” It is to say, “God isn’t, running things quite right.” We need to take a lesson from Job when, upon the loss of his sons and daughters and all possessions, he said, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). No questions asked. Just praise. The man of faith sees God’s sovereignty in every circumstance, and relies upon Him in them all. “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me; thy right hand will save me” (Psalm 138:7). If we rely upon our own strength, buttressed with a pistol under the pillow and a gas gun in the coat pocket, how can we then praise God for His protection?

The saint goes to bed with praise to God for his presence through the day. Even if all the circumstances have seemed to be against him, even if his burden is heavy with no relief in sight, he praises God for His infinite wisdom, trusting that He will deliver and that all things do work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). Failure to exhibit this praise in all circumstances brands our profession of faith as a lie. How can we witness to the world, especially to our children in our homes, if we praise God only in fair weather, and complain to Him in the foul? The saint knows that God will lead to the ultimate fulfillment of His purpose, and praises Him every step of the way, whether the way is hard or easy.

Which brings us to another cause for praise — Victory. True, we are at war. We are not called into the Kingdom to rest and relax, but to wage warfare “against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places” (Eph.6:12). It is a relentless war that grows more vicious each day, and there is no escape from it until death or until Christ comes. But the eternal outcome has already been settled. At Christ’s return He will destroy the enemy and give glorious rewards to the victors. Even if we fall in battle, we die victoriously for we shall awake in the resurrection to share the glories with all who have so fought. “Then shall each man have his praise from God.” Hence we already live “unto the praise of His glory.” In the worst of the battle we can lift our voices in praise to our Captain and praise Him “who always leads us in triumph in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:14).

Then it will be the saint’s turn to receive praise from Christ. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” But even with those divine words of praise ringing in our immortal ears, our minds and lips will still be filled with the praise of God who thought up the whole scheme and made such joy and glory possible.

Praise, like faith, is void if not accompanied by works. As we have said already, to praise God is to admit our necessity to submit to Him as Creator and to submit to Him is to obey Him. It is a blessed circle; praise induces us to humbly submit to our God, and submission reveals such infinite love that we are compelled to offer more praise.

Praise has rewards. Not only does it please God, but it defeats the enemies of the saint. Satan cannot abide the genuine praise to Jesus Christ. Doubt and fear disappear in the warmth and light of our praise to Him who defeated Satan and put him to shame. It is one of the greatest means of encouraging one’s self and all those about us. “Praise is comely for the upright” (Psalm 33:1).

“Praise you the Lord.”

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