

# Praise

When giving feedback in the work situation, we have often been told of the importance of praising the good things. It's always nice to learn that your manager, or a colleague, or a 'customer', thinks you're doing something well! Praise, of course, is only meaningful if it's deserved. Sadly, as a result of their misbehaviour, Paul had to tell the Corinthian believers, "I praise you not" (1 Cor. 11:17,22).

In the New Testament, we are exhorted to be subject to the authorities, and to do good: this should result in praise from them (Romans 13:3; 1 Peter 2:14). In the Old Testament, we read, "a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30). The next verse goes on to say, "let her own works praise her". These verses are a challenge to all of us, whether male or female. The book of Proverbs has more to say about praise: self-praise should be avoided (27:2); and receiving praise tests us (27:21; see also 17:3) – how do I react to being praised? Do I give the glory to myself?

For the Christian, there is the glorious prospect of being praised by God in the coming day of review (1 Cor. 4:5). Are we living every day in light of the coming of the Lord (referred to in this verse), and the judgment seat of Christ (see also 2 Cor. 5:10)?

What we have considered so far is about praise directed at mortals. But, as everyone with any knowledge of the Bible is aware, in nearly all the references in Holy Scripture to praise, it is directed to God Himself. It is such praise to the Lord that I want to focus on in the remainder of this article.

Firstly, let's reflect on the fact that praise is often **collective**. Clearly we can, and should, praise God individually, when we are alone. But the scriptural practice of praise is very often undertaken together. When the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, "all the people said Amen, and praised the LORD" (1 Chron. 16:36). A similar expression occurs in Nehemiah 5:13. In Psalm 35:18, David says, "I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people". Indeed, the call goes beyond mortals: "Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts" (Ps. 148:2). We have a fulfilment of this at the birth of the Lord Jesus, in Luke 2:13 ("Glory to God in the highest"). Later in that chapter, we read of the shepherds "glorifying and praising God" (v. 20). In Revelation 19:6 John "heard as it were the voice of a great multitude...saying, Alleluia".

We should praise **daily**. In Psalm 61:8, David says, “So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows”. From Acts 2:46-47, daily praise also seems to have been characteristic of the early church. In Psalm 119:164, the psalmist declares, “Seven times a day do I praise thee”.

Believers will praise **eternally**. Psalm 145 is headed a ‘psalm of praise’. In v2, David tells God, “I will praise thy name for ever and ever”. How could it possibly be otherwise? “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing [praise]” (Rev. 5:12).

We should praise **fervently**. “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised” (Ps. 48:1). No wonder that the psalmist announces, “I will praise the LORD with my whole heart” (Ps. 111:1). It would be difficult, if not impossible, to read Psalm 150, for example, and miss the sheer enthusiasm that pervades every clause.

Our praise should be characterised by **gladness**. This obviously links closely with what we considered in the previous paragraph. “But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him” (Psalm 68:3-4). When Hezekiah purified the temple, we read that the Levites “sang praises with gladness” (2 Chron. 29:30). Immediately after the Ascension, the disciples “returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:52-53).

Praise often finds expression in **hymns**. Singing provides a great channel for the fervour and gladness we have been considering. There are numerous references in the psalms to singing praise (e.g. Ps. 47:6-7). For New Testament references, see Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, where the Greek word for hymn denotes a song of praise addressed to God.

Finally, and very importantly, praise should be given **intelligently**. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me” (Ps. 50:23). The use of the word ‘offer’ indicates that praise is seen by God as a sacrifice. There should be nothing second-rate about our praise. Psalm 47:7 says, “sing ye praises with understanding”. In Psalm 150:2, two reasons for praising the Lord are given: his mighty acts; and his excellent greatness. Under each of these two headings, there is so much to praise Him for! Under ‘mighty acts’, take:

“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.” (Ps. 40:2-3)

And under 'excellent greatness':

"Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee"  
(Ps. 63:3). As well as kindness and love, the Hebrew word translated  
'lovingkindness' suggests mercy, grace, and faithfulness.

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!