

THE CALVARY EXAMINER

JANUARY 2006

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1



Pam Lemin was the little girl holding the doll. Thank you to all who guessed. Susan Brooks not only guessed it was Pam, but also Chrissy! Bonus points to her!

I had these two sections of Scripture running through my head. I thought I would share them.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ~ Phil. 3:7-14 NIV

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see...By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

~ Hebrews 11:1, 11:7

Putting everything aside to pursue Christ should be our aim. Let us strain toward what is ahead together! ~ KJ



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Singing the Eternal Song Part 2

By Cherwyn Ambuter

1.) PRAISE GIVES GOD THE GLORY THAT IS DUE HIM

It is good for us to give God the praise that is due Him.

Psalm 92:1: It is a good thing to praise the LORD.

Psalm 135:3: It is a pleasant thing for the upright to praise Him.

Psalm 48:1: He is worthy of praise!!

Isaiah 43:21 & I Peter 2:9: We are formed and chosen by God to praise Him!

It serves to cause us to retain an even and balanced perspective of who we are, who He is, and that the world does not revolve around “me.” But that there is Someone Else “out there” Who is over all, and above all, and Who is managing all with great skill and full knowledge and understanding and love. It also helps us accomplish what we were made and chosen to do. So, praising God offers us fulfillment and perspective. Truly, this IS a good thing He commands us to do!

Why can't we just speak our praise only, and not sing it at all? Why are we commanded to sing it? The answer, says Bob Sorge in Exploring Worship: A Practical Guide to Praise and Worship (an excellent book that I highly commend to all of you) lies in the beauty of music. He urges us to imagine saying the phrase, “Alleluia...alleluia...alleluia.” He says that this alone does not do much for us compared with when we sing the gentle, soft chorus of the same words that we know so well. Our hearts are lifted to the LORD through the music, and our spirits are moved in the presence of God. John MacArthur says (in the sermon at this webpage: <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg1940.htm>) that when God redeems men, He gives them a distinctive song, more beautiful and pure than anything the world can produce! In the end, God hasn't explicitly stated why to “sing” praise, but we can all relate to the beauty of praise set to music, and surely, He can.

Again, singing has so many benefits. In addition to spiritual, emotional, and physical benefits, it helps us to stay focused in our prayers. In our flesh, we are often prone to wander in our attentiveness as we strive to pray. Especially in this day and age of fast pace and the 3-second sound bite - a fractured, fragmented kind of daily existence. But if we sing our prayers, this helps us to keep our minds and hearts focused upon the Lord and what we are doing!

Rev. MacArthur says that even before the fall of man, the angels (“morning stars”) sang together (Job 38:7). And at the end of time, the heavenly Temple will have, he says, a “huge choir loft for singing to the glory of God” (Ezek. 40:44-47). A special spot in the inner Court will be built just for the singers! This parallels all of the singers that were gathered in David's and Solomon's temples.

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Rev. 14:2-3 says, "And they sang, as it were, a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth." Rev. MacArthur says that in the future there will be a 144,000-voice choir with heavenly harpers for accompaniment! They'll be singing a very special and unique song that is their very own.

Another group that will sing a special song at the end of time is found in Rev. 15:2-3. John recorded that those who will be victorious over the Beast (the Antichrist) have "the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

So we can see that singing the praises of God is something very dear and special to the heart of God. From time immemorial in the past, to time immemorial in the future, He has ordained praise through song unto Himself. Our sung praise has an eternal, immutable purpose and delights Him eternally!! So, do not think that your song falls upon deaf ears and that it is just an exercise in routine and something you just do in the "order of service." There is a spiritual dynamic to our sung praises that goes beyond just speaking words of praise!! Otherwise, why would God go to all this trouble to make sure that sung praise move towards His throne from both heaven and earth, and for all time? Recognize that singing to Him is filled with the supernatural. See with the eyes of faith how your song of praise is being used of God, enjoyed by God, and even energized by God.

Now, we must be sure of this: God isn't interested in songs from an unclean heart (Amos 5:23-24). At a time when Israel was immersed in sin, injustice toward the poor, and idolatry, God said, "take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." In captivity in Babylon, which was the chastisement of God upon a wayward nation of Israel, the musicians hung up their harps in the willow trees and said, "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?" (Ps. 137: 1-4) If we are at a place of waywardness in our walk with God and we are not walking along the path of holiness He has laid out for us, we will feel the strain of "the heavens becoming as brass" and this is not an accident. We will lose inspiration to sing to God; our sung praises will feel empty and hypocritical. Eventually if we continue down this path of turning away from God's best for us, we will find ourselves becoming depressed and find that the Lord's chastisement becomes a heavy burden that takes away our song. Who feels like singing when they are depressed because of unrepented sin? We lose our victory and we have nothing to sing about. So in order for God to rejoice over us with His song, we don't need to be perfect (only Jesus is!) but we need to be growing and bit by bit, becoming more like Him instead of backsliding and grieving His Holy Spirit. Music is an amazing barometer of our walk with Him, isn't it?

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Where should we praise God? Well, everywhere! Psalm 113:3 says that we can praise Him even when we're are home in bed. (What a beautiful thing that even those who are bedridden and frail can praise Him please Him with their song.) But there are some specific places where praising God is particularly appropriate: in the congregation of the saints.

Ps. 22:22 I will declare Your name to my brothers; in the congregation will I praise You.

Ps. 26:8 I love the house where You live, O LORD...In the great assembly I will praise the LORD.

Ps. 35:18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise You.

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Ps. 68:24-26 Your procession has come into view, O God, the procession of my God and King into the sanctuary. In front are the singers; after them the musicians; with them are the maidens playing tambourines. Praise God in the congregation; praise the LORD in the assembly of Israel.

Ps. 107:32 Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.

Praising God with the house of the redeemed brings unity of spirit, allows God's Spirit to move in our midst and us to flow in His love, sending it back to Him and to each other. We unite as one voice, declaring His goodness and His truth as one, aided by the Holy Spirit and making way for Him in His mission to fulfill Jesus' great prayer for unity among us in John ch. 17. Folks, this is REAL!! God inhabits and is enthroned in our praises especially collectively! Remember how He responded to the singers' united, collective praise by filling the Temple with His shekinah glory! Now, while it would be a thrill to SEE this shekinah glory right in our own sanctuary at Calvary, visible to the very eye, again we don't worship (nor even want, I think) a God who is a formulaic God – He acts always as He pleases, manifesting Himself as He desires and always perfectly for our need at this moment in time. How sad if we would be disappointed to NOT see “the cloud” and say sadly, well, God didn't show up today. This is missing the whole point! God is so much above us! And the dedication of Solomon's Temple was surely a special occasion! Think of the birth of the Church in Acts 2 – God showed up with visible manifestations of Himself – again, a very special occasion! And on both occasions God was wanting to demonstrate His favor at a critical moment in His relationship with His people. But God is NO LESS PRESENT and active among us today as we worship in the 1st and 2nd services at Calvary Baptist! Let's approach Him with faith that He is here with us and rejoicing over us with singing!

So, I want to encourage you all to lift your voices, sing to Him, sing in the shower, in the car, on walks outside or in your prayer closet, and sing especially heartily on Sundays as we meet with God in His Body, and encourage the saints with your purehearted worship. He is the King of Kings! He has ordained praise, both spoken and sung, and it doesn't matter if you sing beautifully or not – He is pleased! No - He is OVERJOYED!!!



If any of you has a tough time “making that appointment with God” to sing praise to Him, or you can't find a place alone where you don't feel embarrassed that you'll be heard and people will think you sing ugly (but surely you don't!), perhaps you could pray about joining the Praise Team if they have an opening, or joining the choir. (You knew this

would be mentioned, didn't you? But this article is not about choir!)

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For me, choir rehearsal and Sunday morning choir singing are times that I KNOW I'll be singing praise to Him. I look forward to them all week. It's so long from Sunday to Sunday! I do sing to Him outside of church gatherings and rehearsals to the Lord, but if that time has been short, I find that the Wednesday evening rehearsals give me an extra boost in my walk with God because they power me up for another few days to get through until Sunday. We have such a joyful time lifting our voices and hearts to Him! In fact, singing to God gives us such a spirit of joy, that I have to work hard to keep the choir from the distractions of always cutting up and laughing and joking around! I am thrilled that God brings so much joy to us believers as we worship Him together! This is a natural outgrowth of praise that He ordains. And as for unity – how many places will we find people in their teens and 20s and 80-year-olds really joking around together? Praise brings us together like nothing else (except of course persecution, which we don't get much of over here). But deeper than that, I can sense the Lord's pleasure and favor as we sing to Him. He ministers deeply to my heart and soul as we work on our music.

Evelyn Kientzler, a longtime choir member, says, "I love to sing, especially for the Lord. We learn many and new things each week...And, to be a part of a group that loves the Lord and wants to worship through music together to serve Him makes it a wonderful experience." Joann Bruno says, "We have a wonderful camaraderie between all choir members...Singing is a wonderful way to praise God."

Matt Newman, who is a "newbie" to the choir, shares the same feeling: "Singing in the Calvary Baptist Church choir has been a fantastic experience. We are presented with numerous opportunities to grow and extend our ministry. Singing in the New York area Billy Graham Crusade this summer was the thrill of a lifetime! We have a lot of fun as we sing praises to our God and worship Him in many varied and wonderful modalities."

Christine Wood and Gladys Calzada both speak of how the choir has become "family" to them, which is a manifestation of the unity that singing praise to God together can create. We lift each other up in prayer and then sing together to God and it is a precious, precious time. Christine adds, "I am filled with the joy of the Lord when I sing, and get excited all the time." How's that for a spiritual blessing in an age when many are battling depression? Singing has become part of Christine's spiritual warfare!

The Hortons find that being in the choir together as a family has meant a lot to them. Chuck quotes Psalm 89:1: "I will sing of the Lord's great love forever." Recognizing that this activity has an eternal component. His family will be singing together **forever** of God's great love! And it brings a little bit of heaven down here on earth to be doing that together, here, even in this sin-sick world. He says, "What better way to sing of His great love, than as a family?" (Even if you're not in choir, you can praise God **together** as a family at home and of course at church!)

Recently, our sense of purpose and mission has deepened and expanded. We are praying for opportunities, like the Billy Graham Crusade, to take the praise of God past the four walls of our church building and declare His praises to all people. We are praying that souls be won to Him through our ministry. We are experiencing a greater sense of urgency to be used of Him to change

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and transform lives, to strengthen the feeble knees (including our own!), to have Him move upon us as we sing and that He will cause spiritual strongholds to fall down at the name of Jesus. Even just one simple song can do that – the Lord can use one little moment in time to begin to crack the walls that are erected by either Satan or the believer. Sometimes we can go through seemingly unbearable things, and we can grow resentful or even bitter towards God – but a simple song can break us down and restore to us a tender, broken, humble and yearning spirit, able to allow God to move again in our life. We pray for such moments of ministry!

Joanne Mercadante has captured this mission: "I guess I am one of the choir's "long time members." Elwood, Evelyn and Gerda share this distinction with me. I remember Alice Herbert's asking me to join, and my saying, "When I finish E.E. (EVANGELISM EXPLOSION), I'll think about it." Well, I did, and I did, and I did! So here I am, 25 years later, still singing praises to the Lord! AND LOVIN' IT!! Choir is a ministry that is sometimes underrated...You don't go on the mission field, don't take too much of a risk evangelizing...All in all, a safe mission field, but STILL, a mission field! Choir, like all ministries, is one that gives as well as receive, but we don't have to wait for results...They are right there, in the faces of those to whom we sing, and we are moved with thanks and praise that Our Lord has privileged and blessed us in this way! So, if you want to go on a mission field, and Africa is not on your agenda, come join us at 8:00 on Wednesday nights. It's only an hour and a half out of your day, but the rewards are TIMELESS!!!!

Now, this is not directly a "recruitment article" for choir. Not all are called to the choir! Not all are called to the pulpit! Not all are called to be Sunday School teachers, nor nursery nurturers, nor trustees nor deacons nor social committee members nor costume makers nor evangelists. In the Body of Christ there are "ears," "eyes," "feet," "hands," even stomachs! (smile) Each with our own function and purpose within the Body, helping it to be fitted together, joined into a great building through Christ's great plan. But, ALL OF US are called to sing unto the Lord, somehow, some way. Choir is one way to do this, an easy way to have at least one time during the week other than a few hymns on Sunday, that we know we will be singing to the Lord and reaping His built-in benefits and bringing joy to His heart and to ours. We sing for almost a full hour and a half – a solid chunk of time singing to Christ! And He definitely meets with us there! The Praise Team goes even longer and incorporates a great Bible study, too. You can take advantage of these opportunities, as a believer, if you but ask and if the Lord has reserved a spot for you!

But He will meet with YOU, WHEREVER YOU ARE and AT ANY TIME, that you choose to lift your voice and begin to praise Him, to declare in song His glory, His praise, His holiness and His love and salvation. He is ready to meet with you as you make that time for Him. Don't be shy – He doesn't care how your voice sounds. He wants to meet with you and sing His song over you! You are participating in an eternal, ongoing-through-the-ages activity THAT PLEASES HIS HEART. Many times as the choir sings, I can "see" us all in our heavenly white robes, before God's throne, maybe even in that eternal inner-court choir loft, singing the very same words we are singing at that moment on Sunday morning, but unto Him in eternity. It is so moving that it brings tears to my eyes and I have to fight them back to keep functioning. Folks, we are engaging in a timeless activity when we sing praise to God. As for evangelism, it will cease. As for tongues and prophecy, these will cease or have ceased, according to whatever your theology is on the subject. But the offering of song before the Lord will NEVER CEASE!

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Psalm 90 says so eloquently, “LORD, thou has been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, THOU ART GOD.” (Notice the present-tense, as when He said, I AM – always present in the “now” – beyond all space and time and limitations.)

And joining the Lord from everlasting to everlasting, are the songs surrounding Him. Will you be a part of His song and make time, in some way, shape, or form, for this? Will you bless your soul with an opportunity to be with Him in a special way? Will you give yourself this chance to do spiritual warfare and to fight against depression, defeat, and Satan’s detours? Then, pick up a hymnal and sing one of the many wonderful, rich hymns. Or sing a praise chorus or song that you know by heart. Or put on a Christian CD (if you have CD-playing capability) and sing with it. Or, even, just make up a song to God – it doesn’t need to be professionally designed; just from the heart. Many times these personally-made songs will be the most intimate experiences with Him as they are the genuine expressions of your heart, not someone else’s words or form. The song style doesn’t matter; what matters is the genuineness you bring to Him and what you give Him of yourself! And, the understanding you have of the two-way relationship that is taking place. The main thing is: “Just A Closer Walk With Thee” as the objective!

HAPPY PRAISING, EVERYBODY!!!!

