

26. CRUCIFIXION AND PRAISE

In this study we want to continue looking at this wonderful key of praising God, through which we prepare a throne for God in our hearts, and through which we can escape from any situation that we ever find ourselves in the world.

In our last study, we studied about this wonderful key that God has given us. It is like a master key that can open every door. Isn't it wonderful to have a key in your hands through which you can unlock yourself and get out of any tight corner or any situation that you find yourself in? It can be some difficult situation, some problem, or some difficult people perhaps, and here you have a master key. What is that? - *To enthrone God on our praises.*

But it is not a technique. If you try it as technique, I guarantee you right now, it will fail. Technique is something that we adopt selfishly. We want something, and we think that, if we repeat certain words like some kind of 'mantra' or magic, it will work. It doesn't work like that. I am not talking about words. You know **God has no interest in words if they don't come from our hearts.** I am not talking about praise alone. I am talking about **praise that comes from a heart that has faith in God** - in His sovereign power, in His perfect love and in His infinite wisdom.

Faith indicates that you believe that God is full of love, full of wisdom, full of power and when you believe that you will sing His praise. We saw in the last study, "Praise is the throne on which God sits" (**Ps. 22:3**). Now Psalm 22 is a Psalm about the Cross of Calvary. It begins with these words "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." Jesus spoke those words when He was hanging on the cross and then He speaks about *God being enthroned on the praises of His people* in the 3rd verse. Then it refers to His hands and feet being pierced in verse 16. It is very obviously a message of a cross - a Psalm of the cross.

And, as you continue in the Psalm, from this crucified position, Jesus invites His younger brothers, that is you and me, to join Him *to prepare a throne of praise for the Father* (verse 22); "I will tell of Your name to my brethren, in the midst of the assembly I will **praise Thee.**" That is the verse which is quoted in Hebrews 2 as referring to Jesus praising the Father. So it is very interesting to see that this verse of praise comes in the *midst* of a Psalm which is speaking about *Jesus being crucified*, His hands and feet being pierced.

The crucifixion of Jesus was the worst evil that was ever committed on this earth. There was never a greater sin committed by any human being than that.

Then consider this: What was the *best thing* that ever took place on this earth, in all the 6000 years of human history? The answer is again the same: *The crucifixion of Jesus Christ.* There was never any better thing that ever took place on this earth. Because of Christ's crucifixion, our sins can all be forgiven and we can spend eternity with God.

So the crucifixion of Christ was the worst sin that man ever committed and also the best thing that ever happened on earth. What does that show? Just this that **the worst thing that man could do, was turned by God into the very best thing of all.**

Now, once you understand that, you will realize that whatever other people may do to you are certainly not as bad as the crucifixion of Jesus. And if God could turn that evil thing into something good, tell me what is there that other people can do to you, which God cannot turn

for good. Everything is less than that. Nothing can happen to you worse than the crucifixion of Jesus and that worst thing God turned into the very best. That teaches us something about *God's Almighty power*. That is why we praise Him. That is why, right in the middle of this Psalm which is the Psalm of the cross, we find, *â€œI will praise you.â€™*

Do you feel like praising God when you are crucified? What do you think the thieves were doing when they were hanging on the cross? They were not praising God. They were cursing and swearing and probably biting the hands of the soldiers who were crucifying them and spitting at them. They were not at all happy. Can you imagine how Jesus was crucified? He must have opened His palms and co-operated with them as they drove the nails in, put His legs, one on top of the other, so that they could drive the nails in more easily. He was happy. Why was He happy? Didn't He suffer? Oh, He suffered for sure. He felt the pain of crucifixion just as much as you and I would feel it. Then why was he happy? He was happy that He was doing the will of His Father. You know, when we do the will of our Father, it doesn't matter if we suffer. We can still be happy. We may feel pain. Jesus felt pain, but He was happy, and that is why *He could praise the Father hanging on the Cross*. And this is the way. This is the secret.

The Bible says that it is not only Jesus Christ who was crucified on Calvary. Do you know somebody else who was crucified on the same cross as Jesus? I don't mean on either side of Him like the thieves. Tell me somebody else who was crucified on the same cross as Jesus was crucified. It is not so well known among Christians, by the way. Every Christian knows that Jesus died on the cross on Calvary, but if you were to ask them, who else died with Him on that same cross? They don't know the answer. The answer is given to us, in two places at least, in Scripture.

In **Romans 6:6**, we read, "*Our old man was also crucified with Christ on the cross*" and Paul says, in **Galatians 2:20**, applying it personally to himself, "*I am crucified with Christ, I have been crucified with Christ.*" So it is not only Jesus who died on the cross. In some wonderful way, God, who knew that one day you and I would also give our lives to Christ (because He knew the future), took us and put us into Christ and **we were crucified with Him. We have died with Christ.**

It is not only that our sins were placed on Christ on the cross, but we ourselves have been placed on that Cross. Now, crucified with Christ, we praise God. See, that is a different type of praise than the *hollow empty words of praise* that sometimes people make by noises and shouting which is meaningless. Why do I say it is meaningless? Praise is a spirit. You can't just switch it on, on Sunday morning for 2 hours, and switch it off, when you go home. If you say 'Hallelujah,' 'Praise the Lord', on Sunday morning in the meeting, and then go home and shout at your wife on Sunday afternoon, do you have the spirit of praise? - Certainly not. That is something you switch on and switch off. It is not a spirit of praise. It is a form. It is a tradition, and that is all a lot of people have. That is hollow.

There is a verse in the Old Testament where God says, "*These people draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far away from me.*" Their hearts seek their own. So it is easy to draw near to God with our lips, and God doesn't care for that. He doesn't listen to a lot of praise that is spoken out on Sunday mornings from different parts of the world. You know what He listens to? **He listens to the people who have a spirit of praise**, and not just words. Words can be empty. Words can be a ritual. There are a lot of people who say that *they love Jesus in the same spirit that Judas Iscariot kissed Jesus in Gethsemane*. Judas Iscariot kissing Jesus wasn't a sign of love and affection and friendship; *he was betraying him*. And in the same way, many people stand up Sunday morning and praise the Lord, and say Hallelujah, but it is not in their hearts.

If you want praise to come into your heart, you have to be crucified with Christ. You are to say, 'Lord I die to myself.'

I want to show you another Psalm which is also a Psalm of the cross and that just confirms what I have been trying to say to you. You know, God's word is powerful and that is why we need to turn to His words again and again. Man's words are not as powerful as God's words. In **Psalm 118:11-14** you read, "They surrounded me like bees and in the name of the Lord I will cut them off." It is a Psalm of the cross and then it says in Verse 22, "*The stone which the builders rejected became the Chief Cornerstone.*" That is a word that Jesus quoted in the Gospels. You read that in **Matthew 21:42** and **Mark 12:10, 11**. It is the word that Jesus quoted concerning Himself. When did the builders reject the stone? That was on Calvary; they said, "*We don't want Him to reign over us. We will not have this man to reign over us. Crucify him.*" And they rejected Him.

But there, hanging on the cross, crucified, the Lord says, in Verse 28, "*I give thanks to Thee; I will extol Thee, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.*" Then in verse 24, "*This is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.*" Was the day, on which Jesus was crucified, a day which the Lord had made? It is easy to say - this is the day which the Lord has made when you get an increment or a promotion in your job or a better salary or a better job or when you get married or get a better house or some earthly benefit. But to say that 'this is the day which the Lord has made,' when somebody crucifies you, requires faith. What is the day which the Lord has not made? *Is there any day in any year which the Lord has not made?* Every day is the day which the Lord has made. The devil doesn't make any days, I will tell you that. If this is the day which the Lord has made, we are going to rejoice and be glad in it. Whether we get a large gift or whether we get crucified, it doesn't make a difference, because we believe in the sovereignty of God.

And so, we find in both these Psalms (Psalm 22 and Psalm 118), this great truth, that *it is only as I am willing to die to my self-life*, which is always seeking its own, *that I can enter into a spirit of praise*. Then my praise to God on Sunday mornings will be meaningful. It will come from my heart and I will not have to live a double life, **where I am a Holy person on Sunday morning and behave like a devil on Sunday Evening**. No, I can be genuine through and through. So, it is not *just faith* that is connected with praising God, but *being crucified* with Christ is also connected with praising God. We are trying to lay a good ground so that our life of praise will be on a solid foundation.