

Why Are We Silent?

Psalm 9:1

Charles Spurgeon, an English Baptist pastor in another century, observed in one of his sermons, “Doth not all nature around me praise God? If I were silent, I should be an exception to the universe. Doth not the thunder praise Him as it rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies? Do not the mountains praise Him when the woods upon their summits wave in adoration? Does not the lightning write His name in letters of fire? Hath not the whole earth a voice? And shall I, can I, silent be? “

Why are we silent? When our loving Heavenly Father has lavished such an abundance of good things upon us, how can we be silent? Yet we have managed to maintain our silence very well. The literal profusion of gifts from God’s throne rises up all around us—still we refuse to open our lips and exercise our throats in singing praise to God. I read of a baby who clapped her hands over almost anything. “Shove breakfast cereal in front of her, you’ll get a hand clap. Sit her in a circle of toys, and she’ll break into applause. Her parents took her to the seashore to watch the waves roll in, and she started clapping right away. Are the baby’s parents concerned? ‘We only worry,’ they say, ‘that someday she’ll stop.’” Too many of us haven’t found much of anything to applaud anymore. We’ve stopped clapping. We have stopped celebrating God’s gifts, creative powers, and his love.—*William M. Schwein*

But that is not the way of the Scriptures. In fact, when we read the Scriptures even casually, we learn that praise and adoration of our Heavenly Father is expected from His children. It is not an option. It is not only for “charismatics.” It is not just for those for whom everything is going great in life. It is not just for the well. It is not just for the rich, or the young. When we turn to Psalm 9, we don’t go beyond the first verse before we learn a very important truth, one on which we focus today:

We must praise Him!

Verse one begins, *"I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart."* It is very important that we pay close attention to the words here. When David says he will "praise" God, the basic meaning of the word is "to throw," and the idea is that David is "throwing" his praise to God. **David also says that he will praise God with *all* his heart.** This is whole-hearted, deeply-committed, entire-being praise. He holds nothing back, because he is aware of the awesomeness of Almighty God. This is no half-hearted offering of praise to God, like the sort offered to God so much in our day.

Then David says, *"I will tell of all your wonders"*; the King James reads, "I will shew forth all thy marvelous works." The basic word for "tell" or "shew forth" means "to scratch or to scrape," as if one is inscribing letters on stone. In other words, David says that he will write down all the wondrous things God has done—he will publish it—so everyone will know. This verse in the old Living Bible paraphrase reads, *"I will praise you with all my heart and tell everyone about the marvelous things you do."*

We humans are sometimes not very good when it comes to saying "thank you" or giving thanks. One lady worked with a church which was very active in trying to help needy people. She had some stories to tell. Listen to a few of them:

"A couple of years ago, a friend and I transported some used living room furniture to a local woman who had no income. As we hauled it out of my pickup truck and set it up in her home, she stood silently, watching us. Eventually she asked, "Could you get me a footstool, too? That way my guests won't put their feet on the coffee table."

"Several times in the ensuing months she phoned me, inquiring about the footstool, which never materialized. One day she called and announced, "I need some new furniture." When I asked why, she

explained, "I moved to a different house. I left that furniture in the other place. It was old, and besides, the couch had a broken leg." I wanted to scream.

"Another time, a woman telephoned our church in a panic, saying her food stamps were delayed and she was going hungry. As emergency needs liaisons for our church, my friend and I filled several grocery bags with food from our own pantries and delivered them to her. Accepting the food, she asked, "Can you find me a roll-away bed? I've got nowhere to sleep but the floor."

"When I returned a week later, having found a bed, she watched from her window as I single-handedly carted the bed across the street in rush-hour traffic. She waited while I assembled it for her and then flatly stated, "The food you brought me was poison. I was so sick I almost died." Stunned, I asked whether she had perhaps contracted the flu, which was going around at the time. She insisted we had poisoned her.

"Another woman, invited to a wedding, complained that our church's Clothes Closet, which offered free clothes to anyone in need, had nothing suitable. I invited her to my house to borrow one of my dressier outfits, but she never showed up. When, at her request, I took her some bags of my clothes as a gift, she handed them back to me. "These aren't what I had in mind" was all the thanks I received."

Certainly not everyone in need is so blatantly ungrateful, and this is not to say we shouldn't help others. But while we may be appalled and shake our heads in wonder at these stories of ingratitude, we must realize that all of us are guilty. Most of us get in a rut and take others for granted, and after a period of time we forget to say "thank you." We not only do this with people but also with God. We take Him and His blessings for granted. It's almost like we think we deserve all the good things we get in life.

Preacher Harry Ironside was in a crowded restaurant one time. Just as he was about to begin his meal, a man approached and asked if he could join him. Ironside invited him to have a seat. Then, as was his custom, Ironside bowed his head in prayer. When he opened his eyes, the other man asked, "Do you have a headache?" Ironside replied, "No, I don't." The other man asked, "Well, is there something wrong with your food?" Ironside replied, "No, I was simply thanking God as I always do before I eat."

The man said, "Oh, you're one of those, are you? Well, I want you to know I never give thanks. I earn my money by the sweat of my brow and I don't have to give thanks to anybody when I eat. I just start right in!" Ironside said, "Yes, you're just like my dog. That's what he does too!"

Have you counted your blessings lately? Have you considered all the good things that God has given you? If so, have you praised Him? Have you thanked Him? How can we not thank Him? In Psalm 13:6 we read these words: *"But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me."*

You may never have heard of Smith Wigglesworth, and we may not agree with every point of what he believed, but he did write something concerning praise which bears repeating:

"The new man created in Christ is God's masterpiece, His poem (Ephesians 2:10) set to music - a song. Singing and making melody in your heart unto the Lord. Praise is God's sunlight in the heart. It destroys sin germs. It ripens the fruits of the Spirit. It is the oil of gladness that lubricates life's activities. There can be no holy life without it. It keeps the heart pure and the eye clear. Praise is essential to the knowledge of God and His will. The strength of a life is the strength of its song. When the pressure is heavy that is the time to sing. Pressure is permitted to strengthen the attitude and spirit of praise. It takes a man to sing in the dark when the storm and battle are raging, and it is such singing that makes the man!"

Why is giving praise and thanks to God so important? Because praising God is a Biblical principle, and it needs more and more attention in our lives and our church. When we read the Scriptures, we learn several things about praise.

First, we learn in Psalm 22:3 that God sits enthroned on the praises of His people. Praising God on a regular basis guarantees the presence of God in our lives. Ever feel as sometimes as though God is nowhere to be found? Try praising Him, and see what happens! Zephaniah 3:17 tells us that *“The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save.”* The presence of God makes the difference!

Second, praise enables us to find victory in the battles we face in our personal lives. In 2 Chronicles 20 there is an absolutely fantastic story that too often goes overlooked in our day of technology and science. The king of Judah is named Jehoshaphat, and he receives a report that a vast army is coming up against Judah from Edom. He proclaimed a fast, and all the people *“came together to seek help from the Lord”* (v. 4). Jehoshaphat led the people in prayer for help, and he began his prayer by praising God. He said, *“O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you”* (v. 6). When the time came to go out into battle, we read beginning in verse 21 of 2 Chronicles 20, *“Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.’”*

And watch what happened. *“As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.”* What happens when we praise God is that God takes over the battles that we face and gives us victory. Praise is a weapon that God has given us against all the power of darkness.

Third, praising God opens up an avenue through which God can pour out numerous blessings on us. Psalm 103:1-5 reads, *“Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”* Praising God allows Him to move into your life and pour out blessings on you.

Fourth, giving thanks and praising God is God’s will. I Thessalonians 5:18 reads, *“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”* We read also in 1 Peter 2:9, *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”* And we are commanded in Hebrews 13:15, *“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.”*

The more we get to know God, the more thankful we should be for whatever we have in life. And the more we should rejoice in Him. He is the giver of life, the giver of all good gifts in life, and the giver of eternal life! How can we not rejoice in Him in spite of our circumstances?

I ran across this list of benefits of praising God:

- Praise - Honors God!*
- Praise - Undergirds faith!*
- Praise - Brings deliverance!*
- Praise - Is the voice of faith!*
- Praise - Is the language of heaven!*
- Praise - Sets the stage for God to move!*
- Praise - Releases the angels to minister!*
- Praise - Fuels joy, which is your strength!*
- Praise - Knocks down walls of resistance!*
- Praise - Stills the enemy and the avenger!*
- Praise - Dispels darkness and depression!*

Praise - Must precede, not follow blessings!
Praise - Gives God the legal right to help you!
Praise - Brings the presence of God onto the scene!
Praise - Is a sure sign of acceptance of the Word of God!
Praise - Is the highway that faith moves its blessings down!
Praise - Is calling those things that be not as though they were!

Baseball great Orel Hershiser, in his book *Out of the Blue*, wrote, "After the final game of the 1988 World Series against the Oakland A's, Bob Costas of NBC interviewed me in the locker room. He asked what I was doing between innings when the cameras had caught me in the dugout with my head back, "eyes closed, almost meditating."

"I was singing hymns to myself to relax and keep my adrenalin down, because every time I thought about being ahead, I got too excited to pitch." The next night I was a guest on "The Tonight Show." Johnny Carson also asked about that. "Do you just hum, or what?"

"I sing." The audience clapped and cheered. I hadn't meant that! "I'm not gonna sing!" They roared.

"Oh, yes you are!" Carson said. I shook my head, panicking. I'd never sung alone in public in my life. "This could be a first," he pressed. "Just a couple of bars."

"Well, the one I remember singing the most was a praise hymn." (Suddenly it was deathly silent.) "As I sat on the bench I'd sing: *Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise Him, all creatures here below. Praise Him above, ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*"

After Orel Hershiser sang that hymn the audience, Carson included, remained in silence. Singing praise to God does something to people that preaching never seems to do. It stops people in their tracks and it praises God like nothing else can do.

Hey! Has God been good to you? What about you? Has God been good to you? And what about you in the back? Has God been good to you? Psalm 100:4-5 encourages us: *“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”*

Remember Psalm 13:6? *“I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.”*
You say He’s been good to you? Then let’s sing! Don’t be silent any longer!
On your feet—sing *Amazing Grace* with me, stanzas one and four.

*Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.*

*When we’ve been there ten thousand years.
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’ve first begun!*