

The Decision to Praise



The Decision is Yours (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again sharing on this week's challenging theme, "The Decision is Yours."

In my two previous talks, I've explained how David's spirit exhorted his soul to do certain things. This is described in Psalm 103, verses 1 and 2.

> "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

You see, David there is addressing his own soul. It's his spirit that's in touch with God and understands the appropriate spiritual response. But the spirit cannot make the response. The response has to come through the soul. The soul is the switch, it's the decision-making element in the personality. It's the gear, if you want to use a very simple, down-to-earth picture. And so, although David's spirit knows what to do, it's getting done by David depends on the cooperation of his soul with his spirit.

Now, David asked his soul to make two very important decisions. The first one was to bless the Lord. The second one was not to forget the Lord's benefits. In my talk yesterday, I suggested that we could make that positive and say to focus his mind on the Lord's benefits. So there's the two vitally important decisions of which David is a pattern for all of us. A decision which in each case our soul must make. The first decision: to bless the Lord; the second decision: to focus on the Lord's benefits.

Now, in my talk today, I'm going to speak about another important decision that David made. This is recorded in Psalm 34, but in order to understand fully the nature of David's decision, we have to read the introduction to this psalm. Because the introduction in this particular case gives us the background, the situation in which David found himself when he wrote this psalm. And it says this in the introduction.

> "A psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed."

If we read the historical books, we discover that this time David was a fugitive, running for his life from his own land

and his own people because he was being unjustly persecuted by the then king of Israel, King Saul. In order to escape the persecution of Saul, David ran away to the court of a Gentile king, Abimelech. But Abimelech was pretty suspicious of David. He wasn't quite sure what David's motives were in coming and he could easily have had David killed. So, in order to disarm Abimelech, David had to come to the point where he feigned madness. And, in another passage of Scripture, it says he slobbered on his beard and scratched on the doors with his fingernails. In other words, he was behaving like a lunatic in order to save his life, in order to disarm the suspicions of Abimelech.

So, how would you behave if you were in that situation? You were running for your life, you were in the court of a king that might easily take you for an enemy and have you executed and, in order to stay alive, you had to do this very demeaning thing: slobbering on your beard and scratching on the door with your nails behaving exactly like a lunatic. What would be your response? Would you say, "God, how did you ever let me get into this situation? I really don't think it pays to serve you. I've done my best and here is where I end up!" Or, would you make the decision that David made?

Now, I want you to understand David didn't make this decision because he felt like it. He must have felt exactly the opposite. But he made this decision because it was a right decision and his soul made it, not his emotions. Listen to what he says:

> "I will bless the Lord at all times [including this time]; His praise shall continually be in my mouth [even now]. My soul shall makes its boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear it and rejoice. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together."

You need to notice the contrast between David's situation and his decision. In the situation everything was against him. There was nothing visible to cause him to praise the Lord. But his decision was not based on his situation, it didn't arise from his emotions, it was based on his will. Praise arises from a decision, not from a situation.

Notice the crescendo of David's decision. Notice the words with which he followed. "I will bless the Lord… His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord… O magnify the Lord with me… let us exalt His name together." Notice those successive words: bless, praise, boast, magnify, exalt. The more he praised the Lord, the more he wanted to praise the Lord. You see, it's always hard to get started in a situation like that. Once you get started, then it's difficult to stop.

Let's compare the words of David in Psalm 63, verses 3-5.

> "Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise Thee. So I will bless Thee as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name. My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth offer praises with joyful lips."

You see, why was David praising the Lord there? Because his situation was good? Not necessarily. We don't know what his situation was at that moment. But he was praising the Lord for something eternal, unchanging. The Lord's lovingkindness, which never changes, the Scripture says. He says because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise you and notice he was pretty demonstrative. He said, "My lips will praise you, my mouth will praise you with joyful lips." This is not just some inward attitude, but this is something very vocal. And then he says, "I will lift up my hands in your name." Have you ever been in a service where people lifted up their hands? How did you respond? Did you say, "I don't feel like it!"? Well, I want to tell you it doesn't come from feeling. It comes from a decision. It's a scriptural decision. Paul says in the New Testament that men should pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. That's not because they feel like it, it's because the Bible tells them to.

And you notice that David says there, "My soul shall be satisfied." I want to compare this with what he says in Psalm 103 that we read previously about the Lord. "He satisfies thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles." Praise brings true satisfaction.

This exhortation to praise the Lord, to thank Him, to bless Him, runs throughout the whole Bible, Old Testament and New Testament alike. Let's look at some words in Psalm 100, verses 4 and 5, speaking about how we have access into God's presence:

> "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations."

You see, that is really not an option; it's instruction. You could call it a command. How do we come into God's presence? With thanksgiving. With praise. What are we to do? Give thanks to Him. Bless His name. It's not a question of whether we feel like it. The question is what does the Bible tell us to

do. If we're Christians, we're committed to obey God's Word, the Bible. We don't obey primarily out of emotions, we obey out of a decision of our will. You might say again, "Well, right now I don't see anything to praise God for. My situation is not the way I want it and things don't seem to be going right." I want to point out to you that the reason given in this psalm that I've just read for praising and thanking the Lord does not depend on situations. You see, praise should never depend on your situation. The psalmist gives three great, unchanging reasons why we ought to praise and thank the Lord and here they are:

1. The Lord is good

2. His lovingkindness is everlasting that's the same word that David used when he said God crowns with lovingkindness and tender mercies

3. His faithfulness endures to all generations

Now, I want to point out to you that every one of those reasons is an eternal reason. They are always true. Whether we see it or not, whether we feel like it or not, is irrelevant. The truth of the matter is: the Lord is always good. His kindness is everlasting, it never ceases. Another psalm says, "His mercies never come to an end." And His faithfulness endures to all generations.

Now, those are three very powerful, absolutely true and unchanging reasons why we owe it to the Lord (and to ourselves, incidentally) to praise Him, to thank Him, to bless Him.

I want to place now the responsibility right before you, my dear listener, at this point. Have you ever made this decision? How is your relationship of praise to the Lord? Do you wait until you feel like it? Do you wait until things are going right? I could almost promise you that things will begin to go less and less right until you change that attitude. God will see to it that you offer Him praise as a sacrifice. That's what the New Testament says in Hebrews 13:15: "By Him [Jesus Christ] let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually [all the time]."

Let me repeat what I said before: praise brings satisfaction. The satisfied Christians are the praising Christians, the ones who don't let situation or emotion dictate to them, the ones who have made that decision with their will to bless the Lord at all times and to have His praise continually in their mouth. If you've never made that decision, I suggest that you make it right now.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. In my talk tomorrow, I'll be dealing with another vitally important decision: repentance.

Radio Program

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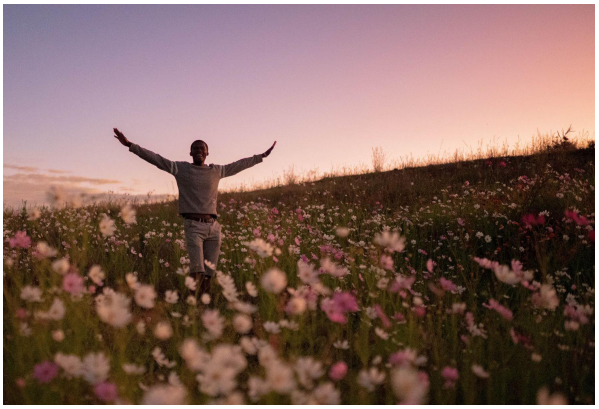

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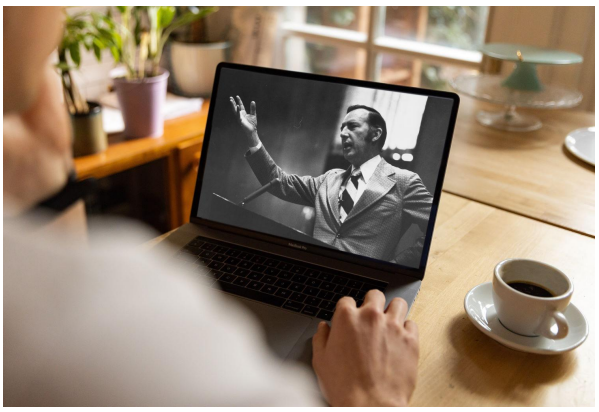

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