



2022 Q3 In The Crucible With Christ: Lesson 9 A Life of Praise

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SABBATH

memory text

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!” Phillipians 4:4

How much leeway is given here...there is an absolute in that sentence, what is it? How much time or what conditions are specified when we should NOT be rejoicing in the Lord? I mean, it is easy to shout with joy...praise...rejoice when we **feel** joy, when we are on top of the mountain, things are right in our worlds. But what about when we feel anything but joy, when we are down in the bottom of the pit at the bottom of the valley, and everything is going wrong? Is it easy to rejoice then...to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving? Could that be precisely the time when we need – perhaps more than ever – to praise God? Is it possible that praise can indeed transform even our darkest circumstances – not by changing the objective facts situation – but by changing our perspectives, our attitudes, and even changing those around us in a way that encourages and empowers and sustains us in the midst of our challenges?

What is praise? The dictionary definition specifies that “praise” can be either a noun or a verb, and is described as an expression of admiration or approval for someone or something...also to glorify or extol.

How can something so simple be such a powerful transformational weapon in the worst of circumstances?

I want to go through some inspiring examples of the transforming power of praise in some unimaginable situations.

Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (a.d. 138–161) continued Emperor Trajan’s policy and practice of persecuting Christians. In a.d. 155, a crowd brought a group of Christians to the authorities of the city of Smyrna in Asia Minor to be convicted and punished. When the Christians refused to acknowledge the gods of the empire, they were punished by death. Afterward, the crowd demanded that Polycarp, the bishop of the church in Smyrna, be brought before the city. A disciple and friend of the apostle John, the old Polycarp also was a widely known and influential Christian leader in Asia and beyond. When Polycarp finally was brought into the amphitheater, the proconsul tried to persuade him to recant his faith and curse Christ.

The faithful disciple of Jesus replied: “For eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no evil. How could I curse my king, who saved me?” When, eventually, the proconsul condemned him to



be burned on the pyre and the soldiers tied him to the stake, Polycarp prayed and praised God with a loud voice:

“Lord Sovereign God . . . I thank you that you have deemed me worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. . . . For this . . . I bless and glorify you. Amen.”—Justo L. González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation, The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, revised and updated ed. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), p. 54.

Polycarp was only one of thousands of Christians who, following biblical characters such as David and Paul, praised God from amid persecution and the trials of life. Those early Christians praised God from the flames, from the stakes, from the amphitheaters full of wild animals, from crosses, from the prison cells, and from the chambers of torture. They did not think about the injustice done to them; they did not calculate the cost-benefit ratio of their act. They loved and trusted God and did not hesitate to make a radical and ultimate commitment to Him. They did not consider it a hardship to die for their Lord. Rather, they considered it a privilege to suffer and die for their beloved Savior. They unhesitatingly trusted God and His promise of resurrection and considered death but a moment in time on their way to meet their Lord in glory.

Writing about the experience of David as he faced the rebellion of his son Absalom, Ellen G. White notes David’s habit in resorting to singing and praising God in times of trouble:

“‘A mighty valiant man,’ a man of war, a king, whose word was law, betrayed by his son whom he had loved and indulged and unwisely trusted, wronged and deserted by subjects bound to him by the strongest ties of honor and fealty—in what words did David pour out the feelings of his soul? In the hour of his darkest trial, David’s heart was stayed upon God, and he sang.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 741, 742.

What about Job? In the midst of unimaginable loss – property, livestock, wealth, all of his children...He said,

“I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing. The Lord gave, and now He has taken away. May his name be praised!” – Job 1:21 GNT

In chapter 2 of *The Great Controversy*, entitled “Persecutions in the First Centuries,” Ellen G. White describes how singing and praising God gave Christians the most genuine and deep joy and peace amid the fiercest affliction and persecution:

“Like God’s servants of old, many were ‘tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.’ . . . These called to mind the words of their Master, that when persecuted for Christ’s sake, they were to be exceeding glad, for great would be their reward in heaven; for so the prophets had been persecuted before them. **They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the truth, and songs of triumph ascended from the midst of crackling flames.** Looking upward by faith, they saw Christ and angels leaning over the



battlements of heaven, gazing upon them with the deepest interest and regarding their steadfastness with approval. A voice came down to them from the throne of God: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' Revelation 2:10."—The Great Controversy, p. 41.

Fanny Crosby the song writer who wrote many famous hymns such as:

- "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"--1875,
- "Blessed Assurance"--1873,
- "He Hideth My Soul"--1890,
- "More Like Jesus"--1867,
- "Jesus Is Tenderly Calling You Home"--1883,
- "Near the Cross"--1869,
- "Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It!"--1882,
- "Rescue the Perishing"--1869,
- "Safe in the Arms of Jesus"--1868,
- "Take the World, But Give Me Jesus"--1879,
- "Tell Me the Story of Jesus"--1880,
- "To God Be the Glory"--1875

She was blind from infancy and later in life, wrote:

"It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind...for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Savior." – https://www.eaec.org/faithhallfame/fanny_crosby.htm

Then there is the story of Horatio Spafford, who faced much tragedy and difficult circumstances in the late 1800's. First, his son died when he was only 2 years old...then despite being a successful attorney and real estate investor, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 ruined him financially as his investment properties were significantly damaged by the great fire. His business interests were further hit by the economic downturn of 1873, at which time he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the SS Ville du Havre. In a late change of plans, he sent his family ahead while he was delayed on business concerning zoning problems following the Great Chicago Fire. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship collided with another sea vessel, the Loch Earn, and sank rapidly...all four of Spafford's daughters died. His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone ...". Shortly afterwards, as Spafford traveled to meet his grieving wife, just as his ship passed near where his daughters had died, he was inspired to write the words to a song...one he named after the stricken vessel, but a song we recognize by the famous chorus, "It is Well With My Soul."

How is this possible?



How do you pass the spot where all FOUR of your daughters went to their watery graves and write these words:

“When peace like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say It is well, it is well, with my soul...For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live: If Jordan above me shall roll, No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life, Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.”

How does a person praise God for their blindness...thank Him for not distracting her with sight?!? How do martyrs sing songs of triumph and rejoice even while they are burning? This is not natural to me...surely this ability or instinct to praise at all times and in any circumstance is supernatural, and requires practice. What design law might be in play here...if we want to learn how to play an instrument, we must practice...if we want to be good at math, we must work math problems. So if praising – even in the midst of the storm – doesn’t come naturally to us, when we practice praise so that it becomes a natural part of our lives, a habit, just our instinctive reaction in ANY circumstance, then praise has the power both to convert and to conquer.

“And while I adore and magnify Him, I want you to magnify Him with me. **Praise the Lord even when you fall into darkness. Praise Him even in temptation.** [Wait...what???] ‘Rejoice in the Lord always,’ says the apostle; ‘and again I say, Rejoice.’ Will that bring gloom and darkness into your families? No, indeed; **it will bring a sunbeam.** You will thus gather rays of eternal light from the throne of glory and scatter them around you. Let me exhort you to engage in this work, scatter this light and life around you, not only in your own path, but in the paths of those with whom you associate. Let it be your object to make those around you better, to elevate them, to point them to heaven and glory, and lead them to seek, above all earthly things, the eternal substance, the immortal inheritance, the riches which are imperishable.”—*Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, pp. 593, 594.*

SUNDAY

Framework for Praise

There are two basic types of prayer. First type of prayer—the prayer of need—brings our hearts and minds into the truth of our own helplessness, our own limitations, our own inability, and our own hopelessness without God in our lives. It is a prayer of humility that opens our hearts and minds to God, to connect with God, to seek God’s presence in our inmost being. This is more than just the pursuit of knowledge, such prayer seeks the will of God in our lives and thus opens us to the healing and recreating presence of God. Our fears and insecurities are replaced with love and trust in God...we are transformed as we come into connection with our Creator.

The second type of prayer is that of thanksgiving, worship, and praise. This type of prayer solidifies our hearts in love, adoration, appreciation, affiliation, confidence, and faith in God...all of which is also working to eradicate our fear and selfishness in the bonds of love



and trust. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving focus our minds away from ourselves and onto Him by communicating our love, devotion, reverence, appreciation, and thankfulness to God. It is exalting God for who He is, communicating our longing for Him. Our praise welcomes His presence in our midst – God lives in our praise...He inhabits the praises of His people, so when we praise and worship God, His presence comes to dwell with us...and when He does, things change. Always. You can count on it – hearts change, situations change, minds change, attitudes change, lives change. Every time you praise God, something changes within you, or your circumstances, or in the people or situations around you. Even if we can't see all that is being affected, we can trust that it is...because it is impossible to touch the presence of God and there NOT be change.

When you come in contact with all that *God is*, it will affect all that *you are*. *Praise is the prayer that changes everything*. This framework for praise comes from really knowing God – the eternal life kind of knowing mentioned in John 17:3 – If we really understood who God is, our praise would be unending...It simply could not be contained.

Who is this practice of praise for? What is the point of rejoicing always (Phil 4:4), or blessing the Lord at all times (Psalm 34:1)? Is all this praising and worshiping for God or for us? Does God need to be reminded of who He is, or do we need to be reminded? Does God need to be reassured in the knowledge of His greatness, perfection, and love...or are we the ones who forget? When we are praising God, we are demonstrating and agreeing with and becoming like who He is. This instinctive response of praise must become a condition of the heart, a way of life, a pattern that is woven into the very fabric of our being – to the point where it is no longer a decision that has to be made because the decision has *already* been made, and we live a lifestyle of praise. (*The Prayer That Changes Everything*, Stormie Omartian, Harvest House Publishers, 2004.)

There is more design law stuff woven into this process of deciding...of actively choosing...the right action of the will. What is it? Our brains are amazing quantum computers. They are composed of 100 billion neurons and more than one trillion supporting cells. Each neuron can have up to 10,000 connections to other neurons. That's over 40 quadrillion interconnections!

These 40 quadrillion interconnections in our brains are comprised primarily of dendrites. Within each neuron, there are 10 million microtubules, and each microtubule is made up of billions of tubulin molecules, which in turn are composed of 445 amino acids, which are made of various atoms, many of which share electrons. Within these quadrillions of dendrites, with their millions of microtubules made of billions of tubulin molecules, the atoms form shared electron clouds.

These clouds exist in positions of uncertainty until you think about something and form a conclusion, a belief, or accept a truth — or a lie. **Your act of choosing to believe something will cause the electron clouds, in various places within the dendrites, to collapse. This causes conformation change within the microtubule structure, which solidifies the memory or belief into the brain.**



This is the process of choosing, when we choose to believe something it changes us, whether it is true or false, the choice to believe it changes the conformation of our dendritic electron clouds. This is why we can have a change of heart, or change of insight, or conviction of certainty very quickly when a belief changes—even while the brain hasn't had time to build a new neural pathway or connection...and those pathways and connections the brain builds then hardwires in learned information and behaviors that can become rote or habitual.

[OPTIONAL – but this is different than forming conclusions and beliefs and memories. Your beliefs and memories are stored within the brain tubulin structure until something happens that causes you to reexamine or reevaluate the belief or memory and come to a different conclusion. This is how beliefs are stored and mindsets are established. This is why the Bible tells us to rejoice in trials because they build character. Difficulties in life will cause us to re-examine our beliefs and the electron clouds reenter a position of uncertainty and we can change our beliefs and when we choose a new belief they collapse in new patterns corresponding to the new belief. This gives insight into the law of worship, which says that by beholding, we become changed. In psychiatry, this is known as “modeling.” We neurobiologically and characterologically change to become like what we admire, worship, think about, choose, and act on.]

Our beliefs initially collapse the electron clouds storing those beliefs, and then as we act on those beliefs, think through and reaffirm those beliefs, recite them and live them the brain creates pathways wiring in the beliefs to habits of thinking, reacting and processing. Thus, we are changed and transformed by what we think, *praise*, value, worship, watch, believe and engage in.

MONDAY

Praying Down Walls

What was God trying to teach the Israelites in the story of Jericho? What actually caused the walls to fall? “By trust in God, the people marched around Jericho for seven days, and the walls fell.” When God is on the verge of doing something new in our lives, He may bring us to a Jericho, for He may need to teach us that the power to triumph does not come in our own strength and strategies. Everything we need comes from outside ourselves. So, no matter what is in front of us, no matter how insurmountable it may seem, our role is to praise God – the source of everything we need. This is faith in action.

TUESDAY

The Life of Praise

In the first paragraph, the quarterly reiterates what we just discussed – “Praise is something that we must practice until it changes from being an activity done at a particular time to an *atmosphere in which we live*. Praise shouldn't so much be a specific act but a specific way of life.” This is well said and references what law?



And did you know this practice or framework or atmosphere of praise is not just for us. The Bible says “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!” – Psalm 150:6. Listen to this quote from the *Review and Herald*,

“While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, **these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ** for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is mediating in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his mediatorial work. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God?” — RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4

“Our life is to be bound up with the life of Christ; we are to draw constantly from Him, partaking of Him, the living Bread that came down from heaven, drawing from a fountain ever fresh, ever giving forth its abundant treasures. If we keep the Lord ever before us, [law of worship, by beholding we are changed] **allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him**, [law of exertion, the more we exercise something it gets stronger] **we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life**. [!!!] Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend. He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him. – COL 129.3

WEDNESDAY

A Witness Who Convicts

How can our praise transform the eternal destinies of those around us?

Did Stephen’s reaction when being stoned affect Saul?

“The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. The memory of the signet of God upon his face; his words, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed. His death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the conviction of Saul, who could not efface from his memory the faith and constancy of the martyr, and the glory that had rested on his countenance.” – AA 101.3



Were spectators in the arenas impacted by the martyrs singing and praising and praying even as the flames engulfed them?

THURSDAY

A Weapon That Conquers

How can praise be a powerful weapon when a “vast army” is coming against you?

“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” 2 Chron 20:12

Even though God was going to fight for them, they still had to go out to face the enemy. But this was no ordinary march to war. Jesoshaphat appointed a choir to sing praises to the Lord as they marched out. “As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.” God intervened at the very moment they exercised their faith in His promise, as they began to “praise him for the splendor of his holiness.”

Did you know this practice or framework or atmosphere of praise is not just for now, here on this earth? Do you think if we develop a habit of praising God in every circumstance, that we will just cease that behavior in heaven...or will we continue to develop it, refine it, and deepen those neuro pathways for all eternity. If we do not develop a heart of praise and thanksgiving while here on earth, could that impede our progress...or even make us unfit for heaven?

“Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to Heaven, and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love; every countenance beaming with joy; enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb; and ceaseless streams of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, **minge with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise?** Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb?—No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for Heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; **they have never learned the language of Heaven**, and now it is too late. – GC88 542.3

And what is the language of heaven?

“Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they were saying: “**Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!**” ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb **be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!**” – Revelation 5:11-13, NIV



A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for Heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from Heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.
GC88 542.3