

Let's PRAISE God!

Light on the Rock

by Philip Shields

Psalm 22:3 says holy God inhabits, or is *enthroned* in, our praises. If so, what kind of throne of praises are we providing? Why does God want praise? What keeps us from praising? This sermon is all about praising God and why it's vital in our worship. What will God do in return, as we praise Him? Be forewarned: this is not just another sermon on Praise. Your status quo will be challenged!

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Good day everyone. Please be turning to **Psalm 22**. Our last 2 studies on **"The Tabernacle of David"** just blew me away preparing them! This is not a part 3. It's a new subject. The last 2 studies had a lot new for me and I was shocked that I hadn't seen before that David put the ark in a *different* Tabernacle than the one Moses had built that was now in Gibeon! David placed the ark in a new tent He had made for it in Mt. Zion. If you haven't heard those two sermons yet, go back and hear them.

The implications of the Tabernacle of David may be profound. If you want to learn more, I found a great book on it after recording my sermons: *"The Tabernacle of David"* by Kevin J. Conner. I wish I had found it sooner. I agree with what he discusses on this subject. Another more recently written book of the same title is by Daniel G. Caram. I wish I had them before I did my own sermons.

The study was also eye opening to me on another front: *The Tabernacle of David was two-fold: it was about the "house of David"—the genealogical line-- that God was going to build for David, but it was also about a literal tent on Mt. Zion that David erected specifically for the ark of God, where there was non-stop worship, non-stop praise of the Great God* – just like it is heaven itself. David incorporated *passionate* praise, with singing, clapping, even orchestras and trumpets and sometimes even with dancing. It's amazing. It was a type of the New Covenant times, and James practically said as much in **Acts 15**. David offered animal sacrifices at the beginning and end of the journey of bringing up the ark to his new tabernacle, but it appears that **once the ark was placed inside, David may have offered only sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving there**, as we'll read. *The animal sacrifices continued, however, at Moses' tabernacle at Gibeon.*

I learned from the study that **I hadn't been praising God nearly enough**. That's changing for me.

It did make me stop and wonder: what would David think of our church services today? And if WE could be taken back in a time machine, be like a fly on the wall just watching – what would WE think of King David's worship services? What would he be doing?

Psalm 22:3 "But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel."

The KJV says God "inhabits" our praises. NLT says God is surrounded by His people's praises.

Is that true for you? Is God *enthroned* in our praises? Are we even providing God a throne of praise to be surrounded by? It certainly was true for the Shepherd King and prophet David.

If you're like me, you'll admit that perhaps the subject of "Praise" didn't exactly grab your attention, but that's exactly why I decided to do a sermon on it. Praising must start to grab our attention, if it hasn't already. We will never praise God as much as He deserves...but we should start to praise more.

This topic is a must *for ALL ages*. Any of you children, teenagers – as well as adults – hearing this – THIS is for all of us. Whether we're 8 years old or 88 years old, we must learn to praise our Creator.

You will hear some things today that may be new to some of you, and may feel awkward at first implementing one or two of the things David and others did – especially publicly. I ask you to read the scriptures with me and then ask God to help you grow in your ability to worship and praise Him. You may wish to try some of these things at first privately, in your own private prayers before anything is done publicly. Just a thought. That's what I'm doing.

Also, let's keep in mind that God wants us to “be real” – to not be hypocritical. **We can all worship and praise within the types of personalities God gave us**. A more emotional and passionate person may be more like David. Someone more formal or serious may be more like Ezra. God made us all. ***But we must all praise. Nor is praise the same thing as worship, though worshiping incorporates praising and vice versa.***

This I know, and know well: when we come *to really know* God, and not focus just on what we may get out of God – but *when we know that we know God, PRAISE will just bubble out of us*, as it did for David!

WHAT KEEPS US FROM PRAISING GOD?

We will also find it *hardest* to praise when we are distant from God. What makes us distant?

- **sin** separates us and keeps us from bubbling up praises to God
- **being preoccupied with the “stuff” of life** instead of seeking God first will make praise difficult. **Being too busy**. Sometimes being too busy even with “church” stuff.
- **Confusing religion with worship** will be disastrous to praise. God wants relationship, not just the mechanics of religion, going to church, and all that.
- **Most of all: we won't praise effectively if we don't know God as the Provident God that He is, involved in all aspects of your life.**

It's certainly easier to praise God when it's all going well for us. But even in our trials, as we'll see today, we can learn to *praise most effectively by focusing on WHO God is, more so than on what God could do* for us.

BEING “SPIRITUAL JEWS” – WHAT THAT HAS TO DO WITH PRAISE

Did you know that the *first* tribe God chose (**Judges 1:1-3**) to lead the final battles into the promised land west of the Jordan after Joshua died, was **Judah** - - and **guess what “Judah” means? It is Y'huda – meaning “May God be PRAISED.”** Judah was the most populous of the tribes. Judah went into Egypt with just 3 sons and when they came out of Egypt, Judah had over 74,000 males! Judah was the main tribe at the east gate of the court of the Tabernacle, the entrance, along with its green standard and the lion insignia. But the point I'm making is that **“PRAISES to God” – YEHUDA, JUDAH -- was what led the nation of Israel into the Promised Land!**

How do we apply that today? Paul says (Romans 2:29) we are now *spiritual Jews* if we have been circumcised in our heart by the Spirit. ***But what's a spiritual Jew? It literally means a spiritual “praiser of God”.*** That's what we should become once we're converted. Or, *are* we praisers?

According to **1 Peter 2:9** we are a **chosen generation** and a royal priesthood, His own special people – *but for what purpose?* It goes on to tell us: “*to proclaim the praises of Him* who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light! *It's frankly time we start doing that more!*” I'm frankly repenting of being so involved in religion in the past and not in real worshiping and praising, things I picked up from the study on the Tabernacle of David.

Let's look at a practical application of this. Please be turning to **2 Chronicles 20** and I'll take the highlights of this passage, so we learn there is real spiritual power in praise, even *victory* in praise.

2 Chronicles 20:1-22

“It happened after this that the people of **Moab** with the people of **Ammon**, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. 2 Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria; and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which is En Gedi). 3 ***And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*** 4 So Judah gathered together to ask help from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

Jehoshaphat prays to God in front of the people – which you can read in verses 5-12, and let's pick up the end of his prayer in verse 12.

12 “O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”

13 Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.

[Notice: the king is praying! But God's Spirit moves a Levite to tell everyone he has a word from God. Would our meetings allow such freedom for someone to jump in? Would you or I have been as bold to jump in and tell everyone publicly what we felt was inspired by God?]

14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. 15 And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. 16 Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. 17 You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!" Do not fear or be dismayed; ***tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.***”

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. 19 ***Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high. [There are times to stand up for God and just start praising!]*** 20 So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, **Jehoshaphat** stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: **Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established;** believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.”

Now watch what happens next. Can you imagine national or many church leaders humbly doing what we see happens next?

21 And when he had consulted with the people, [imagine that!] he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying:

"Praise the LORD (Hallelujah), For His mercy endures forever."

Let's continue –here's the exciting part.

22 Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated."

Did you catch that? WHEN they began to sing and praise, God acted! How much of God's dramatic action in our lives could we be losing out on, simply because we're not praising FIRST in a trial? How could you and I – right now – be limiting the Holy One of Israel from acting mightily in our own behalf?

This is what God's children do! We worship and praise no matter what - because God is worthy of praise, expects it, and it's good for *us* to do so.

For a moment let's hop back to the concept of the Tabernacle of David. It appears that God must have inspired David to understand what kind of praising was going on in heavenly Mt. Zion. After all, the physical points to the spiritual reality. So David was trying to duplicate on earth what must have been revealed to him was going on in the *real* throne of God in heaven: constant praise. The 24 elders around the throne of God corresponded to David's 24 teams of praisers around the clock! The 4 living creatures corresponded to the 4 insignias of the main tribes on each side of the Tabernacle – the Lion (Judah), the man (Reuben), the ox (Ephraim) and the Eagle. David was also trying to show on earth what he must have envisioned in heaven: innumerable angels praising in heaven.

Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:12-14 show how in heaven, the Lamb and the One sitting on the throne are pronounced worthy of all praise. Numerous other verses also teach us God is worthy of praise.

Psalm 18:3 "I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised."

God deserves so much more praise than we have ever given, or ever will give. Let's determine to start changing that. Are you with me on that?

I love the way David even prompts God by promising, **"Praise is waiting for you, O God, in Zion."** (Psalm 65:1). I just love that! Brethren, we have now come to heavenly Mt. Zion. Can we tell God that we have praises just waiting for Him in Zion from each of us? I'm so stoked from reading the Psalms in preparation for this sermon.

God loves our praises. How OFTEN should we be praising?

Psalm 34:1 "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth"

Psalm 113:3 "From the rising of the sun to its going down The LORD's name is to be praised."

Psalm 71:8 "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour *all the day*."

Are we getting the idea? Paul says in **Hebrews 13:15** – "let us **CONTINUALLY** offer the sacrifice of Praise". Wow! *Continually!* From sunrise to sunset! All the day. At all times.

Now remember this too: you are a spiritual JEW now. A “praiser of God” spiritually now.

Once we are something, we remain that – 24 hours a day. We are Jews spiritually (Rom. 2:29). The word “Jew” MEANS “praiser of God”. That means **as long as I’m a spiritual Jew, I’m on DUTY, on call 24 hours a day as a praiser!** Or are we just part-time “Jews”? Part-time “praisers”? I am never to forget I am a praiser. So if you’re 7 or 77, be a praiser from now on.

We have to sleep. We have to focus on other things in life. So how can we be praisers 24 hours a day. Keep reading. I’ll briefly answer that now though: our present *LIVES* must become lives that end up being praises to God! We’ve all sinned. I sure have, big time. **But our lives today can be lives of praise to God** *especially* if and when people see a big change in us, a new beginning, a new way being practiced in each of us.

Let this sink in: our spiritual name of “Judah” - and I need you to think what it means now every time you hear it from this day forward, it means “PRAISE GOD” – the name “Judah” became very special to God and you’ll notice a few more points here. Turn to **Isaiah 60:18**. And “Mt. Zion” within Judah was even more special, more meaningful, more exclusive for God.

When you enter through a defensive wall around a city – through what do you enter?

A GATE! The passage is a prophecy for Jerusalem in the future when God restores His blessings and presence, but the end of **Isa. 60:18** says:

“....But you shall call your walls Salvation, and your **gates Praise.**”

So, we enter God’s presence – we come to Him – through *praises*. When we’re faced with trials and when we’re upset, worried, saddened, and disappointed – we find it hard to enter into His presence through the gates of praise. And yet ***those are the very times we must praise all the more!***

Now turn to Psalm 114:2. I need us to get this next point indelibly ingrained. When you get a glimpse of knowing God and His Christ, you will never be fully satisfied again with church services that are dead or devoid of praising from the heart. Now get this next verse into your heart:

Psalm 114:1-2: “When Israel went out of Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange language, 2 **Judah [PRAISE] became His sanctuary, And Israel His dominion.**”

Did you get that? ALL ISRAEL is God’s dominion. But where is God’s SANCTUARY, His holy special place? In Judah (on Mt. Zion) – in PRAISES! Remember you’re a spiritual Jew IF you’re praising. Otherwise you’re the Israel of God, and acknowledge God’s dominion, you know Jesus is Lord, but have you become God’s sanctuary? That’s the next step.

Everything about the tabernacle – even the one that Moses built for God – was about coming ever closer to the glory of God. We’ve all fallen short of God’s glory, but when you realize there awaits a Mercy Seat, we must come boldly. I’ll give a more detailed account of understanding the meaning of all aspects of the original tabernacle.

Psalm 76:1 is another. This is a psalm of ASAPH, one of the special praisers David appointed to orchestrate around-the-clock praise. This passage was after David set up his tabernacle in Zion, the

one that had the ARK of God's presence in it. Gibeon's tabernacle had an *empty* Holy of Holies, remember, and it was the place where formal, polite, "proper" worship took place.

Ps 76:1-2 "In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. 2 In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His *dwelling place in Zion*."

Israel [now the church in general, for we are now the "Israel of God" – Galatians 6:16], makes God's name great, but those who know God within the church are the "praisers", the spiritual Jews on Mt. Zion. Remember:

Israel of GOD = the church

Spiritual JEWS = those within the church who are spiritually circumcised and praise God

*Now keep in mind that God makes it even more specific: we have come to MT ZION. David set up the holy ark of God in a small portion of Judah – in earthly Mt. Zion, where God's worship and praise was even more potent! **Psalm 87:2** – "the LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob (Israel)." ZION is where non-stop praise is happening in the Tabernacle of David.*

You and I can't really know God until we start praising regardless of anything else going on. And as we praise, as we get to know God, praising will bubble out of us as a spring of living water!

God likes praise, inhabits praise, surrounds Himself with praise, demands praise as you'll see, for He knows WE need to praise for our good, so we get the right perspective on Him, on us, and on everything going on. Whether we praise Him or not, God will still be Almighty. So the praising is as much for our good as it is something God enjoys.

OK, WHAT is "PRAISE"?

I like to start with a Bible definition before ever going to man's definitions like Webster's dictionary. I notice some ministers doing that on spiritual topics, and I wonder – since when does carnal man know how to define spiritual concepts? It's fine to get a dictionary definition, but always start with God's definition! Please be turning to Hebrews 13.

Hebrews 13:15 "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the *sacrifice of praise* to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, *giving thanks to His name*."

PRAISE – according to Hebrews 13:15 is largely about giving thanks to God's *NAME*. It's not just giving thanks. It's giving thanks -- to His *name*. Ponder what that means.

Praising God includes the dictionary meanings of: to applaud, commend, compliment, glorify, extol, magnify, admire, express approval of" – and so on, as you'll see by the way scriptures apply the topic. Since Hebrews 13 says praising includes thanking God, when we praise let's include saying words that show God we appreciate what and who He is and what He has done.

Hebrews 13 says to give thanks to His name. God's name is who and what God is. Names are very important. I have a sermon I gave in June 2004 on the website titled "Our Prophetic New Names". I notice another website has used much of the same material. But good – the word gets out.

Psalm 18:49 also says we "sing praises to your *NAME*".

Psalm 149:3 says "Let them praise *HIS NAME* with the dance..."

Remember DAVID danced before God too, with all his might, no less!

God's names tell us who and what God is. Perhaps someday I'll do a whole sermon or two on the revealed names of God. For example, you all have heard of "EL" meaning Strong. EL SHADDAI – the Almighty. When **Hagar** was cast out by Sarah and felt all alone and no one could see her plight, the Angel of the Lord appeared to her and provided a spring of water for her, and revealed Himself as **"The God who SEES"** (Genesis 16:9-13). She later gave birth to Ishmael.

To PRAISE HIS NAME means we thank Him that He IS the *only* God who *always* sees whatever we're going through. We're *never* out of His sight, no matter where we are. We may not see what HE is doing, but He always sees us. We praise Him for His caring, for what He is: *"The God who sees"*.

Focusing on who "God is", is more important than focusing on what "God can give me" or give to me. Looking for God's blessings only puts one's focus totally on the "get attitude" and not on the *relationship* we must have with God – and all He decides to put us through so we can learn and grow.

In Genesis 22:13-14, when God prevented Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, God provided an innocent ram as a substitute; a ram caught by his horns, the *shofar* part of the ram, through which later liberty was announced, as they blew the shofar on the Day of Atonement every 50 years. A new name for God was given, and Abraham *praised* GOD for what He is: **"THE ETERNAL WILL PROVIDE"**

The Provident God, the God who supplies all our needs. God who provides the Innocent Sacrifice for ourselves and our children. We praise you, Oh God, that you have provided us the ultimate Passover sacrifice in giving us your own Son. He is a providing God. We praise for that. You can continue that theme on your own.

There are many, many revealed names of God that give us glimpses of what and who He is, and what He is doing for us. God our Healer. The Eternal our Banner (in victory). God Almighty. Most High God. The Lord of Hosts (Commander-in-chief). The Eternal our Peace. Yahweh Ro'i – The Lord my Shepherd. The Lord our Righteousness. That's just for starters of what comes to mind.

We praise God by thanking Him that He is the kind of God that He is – A God who is LOVE personified, JOY personified, PEACE, Longsuffering, kindness, goodness personified, and all the fruit of His Spirit.

We DO what we do, because of what we ARE. That's why I have a sermon you can request – not on the website because it was a sermon I recorded live in 1989 – called "Repenting of what You ARE". Until we change what we ARE, we will continue to do what we have been doing. BUT – hear this – once by God's spirit we change from what we ARE, into what GOD wants us to be-- US-- then we become a new creation, with a new heart from God. ***In Christ, we no longer are what we once WERE. Hear my sermon titled "New Creation" for more on this. We are NOW children of GOD, a prince or princess of the Kingdom of God.*** A new citizen of that kingdom. A child of GOD the Highest. In that we praise, rejoice and endlessly thank.

People – even those in a group they *call* the church of God – may still regard you as the same old sinner, but Paul *commands* us to "no longer regard each other that way" – especially as we come to Passover (**2 Cor. 5:14-18**), we come to reconciliation, realizing that if Christ died for *all*, then we all died. We can't be new in Christ until we die to our self and a new life is born within us. A life that has never been in us before. New means new; not overhauled or cleaned up – but brand new. And in Christ we all are new! Hallelujah! [That means "praise the Lord"]

But the process is a painful one. It's likened by Paul to birth pangs – “until *CHRIST is formed* in you” – **Galatians 4:19**. You and I look at ourselves – and others – and get real discouraged when we see there's a long way to go. But God is faithful and will complete what He has started in you and me through Christ – **Philippians 1:6**. Praise God for who and what He is – a God who finishes what He starts! So get off *someone's* case and take it up with God if you have an issue with his/her past. Your past – and mine – are buried in the blood of our Savior. Don't go grave-digging in it!

So that's why even in the painful things we go thru, we must praise our God, first, at once, immediately, up front – so we get the perspective that even in this awful trial God sees, God provides, God is still love in all of it. PRAISE puts everything in perspective! Praise puts us back in the winner's court! Praise puts us in the camp of the multitude, *the “great cloud of witnesses”* of those who have gone before us who are rooting for us by their own victory in the Lamb – **Hebrews 12:1**.

So praise is 1st and foremost thanking God out loud for what and Who He is.

Now let's step it up a notch.

PRAISE IS NOT SILENT. Praise is not done in SECRET.

Do you think Jehoshaphat's praisers as he and the Israelites stepped outside the city walls to face the invaders – do you think the Praisers were just having “good thoughts”, “praying in their mind's eye”, or whispering?

The Bible speaks over and over about “LIFTING UP” our voices (**Isa. 40:9**). Praises were often sung, sometimes shouted, often spoken – but praises were *out there!* ***Praises are not silent!*** And always remember that it means little to God unless our *hearts are in our lips' praising* (**Mark 7:6**)

Psalm 69:30 – “I will *praise* the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with *thanksgiving*”. “SING praises on the harp....” – **Ps. 147:7**.

Psalm 95:2 “Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us *shout joyfully* to Him with psalms.” Are you getting the point? Praise is *expressed* by either sound or action!

Psalm 47:1-2 “Oh, *clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God* with the voice of triumph! *2* For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth”.

There is *not* a lot in the Bible about clapping hands in worship, but there's that one verse at least. We live by *every* word of God (Matt. 4:4), so I include it.

Stop and think! Why, oh why, are our church services so dead, so dull, so void of any celebration of our King, our Victor, our Conqueror over sin, our triumphant God? And let's remember we're 24/7 spiritual PRAISERS, JEWS – and this should carry over even into our private lives.

Because many of us were *raised* to be hushed and solemn and “proper” in a church building – and some churches don't even allow musical instruments – so *many* of us have carried that over into our worship today without testing that philosophy against the words of GOD Himself!

Again I say: If we could go back to David's Tabernacle during their 24 hour, round the clock 7 days a week *worshipping*, we would be blown away by the energy, the excitement, the volume, the amount of praising, the activity.... And the atmosphere of celebrating God, as well as times of devout, quiet your-face-on-the-ground worshipping! We'd hear harps, tambourines, timbrels, flutes, trumpets – LOTS of trumpets, singing, occasional clapping, and occasional *dancing* in their worship. God was **GLORIFIED in David's Tabernacle, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!**

If some of you are thinking I've gone "holy roller" or something – Hey, I'm struggling with these same verses as you are. But either we *live* by every word of God as Jesus says in Matthew 4:4, or we cut them out and *walk away from the way God says He wants to be worshiped!*

You've cheered, clapped, jumped to your feet, you've rejoiced, you've done it at BALL GAMES – but have you ever shouted joyfully in cheers for your Savior? Ever? If not, why not?

[Be sure to hear my sermon coming up soon about "Personality or Conversion". God allows different personalities. But it's OK to sing and cheer and be demonstrative about your passion for your Savior. You don't have to do it if you're not moved to do it, but don't deny those who have the passion to do it from doing it. God leads us in different ways, depending on the gifts and personalities He's given us.]

Psalm 100:1-2 "Make a joyful *shout* to the LORD, all you lands! 2 Serve the LORD with gladness; *Come before His presence* with *singing*."

David and Asaph and others say – shout joyfully! They did! Boy, try that in YOUR church some time! See how far you get! Either we're reading the same Bible - - or we refuse parts of it.

QUESTION: how comfortable would we have been watching our King, our husband David, *shout*, sing, play, *dance*, whirl and cheer in the presence of the Ark as it was coming up to Mt. Zion and to David's Tabernacle? Let it sink in: David praised God in singing, cheering, musical instruments and on at least one occasion – dancing!

Would YOU and I have been a MICHAL? I think the honest answer is many of us *are* Michals. If we are, we may – like Michal – be made unfruitful. Let's wake up while we can, brethren.

Psalm 47:5-6 "God has gone up with a *shout*, The LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6 *Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!*"

Psalm 86:12 "I will *praise You, O Lord my God, with ALL my heart*, And I will glorify Your name forevermore."

God is worthy of so much more praise than we will ever be capable of giving, or are giving.

So praise is speaking audible adoration, respect, gratitude, thanksgiving for what God is – and then for what He has done. **Praise is not silent.** In fact, we praise with all our might, with all our heart, just as *David* danced before the Lord, and played music, and sang, with all his might.

So we start by audibly praising God for what GOD IS. For example:

"We praise you, Our Father, for being a holy God of **LOVE**. We praise you for your unending **mercies**. Your **mercy** never fails. We praise you for your unfailing devotion and loyalty – for always being there, for never forsaking us, for seeing everything we go through. We praise you

Jesus, for being so accepting of us repentant creatures who fall so far short of you, and your glory. We praise you for being such an AWESOME God."

And then it's very natural to find yourself to start moving off from what God is – into what God has done because of what He is. (Read Ps. 78:1-4 some time) For example:

"We *praise and thank* you, that *because* of your love, you gave your only Son to come and live and die for us, that we may be forgiven. We praise you for forgiving us of all our sins and missing the mark. We praise you for the healings you give us, the wonderful world you created us to live in, for providing for us. We praise you for calling us into your family and for guiding us with your Spirit. We praise you Jesus for interceding for us and defending us as our Advocate, before our holy Father."

Do you see the difference – and yet the natural progression? We need to start our prayers with praise, adoration and thanksgiving.

Some of what I'm preaching today is not comfortable for some of you. But since when did God call you and I to be comfortable with all the things we now do, according to God's word? So be willing to listen to God's words – from the Bible—and then to challenge yourself to grow beyond your comfort zone.

-PRAISE INCLUDES THANKING GOD – BOTH IN GOOD TIMES AND "BAD", for THE GOOD AND THE TOUGH TIMES.

Let's start with 2 scriptures. Remember as you read these, that *thanking* is one way to praise.

Ephesians 5:18-20 "Do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 **giving thanks always FOR all things** to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Isn't verse 20 an incredible verse? **FOR, ALL things.**

Philippians 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, but **IN everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Paul speaks of the "**SACRIFICE** of praise" in **Hebrews 13:15**. (Also **Jer. 17:26; Jer. 33:10-11**).

Sometimes it is a sacrifice to praise. It's hard sometimes. Sacrifices cost you. Sacrifices don't come easy. Sometimes it's hard to praise, to thank, to be grateful – when it all seems so bad around you.

Ps 107:22 "Let them sacrifice the *sacrifices of thanksgiving*, And declare His works with rejoicing."

Psalms 27:6 "And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer *sacrifices of joy* in His tabernacle; **I will sing, yes, I will sing praises** to the LORD."

You'll note in **Psalm 27:6**, that David seems to understand - - like New Testament Paul – that God now wants “sacrifices of praise” (**Heb. 13:15**) more than the blood of bulls and goats (**Ps. 51:16-17**). David calls it “sacrifices of JOY” – and that is what typified the Tabernacle of David. (If you haven't heard or studied my 2-part sermon on ‘the Tabernacle of David’ – be sure to hear it soon.)

Sometimes we just don't *feel* like praising! Notice what we're taught in scripture: The descendants of Korah wrote an awesome psalm – really Ps 42, 43 are probably one continuous psalm – and we can learn from them. I'll read this from Today's English Version.

Psalm 42:1-5 “As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God. 2 I thirst for you, the living God. When can I go and worship in your presence? 3 Day and night I cry, and tears are my only food; all the time my enemies ask me, “Where is your God?”

4 My heart breaks when I remember the past, when I went with the crowds to the house of God and led them as they walked along, a happy crowd, singing and shouting praise to God. 5 Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled? *I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him, my savior and my God.*

Continuing in verses 9-10

9 “To God, my defender, I say, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go on suffering from the cruelty of my enemies?” 10 I am crushed by their insults, 11 Why am I so sad? Why am I so troubled? ***I will put my hope in God, and once again I will praise him, my savior and my God.***”

Sometimes we just have to start praising, hard or not. That's what a sacrifice is.

You should put in your notes to continue reading in Ps. 43 for more of the same. “WHY am I so cast down? *I will yet praise you, Oh God,*” they say.

So praise is thanking God for who He is and what He's doing – even in the hard times of trial. For when we praise IN and FOR a trial that is testing us and producing faith of gold, – no matter how bad, God is glorified, because we're saying, “Father, we still trust you; we still are at peace in you, we still believe you, we still know you will work all this out for good and to your glory.”

I've been unemployed, I've been fired, I've been financially broken at times, I've been deserted by people I thought were friends. I've lost my parents, grandparents, a couple very dear cousins, uncles, aunts – and most of all, years ago our first son died. *I know what I'm talking about. Praise is hard at those times. But that's when praise, or worship, is most important, as Job worshiped after he'd lost just about everything. So did David after God took his son.*

What else is Praise?

-OUR CHANGED, CONVERTED LIVES can also be a way we bring PRAISE TO GOD.

When people knew you as a criminal, a poor husband, perhaps obnoxious, or impatient, or a drunkard, or a sexually immoral person, or a lazy person – and now they see a totally different, loving, wonderful person who is not like any of those things anymore – it brings glory to God.

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

PRAY as our Big Brother Jesus did in John 12:28 – “Father, glorify thy name in all the earth” – by the new way Christ now lives in each of us, by the way we talk with others, by our changed life.

I'm a hard nosed businessman at times. **Recently I've really been asking Jesus to live more in me and to change me so that I can adorn the doctrine I purportedly teach. I have so far to go.** I'm focusing on what people may think of the God I say I worship – which they will see as a reflection of my words, my tone, my goodness or roughness, my gentleness or toughness, mercy – or lack thereof.

1 Peter 2:11-12 “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, *[because this wouldn't bring God or His way any glory!]* 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, *by your good works which they observe, glorify God* in the day of visitation.”

Do you ever focus on the fact that our lives, as we mingle and interact with people in the world, either desecrates God's church - - or adorns God's name and his church? * * * We either bring God glory – or shame. We either bring Him honor, or dishonor. People will either praise – or curse, because of our actions and words done “as a Christian”. If not now – “in the day of visitation”.

I'm tired of bringing dishonor, shame to God's name. Aren't you? Can we *together* come and ask God's mercy on us, so we can now let Jesus' life live in us, so WE no longer live – but the lives we now live is Christ in us, to his glory (Gal. 2:20-21).

Whatever we do, we do now to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 4:15) Or not?

There's an interesting passage about Paul's conversion and change and what it caused in those who witnessed it!

Galatians 1:21-24 “Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. 23 But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.” 24 **And they glorified God in me.”**

One of the most effective ways to have people praise the God you worship is by seeing what that God has done to change you into a nicer, kinder, more loving, more gentle, happier person, just like God is. Remember Paul's words.... “until Christ is formed in you”.

(Story of woman who wanted to attend our church because of what she saw had happened to her sister.)

If people watch **our marriage**, how each of us and our **spouse** interact – does that inspire them bring Christ into their marriage, as you did yours, so that your formerly rough marriage is now exemplary?

Does our **child rearing** bring God glory or shame?

Does the way we interact with neighbors make them want to be with us – or run the other way?

The way we **work at work**, act at work, do people want to know the “secret” of what makes us so contented, happy, hard working, so honest, so blessed? **Titus 2:9-10**, written actually to converted slaves, told them to act so their lives “**adorn** the doctrine of God our Savior.”

The rest of the time I have will be spent trying to persuade us all to be willing “to stretch” and to grow, in this area of Praising. If the Bible teaches it, let's be willing to open ourselves up to what we're told.

AS WE LEARN TO PRAISE, LET'S be willing to DO ALL THAT GOD SAYS TO DO

GOD defines how He likes to be praised, so He is the One who tells us what to do as we praise. It may not be what we will feel comfortable doing at first, but much of what God tells us to do is uncomfortable at first: the Saturday Sabbath, for starters. Not worshiping Him with pagan holidays that were being observed long before Jesus was even born, is another example. Many things we had to start doing – were strange to our family and friends. But we obeyed, and God has blessed.

Now the same goes for praising God. We've already covered how the inspired scripture says to praise Him with all our heart – even with song, applause and shouts - - as we sing and play musical instruments. Most of us can do that OK.

This next step may be harder for some of you if you've never done it before, or if it's not practiced by your church. The standard should be what God says in both the old and new testaments. On this aspect, ***David did it and taught it. Asaph did it and taught it. Job did it. EZRA did it. PAUL did it and taught it. MOSES also did it!***

What is “it”? We'll read several scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments.

Psalm 77:1-2 “I cried out to God with my voice; And He gave ear to me. 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; ***My hand was stretched out in the night*** without ceasing....”

This was a psalm of Asaph – one of David's top Levite musicians who stood before the ark of God in the Tabernacle of David. ***Asaph said when he felt troubled, he reached out his arms to His holy father like a child reaching up to be hugged and assured and comforted.*** What a wonderful picture! Like a child rushing toward His Daddy or Mommy – and with arms outstretched, can't wait to hold your Dad, your Mom – and to give, and receive, a hug. ***Lifting up holy arms is described as REACHING OUT TOWARD GOD!*** Did you know that? So why wouldn't you do it, if we're told to do it, and if you now understand the picture behind it.

1 Timothy 2:8 “I [Paul] desire therefore that ***the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands,*** without wrath and doubting”

King **Solomon** raised his arms in prayer and praise

1 Kings 8:22 “Then **Solomon** stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and ***spread out his hands toward heaven***”

And some of you worry that praying with arms outstretched is somehow “holy roller” or disrespectful to God?!! Nothing could be further from the truth! God sees us, His little children, reaching up to Him and wanting Him to take our hand and swing us up to his chest in deep assuring embrace. As Father, that brings Him great GLORY to know YOU understand that.

Do you think of **EZRA** as a “holy roller”? Hardly! Here Ezra is repenting and ashamed to even lift up his face, but watch:

Ezra 9:5-6 “At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees *and spread out my hands to the LORD my God*. 6 And I said: "O my God, I *am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face* to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads”

You already know that **ASAPH and DAVID** surely lifted up their hands!

Psalm 28:2 “Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You, *When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.*” Also *Ps.63:4; Ps. 134:2.*

In fact, incense was compared to our prayers with uplifted hands in Psalm 141:2:

“Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the *lifting up of my hands* as the evening sacrifice.”

Do we need more? Just start doing what the Word tells us - - without worrying that somehow you're going to be perceived as being too emotional, too passionate, maybe even a 'holy roller'. I've been called all those, but *how can it be wrong to lift up your hands outstretched to our Father, when such a cloud of witnesses before us did so: David, Asaph, Solomon, Ezra, Paul and Moses for starters.*

A huge point of this is made in Exodus 17, that **as long as Moses prayed for Israel during a battle with Amalek, and had his arms lifted high** towards God in heaven as he prayed, the Israelites had victory. But if he let down his arms, God's power did not continue to flow back down from heaven – and victory was not with Israel. *So MOSES prayed and praised with raised up arms. A famous story.*

Exodus 17:10-13 “So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek [one of the warlike descendants of Esau]. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 **And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.** 12 But Moses' hands became heavy; so they *took a stone and put it under him*, and he sat on it. And **Aaron and Hur** supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

Who were Aaron and Hur? Aaron was Moses' brother, and Jewish tradition says this Hur was the husband of Miriam, so Hur was also Moses' brother in law. (One verse says there was an Hur who was the son of Caleb). **What's the lesson? There are times when our brother's arms may be too weary and tired for him to pray effectively, or to keep raised in praise to God, and we – as his loving family come to our brother's rescue and prop him up upon the Rock that is Christ, and then **WE raise up our brother to God's throne FOR HIM and WITH him**, petitioning our God for our brother, raising his arms with ours, as *one* before God. *What an inspiring picture this is for us!***

There's a lesson here:

You *know* there are times you just don't feel like praising, but know you should. You **KNOW** your brothers and sisters in Christ *each* has times like that too. Your calling is to prop up your brother and sister upon the Rock and pray in their behalf, praise in their behalf, beseech and stand and **raise them before God's throne for them** – Oh, brethren, oh that we would do more of this!

God *blessed* this battle with a *great victory as long as prayer with raised arms* was going on, in this case – **3 brothers working together to raise Moses' arms** to petition and glorify God. God provided the victory and was very *happy* to do so for the Israelites in this case. God was so involved in *this* battle, that He – God – even ordered Moses to remember Amalek and to someday exterminate them! That was God's orders, you'll see at the end of Exodus 17.

DO we want God with us, giving *us* victory!? Then – like Moses – let's pray and praise without ceasing, without losing heart, and LIFT our arms up to our Holy Abba, our Dear Daddy!

If you still feel I'm wrong, take up your complaint with *GOD*, who personally inspired every one of those verses. Complain to Moses, Ezra, David, Asaph, Solomon, Paul and on and on!!! But don't accuse me that *I'm* teaching anything wrong! Let's instead start praising and growing in this.

Some of you are thinking like MICHAL – David's wife – despising anything that smacks of passionate worship for God. Beware, brethren, lest like Michal you are also rejected and become unfruitful. Some of us have to be willing to grow in understanding on these things – and like one of the lessons from the Tabernacle of David, get past doing and hearing “the same old, same ‘ol”.

At least consider this: let those who wish to pray occasionally with raised hands, do so. Have a group discussion about it, if you meet with a group. Here's a suggestion: try these things first privately, just between you and God, in your own private prayer.

If I meet with you, or you meet with me, in a small or large group, don't be surprised if you see *me* sometime *raise my arms and hands in prayer* – outstretched to my heavenly Father as a small child petitioning his Father's love and acceptance. *If you feel I've gone crazy with that – then you'll have to throw away your book of Psalms and the other verses I've just read.* I think we need to evaluate how we might be limiting the worship of God into some puny little set of rules someone decreed long ago is the so-called “right way to worship”.

I'm convinced that when we someday are in the same worship services with Paul and David and Ezra and Peter and others – we are going to watch worship and praise going on like we've never imagined! Please ponder what I just said. Or for that matter if we can get a peak into what the 24 elders and 4 living creatures do before the throne of God and the Lamb? You get the point?

David had unbounded joy! He even danced before God, at least one time, as he praised.

Confession #1: I've never ever done that. EVER. .

Confession #2: I may have been like Michal, criticizing David at first for his unbounded worship.

Confession #3: I've repented of that awareness of where I am in the process.

Confession #4: I'm trying out this idea of raising hands while praying, privately – since Ezra, Paul, David, Solomon, David and others did it too.

Confession #5: It's not so bad. In fact I like it.

I know I'm challenging some of you. But remember, we are to GROW in grace and knowledge...

LETTING GOD'S SPIRIT MOVE YOU TO PRAISE

I have much more, but am out of time. Let me just quickly say, if you want help learning to praise, getting in the mood, here are some quick ideas:

** read the psalms – especially the last 10, plus Ps. 84, 103 and others*

** listen to good praise music. I find listening to certain praise songs really helps me.*

** slow down and notice and ponder what God is doing in your life, especially now as Passover approaches. Our hurry-way of life is a real block to noticing things to praise God for.*

* Look for God's glory in His creation, and times when God's presence are clear- and then worship.

○ **Exodus 33:9-11; 2 Chron 7:1-3;**

○ **Acknowledge miracles and answered prayers and take the time to audibly glorify and praise in those times** (Mark 2:12; **Luke 17:15** – the healed leper “with a LOUD voice, glorified God and fell at Jesus’ feet)

HOW ALL THIS ENDS UP

Romans 14:11 – “every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall give praise”. There are many psalms that prophesy that all nations, all creation, will come and praise the Eternal.

In the end, if we love our God, praise His name and His works – guess what? You think you can out-praise God? Wait til you see how Jesus will even praise YOU before our dear Abba, our Holy Father, before all the millions of holy angels, before the 24 elders, the 4 living Creatures and the seraphim --- we're going to be blown away, when the King of Kings says some words of praise to each of us, *about* each of us. Yes, it's coming!

1 Corinthians 4:5 “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. **Then each one's praise will come from God.**” Wow!

On top of that, we'll each receive new meaningful names from God ... be sure to hear the sermon I have on that, on the website.. I found it very inspiring to prepare that topic.

1 Peter 1:6-8 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, *7 that **the genuineness of your faith**, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be **found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ**, 8 whom having not seen you love...*” [we may have to wait a while for the praise]

Romans 2:29 “but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; ***whose praise is not from men but from God.***”

There is coming a time when God will praise those who have spent their lives focused on His glory, HIS praises, to show the glory of God to the people all around the world – even to those in prisons, to the homeless, to the Gentiles, to all who will hear. ***You're going to be blown away when you see what He will say about you, and do for you, when it's all said and done.***

Until next time, this is Philip Shields – encouraging you to PRAISE God with all your being. Let's end with Psalm 150. If this has been thought provoking for you, tell others about it. I started by saying God deserves so much more praise than we're giving and I hope you're with me in wanting to change.

PSALM 150 “Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

2 Praise Him *for* His mighty acts; Praise Him according to [because of] His excellent greatness!

3 Praise Him with the sound of the **trumpet**; Praise Him with the lute and harp!

4 Praise Him with the timbrel and **dance**; Praise Him with **stringed instruments** and flutes!

5 Praise Him with **loud cymbals**; Praise Him with clashing cymbals!

6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!”

We will be singing God's praises for all eternity. Today is a good time to start. Can we end today by saying it? “HALLELUJAH! PRAISE THE ETERNAL!”

**