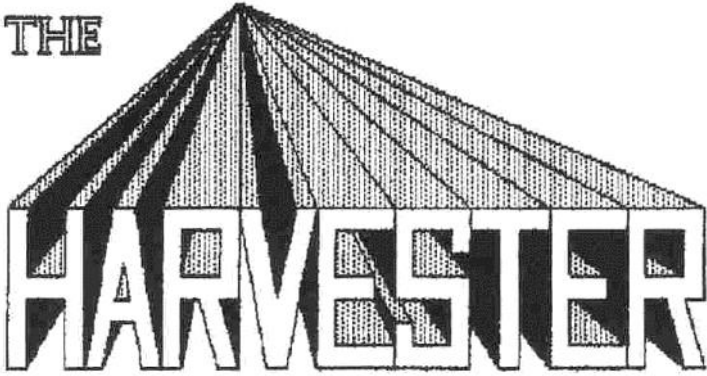


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“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

August 2015

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WHY SHOULD WE PRAISE GOD?

Men often enjoy the praise of others and may even actively seek it out. Men often allow the praise of others to fuel their egos and pride. Herod was struck dead by God for this (Acts 12:23). The chief rulers of the synagogue even *“loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”* (John 12:43). In the Scriptures, when men are praised it often does not end well.

The word praise is mentioned in some form 314 times in the KJV. Surprisingly, praising God was not mentioned very much early on in the Bible. The first mention of praise is Genesis 29:35, when Leah bears Judah (praised) and says she will praise

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the Lord. Moses' song after crossing the Red Sea mentions praising God (Exo. 15:11). Deborah and Barak sang a song of praise to God (Jdg. 5:2). These are the only specific examples where we read of men praising God until the time of David. Over 60% of the Biblical occurrences of the word praise are in the Book of Psalms alone.

The first "official" praise of God was at the retrieval of the Ark of the Covenant. "*And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel*" (1Ch. 16:4). Even though there may be many things that we read of prior to David that we would consider praise of God, it is still noteworthy that it was seldom referred to as such. It is also interesting to note that praise of God was never specifically commanded in the Law of Moses.

David calls for the praise of God over and over again in the Psalms. Is it perhaps this humble and worshipful attitude of David's that led God to refer to him as "*a man after mine own heart*"? (Acts 13:22) While Jesus Himself is never recorded using the word praise, we see that it was common in the early Church. "*Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" (Acts 2:47)

As Christians, we are clearly instructed to praise God. "*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name* (Heb. 13:15). *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*" (1Pe. 2:9).

This brings us to the heart of our discussion. Why does God command us to praise Him? Is it just his ego trip, as it is for many men? While it may be true that some men thrive on the praise of others, God is definitely above such lowly behavior. God does not need our praise. God does not even want our praise. That's

correct, God does not want our praise. To desire the praise of others is selfish and prideful, which God is not.

Then why would God have us praise Him if He does not desire it for Himself? Like everything else God does, it is actually for our benefit, not His. How do we benefit from praising God? First we need to establish exactly what it means to praise God in the first place.

Some people like to use the exclamation “praise God” throughout their conversation. While there is nothing wrong with this, it is not actually praising God. It is only asking or telling others to praise God. To praise someone or something means to honor or glorify, usually through the spoken word. If we speak about how great God is or how wise and intelligent He is, that is praising Him.

There are actually two areas in which God deserves praise: His character and His actions. God’s character includes His holiness, love, mercy, wisdom, omnipotence, omniscience, patience, and everything else that makes Him who and what He is. His actions include the creation of the universe, giving us life, His continual care for all mankind, His specific blessings for each of us, the gracious gift of His Son, and so many other things.

So then how does praising God benefit man and not God? Think of it this way. If your doctor offered you a pill that would help with depression, high blood pressure, and just generally make you happier and more thankful, with no negative side-effects, would you take it? Keep in mind that since it will reduce stress and worry it will also help to improve your overall physical and mental health. Sound too good to be true? Well there is no such pill, but you can get the same effect by praising God!

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psa. 43:5). It is hard to wallow in our own problems when we contemplate the awesome God we serve. How did David manage to keep such good spirits

during the dark days when he was hunted by Saul and at other times when things did not go his way? He simply praised God.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, notice what He started with. “*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*” (Mat. 6:9-10). God is higher than us, He is in heaven. Even His name is hallowed or holy. And it is all about His will being done, not ours. God should continually come first in our words, thoughts, and certainly our prayers. The more we focus on Him the better off we become.

Why does Hebrews 13:15, which we read earlier, call the praise of God a sacrifice? That may sound strange at first, but it really is not when we think about it. When we think about how great and wonderful God is, it reminds us of how small and limited we are. Praising God is not simply a sacrifice of our time and mental energy, but it is a sacrifice of our pride! The more we look up to God the more we learn to trust Him and the less we rely on self.

The best medicine for the mind, body, and soul is the Word of God, and in particular the book of Psalms. The very first Psalm pronounces a blessing on those whose “*delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night*” (Psa. 1:1-2) The more we think and talk about God’s character and His blessings to us the better off we will be.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: How do we get the Holy Spirit and what is the work of the Holy Spirit in the child of God?

ANSWER: Many who hold to a Calvinistic doctrine will contend that salvation is unconditional and that we are illuminated by the Holy Spirit of God and we are saved without any compliance via choices and obedience on our part. That is an opinion of an uninspired human being. From the Holy Scriptures, the mind of God,

we emphatically understand that:

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. (2 Thes. 1:7-9).

Our instructions, in order to avoid everlasting punishment in Hell, could not be made any clearer! We are to obey the Gospel! How important is the Gospel? The inspired Paul vividly explicates the paramount importance of the Gospel in Romans 1:16: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* Jesus Christ authoritatively teaches us what the Gospel is: *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16). Jesus commanded faith and baptism to be taught. After receiving basic instructions from the Holy Scriptures concerning faith in Christ and what to do to be saved (Acts 8:27-39) the sinner must recognize, by faith, that God has loved us (agape: sacrifice) by giving Jesus to die for our sins and that an obedient choice must still be made. At this point the sinner’s faith is not yet a saving / complete faith. The sinner must volitionally make the choice to touch the forgiving blood of Jesus in the watery grave of baptism. Since baptism for the remission of sins is the saving Gospel that must be obeyed, it is naturally what one would expect to hear taught in the very first sermon preached by the inspired Apostle Peter! Peter preached a very bold and authoritative sermon on Pentecost Sunday. From the book of Acts, chapter 2, Peter proclaimed to the Jews what they had done to Jesus Christ! In verse 36 we read what Peter told them: *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both*

Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). In the following verse we read how they reacted to this very plain and forthright sermon. “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Their hearts were pricked by what they had done to Jesus! Then they asked what they could do about it. If there was absolutely nothing one could do to receive what Jesus did on the Cross of Calvary, in verse 38 Peter would have said something comparable to --- there is NOTHING that you can do – it has ALL been done for you ! But, that is not what the inspired Apostle taught. Let us now glean from the mind of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, what Peter gave in response to their VERY important question:

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38)

Peter told the large audience on Pentecost Sunday that if they would change their hearts by repentance and being baptized that their sins would be remitted! To the Calvinist we must lovingly yet vividly expound that the sinner must obey the gospel by being baptized for the remission of sins and thus authoritatively conclude that salvation is conditional. Did the Holy Spirit work directly in the heart of the sinner in salvation? No – not directly! The sinner receives the Holy Spirit after they have obeyed the Gospel! In Acts 5:32 we plainly understand: *“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”* After the sinner touches

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the forgiving blood of Jesus in the watery grave of baptism they receive a present: the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Let us clarify where our faith comes from. The inspired writer to the Romans wrote: *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom 10:17). The Bible is our source of faith by hearing and doing in order to be pleasing to God (James 2:14-26). We read in Ephesians 6:17; *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. The sword of the Spirit is our source of faith that we put in our minds so that we can live right and fight against the Devil.

What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian? The Holy Spirit indwells in the heart of the Christian (Rom. 8:9-11, 1 Cor. 6:19). The Holy Spirit helps the Christian put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:12-13). The Holy Spirit gives strength to the “inner man” (Eph. 3:16,20; Php. 2:12-13). The Holy Spirit helps the Christian pray and helps us with our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26-27). The child of God can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). And, ultimately, the erring child of God can quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19).

The Holy Spirit does not save the sinner. The sinner must choose to obey God’s conditions of salvation and thus receive a present or gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be quenched in the heart of a Christian and thus leaving them in a condemned state. Our source of faith was given by the Holy Spirit via the Bible. When we choose to obey God and live by His commands (faith and love: 1 John 3:23-24), the Holy Spirit will live in our hearts and help as long as we are walking according to the mind of God with a mature faith (James 2:14-26). It is up to us to continue to walk according to the mind of God. On the day of judgment we are going to be judged according to our works (Rev. 20:12). Please remember that Jesus said that faith (belief) is a work (John 6:28,29).

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Gospel Meetings

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
August 7 - 9	Ashlock Near Celina, TN	Wilbur Bass Auburn, AL

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Which son did Jacob not send to Egypt for grain during the famine?
2. What test did Elijah set the prophets of Baal, which failed, proving their god to be false?
3. In which city in Judah did Cyrus tell the Israelites to build the temple?
4. Where was Jesus baptized?
5. The men of what two sects of philosophy encountered Paul in Athens?

...and remember last month's questions?

1. What was the fate of Shechem, the prince who fell in love with Dinah, Jacob's daughter? HE WAS SLAIN BY DINAH'S BROTHERS (Genesis 34:26)
2. What punishment was Zacharias given for not believing the angel? HE WAS MADE DUMB (Luke 1:20)
3. Who stole her father's household gods? RACHEL (Genesis 31:32)
4. How many spies did Moses send out to explore the land of Canaan? TWELVE (Numbers 13:2-16)
5. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, who was the first man to pass by the wounded man? PRIEST (Luke 10:31)

***Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not,
to him it is sin. (Jas 4:17)***