

In **Psalm 96** the writer gives us a wonderful introduction to how we should praise God whether it be in good or indeed bad times.

We see the proclamation to praise God v1-6. We see here the invitation to praise God in a number of ways. First it is to sing to the Lord. Of course music is one of those wonderfully subjective areas of the Christian church that causes no end of heartache, but it can also bring wonderful joy and be a great means of expressing our thanks and praise to God for all that He has done. Notice in these opening verses that the quality of singing is not mentioned. In Psalm 95 it says to shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Personally my singing would be described more like the shout than quality type but nevertheless the Lord loves to hear His people sing His praises.

Then in v2 we can sing the Lord's praises in proclaiming the good news of His salvation. Have you ever considered that our witness to the Lord's working in our life is another way of declaring His praises. Of course this is the reason we produce the Challenge newspaper as it sings the praises of the Lord in changed lives. Then we can declare His praises by shouting about His Glory and the wonders of His creation to all the nations. The word Glory speaks of the sum total of all that God is. We can also declare His praises by drawing people's attention to the wonders of God's creation and how He has put everything together and each day He faithfully maintains His creation.

There is also reason for praise (v4-6). They are listed for us quite easily:-

- a. We can praise the Lord because He is great. He is great in all of His dealings with us; He is great in all of His creation and through His creation.
- b. The Lord is to be praised by our reverence of Him v4. This is all about knowing what it means to fear the Lord, to stand in awe of His holiness. His majesty, His power and His authority.
- c. The Lord is to be praised because He is the one true God. I am so grateful we don't have to work out who is the one true God because the Bible speaks of Jehovah who is the creator and sustainer of the whole universe.

PRAISE the Lord for:

- A fantastic trip to Carnarvon for Impact team. Over 2400 Challenge papers distributed through door-to-door and street ministry. Men/Women outreach events had great response
- A number of gifts towards our projects for Impact Africa trip
- The privilege we have as a ministry to serve God far and wide around the globe

- d. We can praise the Lord because He is the one and only living God v5. Many people spend most of their lives worshipping dead idols or idols of man's own creation. We can rejoice because we worship a living God who reaches out to us in wonderful grace, compassion, love and speaks into our lives in ways we can't express in words.
- e. The Lord is to be praised because He is the creator God. I know we live in an age where evolution and other explanations of this universe are brought to the forefront of the media etc. but the Bible tells us clearly that God is the creator of the whole universe. This not only speaks of his wonderful creativity but also of His amazing sustaining power. The Lord is to be praised as He is honoured for His strength, beauty and His wonderful Majesty.

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Secondly we see the exhortation to worship v7-13. We are to give or ascribe to the Lord's strength. We realise that in the Christian life our strength, power and authority is in a person as He lives His life in and through us moment by moment.

Secondly we are to give or subscribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. We ascribe to the Lord the full gamut of His character as we see it portrayed in the scriptures. Often I have seen and heard people refer to the Lord in some rather demeaning terms such as the Old Man upstairs and the like. Whilst I appreciate that people are trying to make "God" more acceptable or accessible I think they take away from the Glory of His character by doing this.

Thirdly we are to ascribe to the Lord an offering of praise and of our possessions. Often this is one of the real tests of whether we really want to worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth. Giving to the Lord these days is always a difficulty as statistics bear testimony of. As we live in a world that is increasingly taken up with materialism, giving to the Lord has plummeted remarkably. Then the second thought here in this exhortation to worship is that we are to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness v9. We need to see first of all that we recognise and understand who it is that we are worshipping. He is the God who controls all things; He is absolutely sovereign; He is absolutely providential in all that He does.

Lastly we see worshipping the Lord in the Beauty of His creation v11-13. Again and again I take the opportunity to rejoice in God's creation as I travel to work and take time to examine the flowers and view the birds around me. Sadly for some people rejoicing in the Lord is not a habit but is even less of a habit in terms of rejoicing in His wonderful creation. Also we see

in v11-13 that God is coming again and we need to worship the Lord in the expectation of His sovereign return. We need to also take on board the fact that God is coming to judge the earth, and therefore those who do not know the Lord as their personal Lord and Saviour are going to be faced with an awful judgement. We need to gain a new vision and heart for evangelism. This is not something we can just whip up as it were but it is something that comes as we learn what it is to praise the Lord in song, in prayer, in action and in attitude and then God begins to change us from the inside out. When He does it changes the whole reason for our existence, the whole reason for why we want to serve God. Galatians 2:20 *"I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I that lives but Christ that lives in me and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

May you know and experience the reality of that verse in your day to day walk with the Lord.

{ CARL CARMODY
EDITOR CHALLENGE }

PRAYER needed for:

- Impact Africa team. Pray for team unity and for the Lord's protection as they travel to and from ministries each day (29 June - 18 July)
- The various ministries the team will be involved with while in South Africa - Prison, children, hospital, street, paper distribution and church ministry
- Ministry organisations we will be working with in South Africa – Multi Ministries, World Hope Prison Fellowship, Cheerful Care Givers
- Open doors and opportunities for the team to share the gospel with people

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