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PRAISING

The Bible pays much attention to praise. It is spoken of frequently in the Scriptures. The book of Psalms is full of praises. The book of Psalms is in fact a book of praise in the Old Testament. Many praises are quoted from Psalms.

However, the Psalms contain chapters not only of praises but also of suffering. God wants His people to know that the praising ones are the very ones who have been led through trying situations and whose feelings have been wounded. These psalms show us men led by God through shadows of darkness. They were rejected, slandered, and persecuted. "All Your waves and Your billows/Pass over me" (42:7). Yet God perfected praises out of these ones. Words of praise do not always come from the mouths of the smooth-sailing ones. They come much more from those who are under discipline and trial. In the Psalms we can touch the most wounded feelings, and in the Psalms we also can find the greatest and highest praises. God uses many hardships, difficulties, and slanders to create praises in His people. He causes them to learn through difficult circumstances to become praising persons before the Lord.

The happiest persons are not always the ones who have the loudest praise. The loudest praise comes very often from the ones who are passing through hardships. This kind of praise is most pleasing to God and is blessed by Him. God does not want men to praise Him only when they are on the mountaintop surveying Canaan, the promised land. God desires much more to see His people writing psalms and praising Him when they "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (23:4). This is genuine praise.

This shows us the nature of praise in the eyes of God. The nature of praise is an offering, a sacrifice. In other words, praise comes from pain and suffering. Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name." What is a sacrifice? A sacrifice is an offering. An offering means death and loss. The person who offers an offering must suffer

some loss. An offering, a sacrifice, must be offered up. This offering up constitutes a loss. The bull and the lamb are yours. When you offer them up, you are sacrificing them. To offer up something does not mean to gain anything; it means to suffer a loss. When a person offers up his praise, he is losing something; he is offering a sacrifice to God. In other words, God inflicts wounds; He breaks and cuts a person deeply, yet at the same time, such a person turns to Him and praises Him. Suffering for the sake of offering God praise is a kind of offering. God likes men to praise Him in this way. God likes to be enthroned upon this kind of praise. How can God receive His praise? God wants His children to praise Him in the midst of their sufferings. We should not praise only when there is gain. Although praise offered as a result of gain is praise, it cannot be considered an offering. The principle of offering is based on loss. An offering carries with it the element of loss. God wants us to praise Him in the midst of our loss. This makes a real offering.

We should not only pray to God but also learn all the more to praise God. We need to see the significance of praise at the very beginning of our Christian walk. We must praise God unceasingly. David received grace from God to praise seven times a day. It is a good exercise, a very good lesson, and a very good spiritual practice to praise God every day. We should learn to praise God when we get up early in the morning. We should learn to praise Him when we encounter problems, when we are at a meeting, or when we are alone. We should praise God at least seven times a day. Do not let David beat us in his praise. If we have not learned to praise God every day, it is hard to have the kind of sacrifice of praise spoken of in Hebrews 13.

As you learn to praise, you will find that there are days in which you cannot gather yourself to praise. Perhaps you praised God seven times today, yesterday, and the day before. Perhaps you praised Him a week or a month ago. But one day you will find that you cannot utter a praise. On such days you are in pain, total darkness, or dire trouble. On such days you suffer misunderstanding and slander. You are busy shedding

tears of self-pity. How can you praise God on such days? You cannot praise because you are wounded, suffering pain, and in difficulty. You feel that the most obvious response would be complaint rather than praise. You feel that the most obvious thing to do would be to murmur rather than give thanks. You do not feel like praising, and you have no intention to praise. You feel that praise is not suitable under this kind of circumstance and mood. At that very moment, you should remember that Jehovah's throne has not changed, His name has not changed, and His glory has not changed. You should praise Him simply because He is worthy of praise. You should bless Him simply because He is worthy of all blessings. Although you are in the midst of difficulties, He is still worthy to be praised. Although you are in distress, you still have to praise Him. At that moment, your praise becomes a sacrifice of praise. Your praise is like the slaughter of your fattest calf. It is like putting your dear Isaac on the altar. Your praise in tears is a sacrifice of praise. What is an offering? An offering implies wounds, death, loss, and sacrifice. You are wounded before God. You die before God. You suffer loss, and you sacrifice before God. But you realize that God's throne is established in the heavens and cannot be shaken, and you do not hold back your praise. This is the sacrifice of praise. God desires His children to praise Him in everything and through every situation.

Psalm 106:12 is a very precious word. "Then they believed His words;/They sang His praise." This was the condition of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They believed, and they sang. They believed, so they praised. Praise has a basic ingredient—faith. You cannot praise vainly with the mouth. You cannot say in a flippant way, "I thank the Lord! I praise the Lord!" You must believe. Only after you have believed can you praise. When you have some problems or when you are sorrowful, you pray, and as you pray, a kind of faith rises up in your heart. At that moment you open your mouth to praise. This is the living way, but do not do this in a light manner. When a man is faced with a problem, he should pray. But as soon as he finds a little faith, as soon as he begins to believe in God and in His greatness, power, compassion, glory, and manifestation of His glory, he should begin to praise. If a man acquires faith but does not follow it up with praise, he will soon find that his faith is gone. We are saying this from our experience. Once you have faith within, you should praise. If you do not praise, you will lose your faith after a while. You may have faith now. But after a while, you will

lose that faith. Therefore, we must learn to praise. We must learn to utter words of praise. We have to open our mouths to praise. We should have not only a mind to praise but also actual audible words of praise. You have to praise God in the face of all your problems and in the face of Satan. You should say, "O Lord! I praise You!" Do this until you turn from having no feeling to having feeling, or from having a feeble feeling to a strong feeling. Do this until you turn from little faith to full faith.

Finally, in Psalm 50:23 God says, "Whoever offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies Me." Here, the word thanksgiving can also be translated as praise. The Lord is waiting for our praises. Nothing can glorify our God as praises can. One day, all the prayers, works, prophesying, and labor will be over. But on that day our praises will be more than today's. Praise will last for eternity; it will never cease. When we reach heaven and arrive at our final home, our praises will swell even higher. Today we have the opportunity to learn the best lesson; we can learn to praise God even today.

(Collected Works by Watchman Nee, Vol.48)

Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for the blending and one accord among the saints.
- May the Lord raise up many brothers to bear the testimony together.
- Pray for the burden to raise up next generation for building up of the body of Christ.
- Pray for YP that they will be companions with one another to pursue the Lord together.
- Pray for the English-speaking testimony and gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- For GOW training: Vital groups be raised up, attending prayer meeting, prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth.

Announcement

- Morning Revival: Crystallization study of Psalms Message 24.
- YP Bible Study: John Correspondence course.
- Audio and outlines of the messages from Parents and Children/YP Serving Ones Conference are available at <http://thechurchinsanjose.org/archives>.
- Prayer meeting Tuesday (5/1) at Robert Tien's house.
- Summer Training 7/2~7, Registration deadline 5/1, please sanctify the time.
- 2012 International Memorial Day Conference to be held in Bellevue, WA on May 25-28.
- Sixth grade conf. 5/4~6, Bible Camp 6/18~22, SST for YP 7/22~27, please sanctify these times.