

Praise

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Introduction

Intelligent, thoughtful praise to God is a powerful response and a powerful tool for the Christian. A sea of hands raised in mindless ecstasy is not what I have in mind here, because that kind of praise is praise for praise's sake rather than a response to anything specific. Praise, in the sense the word is used here, means a response of gratitude to a particular blessing.

Two Points

Praise and lust

Praise is the opposite counterpart of desire, because praise has to do with what God has already given us or is already doing. We have the blessing, or the clear prospect of it. But desire, or lust, has to do with things we don't have – and quite possibly can never have. The one represents gratitude, the other frustration and the nature of the contrast is do have/don't have.

The other part of this is that lust is the opposite counterpart of praise. When you spend your time wanting what God has withheld for your own good, such actions say nothing good about Him. Instead they are a reproach. He has not supplied your perceived needs. With praise, on the other hand, He has.

Thinking of it another way, yearning for what God has wisely withheld is a complaint. I want this. You haven't given it to me. I wouldn't want it if I didn't think it were good for me. You aren't meeting my needs.

Praise and faith

I've mentioned where praise comes from. It's also important to notice what it leads to. It is a wellspring of faith. When God does something for us, we realize the fact or do not. If we don't realize He has done something for us, when in fact He has done something for us, nothing is learned. We gain the blessing, but not the lesson that should follow from it.

If God does something for us and we realize the fact, we can remain silent or respond in some way. If we say nothing, the event will most likely be forgotten. If we praise God for what He has done, that type of response is a means of acknowledging what He has done and this lodges in our minds as a memory of what happened. This honors God, but it also provides a mechanism for storing the blessing away for future reference. God did do something for me. I acknowledge it. How? By praising Him for doing whatever it was.

As time goes by and God does more things for us, and as we praise Him for those things as well, we gain an awareness that His presence is real, that He hears and answers prayers, and that He takes an interest in our affairs. If He does these things and we don't ever catch it or

ignore what He did, the knowledge slips away, but if we praise Him – thoughtfully, intelligently, specifically – our awareness of God grows stronger. This process is a means of developing faith, and possibly the only means. I don't know how else one could do it.

Conclusion

It's important to praise God for the blessings with which He surrounds us. This is not some optional thing in the Christian's experience. It is important as a witness for what it tells others about God, but for the individual involved it is imperative as a means of developing the type of faith that can withstand hardship and testing.