

Good morning everyone, we have been talking a lot about spiritual warfare recently and I am aware that can get heavy at times, we must keep a balance between the struggle and the joy in our Christian lives.

However I think the best and most important weapon in our armoury in the area of spiritual warfare is: **praise and worship** - it puts the devil in an absolute spin, he just can't handle it, and especially when as Habakkuk 3 says:

*“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food though there are no Sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, **yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Saviour**”.*

It's just not normal or natural when things aren't going well to be “joyful in God our saviour” but by doing so it sets a whole chain of events in motion in the spiritual realm that benefits us as Christians.

I think what happened last week was significant. The Holy Spirit moved in a powerful way. We want that to continue. I think the key to us moving forward however is being open to the Spirit and **praise and worship** - but let's face it! It often doesn't come easily to our fallen nature.

So let's have a little survey! How many of you when they got up in the morning were naturally flowing with joy and thankfulness and couldn't wait to get here and worship the Lord? (It does happen of course, but let's be honest not often)

The truth is: for most of us, this joy doesn't flow naturally, it's sporadic and patchy (if it's there at all!) for many it is as the old minister use to say rather than; ‘Good morning God’ its ‘Good God it's morning’!!

So the first thing I want to say on this subject is;

**To be Joyful, to Rejoice, to Give Thanks is often a choice - an act of our will.**

As scripture says it's a ‘sacrifice of praise’ but that's faith and here's the important thing: as we step into praise and worship as a choice - God meets us where we are, He lifts us.

We see this throughout the scriptures **this choice regarding being joyful**, giving thanks, praise etc, Here are a few bible verses to emphasise the point;

*“**Let us** be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’” Hebrews 12:28-29*

*“Come, **let us** sing for joy to the Lord; **let us** shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. **Let us** come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song” Psalm 95:1-2.*

**And the second thing** I want to say about this rejoicing is:

**We have a very good reason to do so!** But we have to use our mind; we have to recount the reasons to do so.

The case for **WHY we rejoice** is overwhelming for the Christian! I don't know of a better one - it's not the blasé 'don't worry be happy' 'every cloud has a silver lining' 'Power of positive thinking' philosophy we get from the world. No, at the end of the day, that is baseless it's 'built on sand'

The Christian reason for rejoicing is quite different - our reason for it, is solidly built on the rock - un-shakeable and that's the great thing about the scriptures, they give you solid, genuine reasons to rejoice, to give thanks. Listen to just this one scripture from Psalm 100; (Page .....)

*“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God” (a call to worship) (But WHY? it goes onto say...) “It is he, who made us, and we are his we are his people, the sheep of his pasture “(He has made us, we are precious to Him, He has a plan for us - **that's why we rejoice**)*

Or *“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name” (WHY because it goes onto say ) “For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” ( He loves us and will always be faithful to us - **that's why**)*

So what I want to do this morning is; **look at 10 things** praise and worship does for us and to us - you heard Derek's '10 point plan on living the Christian life' so here's mine on the benefits of praise and worship.

**Firstly: our strength will be renewed**

Psalm 103:1-4 says: “Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name <sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— <sup>3</sup> who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, <sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth **is renewed like the eagle’s**”

When we praise and worship there is a **renewal going on in our spiritual being** - are you tired? depressed, weary? Here’s is the antidote; you will find a reviving of your soul in praise and worship.

### **Secondly: it invites Gods presence into our lives**

We all want the Holy Spirit to move in our lives, to go deeper with God, we all want that sweet fellowship and intimacy that a relationship with Jesus brings.

When we are praising the Lord we are taking time to praise Him for who He is - His character, His faithfulness, we shift our attention from ourselves and other people to God. We are raising Him up above ourselves.

When our focus is on God we come to reap one of the greatest benefits of praise and worship and that is: **we experience Gods presence in a tangible way.**

### **Thirdly: it Brings victory**

As I said earlier we have had a lot of teaching on spiritual warfare recently now that can be right and good, but we have to remember ‘**the battle is the Lords**’ and through praise we surrender our battles to the Lord and allow Him to fight on our behalf. This is where we realise God is all mighty, all powerful and in control.

**The enemy will defeat us when we focus on our emotions and feelings** as long as we are lead by feelings we will be defeated. Scripture tells us ‘to walk by faith not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)

I love the story of King Je – hoshaphat in 2 Chronicles chapter 20: (page..... )

Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea”.

Verse 3 says: “Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah”.

Then in verse 14 some men prophesised to King Je – hoshaphat “.

<sup>15</sup> they said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. **For the battle is not yours, but God’s.**

<sup>17</sup> You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you,

<sup>18</sup> Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and **Jerusalem fell down in worship** before the LORD.

<sup>21</sup> After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed **men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness** as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

“Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.”<sup>22</sup> **as they began to sing and praise**, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated”.

Jehoshaphat knew he could not win the battle with clever ideas or in his own strength. He and his people praised God in the midst of a great threat and God delivered them. Praise and worship can bring victory in our lives without doing anything else - because “the battle is not ours but the Lords”

Fourthly: **Praise & worship satisfies our soul**

Are you looking for satisfaction elsewhere? Perhaps family, friends, your home, entertainment, and the things of this world? Are you distracted and bored? Just direct your attention, all your energy to praise and worship instead.

When you’re caught up in all those distractions, stop and say in your worship; “only you can satisfy me God - only in you is there fulfilment & contentment. The Apostle Paul said this in: Philippians 4:11-13

“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength”

Fifthly: **it repels depression** if you suffer with anxious moments, when the world feels grey and miserable, when you're low and fed up with your lot, with the continual battle with your health or life's problems: **praise and worship**.

Through giving thanks He will take away your mood, your gloom, your depression.

Isaiah 61.3 says regarding 'The year of the Lords favour' (we are living in the years of the Lords favour).

"Proclaim the year of the LORD's favour and the day of vengeance of our God to comfort all who mourn,<sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD or the display of his splendour.

## 6. Praise & worship **brings freedom**

Are you bound up? Caught up in addictions or old mindsets? Do you have strongholds in your mind that seem to get the better of you? Do you have things from the past that you can't shake off? Or do you feel you are on the same old merry go round of life? (Even the Christian life) then praise and worship can bring freedom from the chains that bind you.

The story of Paul and Silas is an incredible one; they were imprisoned for preaching the gospel. You can read about it in **(Acts 16:16-40)**

But even though they had been beaten thoroughly, they did not stop praising God. As they were praising God at the midnight hour, the prison doors were opened, **and everyone's chains were removed.**

When we praise God He can set us free from every chain that holds us back and that's not just for us but for our families as well (notice how the chains from the other prisoners were removed as well by Paul & Silas praise)

## 7. When we praise and worship **we fulfil Gods purpose in creating us**

The Westminster confession says this: *Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever*'. So when we are praising God we fulfilling his purpose He created us for.

We cannot be truly be happy or fulfilled, or find our purpose in the world, without glorifying God our maker, the majority of people today don't even acknowledge God in their lives, but that's where a **truly contented life starts**; by firstly being thankful to our creator and enjoying Him & who He has made us.

### **8. It releases us from the weight of sin**

It is true is it not? That we all feel condemnation at times? And when we have fallen short, missed the mark, the enemy always reminds us of our faults. If you find yourself struggling with condemnation then the way to sweep aside those thoughts is: to praise God instead and thank Him for your forgiveness, you will find it will lift you out of 'the pit of despond'

Psalm 103 says this: "Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—<sup>3</sup> **who forgives all your sins** and heals all your diseases"

Praise Him for forgiving your past, present and future sins, and when we do this we will be reminded of what we did earlier in communion - Gods great sacrifice on the cross which has released us from the weight of our sins.

### **9. It increases our faith in God**

To begin with just entering into praise and worship requires faith - Hebrews 11:1 says: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

When we are praising God, we are showing that we believe God exists. That He is worthy to be praised. When we praise God and remember the great things he has done in our lives, or other people's lives, or the great things He has done in the Bible we are reminded of Gods goodness and faithfulness - it strengthens our faith, we are expressing truth.

And the Bible says the "truth will set you free" (John 8:32)

We serve a God who has parted the red sea, fed the people of Israel with manna from heaven, closed the lion's mouth, fed five thousand from five loaves and two fish, walked on water, raised the dead, healed the sick, cast out demons. I could go on.

Start recounting what a great God we serve in your praise and worship and our faith in Him will increase.

And lastly number 10: **Praise and worship helps us focus on eternity**, we are just pilgrims in this world, passing through - our life is like as **James says**:

“Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes”

It is easy to get distracted by worldly things but God says He will keep us in perfect peace if we “keep our mind stayed on Him” (Isaiah 26:3)

We are built for eternity, a few short years of trouble in this life and then eternity. No more crying or tears or pain and sickness, no more disappointments and heartaches and when we worship and praise we can sample what is yet to come, we will want to praise God continually in eternity, because we will see Him face to face and realise how wonderful God really is. We will be like the angelic beings in:

### **Revelation 7:11-12**

“And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might, be to our God forever and ever”.

Amen

So there it is, praise and worship is what we are created for and we are going to enter into a time of praise and worship now. We are going to ask the Holy Spirit to come and Edwin will lead us.

*Tony Troy*