

## *Part 6*

### *Faith Alive Through--*

# **PRAISING THE LORD!**

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How can snakes, trees, hills, birds and snow praise the Lord? Listen to the Psalmist as he calls on these and more to praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord, O heavens! Praise him from the skies! Praise him, all his angels, all the armies of heaven. Praise him sun and moon, and all you twinkling stars. Praise him, skies above. Praise him, vapors high above the clouds.

Let everything he has made give praise to him. For he issued his command, and they came into being; he established them forever and forever. His orders will never be revoked.

And Praise him down here on earth, you creatures of the ocean depth. Let fire and hail, snow, rain, wind and weather, all obey. Let the mountains and hills, the fruit trees and cedars, the wild animals and cattle, the snakes and birds, the kings and all the people, with their rulers and their judges, young men and maidens, old men and children--all praise the Lord together. For he alone is worthy. His glory is far greater than all of earth and heaven.....Hallelujah! Yes, praise the Lord!(1)

Animals, fish, fire, fruit trees, cattle, snakes and birds praise the Lord by being what He made them to be as suggested by the phrase "all obey" at the end of verse eight. A tree praises the Lord by growing where God planted it, and its' products serving a useful purpose. It would be intriguing to pursue a study of nature and its' praise of God. However, God calls on the highest of His Creation, man, to praise Him!

While I had memorized Ephesians 5:20--"giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,"--yet, the truth of the verse had never been lived out in my life.

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul encourages us to be filled with the Spirit. The second blessing he names that results from the Spirit's work in us is "GIVING THANKS ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (5:20). This is the very essence of God's Divine Provision in our life on the one hand, and the other side is our acceptance of His Plan. We declare our acceptance by PRAISING HIM. PRAISE fulfills GOD'S WILL for us by making Jesus Lord of our lives.

After discovering how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, my mind was renewed and many truths came knocking at my door so-to-speak. Praise was one of these truths.

My desire to praise God was born out of this prayer covenant with the Lord.

"Lord, if Your Words through the apostle Paul-- 'giving thanks always for all things' mean what they say, then please know this is impossible for me. Enroll me in Life's School of Praise! Please be my Teacher in this course of life. Help me to be a good student in learning Your lessons and passing the tests."

My first lesson after this prayer came on a humid summer evening in June. The Minneola Christian Church provided us with a house to live in while preaching there. I was painting the trim around the windows and doors a John Deere shade of green to coordinate with the light green siding. The mosquitoes and gnats buzzing around my head were making it nearly impossible to work. Having just learned to always pray, I began talking to the Lord about removing the insects. His reply was the core of truth from Ephesians 5:20--"give thanks always for all things". Immediately I argued against the truth. It wasn't logical and furthermore I needed to get rid of these pesky gnats and mosquitoes. No further reply from the Lord except this admonition--give thanks always for all things. Finally out of desperation and aggravation I thanked the Lord like this, "Lord, I do not know why you made gnats or mosquitoes but they are a part of your creation and a problem to me. Thank You for the little creatures and for their being here right now."

That which followed seemed to have no relation to my giving thanks. The gallon of green paint setting on the stepladder tipped over spilling down the side of the house. I ran to the garage for some rags and paint thinner to wipe the dark green paint off the siding shingles. I scrubbed a shingle then threw the rag in the bush under the window.

Now, the Lord probed my spirit with these thoughts--Are you thankful for spilled paint? Are you grateful for gravity that caused the paint to go down and not up? At first I was furious. "Lord, all I wanted was to paint the trim without being bothered by insects." Finally the stained siding was clean.

Back up on the ladder I pumped up my determination and thanked the Lord for even spilled paint and gravity, too. At that moment I sensed something strange. No mosquitoes! No gnats! I think for the first time in my life I said--"Praise the Lord! Thank You Jesus!"

As I mused upon this strange happening I realized that my original prayer of wanting the insects removed was answered through a chain of events--paint spills, lacquer thinner used to remove stains, rags thrown in bush, fumes = a repellent to gnats and mosquitoes, so they disappear.

Some will smile and say, such a simple little thing. That's true, however I have learned that God is a God of little things, beginning with the atom which He uses as building blocks for all things. (Hebrews 11:3 and Colossians 1:16,17.) For me the lessons of life always begin with just little things and then the Lord leads me on to the higher ground of bigger and greater things.

I learned many lessons out of this simple incident--#

- #1. OBEY His Word. He said it! That settles it!
- #2. Logic, the science of reasoning, is often faulted in man because of his sinful nature.
- #3. God often uses a chain of events in answering our prayers and praise which fulfills the truth of Romans 8:28 that He causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him.

Much of our thinking and speaking about PRAISE is like the man hauled into court on a charge of Assault and Battery.

The Judge said, "How do you plead to this charge of Assault and Battery?"

The accused said, "Your Honor, I plead not guilty of assault 'n battery."

The Judge said, "Are there any witnesses?"

The arresting policeman came forward and testified that he saw the man commit the crime of Assault and Battery.

The Judge further inquired, "Now, what do you say to this testimony?"

"I still plead not guilty to assault 'n battery for I never put salt in anybody's battery."

He did not understand the basic terminology.

Our thinking in this chapter will seek to clarify what praise is and how we can make Jesus Lord of our lives through PRAISE.

The key verse the Lord used in teaching me about praise is I Thessalonians 5:18.

**"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."**

This verse makes four statements about "PRAISING" THE LORD which will be the focus of our thinking. I plan for us to look at these four facets reversed from the order stated in the verse.

1. THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD.
2. FOR YOU IN CHRIST.
3. GIVE THANKS!
4. IN EVERYTHING!

## **I - This is the Will of God.**

From Paul's phrase in this verse--"**this is the will of God.**" I pose this question: "**WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD?**" It should be crystal clear as Paul has just told us--"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Our humanism shows through as we insist on arguing with that which is obvious. Some say, "What about the context? What immediately precedes the word this?" Look and listen to what the two previous verses say:

**"Rejoice always:  
Pray without ceasing;**

In everything give thanks;  
for this is the will of God  
In Christ Jesus for you."

The WILL OF GOD for us is:  
Rejoice always!  
Pray without ceasing and  
In everything give thanks.

God is far more willing to REVEAL HIS WILL to us than we are to DO IT.

A young man came to my study saying--"Preacher, I haven't had a job for six months and my Workman's Compensation is running out. Can you help me?"

"Possibly. Would you be willing to pray?"

"Yes, but it won't do any good. I've been praying and nothing happens."

"Would you want to pray God's Will for your life?"

"Well, certainly!" he said. "Do you know what God's Will for me is?"

"No, but the Apostle Paul has written it down."

"Really! What is it?"

I read him these verses--"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." and "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

"Shall we pray the truth of these verses?"

"Well,.....O.K.....I guess so," he said slowly.

I told him he could repeat my prayer words after me as a prayer since he was not familiar with this type of prayer. We knelt and prayed.

"Thank You God for making Your Will so clear and revealing it to me. Lord, You have numbered the hairs on my head and You keep a running census on the sparrows so that not one falls without Your knowledge. Thank you for the gift of life and Your being the Master of all my days and ways in causing all things in my life to work together

for good. I Praise You that what is happening right now is Your will for me even as Your Word says--'In everything give thanks for this is Your will for me.' So You know that I have no job. Thus, according to Your Word I praise You for that! In Jesus' Name--A-men."

You guessed it, I almost lost my friend on that last phrase in the prayer. But, the good news is that whereas the young man had found no work for six months, within twenty four hours he had a permanent top paying job!

Did this happen by chance? No, not when the same principle has been observed hundreds of times to work the same results. The young man made Jesus Lord of the matter by praising Him and when He did, God acted!

## II - FOR YOU in Christ Jesus.

1. This is the will of God.

2. FOR YOU IN CHRIST.

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (I Thessalonians 5:18)

**ME? GIVE THANKS?!**

Paul does get personal when he says--**YOU!**

We often treat praise in a detached, non personal manner by attempting to praise God in groups or listening to a musical group offer praise. We allow a Preacher to pray a prayer of praise or a soloist to sing praise while we listen.

Thus the Lordship of Jesus in our lives is much like the government of Great Britain. England has a King. Right now the King is a Queen; but, she is not really the Head of State. The Queen makes speeches, dedicates buildings, bridges, etc.; but the Parliament elects a Prime Minister to run the Country. In like manner, many times we say, "Jesus is Lord but I am my own boss making all the decisions and running affairs in general." This is lordship once removed which is as real as a three dollar bill.

For many years the Lordship of Christ was not a personal matter with me. It was a puzzling and fuzzy subject and His

place in my life was not clearly defined. Mostly, He was an insurance policy on my soul. Then I learned there is a direct relationship between being FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT and the LORDSHIP OF CHRIST. The latter is the result of the first. It takes the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the meaning of Lordship. As Jesus said, "He (the Holy Spirit) will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." John 16:14 (Words in brackets, mine.) When Jesus is less than Lord, people consider Him a teacher, friend, guide, elder brother, example, leader or any one of a whole list of additional titles, which show respect but not lordship.

### III - GIVE THANKS!

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." I Thessalonians 5:18

1. This is the Will of God.
2. For you in Christ.
3. GIVE THANKS.

Giving thanks is an approximation of the word praise which is one of the major themes of the entire Bible. Not to be treated as an extracurricular matter, God's people are encouraged over 300 times in the Bible to PRAISE HIM!

In this chapter on PRAISE our working definition of PRAISE is:

Praise is an active response to what we know that God has done or is doing for us in our lives and in the world through His Son Jesus and through the person of the Holy Spirit.

This expression, "Praise the Lord," is often used as an expression of PRAISE in our generation as a result of the influence of the "Jesus Movement" of the sixties and seventies; yet, it is much misunderstood. Folk often sing the beautiful chorus "Let's Just Praise The Lord" by the Gaithers and suppose that is praise. It's what we do a-f-t-e-r we sing the chorus that determines whether we praise the Lord. The old hymn "Praise Him, Praise Him" is an exhortation to praise; but, not a substitute for praise. Few hymns are pure praise but America's #1 favorite--"How Great Thou Art!" is!



The expression, "Praise the Lord" is used 174 times in the Psalms alone and denotes nine things.

1. "Praise the Lord" may indicate GOD IS AT WORK in a situation. (Psalm 145:10-12)
2. "Praise the Lord" is spoken to GLORIFY GOD. (Psalm 113:1-3; 50:23)
3. GOD IS THE GIVER of the mercies of life denoted by the words "Praise the Lord." (Psalm 117:1,2)
4. The expression may mean "Thank You God for being in CHARGE". (Psalm 66:1-4)
5. "Praise the Lord" in the midst of the strange twists and turns of life, suggests DIVINE FOCUS. (Psalm 40:1-3)
6. "Praise the Lord!" a SIGN OF A SEEKING HEART. (Psalm 22:26)
7. "Praise the Lord" is used upon DIVINE DELIVERANCE. (Psalm 106:47,48)
8. "Praise the Lord" God keeps me. (Psalm 66:8,9)
9. "Praise the Lord" God made me! (Psalm 146:1,2; Psalm 139:14)

Bro. Rollin Stewart, a Christian poet here in Arkansas City, Kansas, has given me permission to share one of his beautiful poems about thanksgiving and praise.

#### A THANKFUL HEART

My house is small and very old  
But it shelters me from the cold.  
My little rusty stove doesn't have much class  
But it sure doesn't burn very much gas.  
A THANKFUL HEART is such a prize  
It makes everything just the right size.  
  
My shoes are large and not so neat  
But they're just right for my old feet.  
My socks have shrunk, have holes, don't match,  
But there's easy access if I need to scratch.  
A THANKFUL HEART is such a prize:  
It makes everything just the right size.  
  
My income is small, money's hard to get,  
But my wallet makes no lump where I sit.  
It isn't important to have great things,  
But just the large contentment Jesus brings.

A THANKFUL HEART is such a prize,  
It makes everything just the right size.  
If I have faith the size of a mustard seed,  
God will supply everything I need.  
What a blessing that my needs are not great,  
Just look at what the Lord has put on my plate.  
A THANKFUL HEART is such a prize,  
It makes everything just the right size.(2)

#### IV - "In everything give thanks."

I Thessalonians 5:18

Many of God's graces are like pieces of wood along the shores of time. They never appear as a building or piece of furniture unless we do some carpentry. It is my desire to nail the "IN EVERYTHING" of PRAISE down to three specific areas--

- A. Praise for the PAST removes bitterness.
- B. Praise for the PRESENT removes worry.
- C. Praise for the FUTURE removes fear.

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

I Thessalonians 5:18

- 1. This is the Will of God.
- 2. For you in Christ.
- 3. Give thanks.
- 4. IN EVERYTHING.

#### The Past.

Professor Royce says:

"When you can take the worst thing that can happen to you and declare JESUS IS LORD, you turn it into the best and have VICTORY!"(3)

God has been doing this very thing for His Children ever since Calvary.

On a lonely hill, on a day when God Himself turned His face away, man at his worst, killed Jesus. The sun was blackened, lightning flashed, an earthquake ensued, people hid as the veil of the Temple strangely ripped itself asunder.

It surely was a paradox of ignominy that man chose to call the darkest, blackest, most evil day in all of recorded history "Good Friday". As man looked back at that dark Day of his evil deed through the prism of Jesus' Resurrection Day (Easter), he began to attach the word "GOOD" to the Day!

Now, what God did with that dark, black Friday, turning it into the best thing that ever happened to man--forgiveness of sin with the resurrection hope, He has been doing in people's lives ever since. He takes the dark side and the bright side of life and works it all together for our good and His glory!

We can PRAISE GOD for PAST EVENTS because God is in control.

The Apostle Paul addresses the entire spectrum of life--past, present and future--in Romans 8:28 when the Lord declares through him:

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

In general, the theme of the entire eighth chapter of Romans is--No condemnation to those who walk after the Spirit. Paul delineates the many blessings of our walk after the Spirit and concludes by discussing the victory that follows this walk.

In verses 18-25 he speaks of our daily victory and an even larger victory to come. Yet, there are "weaknesses-infirmities" in our present walk spoken of in Vs. 26. It is in this area of living and praying about these infirmities that we raise most of our questions about God's Will for us. Concerning these, Paul says in verse 26:

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."(4)

In the midst of our weaknesses, the Divine Record says, God is working out His Will as suggested by these phrases from Vss. 26,27.

\*\*\*"The Spirit Himself makes intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."Vs.26b

\*\*\*"He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."Vs.27

Now, I ask.

"What is the Spirit seeking in my behalf which I do not know how to pray for myself?" Vs.26

"What is the interpretation of these groanings which the Spirit makes?" Vs.26b

In specific, "what is the Spirit seeking for me that I have no knowledge of?" Vs.26a

"What is this elusive 'Will of God' in terms of my life?"Vs.27b

THE ANSWER to the above queries is, in part, hidden from our knowing. It has been often stated--God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. While this is not Scripture, yet the truth of it is borne out in many places in the Bible.

Our lives are w-i-d-e o-p-e-n to God's Will when we pray because the Holy Spirit takes our words and feelings coupled with our real needs, and translates all this with groanings and special intercession to our heavenly Father. So, we get what we need and not necessarily what we ask for in prayer. According to the Holy Spirit's intercession, God allows certain things in our lives which we might not choose if we cast the final ballot, yet He performs His Will by working all things together for our GOOD and His GLORY! Therefore, we can GIVE THANKS in ALL THINGS because GOD IS IN CHARGE!

In consideration of this, we can make God Lord of all our days and ways in accepting the events of the PAST by praising Him!

Let me pose a question as we probe further Gods' Lordship of our past.

QUESTION: How many mistakes can God make?

You may respond by saying: "None and it's sacrilegious to even ask such a question."

I still press the question and pose an answer. God is a big God. So, how about one billion mistakes? One million? One thousand? One hundred? Ten? Most people affirm "No" until I get down to one or two mistakes. Even then, in a formal sense, folk will say out of religiosity, "0 - NONE!" Yet, on the real plane of life, down where the tires meet the highway of life, many acknowledge God has made one, two or three mistakes concerning them personally. This is true, in particular, when our thinking for the moment about possible mistakes is separated from an immediate awareness of God.

The events out of the PAST which many think God personally made a mistake concerning include:

## **1. OUR BODY.**

Did God make some people too tall and some too short? "Yes," according to many people I have counselled. God made some people ugly and others good looking. I believed for many years that God made my nose too long and my ears too big. So much so that I developed an inferiority complex with extreme shyness.

"Self-acceptance" is what the psychologists call the cure for this complex. The writer of Psalms says PRAISE, acknowledging that God made me, is the answer, which produces self-acceptance.

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well."  
(Psalm 139:14)

Strange as it may seem, PRAISE will cure this faulty thinking about self. When I took the step of faith to say "Thank you God for making me just as I am, fearfully and wonderfully, body, soul and spirit in your image and likeness." there was victory in my soul!

And when self-doubt returns, I affirm that confession of truth about myself to the Lord over and over. The old self gave way to a new truth--God made me! I PRAISE HIM! He loves me just as I am!

## **2. FAMILIES**

People have spoken to me saying that God surely put them in the wrong family, gave them the wrong mate.

Now, really, does God make mistakes?

HUSBANDS: Praise The Lord for your wife just as she is!

WIVES: Praise The Lord for your husband just as he is!

CHILDREN: Praise The Lord for your parents just as they are!

PARENTS: Praise The Lord for your children just as they are, problems and all!

One man said to me--"But preacher, my wife has two faults."

I inquired--"Did she have these when you got married?"

He said, "Well, yes but I didn't see them."

"Oh," I said, "love was blind, wasn't it."

He smiled and dropped his head.

I encouraged him with these words--"Now, fellow, you just PRAISE THE LORD for your wife as she is now and always has been for as long as you have known her and if she needs changing, the Lord will see to that."

He did! and The Lord did too!

"I will, IF....."

This expression, "I will, IF..." is often a response to PRAISING THE LORD for the PAST.

In California after I shared about praise, a young lady came out of the auditorium and paused to say, "Wilbur, you just don't understand my situation. If God would resolve my Mother's domineering attitude toward me and cause my husband to quit smoking, then I would praise Him."

This is a trap set by the Devil that we are prone to fall into when trying to PRAISE THE LORD.

There is a unique answer contained in a true case history of a mental patient who voluntarily checked into a State Mental Institution for evaluation and treatment. His complaint was that he had a cat inside him. The psychiatrist examined the man and told him they would operate and take the cat out. The theory was that when something physical is done to cor-

rect an emotional problem, it often effects the mind in a positive way. The day for the surgery arrived. The patient was wheeled into the operating room and anesthetized. The Doctor made a light incision through the upper layer of skin on the abdomen and sewed it back. While this was taking place two of the nurses obtained a white cat from the alley behind the hospital. They removed the debris from its fur, bathed it and added some perfume. At the appropriate moment when the patient was out from under the anesthetic and back in his room, the Doctor walked in carrying the white cat under his arm. He made this statement to the patient, "Fellow, your troubles are over. That cat will never bother you again for we operated and took it out and here it is." The patient said, "Oh no, Doctor, you took out the wrong cat! It was a black cat that bothers me."

Our modern adage applies here--You can't win for losing. God couldn't either, if He engaged in the business of removing problems from our lives on the supposition that we would praise Him after the removal. There would always be one more problem. God doesn't play this kind of cat and mouse game with people. HE SAYS--"In everything give thanks." (period(.)) Right now! Just as you are! Where you are!

### **3. LOVED ONES DEPARTING.**

From my observation, the death of family members and friends is the biggest stumbling stone that keeps people from praising the Lord for PAST EVENTS.

My good friend, Esther Reiswig of Beaver, Oklahoma said to me--"My father was a Preacher. When he was only 25 years old a horse kicked and killed him. I was one of the four children Mother was left to raise."

She stopped.

I said, "Has any good come out of this event?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "Mother raised four fine children and everything turned out all right; but there were many difficulties."

Yes, it's time to PRAISE THE LORD! He was already work-

ing all things together for good!

Francis Schaeffer relates PRAISE to the PAST when he writes:

"As Christians we died, in God's sight, with Christ when we accepted him as Savior; but there is more to it than this. There is also very much the demand that in practice we are to die daily. That is the negative aspect.....The Bible gives us a very sharp negative indeed--one that cannot be made an abstraction but which cuts into the hard stuff of normal life.....The Word of God is definite that in all things, including hard things, we are to be contented, to say, 'Thank You' to God."(5)

JOB is an excellent example of PRAISING GOD for the hard things out of the PAST.

#### JOB'S CASE HISTORY:

Job was blameless and upright. He feared God and shunned evil. Job 1:1

He had 10 children--7 sons and 3 daughters. Job 1:2

His possessions: 7,000 sheep, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and many servants. Job 1:3

Job's daily practice was to pray for his children and offer burnt offerings. Job 1:5

Yet, in one day he lost all his children, possessions and servants.

Isn't this reason for bitterness?

Job declared it was time to worship and summed it all up in these words:

And he said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb,

And naked I shall return there.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away;

Blessed be the name of the Lord."

In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.(6)  
(Underlining mine.)

Bitterness was cancelled by PRAISE before it could take root in Job's soul. Out of adverse circumstances Job was willing to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)



## **A practical T-E-S-T:**

**Of Jesus' lordship over our PAST is--**

### **How much bitterness do I have in my spirit?**

Folk usually give a dishonest answer by saying "NONE!" Yet, in counselling, I find all kinds of bitterness about the untimely death of loved ones--people thinking they are ugly, being an unwanted child, others getting all the breaks in life, divorce, a domineering mother and/or an abusive father, and the list goes on and on.

Bitterness is unresolved happenings out of the present which we have failed to make Jesus the Lord of. We brood over these happenings and bitterness takes root. These bitter feelings are really projected towards our Creator; however, most people because of strong religious feelings towards God, turn their bitterness inward. This produces many sad fruits--Anger, hate, doubt, despair, depression, ulcers, heart attacks, suicide, nerves, collapsed lungs, etc.

It is impossible to be bitter and praise the Lord at the same time. The antidote for bitterness is PRAISE!

TESTING TIME came for me in July of 1971 when our oldest son, Lynn, left this world out of a one-vehicle car wreck.

Lynn at 18 had graduated in May from the Minneola (Kansas) High School. He planned to attend Midwest Christian College in the fall. Funds for his education were being earned by working at the local "Minneola Record" newspaper office along with washing dishes at the Rancho Cafe.

He borrowed our Opel Cadet car for a date with his girl friend, Patty Cusick, on this 4th of July eve. At 9:30 pm on their way to Patty's house, they stopped at the entrance to the Minneola Cemetery and read together the eighth chapter of Romans. Leaving Marshall and Nadine's house at 10 o'clock driving west he approached the cemetery and the highway a mile beyond. For reasons unknown, the car rolled end-over-end and out into a field of wheat stubble and Lynn went to be with Jesus.

No, I did not pass the test as quickly as Job. In the days following the memorial service, as I began to mull over the

events of the immediate PAST, bitterness was born in my soul. The devil added fuel to this fire of bitterness with strange facts(?)--\*\*

\*\*A mechanic told me someone had tampered with the linkage on the carburetor. Meaning that when the accelerator was engaged it would go faster and faster without releasing.

\*\*A Highway Patrolman told me that when he arrived at the scene a stranger was there taking pictures. This photographer claimed to represent the U.S. Army. When the Patrolman sought him again, he was gone.

\*\*A mortician asked me, "Did you know your son was killed by stabbing with a sharp instrument like a screwdriver or ice pick?"

\*\*Another person said, "I'll pay for a private detective to get to the bottom of this."

\*\*I added to the list that an automobile company had produced an unsafe car with a high center of gravity which would tip over easily.

Higher and higher burned the fires of bitterness within me. Now, we human beings do strange things as suggested by an old adage--We get mad at the cat and kick the dog. The truth was that I was bitter towards God. However, it's not acceptable to say--GOD, I'M MAD AT YOU! So, I became angry with my fellowmen. It was easier to say--The police didn't do their job and the auto manufacturer made a no-good car. Why didn't the Doctor get there sooner? Why didn't the first people at the scene give artificial resuscitation? Who was the stranger taking pictures? Why couldn't they be sure about the seat belts being fastened? When the devil gets the train of bitterness started rolling, it goes faster and faster like a runaway down a mountain. This runaway went on for nearly a year and it was PRAISE that brought it to a screeching halt. The Lord was touching this sensitive spot in my spirit with His Word. Is Romans 8:28 true? Can God work ALL THINGS together for good? Did Paul really mean "In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."? I Thessalonians 5:18.

Nearly a year passed by and I had no peace within my bitter soul. One more time I rode my ten-speed bicycle four miles out to that cemetery atop a quiet windy hill. I remember it now like yesterday. As I gazed out across the prairie towards the

setting sun, the meadowlarks were singing while the ground squirrels scurried here and there. I knelt in front of the freshly made grave of Raymon Lynn Johnson, closed my eyes and **THANKED GOD** for my son and for the night of the wreck on July 3rd. I PRAISED THE LORD that He was in control and nothing happens by chance in the life of His Children.

Like the lifting of a ton of weight from my shoulders was the disappearance of bitterness and the coming of peace that flooded my soul. I stood up and sang a hymn--"Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand; But I know who holds tomorrow, And I know who holds my hand!"

And, it was a truism, **EVERY STEP WAS GETTING BRIGHTER, EVERY BURDEN GETTING LIGHTER, FOR THE ONE WHO FEEDS THE SPARROW WAS STANDING THERE BY ME! HALLELUJAH!**

Let us remind ourselves again that **PRAISING THE LORD** for an event out of the **PAST MAKES HIM LORD OF THE MATTER** and removes **BITTERNESS**.

### **In The PRESENT TENSE of life--**

#### **Give Thanks In Everything!**

Praise for past events removes bitterness.

PRESENT tense PRAISE removes worry.

After listening to the 10 pm news and sharing in our Family Altar time of a chapter from the Bible followed by a song and prayer, my wife and I retired upstairs for the night.

At 12:22 am, Imalee and I bolted upright in bed as a downstairs light flashed on. Immediately my mind working faster than a computer deducted that the doors and windows were shut and locked. The light could only be turned on with a wall switch, so logic(?) decreed that someone unknown to us was downstairs. A search must be made. I was still 80% asleep so **BIG** and **BRAVE** Imalee put on her housecoat and ventured forth. Her search revealed no one down stairs.

Now, a degree of fear made a sneak attack. I spent the next hour sifting thru the facts(?), dealing with the devil in the inci-

dent, praying and inviting the Lord's Angels to assist. Finally, I built up my stamina and **PRAISED THE LORD FOR THE WHOLE SITUATION, acknowledging that He was in charge!** Having done this, sleep came quickly.

The next morning the whole truth became known. Vibrations from thunder outside and our attic fan inside had caused a wall plaque to come loose and slither down the wall striking the Mercury wall switch and turning the light on.

I learned a couple of lessons from this incident:

#1--DON'T trust your own understanding including what appears to iron-clad logic.

#2--PRAISE THE LORD immediately making Him LORD of the situation.

"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20)

Praising the Lord for everyday events turns the trials of life into stepping stones.

Bro. E. Stanley Jones quotes Professor Royce as saying:

"No man is safe unless he can stand anything that can happen to him. However, a Christian goes one step higher. He can use anything that happens to him for the glory of God!"(7)

There are certain unwritten laws woven into the fabric of our lives. One of them is--Sooner or later we must reap what we sow and practice what we preach. (Galatians 6:7) Such as was the case with the Apostle Paul. He wrote the advice--"In everything give thanks" and "Giving thanks for all things" along with "Rejoice always!"(8) Now it's time for him to practice. So, to the GLORY OF GOD he uses his own "thorn in the flesh" to GLORIFY GOD.

So, Paul describes his own plight as follows:

"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. For this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that

the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecution, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."(9)

### **PRAISE equals POWER.**

Strange as it may seem, one of the reasons Paul names for **PRAISING THE LORD** ("taking pleasure-boasting.") is **"THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST MAY REST UPON ME."** Vs.10.

Paul's statement, "For when I am weak, then I am strong." is a certain paradox--a seeming contradiction. Yet, it is forever true! Our strongest moments are when we wait upon the Lord in prayer and praise. In these times we get what God can do.

**PRAISING THE LORD** for the events of life in the **PRESENT TENSE** opens the door to witness for Christ. The world is famous for grumbling about everything--taxes, weather, work, government, and life in general. When Christians unite their voice to grumble with the world, their witness goes down the drain.

A Christian Chaplain in the Army tells of a little incident that won a soul to Jesus. The Chaplain had worked late and so was the last person in the Hotel Dining room near midnight. He ordered some toast and a glass of warm milk. The waitress went to get his order but returned in a moment saying:

"I'm sorry, Sir, but some blankety blank locked the refrigerator, took the key and went home."

The Chaplain said, "Oh, Praise The Lord!"

The waitress said, "What did you say?"

"I just said Praise The Lord!" responded the Chaplain.

"What kind of religion are you?" asked the waitress.

"Oh, just a Christian trying to make Jesus Lord of all my life. I have learned that God keeps the hairs on my head numbered and He knew that I didn't need that milk. You know Jesus don't you?"

"No, I don't," said the waitress.

No one else was in the dining room so the Chaplain said,

"Do you have a moment to spare?"

"Well yes, I guess so."

The Chaplain took out his New Testament and told the young lady about Jesus. She accepted the Lord.

The Chaplain reflected later. When the refrigerator was locked and there was no milk, what if I had reacted like most of the world does and said-"What kind of a no good joint are you running here? I'll take my business elsewhere?" An opportunity to win a soul to Jesus would have been lost.

THE POWER OF CHRIST rested upon him when he PRAISED THE LORD!

INFIRMITIES is one of the matters Paul says he takes pleasure in.

"Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities,.....for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

II Corinthians 12:10

One of the first lessons the Lord taught me about trusting Him was to use my mustard seed faith to PRAISE HIM in negative-adverse circumstances.

For many years in the sixties I was allergic to the springtime pollen of Elm trees. I called the problem "Elmitis." Symptoms included red, burning, weeping eyes, itching ears, sore throat, running nose, etc. When all the home remedies failed and I couldn't stand it any longer, Dr. Stephens would give me a desensitizing injection.

As I journeyed through the School of Praise, the Master Teacher-Jesus, reminded me of Paul's taking pleasure in infirmities. So, I began to PRAISE THE LORD for my "Elmitis allergy." Bicycle riding is my exercise pastime. So, as I rode down the country roads with the pollen from the wheat, sorghum grain, wild flowers, trees and weeds everywhere-I started to praise the Lord for all of these plants with their pollen which was a part of His plan and my problem. I included my INFIRMITY of "Elmitis allergy" as well.

Logical? NO! Awkward to give thanks for the negative? YES! But, HIS WORD said "Give Thanks", "Take pleasure!",

**"Rejoice Always!"** So, in simple obedience I **PRAISED THE LORD** for all his creation. And, **A WONDER TOOK PLACE!** The Lord took my "Elmitis allergy" away! This **VICTORY** called forth more **PRAISE** and **REJOICING!** It's now been sixteen years and the pollen and mold spores of Springtime, Summer and Fall come and go and the allergy is gone! No more shots, just shouts of **HALLELUJAH!** Praise the Lord!!

Am I suggesting a cure for all **INFIRMITIES?** **NO!** There are at least nine reasons, according to the Bible, **WHY** infirmities come into our lives. One of these is **TO POINT OUR ATTENTION TO THE LORD.** Such was the case with Saul of Tarsus in Chapter nine of Acts. His being struck blind and led into Damascus commanded his attention which led to his conversion to Jesus. James says "Count it all joy, when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience." James 1:2.

Many years ago in an Upper Room devotional booklet, I read about a New York City construction laborer who was working on a skyscraper overlooking Fifth Avenue. The man fastened the huge beams in place with foot long rivets. He was running his rivet gun at quitting time and did not hear the signal. At 5:15 he prepared to take the freight elevator down but it was not there. Unable to attract the attention of fellow workers who were now forty floors below, he crawled out on a beam overlooking Fifth Avenue. For years he had carried three silver dollars in his pocket. Hoping to attract attention, he dropped one to the street below. It hit the sidewalk and rolled into the gutter. Someone picked it up, wiped the dust off and put it in their pocket. The second silver dollar bounced on the sidewalk and a person reached out and caught it. Apparently not believing that money was falling from the sky, they bit it with their teeth and walked away with a smile of satisfaction. The third silver dollar did not get the attention the worker needed for rescue. The riveter crawled back to the work area and picked up a couple of the large, bolt-like rivets. Back out on the ledge he dropped the first rivet. It plunked on the sidewalk missing everything. The second one hit a man on the shoulder and immediately **HE LOOKED UP.** There he saw

this man waving his arms and throwing things down on people, so he called the Police. They came and got him down. The man writing the devotional mused that the silver dollars got no one's attention but the rivet did. And, that God works this way at times as He says--

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance. (Romans 2:4)

Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. (Romans 11:22)

The Scriptures and life verify that God at times allows, not causes, certain events in our lives to bring good to us and glory to Him. Classic cases are Job's boils, Paul's thorn, Timothy's stomach problem, and the Woman bent double for eighteen years.

If God is allowing a certain infirmity for the purpose of getting my attention to PRAISE HIM, FOLLOW HIM, OBEY etc., then when that purpose is fulfilled, the tool may be removed.

When I PRAISE THE LORD for a PRESENT TENSE event, this makes Jesus **LORD** of my will and ways.

Beautiful illustration of this in my own life took place while living in West Lebanon, Indiana. For many years I had taken good health for granted and did not make it a matter of PRAISE TO GOD. At the age of 28 I suddenly began having health problems. Dr. Nelson indicated I was far too young to have prostritis and sent me to a specialist in Danville, Illinois. There Dr. English ran all the tests and diagnosed it as chronic prostritis. He indicated it would get worse with the passing of time. He was right, that is until 1972 when I said--Lord, You said "Give thanks for all things." So, I started to thank Him for the problem and the pain, for the good days and tough times. In a matter of weeks, **PRAISE GOD** the problem was gone!! And after sixteen years is still gone! Hallelujah!

Could it be that The Lord wanted to gain my ATTENTION to PRAISE HIM in a-l-l things including infirmities? My answer for me is: **Yes!**



## **In Reproaches, PRAISE THE LORD!**

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches,.....for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong." II Corinthians 12:10. (Underline mine)

Two other words used to translate this word "reproaches" are ill treatment and insult.

An incident of several years ago taught me to trust the Lord by PRAISING HIM while being reproached.

The letter of December 16th from the Department of Revenue of the Kansas Division of Vehicles was not a Christmas present. The plain words were:

### **ORDER OF REVOCATION**

"On this 16th day of December, 1977, the registration privileges of the above vehicles (1969 Chrysler, 1966 Ford) have been reviewed and the registration of the listed vehicles are hereby revoked for a period of sixty (60) days pursuant to KSA 40-3118. This order is being forwarded to the Kansas Highway Patrol who will pick up your tags and registration within fifteen (15) days."

Immediately I sought the mind of the Lord. God speaks through ten different 'voices' according to the Book of Hebrews but most often through Scripture. The only Divine answer I received day after day was pointing my mind to Habakkuk's promise.

Though the fig tree may not blossom,  
Nor fruit be on the vines;  
Though the labor of the olive may fail,  
And the fields yield no food;  
Though the flock be cut off from the fold,  
And there be no herd in the stalls--  
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.  
I will joy in the God of my salvation.  
The Lord God is my strength;  
He will make my feet like deer's feet,  
And He will make me walk on my high hills.(10)

So, I PRAISED THE LORD in the midst of this devastating situation. For if the State carried out their plans, our Faith Alive Days Ministry would come to a screeching halt with no

vehicles to take us to our preaching and teaching appointments.

Leaning on my own understanding I sought counsel. I explained to the lady of the License Bureau at the County Court House that what appeared to be a three day lapse in our liability insurance coverage was in reality a problem with a change in billing by the Insurance Company as they changed over to computers. Our Insurance Company acknowledged this was the case.

The lady said, "So sorry, but that three days represents a violation of the Kansas Law. Like any other criminal, you must pay the penalty."

"May I hire a lawyer to protect my interests?" I asked her.

She replied, "Sure you can. It's a free country and lawyers do some strange and wonderful things. However, I have never seen a lawyer get anyone out of this type of violation."

I employed Bill Ellis, Cowley County Attorney. According to his record he wrote two letters and made five phone calls.

In response to the above maneuvers the State of Kansas advised me:

"This revocation order #710 23 696 is being forwarded to the Kansas Highway Patrol who will pick up your tags and registration on December 31, 1977."

"You may purchase new registration and tags from your county treasurer at the end of the sixty (60) day revocation period."

The days passed and as they did we **REJOICED IN THE LORD** as His Word says--"In everything give thanks."

December 31st came and no Highway Patrol. Our confidence was one-hundred percent strong in Jesus that He would work it out, but since He is a God of infinite variety, we had no idea what the solution would be.

The New Year brought no news until the 3rd of January when a letter came from the Kansas Department of Vehicles. Simply it read:

"We are pleased to advise you that your Kansas vehicle registration privileges, which were revoked by this Division, are hereby

reinstated and your case has been closed.”

Yours very truly,

John W. Smith, Supervisor

Yes, we PRAISED THE LORD for making our feet like the feet of a deer to walk on the high hills and slippery places of life as Habakkuk said!

**IN PRESENT TENSE--**

**NEEDS**

**PRAISE THE LORD!**

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs,.....for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.” (II Corinthians 12:10.)

Is it practical to face NEEDS with PRAISE?

As the hour for the crucifixion came near, Jesus PRAISED the FATHER.(11)

Paul and Silas needed to get out of prison. So they sang hymns and PRAISED GOD. An earthquake opened the doors of the prison and set them free.

The Macedonian Christians were in great need. II Corinthians 8:2b says--“they have mixed their wonderful JOY with their deep poverty, and the result has been an overflow of giving to others.”

In our own NEEDS we have found PRAISE to be the right solution.

Lisa, our youngest daughter, was one of those NEEDS.

Born to us on a Winter morning two days after Christmas in 1959, Lisa was normal in every sense of the word. She walked at 15 months and began saying the usual words--mamma, dad, dog and cat, and her brothers and sisters names, Lynn, Teresa, Galen and Becky.

In the Summer of 1961 Lisa ran a high fever, vomited and was covered with a red rash deepening to welts in places. She was diagnosed over the telephone on a Saturday afternoon as having hives and treated with a prescription.

The changes that began to take place in the following

months were so little that we ignored them at first. Lisa quit saying words and lost interest in her toys and other surroundings. At night she would get up in the dark and tear scores of pages out of catalogs and magazines.

Lisa doesn't talk, dress herself or take care of other needs. She has been examined by doctors and specialists in several of the major medical and psychiatric clinics from Indiana to Kansas and yet remains a medical mystery.

In 1966, when Lisa was six years old, we committed her to the Kansas Neurological Institute of Topeka. Here the latest therapies, tranquilizers and treatments were administered. After six years the bottom line was--NO PROGRESS FOR LISA.

In November of 1971, we brought Lisa home to stay. Now she was back on the home scene and her family was just learning to PRAISE THE LORD in ALL THINGS. We realized that Lisa was a part of our "all things" and "everything" that Paul spoke of in I Thessalonians 5 and Ephesians 5. So, we began to say to the Lord:\*\*

**\*\*THANK YOU JESUS FOR LISA JUST AS SHE IS RIGHT NOW!**

**\*\*WE PRAISE YOU LORD THAT YOU WORK ALL THINGS TOGETHER FOR OUR GOOD AND YOUR GLORY!**

**\*\*THANK YOU FOR MAKING LISA AND THAT YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF ALL HER DAYS AND WAYS!**

I cannot tell you today that Lisa is A-OK. I do tell you that Lisa has made more progress since we started to PRAISE THE LORD for her in the present tense than in all the other years put together. We press on, PRAISING THE LORD, knowing that at just the right time, HIS TIME, HE DOES ALL THINGS WELL! Hallelujah!

**Persecuted? PRAISE THE LORD!**

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions,.....for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong." (II Corinthians 12:10)

It is significant that the New Testament often associates persecution with praise, joy, and rejoicing. **PRAISING THE LORD** when opposed by evil people or forces makes Jesus **LORD** of the situation.

Beautiful examples of this include:

And they departed from the presence of the council, **REJOICING** that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:41)

But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up **PERSECUTION** against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with **JOY** and with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:50-51)

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word with much **AFFLICTION**, with **JOY** of the Holy Spirit. (I Thessalonians 1:6)

But **REJOICE**, insofar as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be **GLAD** with exceeding **JOY**. (I Peter 4:13)

## **Distressed? PRAISE THE LORD!**

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong." (II Corinthians 12:10)

We live in a world of stress and the United States is full of stressful situations--crowds, traffic, phones, fast moving pace of life, etc. **PRAISE** is the best antidote for stress.

The Devil plays cat and mouse games with our lives through little things. One of the things that used to raise my stress pressure was church **ATTENDANCE**. During our ministry at Minneola, Kansas we averaged 153 and fluctuated between 130 and 210.

In April of 1972, while learning to **PRAISE THE LORD** in **ALL** things, our Morning Assembly Attendance on a non-holiday Sunday shot up to 165. **WOW! I PRAISED THE LORD!**

The next Sunday it dropped to 140 and I talked to the Lord about it but **WOULDN'T PRAISE HIM**. The Lord reminded me

over and over of what Paul said in II Corinthians 12:10--take pleasure in STRESS-DIFFICULTIES.

The following Sunday attendance dropped to 138. The Lord reminded me that 138 people were a lot more than a dozen or one or two. Furthermore that the sheep and lambs were His not mine. Wouldn't I do what He said through Paul?--"In everything give thanks." I Thessalonians 5:18. My answer: I agreed to think about it. That is as far as it went.

When the count was posted on the next Sunday, it read 135. I stopped the service and explained to the people what was happening with me and the Lord over this PRAISE and ATTENDANCE STRESS matter. We paused for a long PRAYER OF PRAISE.

The following Sunday when 156 was posted on the board, we gave the LORD a STANDING OVATION clapping our hands as David said--"*Oh, clap your hands, all you people! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!*" (Psalm 47:1)

The stress was gone. I praised the Lord all week long and learned the lesson of PRAISING HIM in the midst of STRESSFUL SITUATIONS.

When DIFFICULTIES arise, PRAISE THE LORD and press on!

WEATHER brings stress; but the Lord makes the weather. Some of my coffee drinking Christian brothers used to tell me that God is NOT in control of the weather. It operates by the laws of nature. This is a bunch of gobbledgook. My search of the Bible reveals that God is personally in charge of the weather. The Psalmist said--"*This is the day which the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.*" (Psalm 118:24)

Consider the possibilities when we PRAISE THE LORD in the midst of STRESS--\*

\*It removes the tension of stress!

\*May be a witness to a lost soul!

\*Glorifies God!

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ

Jesus concerning you.” (I Thessalonians 5:18.)

### **Facing the unknown FUTURE: Praise The Lord!**

On Thanksgiving Eve in 1983, Imalee and I attended a Community Thanksgiving Service with our son, Galen, and his wife, Kim, in Dahalonaga, Georgia. Sponsored by the Ministerial Alliance, it was held in the First Christian Church building. The speaker was the local Methodist Minister. During his timely message he made a simple but profound statement that I share with you.

### **IT REQUIRES GREAT CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S GOODNESS TO BE GRATEFUL.**

“Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:20.)

So, whether we think of PRAISE in terms of the PAST, PRESENT or now the FUTURE--it takes great confidence in God’s goodness to be grateful.

#### **A. Confident that--**

**God is in absolute control working all things according to His Will.**

**Therefore, we can PRAISE HIM!**

- A. Praise for the Past removes bitterness.
- B. Praise for the Present removes worry.
- C. PRAISE for the FUTURE removes FEAR.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,.....In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKS ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF HIS WILL.”(12)

God taught me to relate PRAISE for future tense matters in a simple and amusing way.

Imalee and I had planned for some time to attend a 7 pm special Bible College Choir concert at the Central Christian Church of Dodge City, Kansas. We went early and ate out. Having some extra minutes to spare, we stopped at the shopping mall. I told Imalee she could get out at Penneys, walk down through the mall and Lisa and I would drive around and

meet her at the Woolworth entrance. "Please don't linger as its 6:30 now and the concert starts at 7 pm. You have fifteen minutes to walk through."

True, I must have been dreaming to think that a lady could walk through a shopping mall in fifteen minutes.

Soon it was ten 'til seven. I began to pray. The Lord responded with "Praise Me!" I didn't.

Now it was 7 o'clock. I was getting steamed up, as being on time has been a rule of my life.

The Lord admonished--For things FUTURE, give thanks.

NO WAY! Being late is not a matter for PRAISE. Now it was five after seven. My stress pressure was zooming up. Ten after seven and out the door came Imalee.

"Don't you know the concert started at 7 pm?" "Well, yes, but I met a lady and stopped to talk. I Had to find out how she was getting along."

I was aggravated and the Lord was prompting me--"In everything give thanks."

I drove down the street fast with the Lord in mental pursuit--GIVE THANKS! BE THANKFUL! REST IN ME!

Finally I did--"Thank You, Lord, that we're on our way finally. We're going to be late; but, thanks anyway!"

It was 7:25 pm as we pulled up to the church building. My mouth fell open while my eyes got big. No one was there except the big bus used to transport the choir. Starting time was 8 pm. We were early and the Lord knew all along.

Now since the Lord knows the time schedules including the end from the beginning, it is best by far to acknowledge as David did:

But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord;

I say, "You are my God,

My times are in your hand."

Psalm 31:14,15a

Out of this I learned a life-long lesson. Now, in the midst of



a stressful situation, we encourage one another with--**HANG LOOSE, THE LORD IS IN CHARGE! PRAISE HIM!**

**B. Confident we are that--**

**GOD IS TOTAL GOODNESS,**

**Therefore, we can PRAISE HIM as the Scripture admonishes.**

The goodness of God endures continually. (Psalm 52:1)

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you. (Isaiah 54:10a)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3)

Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." (Psalm 63:3)

Most of us know John Newton for his having written the hymn "Amazing Grace." John Newton had an unusual appreciation for the goodness of God, for he had wandered a great distance in sailing the Seven Seas. In a series of fourteen letters written to a friend, he discloses the many acts of God's Goodness that led to his salvation. From his early years of hardship and his life as a sailor and slave dealer, he relates God's goodness and mercy in delivering him.

So the GOODNESS OF GOD towards His Children is well stated in these words;

"But to us there is a time coming when our warfare shall be accomplished, our views enlarged, and our light increased. With what transports of adoration and love shall we look back upon the way which the Lord has led us! We shall then see and acknowledge that mercy and goodness directed every step; we shall see that what our ignorance once called adversities and evils, were in reality blessings which we could not have done without. Nothing befell us without a cause; no trouble came upon us sooner or pressed on us more heavily, or continued longer than our case required.....By the light offered us in the Scriptures, we may collect proof, from our narrow circle, that the wise and good providence of God watches over His people from the earliest moment of their lives, overrules and guards them through all their wanderings in a state of ignorance, and leads them in a way to the possession of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory which the Lord has prepared for His people."

C. Confident we are that--

**GOD HAS MADE US WINNERS!**

**WE PRAISE HIM!**

If God is for us, who can be against us?.....Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we are killed all day long;

We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.”

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.(14)

How could we be MORE THAN CONQUERORS? Vs. 37.

A conqueror may be a simple foot soldier, a peon, or a king.

**WE ARE---#**

#Heirs of God! Joint heirs with Christ! (Romans 8:17)

#Kings and priests! (Revelation 1:6)

#Sons and daughters of God! (Romans 8:15,16)

So, we have reason to say--Hallelujah!

A simple fable illustrates the story of our victory.

A little bird built its nest out on the end of a limb in a high tree.

A Storm spoke to Little Bird saying:

“Little Bird, I am preparing the worst storm that has ever been. There will be black clouds with thunder and lightning. Then will come my wind which will exceed one hundred mile-per-hour. I will attack you with fury and vengeance shaking your tree. At the worst, my wind will begin to whirl and swirl and your tree will begin to shake. I'll rip your tree out of the ground and blow your nest off the limb and you out of your nest.”

The Little Bird said to the Storm:

**“O.K. Mr. Storm, do your worst. Blow my tree down and blow my nest off the limb and me out of my nest and when you do, I have another alternative--I HAVE WINGS AND I’LL FLY AWAY!”**

Isn’t this our response to all the things Paul lists in Romans 8:35,38,39?

The winds of adversity may bring---\*

\*Tribulation?

\*Distress?

\*Persecution?

\*Famine?

\*Nakedness?

\*Peril?

\*Sword?

\*Death?

\*Life?

\*Angels?

\*Principalities?

\*Powers?

\*Things present?

\*Things to come?

\*Height?

\*Depth?

\*Any created being?

What can any of these do to us?

Nothing!

Some will say-- BUT DEATH is in that list.

Yes. But what can death do?

Only bring us into the living, everlasting, glorious, holy PRESENCE of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Angels and Saints gone on before us. So, in the language of the fable, when DEATH blows its chilly breath our way and says--I’LL BLOW YOUR LIFE AWAY.

We respond in the language of Little Bird--“O.K. Mr. Death. Do your worst. Blow me out of my earthly house and when you do I have another alternative--I HAVE WINGS AND I’LL FLY AWAY AND BE AT HOME WITH GOD, FOREVER!” That’s what I mean when singing that grand old hymn--“*Some*

*glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away."*

So, we face the PAST, the PRESENT, the FUTURE with absolute confidence and PRAISE THE LORD as we pass down this Trail of Life towards the rising of the SON where the shadows all disappear when the day at last is done saying: Hallelujah!!!

**Praise the Lord!!!**

### SOME PRAISE SUGGESTIONS:

1. PRAISE is a personal release of FAITH. So, just as I cannot believe for someone else even so I cannot do their PRAISING. Praising God for the problems of another will remove any anxiety that exists in me; but, it will NOT bring a solution to the other person.

2. DO NOT look for a reason WHY you should or should not praise the Lord. The devil always has a bagfull of reasons why you SHOULDN'T. God says it! That settles it! I'll do it!

3. We do not need to keep praising God over and over for an event out of the PAST. Make Him Lord by PRAISING HIM. When the devil attacks again with a wave of bitterness, remind him that you have placed the matter in God's hands with PRAISE.

4. SEAL PRAISE with FAITH. That is, after thanking the Lord for a matter, do as Jesus said--"Believe you received them, and you will have them." Mark 11:24. Show this faith by THANKING THE LORD for the matter.

5. DO NOT intend to USE THE LORD in PRAISE. I mean, when one learns that PRAISE for the PAST will remove bitterness, PRAISE for the PRESENT dismisses WORRY and PRAISE for the FUTURE cancels FEAR, it is a real temptation to PRAISE THE LORD just for the benefit of removing undesirable factors.

Simply PRAISE THE LORD for WHO HE IS and WHAT HE HAS DONE and IS DOING NOW. PRAISE HIM for the PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE because HE can and does work all things together for our good and His Glory!

6. ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES for praise. Too often we treat praise in a detached, non-personal manner by attempting to Praise The Lord through listening to a musical group or soloist offer praise. We allow a preacher or leader to pray a prayer of praise, while we listen. This is praise once removed and is no more real for us than a three-dollar bill.

7. PRAISE THE LORD NOW! Don't Wait! Praise God at the very moment an event occurs. A Beautiful example is found in II Chronicles 20:1ff. Judah was surrounded by enemy forces. Jehoshaphat sought the Lord. The Lord's victory plan for the Nation is written in these words:

Vs. 15--"FEAR NOT, neither be dismayed by reason of this great multitude: for THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS, but GOD'S."

Vs.22--"And when they began to sing and to PRAISE, Jehovah set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab and Mount Sier, who had come up against Judah; and they were defeated."

Our journey of thinking about the wonder and glory of PRAISE is winding down; but, I trust not ending. I PRAY THAT EACH PERSON WHO HAS READ THIS WILL RESOLVE TO TAKE UP THE TRUMPET OF PRAISE in a greater way and "In everything give thanks!". So, may the following song encourage you as it does me.

### **PRAISE THE LORD!**

When you're up against a struggle  
That shatters all your dreams,  
And your hopes have been cruelly  
Crushed by Satan's manifested scheme  
And you feel the urge with-in you  
To submit to earthly fears,  
Don't let the faith you're standing in  
Seem to disappear.

Praise the Lord!

He can work through those who praise Him.

Praise the Lord,

For our God inhabits praise.

Praise the Lord,

For the chains that seem to bind you

Serve only to remind you

That they drop powerless

Behind you, when you PRAISE HIM!(15)

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name."  
(Hebrews 13:15)

## **FAITH ALIVE IN HEART, HOME and CHURCH**

### **NOTES - Chapter 6**

1. Psalm 148:1-14 - The Living Bible Paraphrase (1971) by Kenneth Taylor. Used by permission.
2. An original poem from Meditations from the Heart by Rollin Stewart of Arkansas City, Kansas. Used by permission.
3. Professor Royce as quoted by E. Stanley Jones from a taped message by Mr. Jones. #738-E.
4. Romans 8:26,27
5. True Spirituality (1971) by Francis Shaeffer, Cp.2, Pg. 18, Copyright 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.
6. Job 1:21,22
7. Transcribed from a sermon tape #738-E - "Jesus is Lord" by E. Stanley Jones.
8. I Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:4.
9. II Corinthians 12:7-10.
10. Habakkuk 3:17-19.
11. John 17:1; Hebrews 12:2
12. Ephesians 1:3,11.
13. Book - John Newton, Out of the Depths, Pgs.8,9. An autobiography. Public domain. Used by permission of Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.
14. Romans 8:31b, 35-39.
15. Song - "PRAISE THE LORD" by Brown Bannister and Copyrighted 1978 and this arr. copyrighted 1980 by BUG AND BEAR MUSIC & HOME SWEET HOME MUSIC. Used by permission of WORD MUSIC.