

## INTIMACY WITH GOD

### Part Five

#### “Praising His Glory”

Three basic kinds of prayer:

Upward prayer—praise and thanksgiving that focuses on God Himself. (Awe)

Inward prayer—self-examination and confession that brings a deeper sense of sin and, in return, a higher experience of grace and assurance of love. (Intimacy)

Outward prayer—supplication and intercession that focuses on our needs and the needs of others in the world.

In Jesus' instruction on prayer, the Lord's Prayer, praise comes first. Why?

Praise motivates the other kinds of prayer:

Seeing His holiness leads me to own my flaws and confess them.

Seeing His greatness leads to supplication.

Seeing his majesty leads to my dependence and trust in Him.

When you start your prayer with your list of problems the more anxious and burdened you may feel. But if you start your prayer with praise—thinking and thanking God for how great and good He is—when you get to your problems they feel much smaller as you put them in God's hands.

**The Health of Praise** (Ps22:3 God inhabits (dwells) in the praises of His people)

**1Sam16:23** And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.

**2Chron20:22** And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.

**Acts 16:25-26** About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, <sup>26</sup> and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.

Praise has the power to heal what is wrong with us and create inner spiritual health.

C.S. Lewis—A Word about Praising (Reflections on the Psalms)

When we say that a picture, or a book, or a piece of music is admirable, we are inviting others to admire them also, and if they do not, they will lose out and miss something wonderful.

If God is the great object of admiration behind all other beauties and magnificence, then to praise and admire him would be “simply to be awake, to have entered the real world,” while not doing so would be to become far more profoundly crippled than those who are blind, deaf, and bedridden.

If we don't praise God we will live in unreality and poverty. We cannot merely believe in our minds that he is loving or wise or great. We must praise him for those things and praise him to others—if we are to move beyond abstract knowledge to heart-changing engagement.

## **The Reordering of Our Loves**

Praise directly develops love for God. We are what we love.

Our most fundamental identity and life behavior is a function of what we love.

Everyone seeks happiness, and they attach themselves to things they believe will make them happy. That attachment is experienced as love.

But, because of sin, we misidentify what will make us happy. The result is disordered loves—loves “out of order.”

We either love what we ought not to love, or we fail to love what we ought to love, or we love more what we should love less, or love less what we should love more.

If a man loves making money more than doing justice, he will exploit his workers and employees. If he loves his career more than his children, his family relationships will break down.

The ultimate reason for our misery is that we do not love God supremely.

“You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you” (Confessions 1.1.1). –Augustine

If you love anything more than God you will crush it under the weight of your unrealistic expectations, and it will eventually break your heart.

For example, if your spouse and his or her love of you is more important to you than God’s love, then you will get far too angry and despondent when your spouse is failing to give you the support and affection you need, and you will be too afraid of your spouse’s anger and displeasure to tell the truth.

Only if God’s love is the most important thing to you will you have the freedom to love your spouse, or anything for that matter, well.

The things we love individually not only determine our character, but what a society loves collectively shapes its culture.

To change people most profoundly, we must change what we worship. Thinking, arguments, and beliefs are crucial as means of moving the heart, but ultimately we are what we adore. We are what captures our imagination, what leads us to praise and to compel others to praise it.

Our inordinate anger, anxiety, and discouragement result from disordered loves. Our relational problems result from disordered loves, and our social and cultural problems as well. What can change us at the core of our inner being? What can create healthy human community? Worship and adoration of God. We must love God supremely, and that can be cultivated only through praise and adoration.

## **The Importance of Thanks**

Thanksgiving is a subcategory of praise. Thanksgiving is praising God for what He has done, while “praise proper” is adoring God for who he is in himself.

Thanksgiving for a blessing automatically draws our mind toward the attributes and loving purposes of the God who has done the blessing.

Praise for God’s love and goodness transforms effortlessly into thanksgiving for all the examples of his goodness in our life.

**Romans 1:18-21** <sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

The essence of sin is that we don't "give thanks"!

Cosmic plagiarism (ingratitude) is taking credit for something that is a gift. Our life, breath, heartbeat, successes, opportunities, where we were born, talents, etc. are all gifts from God.

When good things come to us, we do everything possible to tell ourselves we accomplished that or at least deserve it. We take credit. And when our lives simply are going along pretty smoothly, without a lot of difficulties, we don't live in quiet, amazed, thankful consciousness of it. In the end, we not only rob God of the glory due him, but the assumption that we are keeping our lives going robs us of the joy and relief that constant gratitude to an all-powerful God brings.

### **The Spiritual Discipline of Praise**

**First:** "See all pleasures as shafts of glory as it strikes our sensibility...I have tried to make every pleasure into a channel of adoration." –C.S. Lewis

"Gratitude exclaims...'How good of God to give me this.' Adoration says, 'What must be the quality of that being whose far-off and momentary coruscations are like this!' One's mind runs back up the sunbeam to the sun."

He says we "shall not be able to adore God on the highest occasion if we have learned no habit of doing so on the lowest."

**Second:** 16 Century English Reformer Thomas Cranmer, the author of the original Book of Common Prayer.

1. The address—a name of God
2. The doctrine—a truth about God's nature that is the basis for prayer
3. The petition—what is being asked for
4. The aspiration—what good result will come if the request is granted
5. In Jesus' name—this remember the mediatorial role of Jesus

i.e. Holy Communion

1. Almighty God
2. unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid,
3. cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit
4. that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name,
5. through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

See how the prayer moves from a grounding in God's nature (why we can ask) to the petition (what we want) to the aspiration (what we will do with it if we get it).

It is remarkable how this pattern combines praise with petition, sound theology with deep aspiration of heart, and concrete goals for our daily life.

Any time you read a text the 1<sup>st</sup> question should be: What does this tell me about the nature or character of God? And use it as an opportunity to praise and adore Him.

### **Alphabetical Attributes & Titles of God**

**A** Advocate 1Jn2:1; Almighty Ps91:1; Ancient of Days Dan7:9; Alpha and Omega Rev1:8 Author & Finisher of our Faith Heb12:2

**B** Banner Ex17:15; Beautiful Ps27:4; Beginning and the End Rev22:13; Bread of Life John 6:48; Branch John 15:2; Bridegroom Mark 2:19; Bright and Morning Star Rev22:16

**C** Comforter 2Cor1:3; Cornerstone 1Pet 2:6-7; Creator Eccles12:1;

**D** Defender Isa19:20; Deliverer Ps18:2; Door John10:9

**E** Eternal Life 1Jn5:20; Everlasting Father Isa9:6;

**F** Faithful and True Witness Rev3:14; Firstborn Col1:15,18; Fortress Ps18:2; Friend Jn15:13-15

**G** Good Shepherd John 10:11; Ps23:1  
And Many More!

The last Psalms of the Psalter are all praise, and the final one—Psalm 150—speaks about praise in the strongest terms. Why does the Psalter end in unbroken praise? Eugene Peterson believes that, just as all prayer is framed by praise, in the end, all prayer should and will end in praise.

All prayer pursued far enough, becomes praise.

C.S. Lewis says that a lack of praise of God is a lack of reality, and praising him helps us enter the real world and enjoy him more fully. This gives us an exciting, concrete vision of the future. Lewis argues that the more perfectly we can praise an object, the greater our enjoyment, and “the worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be.”

What will happen when, in heaven, we are able to love and delight in the triune God, the greatest of all beings, and “simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression”? What will that be like? The answer is that “that soul would be in supreme blessedness.” “Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.”—C.S. Lewis

You believe in a loving God. Then along comes criticism, or rejection (say, a relationship breaks up), or some failure that’s a blow to your reputation in some realm. Anyone in such a situation will feel downcast. But there is a difference between being discouraged and being devastated, between sliding into despondency and not being able to function. If God’s love is an abstraction, it is of no consolation. But if it is a felt and lived reality through pray and praise, then it buoys you up.

Praise encounter with God takes the love of God, the greatness of God, the power of God, the wisdom of God—which most of us experience only on audio—and puts it on video. Praise plunges us into the fullness of who he is, and his love becomes more real than the rejection or disappointment we are experiencing. What could be more practical than that?

**Group Time:** Using Thomas Cranmer’s model for pray write your own prayer using one of the Alphabetical Attributes & Titles of God from the list or your own. And then share it with your small group. As Christians why should our lives be saturated with praise? What difference would it make?