



The Power in Praise
Matthew 21:12-17; Psalm 8:2
GCSP – 05/29/2010

Let's pray.

Because he ascended to the throne at the age of four, King Louis XIV of France enjoyed the longest reign in modern European history – 72 years. While his reign was in many ways a great one, Louis was intoxicated by his power and was consumed by his own greatness. He even called himself the Great Monarch and once declared that he was the state, meaning he was France. But in 1715, just like all other human rulers, Louis died.

His funeral was nothing short of spectacular as the great cathedral was packed to the rafters as mourners marveled over his solid gold and jewel-laden coffin. To dramatize the greatness of the king a single candle burned above the casket. Thousands waited in silence for the eulogy as they gazed at the solitary flame.

At the appointed time the funeral service began. Bishop Massillon stood to address the mourners, which included the primary clergy of the entire nation. When the bishop rose he did something that stunned the crowd, and the nation, by bending down and extinguishing the flame that represented the greatness of King Louis. The people gasped, and then in the darkness the bishop simply said, "Only God is great!"

The bishop was and still is right. Only God is great. And only God is worthy to be praised. Not only is God the Creator of all things, but He also sustains all things and thus is sovereign over all things. God alone is great and God alone deserves worship and praise.

But let's think about the act of praise for a moment. Does God actually need our praise? Does God's ego need to be stroked? Does God struggle with issues of self-esteem and need to be encouraged and lifted up from time to time? No; God is sufficient unto Himself. He could get along just fine if none of us even existed; if He never created us in the first place. There is absolutely nothing we can do to magnify God because God can't be any bigger or greater than He already is.

So what is the purpose of praise and who truly benefits from it?

I am going to show you tonight an important aspect of praise that you may have missed through the years – I know I have. And even if you have not missed this aspect of praise, you probably have not fully understood the importance behind it or have not applied it to your life as you should.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Matthew**.

Matthew 21:12-17

Jesus is entering the city of Jerusalem to be crucified. The people and even the disciples are unaware of this ordained outcome so they are celebrating and singing and shouting Hosanna to the Son of David. They are momentarily grasping the fact that Jesus is indeed their long-awaited Messiah but they have completely missed the fact that Messiah must suffer and die.

The fanfare alone was enough to rile up the Pharisees and the rulers of Israel, but Jesus doesn't stop there. He enters the Temple and for the second time in His ministry He runs the merchants and money changers out of the Temple; not necessarily just because they were selling but because they were gauging the people.

The merchants were selling sacrificial animals. The priests inspected each animal as they were brought for sacrifice and they always found some minor defect that they would then use as an excuse to reject that animal as an acceptable sacrifice. Conveniently, the priests had a corral of acceptable animals and a cage full of birds for sale.

In the history books of the time, including Josephus, these acceptable animals were sold for as much as ten times the going rate. And if that wasn't bad enough, you had to purchase the animals with Temple money, and nobody had Temple money. But once again, conveniently, the priests had a booth set up where you could exchange your money for Temple money. And again, history teaches us that the exchange rate for this Temple money was one-third to one-tenth of what your money was worth.

So depending on how greedy the priests were on any given day, between the exorbitant prices for the acceptable animals and the ridiculous exchange rates, you could pay as much as \$100 for a \$5 goat (putting it our currency).

The people were coming to worship the Lord and they were getting raked over the coals by those who were called to be the intermediaries between God and the people. Do you understand the anger that boiled up inside of Jesus now? It was a righteous anger and it was a controlled and measured response to turn over the tables and run them out of the Temple.

The people respond by bringing the sick and afflicted to Him in the Temple and Jesus heals them all. The children are now singing praise to the name of Jesus and the Pharisees could no longer contain themselves and indignantly ask Jesus, "**Do You hear what these children are saying?**"

Jesus then quotes **Psalm 8:2** which sends the Pharisees into orbit, because they well know that **Psalm 8:2** is a Messianic verse, meaning Jesus is proclaiming that He is the Messiah by quoting this verse in this way.

But Jesus changed one important word from the Hebrew when He quotes **Psalm 8:2**. This happens from time to time with several of the New Testament authors when they quote from the Old Testament, so are we to assume one or the other is wrong? Not in the least; the changes we see in the New Testament are simply to bring clarity and/or depth of meaning that may have been missed by the wording in the Hebrew alone.

So let's take a look at the Book of **Psalms** and see this important change.

Psalm 8:2

In **Matthew 21:16**, Jesus says, "**Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies, You have prepared praise for Yourself.**" In **Psalm 8:2**, David says, "**From the mouth of infants and babes You have established strength.**"

Jesus is relating praise with strength; He is telling us that there is divine power included in praise. As a matter of fact, the psalmist gives us the reason for this strength or power. It is because of your adversaries and to make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

The NKJV is considered to be one of the, if not the, most accurate translation when it comes to the Old Testament. It reads this way: **“Because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.”** But even as accurate as the NKJV is, there is some controversy and dissention amongst Hebrew scholars as to the **You** and **Your** in this verse.

Earlier in this verse it speaks of the fact that the Lord has established or ordained strength. There is no doubt or dissention concerning the identity of the You when it says **“You have ordained strength”** (NKJV). The Hebrew is clear that the You refer to the Lord. The confusion comes with the next two English renderings. If you have a NKJV or a NASB or any other translation that attempts to capitalize the You’s and the He’s, etc, when they determine it is referring to the Lord, your translation may or may not have the Your and the You in the last half of this verse capitalized, and this is very important for us to distinguish the difference because it has a drastic impact on the meaning of the verse.

The Hebrew does not lend itself to these two instances referring to the Lord, although there is at least some room in the original language to imply this to be the case. So let’s look at the context to see if that is any help.

If indeed these last two uses of the words refer to the Lord, what is it saying to us? Isn’t it saying, or at least strongly inferring, that the Lord requires the praise of infants and babes in order to have the strength to defeat the enemy? This is obviously not the case so we are either missing something in the translation or it should not be translated as referring to the Lord.

An alternate rendering could be saying that the praise itself from the mouths of infants and babes is enough to defeat the enemy simply because they are confounded by the mere fact that little children inherently know that Jesus is Lord. This is possible but it seems unlikely.

A third possible rendering though, especially because of how Jesus uses this verse in **Matthew 21:16**, would be that the Lord has ordained praise that comes from our lips as a means for us to silence or stop the enemy.

Let’s run with this one for a bit and see if we can confirm this possible rendering through other Scripture.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **2 Chronicles**.

2 Chronicles 20:1-4; 14-25

Here we have an instance where three nations have combined forces to attack and conquer Judah. From a human and a military perspective there was very little hope that Judah’s armies could withstand the assault. King Jehoshaphat makes the only wise decision by calling for a national fast and by crying out to God in prayer.

The Lord answers the king’s prayer and tells them to not fear and to not worry about even having to fight. The king and the people praise and worship the Lord for this answer. The

praise continues as the king sends the choir to the front of his army and has them lead the way into battle.

Now let me ask you something, how crazy is this plan? The nation is about to be attacked by a superior army and the battle plan is to sick the choir on them? *“Okay, sopranos and tenors lead the charge and altos and basses watch the flank. Make sure you are on key and watch me for the changes in tempo.”*

When they began singing and praising God caused the enemy to start fighting against each other until the whole multitude of them had killed each other on the battlefield while the choir and the army of Judah stood by and watched. It took Judah three days to haul off all of the spoils. The battle was the Lord’s and the victory was His.

Now who benefitted from the praise? The power of praise benefitted the people who offered the praise.

“You have ordained strength (praise), because of your enemies that you may silence the enemy and the avenger” (NKJV).

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Luke**.

Luke 8:26-39

The demons could not stand being in the presence of the Lord; they wanted to leave as quickly as they could and begged Jesus to let them leave this man and enter into the herd of pigs nearby.

The primary point I want you to see from this account is that since the demons could not wait to get out of the Lord’s presence how does that apply to you, if you are walking so closely to the Lord that you are filled with His presence? They are not going to want anything to do with you either.

It will be like having a big brother that has already whipped someone that wants to mess with you; they steer clear when your big brother is around. So when you feel the attacks of Satan and his demons in your life, start praising the Lord and reminding the demons that Jesus has already won the victory: *“Do you remember when Jesus rose from the grave?” “Do you recall the time my God split the Red Sea?” “How about the time my God sent a group of your buddies to the bottomless pit?”*

When you are in the midst of people who are cursing God and taking the Lord’s name in vain, how comfortable do you feel? Do you feel like getting out of there at least wanting to make them stop? That’s the same way the demons feel when you are praising and worshipping and lifting up the name of the Lord. They want to make you stop or they just want to get out of there. They cannot stand to be in the presence of the Lord or in the presence of you when you are praising and worshipping God.

So again I ask; who gets the benefit of praise and worship?

Let’s go back to the Book of **Psalms**.

Psalms 9:1-3

Notice that David says in **verse 3**, “**When my enemies turn back**” not “If my enemies turn back.” And why are his enemies turning back? Based on what we have been studying a strong argument could be made that they are turning back because David is thanking and exalting and praising God.

Psalm 22:3 tells us that God is enthroned upon or inhabits the praises of His people; meaning the presence of God is in the midst of you or even indwelling you when genuine praise and worship is taking place. And Satan and his demons are reminded once again that they have already been defeated and they want no part of being in the presence of the Lord.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **1 John**.

1 John 5:16-20

The primary point in this passage I want you to see is in **verse 18**: “**He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.**” In the context of this passage, as we refrain from sin, Jesus keeps us, or protects us, from even allowing Satan to touch us.

Why is this the case; why does Jesus protect us from the evil one? Because we are keeping ourselves from sin; because we know the Son of God has come; because we know He is true and that we are in Him; because we know His Son Jesus Christ, and we know He is the true God and eternal life. And this knowledge, as we proclaim it and apply it to our lives is literally a form of praise. Even the simple act of acknowledging these things is an act of praise worthy of repelling your enemies.

And while I have mainly been applying this truth to your spiritual enemies, John shows us how all unbelievers lie in the power of the evil one. This truth can be applied to those in the human realm who come against us as well.

The late John Osteen relates a story of being in a hotel elevator with a gruff old cowboy with a cigar in his mouth, and two older ladies. He doesn't exactly know what set this man off but he started turning loose a string of curse words and blasphemies that would make most people's hair curl. The old ladies were indignant and all in a huff over the language. John just lifted his hands in the air and shouted “Praise the Lord!”

He says that old cowboy almost bit the end of his cigar off and turned all shades of red. And he said the old ladies were then pushing the elevator buttons wanting to get off. John turned around and told that old cowboy, “I just wanted to give Jesus equal time!” And when the elevator doors opened the two old ladies and the gruff old cowboy got out as fast as they could.

That's what I'm talking about. We may have the wrong idea about praise if we think it is doing something for God or think it is our spiritual duty. Praise is for us. Praise is for our benefit. Praise is the pathway to defeating the enemy in our lives or to put a stop to his influence and activity in your life.

If you are walking side-by-side with the Lord and praising Him throughout the day, do you think Satan and his demons are going to hang around? And by the same token do you think people who are in the power of the enemy are going to stick around if you are praising the Lord all the day long?

Are you struggling with doubts and fears? Praise the Lord!

Do you have overwhelming concerns for your family? Praise the Lord!

Is your job or income on shaky ground? Praise the Lord!

Do you feel attacked and oppressed? Praise the Lord!

Does sickness and disease weigh on your mind? Praise the Lord!

Is temptation consuming your thoughts? Praise the Lord!

Is anything whatsoever distracting you from your relationship with God? Praise the Lord!

There is power in praise and that power is for you to silence and stop the enemy and the avenger. That power is there to eliminate his lies from impacting your life. That power is there to give you daily and moment-by-moment victories over the accuser. That power is there to bless and benefit you.

Praise the Lord!

Let's pray.