

Psalms: God's Worship & Prayer Guide

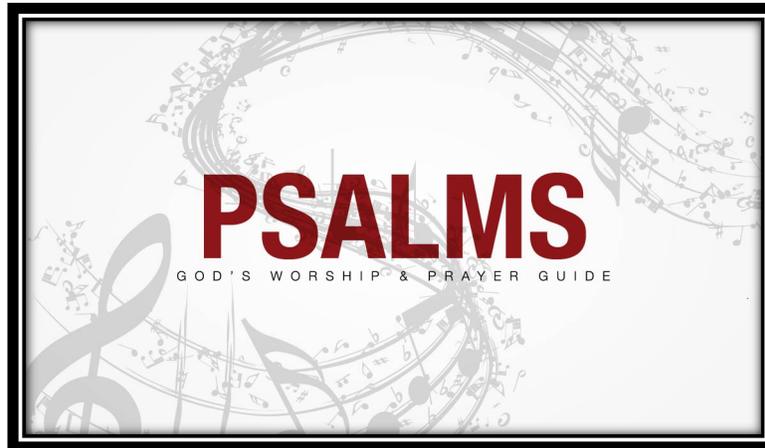
The Path Of Praise

Psalm 33:10-22

Written By

©Dr. Marty Baker

September 27, 2020



How important is praise to the life of a Christ follower? When the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His disciples for praising Him as the messianic king as He rode the humble donkey into Jerusalem, Jesus rebuffed them with a shocking statement:

⁴⁰ But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19).

How instructive. If the crown of God's creation will not praise Him, then the inanimate and lowest order, viz., stones, will bring Him worthy praise. That is how crucial praise is when a person stands before the Creator, and Jesus is the originator of the cosmos (Col. 1:16-17).

Praise, therefore, is utterly important, especially for we who know God and walk with Him. It should not be something you occasionally do, but that which is natural and quite often consumes you. Does it?

Praise is what King David lived for, and many of the songs he wrote for Israel's worship, which are now our Psalms, reflect this truth. Psalm 33 has proven to be worthy of our intense, intricate focus because it gives the various reasons why we should adore the living God. This is, in fact, the main motif of the passage. I offer it again for your consideration and application.

We Should Praise God For Who He Is And What He Does (Psalm 33)

Thus far, we have considered three Davidic points which validate the main premise. Think of this, as I have said before, as praise pumps, or that which cause you to start praising God.

- *Praise Him For His Person* (Psalm 33:1-2). God's vast, fathomless character should foster praise from His people. Does it? Do you read about His character in the Bible and then stop and praise Him for it?
- *Praise Him For His Practice* (Psalm 33:4-5). What is His practice but to make sure absolute moral and spiritual truth permeates the cosmos He made. Do you praise Him for it or chafe against that which challenges your lifestyle and ideology?
- *Praise Him For His Power* (Psalm 33:6-9). God's omnipotent power, by which He fashioned the cosmos in all of this complexity, mystery, and stellar glory should, by definition, move His saints to outright praise . . . and it should also give them hope for each day for He is with us (Heb. 13:5).

In addition to these reasons, we add several more.

Praise Him For His Plans (Psalm 33:10-17)

When you look at our world, it appears to be in a state of utter and perpetual chaos: riots, looting, injustices committed by rogue police officers, injustices committed by angry people seeking justice, fake news, no news, criminals running loose, mayors afraid to defend their cities from violent people, the weaponization of a real virus for political purposes, politicians who blame others for their failings instead of taking responsibility, educational systems which foment hatred of our country by teaching Marxist concepts, a Presidential election which is set up to be a no-win situation for either party, an ideologically driven Supreme Court, and so on and so forth.

I have seen the injustices committed against people of color while visiting family every summer in the South during the sixties. I have had numerous heated discussions with cousins regarding, for instance, why black people could not enter the theater through the front door with the whites, but had to enter through a small side door. I have lived through the melt-down of the culture in the same period, resulting in the takeover of the universities by anti-Constitutionalists, the opposition of police and the military during the Vietnam War, the hedonistic debacle called Woodstock, the rise of drugs for any and all reasons, the unfounded banishment of prayer from schools in 1963, the codification of all forms of sexual perversion, the abandonment of logical reasoning while believing that loud rhetoric is an argument, but I must say I have never seen our culture, our world in such a death spiral.

What has this brief and sad commentary got to do with praising God? Good question. Everything is the answer. David tells us this much:

¹⁰ The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. ¹¹ The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.

Ours is not a deistic world where God created everything and then left us on our own as He backed out of said system. No, ours is a theistic cosmos, where the Creator fashioned us, gave us the freewill to either follow Him or discard Him, and who, from the very beginning, made it quite clear to the Devil and to us that He would, in fact, deal definitively with the Devil and usher in His kingdom of messianic peace. It's a story we see from Genesis to Malachi, and the appearance of Jesus, the only man who fulfilled all messianic prophecies, in 5 B.C. brought us that much closer to its glorious realization.

To look at it another way, God not only has a kingdom plan, He is doing everything within His power . . . at all times . . . to bring it to fruition, and nothing puny man does, no matter how crafty and devious it is, no matter how many people band together to oppose Him and His people, regardless of much money or firepower is thrown at it or supports it, God's kingdom will prevail in the end. And let us remind ourselves that He, the providential and all-powerful God, is *actively* (not passively) working in all the global mayhem to cause it all to terminate at the glorious revelation of His Son, and our Savior, Jesus, the Christ (Matt. 24-25).

This is why David definitively says that "*The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.*" China might want to build its military so it can dominate the seas and eventually the world, Iran might want to destabilized the Middle East so they can defeat Israel and establish a world-wide Islamic caliphate, communists and socialists in our own country might think they are finally positioned to dethrone our nation's intimate tie with life-giving and nation building Judeo-Christian concepts, pernicious people who used to challenge everyone to tolerate them not arrogantly use their new power to cancel others who dare to speak against their mis-guided and godless ideologies, lawless and law-hating people who want us to illogically strip police departments of much needed monies because of the moral failure of a few officers all believe their way is going to be the way. God says otherwise. He specializes in working on all geo-political fronts at the same time, be it the placement of a new judge on the Supreme Court, or the firing of rockets by Hamas during a peace-signing treaty between Israel and its Arab neighbors to advance His kingdom causes. Yes, even when it does not appear He is at work, He is.

Once more, we listen to the inspired words of David:

¹⁰ The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.

The LORD, the eternal, all-powerful One, is *constantly* bringing the strategy of nations to naught. He takes their most intricate, devilish, carnally complex, outright godless, and truth-hating plans to elevate man while debasing God and ultimately makes them of "no effect." This Hebrew word really means "to thwart," or to keep something from happening. Think of a regulator on a car's engine. The person might want to go 120 mph; however, the regulator keeps them from ever achieving their goal. They have freewill . . . but only to a point.

The Scripture abounds with historical stories to validate this premise. I just finished reading John Piper's *Spectacular Sins And Their Global Purpose In The Glory Of Christ*. If you haven't read it, you need to, especially in the dicey days in which we live. Throughout this little book, Piper illustrates again and again how God took the actions of godless people (even the demons) and turned them toward His lofty, life-giving purposes.

In chapter 5, Piper illustrates how in Genesis 11 mankind sought to elevate himself to divine status with the construction of a mighty and massive ziggurat. In verse 4, man's motivations are laid bare:

And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11).

In verse 5, God came down from His truly lofty heavenly position to see what man was doing. The statement is, in and of itself as ironic as it is an open rebuke. Man wants to elevate himself, to be the master of his destiny, the Lord of his life, and to remove his dependence on God by congregating in cities. God, conversely, thwarts this evil plan by simply giving man multiple languages so he cannot communicate as easily. If a brick layer can't communicate with the on-site foreman, and the foreman can't communicate with the architect, the building could not be built, and it wasn't. Funny, how Babel, which in Hebrew means confusion, became the appropriate name of the city.

Fast-forward to the throne room of God prior to the Tribulation. Here John writes something very interesting:

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5).

God used the judgment of sin by means of creating languages to reach cultures who spoke those languages. You might need to read that again. Even in His judgment of sin, God's kingdom purposes are realized. It is one thing for the glory of the gospel to shine through one language, but to cause it to shine through a plethora of complex, difficult languages is tantamount to seeing one light split into many wonderful and colorful lights through a prism (as Piper suggests, p. 72). Is God not awe-inspiring?

Over and over again the Scriptures drive home the salient point that God can and will bring the plans of the godless to no effect, while working diligently to realize His redemptive, kingdom plans. In the book of Esther, for instance, we do not even find the Lord's name mentioned; however, as wicked Haman worked to kill the Jews in his land, God worked in and through the providential placement of Esther and her relative, Mordecai, into the king's court so they could use their collective and courageous voices to unmask the pernicious, evil plan(s) of the politician. In the end, the gallows meant for Mortdecai (Esther 5:14) ironically became his gallows (Esther 7).

And how can we forget the cross of Christ? We know from Christ's temptation in the wilderness that the Devil was full aware of His redemptive plan, and in Matthew 4, verses 1-11, we learn how he sought to thwart the mission of Jesus by tempting Him to by-pass the cross and gain some world-wide power and authority from him. Even when Jesus revealed (again and again) that He had come to die for our sins (Mark 10:45), Peter, one of His most trusted disciples rebuked Him: "*Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you*" (Matt. 16:22). Jesus rebuked the Devil who had worked in Peter's mind to say this, "*Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not*

setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matt. 16:23). Realizing later that he was not going to be able to keep Jesus from the cross, Satan switched tactics and entered Judas with the goal of using him to get Christ arrested and crucified on trumped up charges (Luke 2:3). In his own arrogance, he, along with his menacing minions, must have thought they had prevailed when Christ died. Little did they know that on the third day Jesus would rise, thereby defeating them and sin. Along these lines, I love Paul’s analysis of what happened in the angelic realm:

¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it (Col. 2).

Principalities and *powers*, *arkas* and *exousias* (τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας) are merely Greek code words for demonic beings . . . like the Devil. With Christ’s resurrection, He took the most godless act of all time (the crucifixion of the divine Messiah) and turned it into a glorious victory for sinners, all while stripping His demonic foes of their power to ever advance their dark ideology. Talk about bringing godless actions to the point of no effect . . . this is the best illustration we will ever have.

Ostensibly, all of this means God’s kingdom/redemptive plans will prevail no matter what man is currently planning overtly or covertly. Toward the end of the seven-year Tribulation of divine judgment, a seventh angel blows his trumpet of judgment and voices in heaven shall collectively shout, “*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever*” (Rev. 11:15). Godless aspirations to control of the media, the universities, the White House, the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Supreme Court, the military, the masses, and the like can never thwart the coming of the Christ in victory to bring His kingdom of peace and righteousness (Isa. 2; 9). He will reign as prophesied and as David foretold.

Wise people realize this and praise God. This should be the logical result of understanding divine providence where mankind is concerned. When people, and nations do this, when they embrace God and God’s good providential plans, instead of effacing them, they are, in a word blessed. As David comments:

¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people He has chosen as His own inheritance.

Why is this type of nation, this God-fearing nation blessed from God’s perspective? Yet one more timely question. The ensuing verses give us the coveted, much needed answer for testy times:

¹³ The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. ¹⁴ From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; ¹⁵ He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.

They are blessed insofar as they, from politicians to paupers, collectively know He sees, knows, evaluates, and *will judge them* (as David says, “He considers . . . the present tense denoting perpetual activity . . . their works”). This knowledge changes everything, doesn’t it? Or, at least it should. Remember the words of Jesus in this regard:

Therefore, do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known (Matt. 10).

On judgment day Jesus, the Judge, will have all the facts and intel needed to judge all people justly. No plea bargains will be necessary, and no one will be able to say His judgment was ill-founded or ideologically driven. On the contrary, His judgment of a person’s life will be perfect, righteous, and without error. For the non-Christians, their works and words will be found wanting (Matt. 7:21-23), resulting in eternal punishment for rejecting the redemptive work of Jesus. For Christians, their works will be tried and tested to see if they are worthy of receiving reward for service rendered in the name of Christ (1 Cor. 3; 2 Cor. 5:10ff). For them, entrance into heaven is not in view, while reward for obedience is. Either way, however, Jesus’s judgment at the end of time is based on first-hand knowledge of internal thoughts and motivations, coupled with external activity, be if good or evil. Again, the very thought of this day of reckoning should move anyone to more righteous, godly behavior.

Applied to all aspects within the life of nations, a knowledge and fear of God’s impending judgment should have a profound, lasting impact.

- Politicians would be careful not to bad-mouth opponents, use foul language to denigrate another political leader across the aisle, mis-represent facts to push an agenda or ideology, purposefully lie to the people, or embrace political platforms which reject God, morality, absolute truth, and that which protects life.
- Law-makers would be careful not to create laws which contradict, distort or hamstring God’s unchanging law(s).
- All people from the police to the policed would respect each other since they are all made in God’s wonderful image.
- Husbands would be careful what they do on their business trips when their wives are not around.
- Students would be careful what they do when their parents are not around on their new university campuses.
- People who are dating would be careful what they do with each other prior to marriage.
- People would be careful what they tweeted or put up on Facebook.
- People would be careful how and why they demonstrated against things they didn’t agree with.
- Teachers would never think of teaching unsuspecting children things about life which would make a rugged sailor blush.

And so on and so forth. Armed with a God mind-set, a nation is blessed because such thinking causes them to think long and hard about their life choices and to make necessary course corrections. I think we are in a national state of chaos because, for the most part, we have forgotten the very God who created us. To remember His is to head toward life and blessing. This is the very warning God gave the Israelites in Deuteronomy chapter 7 as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. Basically, God says, "Don't forget me when your life is blessed by earthly things." They did and we know the result (2 Kings 17). Their national outcome could have been so different. I pray ours is, and it will be if our people will turn back toward God.

A nation is also blessed when they recognize God insofar as it gives them a better picture of how to view their armed forces. David, a military man who had fought alongside many soldiers in battle, understood this truth. This is why he penned these insightful words:

¹⁶ No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. ¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver *any* by its great strength.

When you understand that God's plan will prevail, then all of a sudden military might fades into the background. America has a wonderful and powerful military, and it stands at the ready of our President to guard and defend us from all foreign and domestic threats. A force of some 2,260,000 personnel, coupled with some 860,000 in military reserves is a force to be reckoned with. Yet, as David observes, military manpower cannot ultimately deliver a nation. Why? That power is by no means greater than God's power. And it doesn't matter how much firepower a nation possesses either. "A horse" in ancient times was equivalent to our modern version of armored vehicles. Currently we have over 2,280 tanks, some 39,253 armored vehicles, not to mention ninety-one lethal destroyers, and some 66 submarines. Yet even all of these pale into powerlessness in the face of the plan(s) of the Almighty. Wise political and military leaders, like David, realize this timeless truth and act accordingly.

How do you go about doing this? Next time you are doing a parade review, thank God for the men and women at your disposal. Next time you are at an air show, thank God for the planes but thank Him for being more powerful. Next time you see new weapons in action, give thanks to God that even though these weapons serve a purpose, none of them compare to His ability to protect and thwart evil. Yes, a nation is blessed when its people, from the Generals to the car mechanics who taxes pay for the armaments, are not cocky but humble because they realize that at the end of the day God's power is THE power and that power will cause His plan to prevail at the end of time.

Oh for less hubris and more humility from the top down for God's eye is on us. Oh for more who praise the living God who will let absolutely nothing stall or thwart His plan to bring His kingdom to earth.

Lastly, we should . . .

Praise Him For His Provision (Psalm 33:18-22)

What is God's provision for His people? David waxes eloquent here with the timely answer:

¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, ¹⁹ To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. ²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield. ²¹ For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. ²² Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us, just as we hope in You.

Twice here David talks about the mercy, or the loyal-love of God for His people, be it Israel in ancient times or the Church today. No matter what happens, no matter how difficult life becomes, no matter how many hardships or difficulties come our way, God, who sees us like a loving Father, will, in due time, come to our aid, He will help and protect.

At times that help might come in this life, as when God sent an angel to provide a meal for His weary prophet Elijah as he fled sought from the wrath of Jezebel after God's defeat of the prophets of Baal on Carmel (1 Kings 19). Your angel might be a specialist you are directed to through a series of relationships, who knows best how to treat your medical situation. Your angel might be an old friend who remembers your skill-set and calls you about a job, even though he didn't know you needed a job. When we were out of answers with how to provide the best care for Liz's mother as she degenerated physically, as well as care for her step-father and his dementia needs, it was one social worker in San Diego we encountered who took care of the majority of our issues.

For those who know God, reverence Him, and walk with Him, one thing is true: He will, at the right time, provide for your needs and show Himself powerful and praiseworthy. When He moves, really, there is only one response: We must waste to time giving Him the praise due His holy name.

