

The Power of Prayer and Praise

You've seen the coffee t-shirt and mug quotes, heard the sermons, read the Bible verses and sung the songs about praising God through the storms.

Well, I am here to tell you, personally, it's one thing to read the verses and sing along with the songs when life is good, but it is another thing altogether to turn your heart toward praise when the storms are in full force in your life.

It is hard! I know it. I have been there. I have faced that turmoil a number of times in the last few years as I faced the pain of cancer in my family. My uncle Ray, my uncle Ron, my aunt Shirley, my cousin Jane, my uncle Louie, my cousins Dawn and Carol, my granddaughter Amelie and my sister Cindy – not to mention the many friends and church members who I love and have loved very much. It is hard to link prayer with praise when you're down on your knees begging for God's mercy and healing while you hold on white knuckled to whatever you can find at the moment. I get it! I so do....

When the prayer doesn't magically produce what I was hoping for and even expecting, it is hard not to start questioning why not, it's hard to not get angry, it's hard to move on past the pain and unmet expectations.

So, biblically speaking, what benefits are there to combining with my prayers an attitude of praise during the hard times?

Most of us need more than a *“you should praise God in your prayers when your hearts are full of grief, despair, worry, and fear because Scripture says so.”*

What will praising God in the hard times do to help you through the storms?

I mean, if praising God through my storm isn't going to necessarily change my situation, why should I do it?

Beyond the “you should do it,” praise is one of your greatest gifts to God and one of your greatest weapons you have against your enemies.

When you're in the storms of life, under fire from battles on numerous fronts, facing difficult trials, you have to knuckle down on your hope in God's power.

And you can ***always find*** reasons to turn your heart to praise for the God who loves you, reasons to believe in God's great power and sing his praises.

I'm a slow learner, I know. I have always struggled with pain and suffering; especially when children are involved or the very best of us are taken.

So, let me say this about my prayer life up until recently! When **things are NOT going so good** and I need to get God's attention, I find it much easier to approach God using our January 21 days of prayer model (*prayer with fasting*) than I do using our August model of 21 days of prayer (*prayer with praise – harvest thankfulness*).

On the other hand, when **things are going well** and I am praying, I find it much easier to approach God using our August model of 21 days of prayer (*prayer with praise – harvest thankfulness*) than I do using our January 21 days of prayer model (*prayer with fasting*). Let's face it, why go through all the fasting if things are going well – I just like eating too much. 😊

But, since, it is August, and many of you are thankfully enjoying your garden delights after a season of hard work, it is our time too, to approach God with thanksgiving and praise.

*As I come before you Lord, let me begin by saying how thankful I am **for you**. For **who you are** and for the **wonderful things** you have done in my life.*

And having acknowledged these amazing things about you and the many reasons I have to be thankful, let me tell you what is on my heart.

Let's look at 5 Reasons for Praise-filled Prayer When Life Gets Hard.

Our first reason is revealed in 2 Chronicles 20 where the enemies of Judah are joining together to make war on them...

2 Chronicles 20:6-12, The people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and others with them besides the Ammonites, came to battle against Jehoshaphat. ...And Jehoshaphat feared, and sought the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah and then he prayed.

And here is a **capsulated version of Jehoshaphat**, king of Judah's prayer,

*“O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and **in Your hand is there not power and might**, so that no one is able to withstand You? Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? **O our God**, will You*

*not judge them? For **we have no power** against this great multitude that is coming against us; **nor do we know what to do**, but our eyes are **upon You**.”*

Then in **Verses 14-17**, it says “the Spirit of God comes upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of **Asaph**. And he says...

Verses 15, *“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.”*

2 Chronicles 20:20-22 NKJV, *“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.” And when he had consulted with the people (Jahzaiel?), 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**, For His mercy endures forever.” 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.”*

1) When You Praise Him, God Will Fight For You.

When you recognize you are powerless and have to rely on HIS POWER, stop worrying, stop being afraid, stop trying to fix it all on your own, and allow space for God to step in.

Remember His goodness and faithfulness, and power and praise Him for it. Trust that He is at work to turn things upside down for your good regardless of the outcome.

So, as they began to **sing and praise**, the Lord answered their prayers by setting ambushes against their enemies, and they were defeated.

And the second benefit flows out of that same reality. When you pray from a posture of praise – with your attention directed toward God rather than self,

2) God Will Protect You.

David in celebration of God’s victories over His enemies writes and says this in... **2 Samuel 22:2-4 NKJV**,

*“The Lord is **my rock and my fortress and my deliverer**; The God of **my strength**, in whom I will trust; **My shield** and the horn of my salvation, **My stronghold and my refuge**; My Savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon the Lord, who is **worthy to be praised**; So, shall I be saved from **my enemies**.”*

David’s enemies here: Death, sorrow, his own distress and anxiety, the ungodliness around him, contentious people, violent people, and real enemies who wanted him dead.

God is our shelter from the storms, our refuge in times of trouble. He will protect us from our enemies and the battles they wage against us in this life.

So, rejoice in the God who loves and protects you and give him your praise.

When your heart turns to God, trusting him and praising his great name, you’ll find his peace which passes all understanding.

Psalm 5:11 NIV, *“Let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.”*

When the trials of this life are making you weary and waring you out, take refuge in God. He is a mighty fortress who offers you protection from you’re your enemies. Crawl up into His lap and rest in His power; singing praises to Him for the safety He offers.

Praise can turn around even the worst day – a day that feels like a full-fledged assault on your mind, soul and body – can turn out to be a day where your heart feels refreshed and renewed. When Prayer is filled with praise, God Will Protect You.

A third benefit praise filled prayer is that...

3) It Produces Sacrificial Generosity in You.

Hebrews 13:15-16 NIV, *“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”*

Praise - It’s a sacrifice. Giving him our best, even when we don’t feel up to it.

Do you want to please God? It can't be because you want to earn something for yourself or that you want to win His ear. "I will praise you so you will do for me what I want for my benefit... **NOT GOOD.**

"Regardless of the benefits I praise you for your benefit, not mine."

"I will praise you because you are worthy and I will do it at my expense."

That is a sacrifice. And if we can get the first sacrifice right, the other two will naturally follow:

Doing good or what is right (*when doing what is bad might be a little easier*), **that is a sacrifice.**

Sharing with others, well it is a little easier to see how that is a sacrifice. We give to others what we may have enjoyed for ourselves.

Praising God through the storms not only blesses God, but it blesses those around us who witness such faithfulness. **Praise Filled Prayer...**

4) It Makes Your Troubles Seem Smaller.

Philippians 4:6-8 NIV, "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything **by prayer and supplication**, with **thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Finally, brethren**, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is **anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.**"*

When life is hard, it's easy to focus on all the problems we're facing. Those challenges loom larger and all we see are the difficulties we're facing.

I mean, when you're in the thick of battle, it's hard to see anything but the blasts and explosions. Our focus is on the issues and surviving them.

But when we turn our hearts toward God and thankfully praise Him for His goodness and faithfulness to us and others we know, our problems begin to shrink. We begin to gain a new Divine perspective that opens up our eyes to see all the ways God is at work in our lives; all the blessings that have gone unnoticed. When we focus on these, our pain crashes into the unexpected peace of God.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

What are the benefits of praising God? Well...

5) It Increases the Possibility of Seeing a Miracle

Acts 16:23-26 (NIV), *“And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. **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 chains were loosed.”*

*Do you need a miracle? Do your problems seem bigger than any earthly solution? **How are you praising God and praying for that miracle?***

When troubles begin to surround you, look for ways to focus your thoughts and actions on praise and thanksgiving. Allow God to work his wonders through your testimony of praise in the storm.

But, let me be clear, praise-filled prayer doesn’t guarantee you a miracle, but it does open up the possibility of one – and it may not look like the one you hoped for. It may still be a miracle, but it may not change the outcome of your situation – just the outcome of your heart of faith.

Disciples like James (Acts 12) and Stephen (Acts 7), weren’t released like Paul and Silas. Their incarcerations still lead to their deaths.

Acts 7:55-58 NIV, *“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and **saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God**, and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened **and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!**” Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him.”*

So, you may not get the miracle you were hoping for but God can still do the miraculous. I mean, look at what He let Stephen see and experience!

You know, I am pretty sure Paul and Silas weren’t singing praises in jail to conjure up a miracle and cause the earth to shake and open prison doors.

No. They were simply singing praise to their all-deserving God and He chose that miracle for them at that moment.

So, what I am saying?

Praying with a focus on thanksgiving and praise has the power to change the outcome in these 5 ways

Praise-Filled Prayer results in us not fighting our own battles...

1. God Fights our Battles for us. (and sends the enemy running)

And when we take our refuge in Him...

2. God Will Protect us.

3. It Produces Sacrificial Generosity in Us (toward God & others)

4. It Makes Your Troubles Seem Smaller (Focus on Him and others)

5. It Increases the Possibility of us seeing a Miracle

It results in God miraculously changing outcome – either situationally or in us.

The Bible says that God inhabits the praises of His people **Psalms 22:3 ASV**

“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.”

In other words, God “dwells” in the atmosphere of His praise.

Praise to God invokes the Lord’s presence and power to flow in our midst. Praise transports us into the realm of the supernatural.

Psalms 89:15-16 NIV, *“Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all day long, And in Your righteousness they are exalted.”*

He delights in the love and devotion of His children.

Too often, praise is something that we practice and leave at church. However, praise should be a part of a believer’s lifestyle, inter-mingled as a part of their daily prayer-life. Praise is an expression of faith, and a declaration of victory!

Psalms 34:1 NKJV, *“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”*

I challenge you to become a person of praise, and you will experience the release of the power of God! **LET’S PRAY**