

Psalm 149—Praise to God for His salvation and judgement?

I think it is very important for every Christian to recognise that what we do as a Christian must flow out of our worship relationship with God. I remember a wonderful preacher Dr. Alan Fleece saying “we must never forget that we are first worshippers then workers”. First we need to have a vital deep love relationship with God and then out of that spurs an effective service for God. So in this Psalm the writer gives us four things we should do in worship. Again it comes to us in the context of this great finale in the Psalms which is really a wonderful ongoing crescendo of praise to the wonderful God that we know and love and worship.

1. Firstly worship the Lord intelligently – verses 1-2.

Worship is something we learn and keep on learning to do. Sadly for many folk worship never really gets beyond a rather shallow, repetitive ritualistic operation. I think it would be fair to say that for many Christians their worship of God never really gets beyond the routine and ritual nature of Sunday morning as usual. It is never God’s desire that that should happen, but unfortunately depending on where we are at in our love relationship with God obviously impacts how we are growing and developing in our worship of God. So therefore we need to see that our primary focus of worship should always be God. The opening verse says ‘Sing to the Lord a new song’. I think it really says it all when we recognise that we can sing to lots of different things and lots of different tunes and worship lots of different things when it comes to worship. I think it is very important for us to acknowledge that we are born to worship but if we don’t worship the living God we will worship something else. Then we need to recognise that worship of God is not some sort of mindless act but a clear and direct action so that we worship God and then what happens is we make a progression as we worship God. Then we worship Him for the beauty of His creation and we worship and thank Him for the blessings that He pours out upon us day by day. When I first became a Christian one of the first things that really seemed to take on a whole new look for me was God’s creation. It seemed that the sky was bluer; the grass was greener; the trees seemed more beautiful and shapely and the birds seemed to have the most exquisite colours. I really believe that part of the reason for the change was that suddenly I was looking at God’s creation through God’s heart as He indwells us through His spirit. Secondly worship needs to be seen both as a corporate and individual joy and privilege. As the Psalmist says “let Israel rejoice in their maker, let Zion be joyful in their King.” I think this really hi-lights for us that when it comes to worship it is God’s desire that we not only worship Him as a church but that ideally we would worship Him as a nation. I think that is why the Bible does say that righteousness exalts a nation. Part of the outcome of righteousness is that we want to have that both corporate and individual joy and privilege of worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

2. Worship the Lord fervently – verses 3-4.

I think that when we talk about worshipping the Lord in terms of praising the Lord with dance and musical instruments we are not talking about some mindless disco or ballroom dance but that it is a dance that is inspired of God and points always to God. Again the Psalmist takes time to remind us of the importance of music in worship. There have

been times when I have been in a quiet time and there have been wonderful Christian choruses or instruments playing in the background which have been such a help to me in focusing on the God that I know and love and worship. I praise God for those who are able to sing or write Christian music or play musical instruments as I have to confess to being an all rounder - I can’t write, sing or play music with any skill to speak of.

We must see that such worship whether it be in terms of dance or musical instruments is truly bringing pleasure to God. I think it is important for us to recognise that true worship is all about enrichment of our Christian lives and not entertainment in our Christian walk. We need to recognise that true worship can bring deliverance from the bondage of sin and the world. One of the things that I found interesting when Jehoshaphat back in the Old Testament was going into battle was that the primary weapon that he used was music and song which praised and worshipped God. Now there is a different spin on having the right sort of weapons for battle. What it does do for us is to hi-light that praise and worship are an important part of knowing victory in our daily walk with God. Why would we say this? The answer is that when we praise and worship God we get our focus on God and in doing that we literally come into the very presence of God as it were in the circumstances in which we are in. It also helps us to take a new and different perspective on the circumstances in which we are enduring.

3. Worship the Lord gratefully – verse 5.

Let the saints be joyful in glory, let them sing aloud on their beds. The key things about worship here is that we need to be so thankful that we can worship the Lord day by day. I look at what has been going on in Africa in places like Sudan and Chad and in Eastern Europe and Russia and China. It troubles me enormously that somehow or other God has deemed it to be my lot in life to live in Australia where we enjoy such incredible freedom to worship the Lord. The sad thing is though we can go to church whenever we want to but often we make it an optional extra. We can read any different translation of the Bible that we want to or we can get access to Bibles whenever we want to but we choose not to read it. We have the wonderful joy and privilege of praying and seeking God day by day moment by moment but for many Christians it is just once again seen as something that is supplemental rather than fundamental to our Christian walk. Then we have the wonderful opportunity to witness for the Lord of His wonderful goodness and grace and mercy toward us and yet for many of us as Stephen Oldford said “we are like an Arctic river frozen at the mouth”.

Then we also need to keep our worship from becoming routine or mindless because then it becomes meaningless. We need to recognise that our worship is not in just simply producing a shopping list before God in prayer or just doing something as an end in itself e.g. going to church on a Sunday morning as an end in itself. When I became a Christian one of the first things that changed for me was that I was taken from what was going to church for ritualistic purposes to suddenly wanting to go to church that I might indeed have that deepened relationship with God. The differences are worlds apart and the outcomes are obvious.

(Please turn over)

4. We need to worship the Lord triumphantly – verses 6-9

We need to recognise that worship and warfare often go hand in hand as I have said before in 2nd Chronicles chapter 20 Jehoshaphat made that clear but also we see it in Nehemiah chapter three when Nehemiah gave instructions to the people to be ready to pray and ready to work. We need to recognise that when God has called us to a task that we can worship the Lord and as we do He keeps on giving us an ongoing vision and passion for Him and out of that spurns victory over the world, the flesh and the devil. We need to and must worship the Lord in the midst of the warfare and in essence this is the definition of true worship. If we can't worship the Lord in difficult times chances are we have never really understood what worship is all about. If we find that the moment the going gets tough and we move from worship to whining then we need to revisit how we are worshipping and indeed why?

Then lastly we need tools for building and tools for battling. You need to recognise that whilst we need the tools for building as in the rebuilding of Nehemiah's wall we also need the tools for battling such as the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation and so on. In those final verses it is important for us to recognise that in the difficulties and struggles of life, we need to learn to honour the Lord in all that we do and above all that there is always a word of praise upon our lips. Just recently a very good friend of mine, Glen Smart passed away to be with the Lord. As I was speaking to his wife Coralie after the funeral I said to her there was one word that always seemed to mark Glen's life and that was the word praise. Glen always had a word of praise for God and for others on his lips and I think the fact that over 400 people attended his funeral was a testimony to how he walked in the victory of praising and worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge



Praise:

1. We want to praise the Lord for the recent visit for Carl and Carolyn to the United States and South America where the Lord richly blessed. As a result of their visit we are now anticipating our Spanish edition of the Challenge going into Hoffmantown Baptist church which is located in Albuquerque New Mexico. We are also praising the Lord for a big increase in the print run for the USA going from 10,000 to 30,000. We want to praise the Lord for 10,000 of that print run going into Harlem New York. We also want to praise the Lord for the increase of the paper distribution in South America going from 10,000 to 25,000 for this next edition and then looking to go to 40,000 for the following edition. We envisage going into two new countries in South America this year namely Uruguay and Paraguay.
2. We want to praise the Lord for the growth of the paper in South Africa and Southern Africa. Our next print run will be somewhere around 370,000 papers into Southern Africa. Also we are looking forward to seeing how the Lord provides for the ongoing expansion of our print run into Kenya. We are printing somewhere around 15-20,000 papers per month there depending on how finances are available. Also we want to praise God for the ongoing opportunities coming up in Egypt and Nigeria.
3. We praise God for our prayer warriors who are a great blessing and asset to the work that we are doing both in Australia and around the world. We want to praise God for those who are faithful givers to the work of Challenge. We know that without the prayer backing and financial support of this work much of what you are reading about now would not be happening. We want to praise God for a faithful team of staff who do an outstanding job in each of their areas. Challenge is no doubt a team ministry and without the work of our staff here in Perth and also the Partnerships that we have with Multi Ministries, Peace Makers Fellowship, Challenge Weekly and Word of Life and also with our United States rep Doug Cornelius none of what is happening would have come about.

Prayer:

1. The most important prayer point at the moment is for Swahili Bibles into Kenya. I had an email recently from Paul Dondoh who shared with us that it was very difficult to hold a Bible study with new converts who did not have their own Bible. I think we can all concur with that and so we are asking that you might consider giving towards funding Bibles for our Kenyan outreach. One Bible will cost around about \$6-\$7 so a hundred dollars will get us probably 12 to 15 Bibles depending on the cost. Secondly Paul is in desperate need of a hi-ace van for picking up of the papers and distribution as well as good transport to get him from place to place. Please pray that God will touch the hearts of some people to give in this area.
2. We do want to pray for the ongoing development of Challenge and for wise procedures and organisational structures in place. We recognise that this is critical to the ongoing sustainability of the work.
3. Please pray for the ongoing establishing work in the United States and for Doug Cornelius as he promotes and develops the work there. Please also pray for our next print run will include an order for 10,000 going into Harlem New York. These papers will be used in a church planting work. Pray for a rich harvest.



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