

The Sacrifice of Praise

by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

The sacrifice of praise is an act of our will to praise God even when we don't feel like it, demonstrating faith and pleasing God, and leading to joy, peace, and conformity to Christ.

Duration: 54:22

Scripture: Jonah 3:1, James 1:2

Topics: "Praise"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the power of praise and how it can lead to deliverance. He uses the examples of Paul and Silas praising God in prison, which resulted in an earthquake and their release from chains. The speaker also talks about David, who despite being in difficult circumstances, chose to praise God and trust in His promises. The sermon also touches on the speaker's personal experiences of loss and suffering, highlighting the importance of faith and praise in difficult times.

Transcript

It's been a blessed Lord's Day already. I was sharing with Nancy and Gordon about a mother-daughter banquet I spoke at a number of years ago. As one particular mother and her daughter were leaving their house, the daddy asked the little girl where they were going.

And she said, we're going to church and first we're going to eat, and then we're going to sleep. Well, I hope that's not what you came to do. I don't often share before groups of men and women together.

And I'm most comfortable teaching the Word with women. So I'm not going to preach. I'm not a woman preacher.

But just to share some thoughts from God's Word. And out of my own life, as God has been moving in a particular area, I had understood that this was a banquet for singles. So I came prepared along that line and realized yesterday that there would be those who are married as well here.

And hopefully the married ones are not wishing that they were single. I'm sure the singles are wishing that they were married. Hopefully not the other way around.

But the Lord gave a different direction as a result. And I'm so thankful because the area that He's put on my heart is one in which He's been working in my life in a fresh way. And it has to do with what is perhaps one of the most neglected areas of revival, praying, and living.

The area of praise and thanksgiving. Praise and thanksgiving. You know the scripture tells us in Acts chapter 3 verse 19 that times of refreshing, which would be a good definition for revival.

Times of refreshing. And we all need regular times of refreshing. Who doesn't? Whether it's the mother with young children or the man building his business or the grandmother babysitting the children.

At different times of our lives for different reasons we need times of refreshing. Times of not only physical but emotional, spiritual refreshing. And I think those times of refreshing come, according to God's word, from going to church.

Not necessarily. There are a lot of people who went to church in North America this morning who didn't leave refreshed. I did.

But it's not because we came in this building. Times of refreshing come from having good Christian fellowship. Well, that's a blessing.

But it doesn't always leave you refreshed. Because if you get down to where we really are, sometimes we leave not refreshed but more heavy hearted than we came in. Times of refreshing come from watching Christian television programs and listening to Christian radio programs.

Not necessarily. When you come right down to it, times of refreshing, God's word says, come from the presence of the Lord. And if we got refreshed this morning, it's not because we came in this building.

It's because we got into God's presence. Under the teaching of a man, by the way, I was so thankful for that message this morning. I don't know if you were worshipping here, but God really spoke to my own heart about some ways that I've been grieving the Holy Spirit and even resisting Him.

And I was so thankful for the challenge from the heart of a man who's filled with the Spirit of God. But times of refreshing come from the presence of God. And how do we get into God's presence? Psalm 100 tells us that we enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.

Through praise. Psalm 22, I believe it's verse 3, tells us that God inhabits the praises of His people. I love that verse.

I believe it's Jack Taylor, the Southern Baptist evangelist, who says, praise is God's address. That's where God lives. God inhabits the praises of His people.

If you want to find God, you have to go to where He lives. It's in the place of praise. And again, as we pray for revival, as we live lives in the presence of God, so often the ingredient that we neglect, I find myself often neglecting.

And as a result, losing the joy and the power of God in my life is so many times because of the neglect of this area of praise and thanksgiving. You know, praise brings down the presence of God. I think of instances in the Scripture where God was pleased to come and inhabit the praises of His people.

You see, praise demonstrates faith. And faith pleases God. Without faith, it's impossible to please God.

So when God's people begin to praise Him, He's pleased and He comes and dwells in that place. I was looking this morning at the passage in 2 Chronicles 5, where the people of Israel came together to dedicate the temple under the leadership of King Solomon. And how you read about it in the last two

verses of chapter 5 there, how the people began to sing and to praise God, led by the choir and the instrumentalists, to lift their hearts in giving glory to God.

And God was so pleased that His glory came and filled that place. So great was the awesome presence and manifest glory of God that it's as the priest could not even stand to minister in that place because all attention was on God. God comes to dwell in the place where His people praise Him.

You know, praise is really just transferring my focus from me and my circumstances to God and His circumstances. It's really just a matter of transferring my focus. You see, when I find myself looking at me and what's around me, the people, the circumstances, the distractions, the interruptions, the irritations, the heartaches, the burdens, the pressures, the frustrations, I become consumed with those things.

My problems and situations seem to be insurmountable. And by contrast, my God seems to be very, very small. In fact, sometimes we come to the point where we feel we cannot see Him at all because we're looking at the wrong thing.

And I find that when I transfer my focus from things of this earth to the ultimate reality, that is God and who He is and His circumstances, then I find that my God becomes very, very big. And my problems, by contrast, fade into near insignificance. Perhaps that's what the songwriter was thinking about when he said, turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. Praise is a matter of transferring my focus from myself and my circumstances to God and His circumstances.

And that pleases God. That is the life that is then filled with the presence and the power of God. Now, praising God is not always a matter of my feelings.

In fact, it is often not a matter of doing what I feel like doing. There are those times when our hearts are heavy. When we are, as David says in the 142nd Psalm, when my spirit is overwhelmed within me.

It may be physical weariness. It may be financial pressure. It may be physical illness.

It may be a wayward child. It may be a backslidden or lost mate. It may be the loss of a job.

It may be the loss of any number of circumstances that we could name. In which, sometimes just when it's raining, we don't feel like praising the Lord. And that is when we learn to offer what Scripture calls the sacrifice of praise.

The sacrifice of praise. And Scripture says in Hebrews the 13th chapter, with such sacrifices God is well pleased. What does it mean to offer the sacrifice of praise? First of all, let me say that offering the sacrifice of praise I'm learning is an act of my will.

It's a choice. It's not something I do because I feel like it. It's something I do because I choose to activate my will in obedience to God.

I choose to accept by faith what I cannot see. That is that God is in control. That He knows what He's doing.

That He is too wise to make mistakes with my life. And that He is too loving to hurt me except to help me. So I trust when I cannot see.

I think of the passage in Psalm 34. We're familiar with it. I will bless the Lord at all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. That psalm takes on new meaning when you think about the context in which David wrote those words. And how as a young lad he had been anointed by the prophet of Samuel to be the next king of Israel.

But there was one man who stood in the way. And forty years between the time of that anointing and the time when David would actually assume that position. Who was the man in the way? King Saul.

King Saul was a deeply insecure man. He was threatened by those that he saw as being more capable, more popular than himself. And insecure people become spear throwers.

They begin to try to destroy, to undermine, to criticize, to attack those that they perceive to be a threat to their position. And David was always something of a ladies man. He was always attractive to the women apparently.

And this is in fact what ended up getting him in trouble later in his life. But even in his young years when he was pursuing hard after God. The women were always impressed by his military prowess and his exploits.

And he would go out to battle and would kill the Philistines. And the women would begin to chant and to sing. Saul has killed his thousands but David has killed his ten thousands.

And Saul became infuriated. He was insanely jealous, very self-centered, deeply insecure. And he began to seek to eliminate the man he saw as the threat.

And so David who knew that the promise of God was that he would one day be king. Entered into years of being a fugitive. Running.

Hiding. And these had to be dark hours and deep valleys. Times when our natural response would be one of depression.

Fear. Distress. Discontent.

To become disheartened. I have found in recent years more and more women. I can't speak for men.

But I have met so many women in recent years. Including those in vocational ministry and pastors wives. Who are living with chronic depression.

It seems to be more so true in recent years. And David was in circumstances that would have made any of us depressed. Understandably.

He's running for his life. And not only is he having to care for himself and meet his own needs. But he gathers around himself.

Attracts to himself a band of 400 men. Who are malcontents themselves. They got their own problems.

The scripture says they were in distress. They were in debt. And they were discontented.

They were a motley crew. So here he is running through the woods and the caves and the forests. Having to not only hide himself and feed himself.

But having to care for this odd group of 400 men. Who gathered themselves around him. It's enough to drive anybody crazy.

But David responds in a way that is not natural but supernatural. An exercise of his will. As an expression of faith he says.

In one of those times of running and hiding. And in those times when it seems as though the promises of God will never come true. Have you ever been there? You know that God's word says that light will shine for the righteous.

But you're not seeing the light. You wonder if you'll ever see it again. And David cries out.

Not because he feels like it. I promise you he didn't feel like it. He couldn't have.

But as an act of his will he offers the sacrifice of praise. He says I will bless the Lord. At all times.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. By the way I'm discovering that it's important that I verbalize the praise of God. I cannot tell you how many times.

I have been either extremely weary or heavy hearted from counseling situations I've been involved in. Or just even aware of my own inadequacies and failures. And lack of spiritual maturity in different areas.

And I'll be frustrated or heavy hearted or whatever. And I'll begin in teaching or in counseling or just in conversation to verbalize how good God is. And it's amazing how a spirit of praise will displace a spirit of discontent.

Or murmuring or complaining or fear or anger. You see I can't be complaining and praising at the same time. So it's important that the praise get from my head and my heart into my lips.

That I begin to speak the goodness of God. To tell others how very good He is. And I'll tell you you begin to verbalize it.

And your emotions catch up. You counsel your heart according to God's word. And then you begin to feel what you have been professing and confessing to be true.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth. I think of Job. Who suffered in ways that most of us in this room will never experience.

And came to those, walked through those dark hours. You know we understand what was happening to Job. Because we know the end of the story.

We know the beginning of the story. Job didn't know either. In those dark years of his life.

And at one point in chapter 23 he cries out in utter anguish and frustration. And he says, where is God? I look before me, I can't see Him. I look behind me, He's not there.

I look to my right, I look to my left, I can't find Him. Do you ever feel like your way is hidden from God? I think by the way of the words in Psalms that have been such a comfort to me. When my spirit was

overwhelmed within me.

Psalm 142 I quoted the first part of the verse earlier. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path. If only I could trust God for that.

When I'm in those moments. But Job cries out, where is God? I can't see Him. I can't experience Him.

I don't sense Him. There's nothing more frustrating. My heart really heard Brother Zipleby this morning.

When he talked about the experience he'd been through. Recently seeking after the Lord. There are times when you're proclaiming revival truths.

You know in your head that it's true. You're saying them to be true. But there's a vacuum in your own heart.

You don't sense it. You don't feel it. Where is God? Job cries out.

And we don't like to get that honest. We feel there's something wrong with admitting. I've lost the sense of His presence in my life.

We'd probably get it back quicker if we'd be more honest about the fact that we've lost it. But then Job gives this wonderful expression of faith. I don't know where God is.

And I don't see God. But Job 23 verse 10. He sees me.

He knows the way that I take. Listen, when it comes right down to it. Is it more important that I can see God? Or that God can see me? What makes me safer? The fact that God knows where I am.

That He sees me. He knows the path that I take. And when He has tried me, I shall come forth.

Listen, if the verse ended there, it would be wonderful enough. I shall come forth. It will not last forever.

2 Corinthians chapter 3 tells us that these afflictions are momentary. They're light. They do not last forever.

They may seem that they're going to last forever, but they don't. They're working for us and in us a far more eternal and exceeding weight of glory. The problem is we want the weight of glory right now.

We're not willing to wait for it. And we have a difficult time believing that what we're going through at this moment will pass. He knows the way that I take.

And when He has tried me, I shall come forth. Oh, to be able to remind myself of the promise of God when I'm in the midst of that dark way. I shall come forth.

He will deliver me. He will deliver the righteous. The end of Psalm 34 says, and not one of His bones will be broken.

But we don't want to wait. We want to yank ourselves down off that cross. Isn't that the greatest temptation Jesus faced? Hanging there from the cross.

If you're the Son of God, save yourself. He could have saved Himself. He would have come down off that cross bloodied and wounded and weak.

He could never have accomplished the plan of redemption. But He chose not to save Himself. He entrusted Himself to God.

He waited for God's timing. Why? Because there was a joy that was set before Him. He knows that weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

He endured the cross because He knew that beyond the cross there's a resurrection. But you see, we don't want to stay on the cross. We want to manipulate our way off of the cross.

We're escape experts, in the West at least. We don't like our job, we get a new job. We don't like our roommate, we get a new roommate.

We don't like the color of our hair, so we get a new hair color. We don't like the state or province we live in, so we move to another one. We don't like our mate, so we get another one.

We're so often trying to escape from the cross, to manipulate our way off of it, or around it, or over it, or under it. Anything but go through it. When it's the cross itself that is working in my life, the very thing I've asked God to do in my life, and that is to conform me to the image of His blessed Son, Jesus.

I say, oh, to be like Jesus. And then God puts me on the cross, and I say, oh, to get out of here. Well, I ought to be embracing the very instrument that God is using to purify and purge and perfect the image of His Son in my life.

He knows the way that I take. He knows. He knows my way is not hidden from God.

He knows. He knows when no one else does. David cried out in the earlier part of Psalm 142, No man cared for my soul.

And it didn't matter whether you're married or single, or you've got ten children or no children, there are times in a crowd of just deep loneliness. When it seems as though no one sees, no one understands, no one knows, no one cares. And I find it to be true of those that sometimes you would think to be the most vibrant Christian workers.

He knows the way that I take. He knows. He cares.

And when He has tried me, when He has tested me, when I have passed the test, I shall come forth. How does the verse end? As gold. Not just, I shall come forth, but I'll be beat up.

I shall come forth as gold. The end of Psalm 34, He keeps His bones. Not one of them is broken.

Jesus came forth from that cross in new resurrection glorified life. There's life beyond the cross. There's a resurrection beyond death.

There's glory beyond the gore. There's a crown for those who go through the cross. I shall come forth as gold.

When is the process complete? When God can look at this life and see perfectly reflected in it the image of His blessed Son Jesus. It's no wonder that virtually all of the New Testament writers, I may be mistaken, but it's almost all of them, if not all, had this, what seems to us, very strange concept about how to respond to suffering. And what did they uniformly say? Rejoice.

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into diverse types of temptations. My beloved Peter says, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, and so some strange thing happen unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings. They don't have to tell us to rejoice when things are going well, because lost people can do that.

That's why there's so much teaching on rejoicing when your world is falling apart. On lifting your eyes upward when they're full of tears and saying, Lord, I choose to thank You. Jesus said it, rejoice.

When men persecute you and speak evil against you, rejoice, be exceeding glad. That sounds like strange counsel to me. Well, it is from our human reasoning.

That's why we've got to learn to think God's way. You see, it's those very trials, those very pressures, those very problems, those very weaknesses and inadequacies and failures that qualify us for the grace of God. It's through our weakness that His power and strength are revealed.

It's through our emptiness that we receive His filling. It's through our poverty that we latch on to His riches. It's through our nothingness that we enter into the great I AM who is everything.

It's through the wounds, the scars, the cutting, the surgery, if you will, that there comes about in our lives healing, restoration, and the conforming, shaping process. I shall come forth as gold. That's why Paul could say... I tell you, Paul's life is a remarkable one.

Being in full-time ministry, I never cease to marvel at his life. When I compare what it takes to get me down with what Paul experienced, just his routine, he says in Acts chapter 20, the only thing I know when I go from city to city is that bonds and afflictions await me. What a thought! I've been on the road full-time year-round for nine years.

And for all the moments of being weary of restaurants and hotels and airplanes, airports, and new church buildings that you get lost in, for all the times when I have griped and murmured and complained about some of the ass-packing, losing things in different states, whatever, I know that each place we go, by God's power and His Spirit and His truth and His Word being proclaimed, there are going to be lives set free. There are going to be people who are blessed and helped and matured in their faith. We have that to look forward to.

It's wonderful. It's what keeps you going. Paul said he didn't even have that.

All I know... I don't know that people are going to respond. In some places, they responded everywhere, but in some places it was by stoning. We don't know that people are going to receive the truth, Paul said.

The one thing we do know is that bonds and afflictions await us, but none of these things move me. Why? Because, he said, I don't count my life dear unto myself. And you read about the stonings and the imprisonments and the beatings and the loneliness and fastings and watchfulness and deprivations and the lists he makes of what he went through for the cause of Christ is enough to make me ashamed every time I see what I complain about.

And then Paul says, We are exceeding joyful in all our tribulations. What heart! What faith! What a God! Paul must have trusted. We are exceeding joyful in all our tribulations.

Praise precedes and prepares for deliverance. I think of that passage in 2 Chronicles chapter 20 where King Jehoshaphat was leading the forces of Judah against an army which hopelessly outnumbered Judah. And Jehoshaphat did what we do when the odds are against us.

And that's why God so loves to put the odds against us because that's when we come to Him in utter dependence upon Him. We are stripped of our self-sufficiency when we cannot handle it. God loves for us to be outnumbered because then only God can get the credit for the victory.

And Jehoshaphat goes and he cries out to the Lord, Lord, we have nowhere to turn except You. What a place to be! And God gives Jehoshaphat perhaps the most unusual military strategy of all history. The next morning Jehoshaphat goes out and puts the choir in the front lines of the army.

How would you like to be in that choir? And the choir begins to sing and to praise God that was the weapon that defeated the evil one and defeated the enemy. God was so pleased with the praise He came down and personally routed the enemy and God got the glory. You think of Jonah down on the belly of that great fish.

As a result of his own disobedience and willfulness that's usually why we end up there. Not always, but usually. And Jonah in that second chapter prays that wonderful prayer of committing himself to evidencing the repentance of his heart by indicating that he will now obey the Word of the Lord.

I would too if I thought it would get me out of there. It's what it takes sometimes to bring us to repentance. The cross looks like a pretty good option when you have nowhere else to turn.

And then Job says in the last verse of the second chapter I will pay my vows and offer thanksgiving. Praise precedes and prepares for deliverance. Do you know what you read in the next verse? Chapter 3 verse 1 Fish got tired of Jonah and Jonah was delivered.

Think of Paul again in silence there in Acts chapter 16. They're in that Philippian jail where they'd been abused and misused and mistreated and shamefully persecuted as he says to the Thessalonians. And there they are locked in stocks in that Philippian jail.

I don't think I'd want to be in jail anywhere but I surely don't think I would want to have been in a first century Philippian jail. No modern conveniences I assure you. And what are Paul and Silas doing in the middle of the night? What would you be doing? I stub my toe in the way of the bathroom in the night and it takes me a week to get over it.

But here are Paul and Silas filled with the Spirit that's the only explanation because the flesh will never do this. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. And here they are praising the Lord.

God was so pleased with their praise He sent a little heavenly accompaniment in the form of an earthquake and delivered them from those chains. Listen, those are literal chains. But I have seen over and over again in my own life and in the lives of countless others how offering the sacrifice of praise precedes and prepares for deliverance.

There are bonds in our lives from which we will never be released until you and I say and mean it I will bless the Lord. Side 2 This woman, of course, those of you who are parents, mothers, can just try and fathom what that does to the heart of a mother. And she was understandably upset but then she became angry because in her opinion the parents of that girl did not adequately deal with the girl involved.

Excuse me. And she felt also that the pastor of the church did not handle the situation, did not deal with the girl adequately. So in anger this woman yanked her family out of that church, dragged them to another church where they were currently attending.

She poured out that venom and anger of her heart. We were standing in a classroom and on that classroom wall there was a bulletin board with a verse posted on it that said, In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. I asked her if she would turn and face the bulletin board and read it aloud.

She did. A number of years ago I met and counseled with a woman on the East Coast who told, she was a woman probably in her mid-thirties and she looked quite a bit older than that. You know, especially with women, bitterness and unforgiveness and a murmuring spirit leaves tell-tale signs on our faces.

And you can look at many, many women, it's more true of women than men I think, and see the evidence of the bondage of bitterness and unforgiveness. It ages us prematurely. God didn't create our bodies to hold up well under the pressure of carnality and fleshly living.

We sat in a classroom, a school classroom located there in the church and talked. Actually, I sat. She paced the room.

She was a woman who was obviously extremely angry and hostile and bitter. It was just written all over. She told me the story of how five years earlier, her two children, who were at that time quite young, had been sexually abused by a babysitter, a girl in their church.

And this woman, of course, those of you who are parents, mothers, can just try and fathom what that does to the heart of a mother. And she was understandably upset, but then she became angry because in her opinion, the parents of that girl did not adequately deal with the girl involved. Excuse me.

And she felt also that the pastor of the church did not handle the situation, did not deal with the girl adequately. So in anger, this woman yanked her family out of that church, dragged them to another church where they were currently attending. She poured out that venom and anger of her heart.

We were standing in a classroom and on that classroom wall there was a bulletin board with a verse posted on it that said, in everything, give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. I asked her if she would turn the bulletin board and read it aloud.

She did. I said, you know, as painful and difficult to understand as those circumstances are, and as wrong, do you know that you'll never get set free from the bondage of your bitterness and anger until you are willing to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving? Not thanking God for the sin, but thanking God that He is able by His providence and wonderful sovereignty to take that which was intended for evil to turn it to good. She said, I couldn't do that.

I said, okay. We prayed and she left. She came back to me the next day.

I don't know that I've ever seen such a dramatic transformation in the appearance, the countenance of a woman in such a short period of time as took place in that 24 hour period. She was just radiant. She was a new person.

And she came back to me and she said, can you tell me something has happened to me? I said, I surely can. Why don't you tell me about it? She said, well, I went home and got before the Lord. And though I did not feel it as an act of my will, I offered to Him the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

She began the wonderful process. It's just the first step, but it is always the first step of getting set free from that cancer, that bondage of unforgiveness. You know, her children were being far more damaged by living all those years with an angry, hostile, bitter, unforgiving woman, mother, than they were even by that incident that had taken place five years earlier.

Just a few weeks ago, I shared this, I think, with the ladies yesterday. A woman stood at the beginning of a revival crusade with a meeting of the ladies and told how she had for years hidden the painful, ugly, dark secret of the fact that her father had not had a proper relationship with her as a father. She had been sexually molested, deeply scarred, and she just confessed to hating her father.

She said, I cannot forgive him. I cannot thank God for allowing this circumstance to come into my life. She was in bondage.

She was a prisoner of her own bitterness. God began to soften her heart to deal with her by His wonderful Holy Spirit. To do what I could not do, what no speaker could do, the Spirit of God began to do.

And I heard that gal testify just a week or so later how she had come to the place where though she could not understand she was willing to thank God for the father He gave her. To accept that this was God's will for her life, to have such a father, and that through that ugly, hideous sin on His part, God wanted to turn evil to good and to use those scars to perfect in her the likeness of Jesus, to give her a greater sweetness and filling and fruitfulness than she might possibly have been able to have otherwise. To come to the place where she offered the sacrifice of praise.

And then God set that gal free to forgive her dad, to release him from his debt, not because he deserved it or asked for it, but as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. And she could truly say, I love my dad. Love, by the way, isn't a matter of emotions.

It's a matter of faith, isn't it? An act of the will. You see, as she exercised her will, activated her will to praise God, then she could activate her will to forgive and to express love to the very one who had wronged and hurt her. One of my favorite... By the way, I've seen God in circumstance after circumstance after circumstance through the pains and heartaches and aches of life, transform the wilderness into a well of joy when people have taken this first step of saying, Lord, I thank You, though I do not understand.

By faith, I thank You. Over the years, God has used Dr. Helen Roseveare in such a special way in my life. I've never met her.

I'd sure love to. If not on this earth, I know we will in heaven. And I've been so blessed and helped by her writings.

She was a missionary doctor to the Congo for many years, now Zaire. And she tells a story of how, during the uprising, many of the missionaries, Americans and Westerners, left the country, but she stayed with a number of other missionaries to continue their work there. And she tells of that awful night when the rebel soldiers came to the mission compound, looted it, and then took the female missionaries who were left there, brutally beat and raped them.

And here was a woman who had devoted her life to serving these very people, to serving God. And here's what she seemed to get in reward. And she told how in the days that followed, she sought to work out, in her own emotions and heart, to deal with these awful feelings and just the torment of the memories of that night.

She said it was as though God was saying to her, Helen, are you willing to thank me for that which I may never give you the privilege of understanding? Are you willing to thank me for that which I may never give you the privilege of understanding? You see, we're so earthbound. And we so want the understanding to come now and here and now on this earth. We will know in full someday, but now we know in part.

That's what makes God God and us not. The fact that there are things God knows and things we don't know. It is the glory of God to conceal a matter.

And we say, Lord, you give me understanding and then I'll thank you. No, the question to her heart was, are you willing to thank me for that which I may never give you the privilege of understanding? And it was through coming to offer the sacrifice of praise. The sacrifice of praise that God set her heart free.

It was nearly ten years ago that I went to at my dad's request to spend the weekend of my 21st birthday at home with my family. We had not, there are seven children, I'm the oldest, but we're scattered all over and we were not often able to be together as a family. We had just been on vacation, but it kind of in shifts, you know how it goes as the children get older.

And we'd not all been together. My dad asked if I would come home for the weekend of my 21st birthday, Labor Day weekend. And he said it was going to be the first time in 18 months that our whole family would be together.

It appealed to me to do that. And by the way, those who have parents who are still living, I'm so thankful for the direction God gave to my heart that weekend. Though I'd just been with them and though it was a weekend which was the busiest time of ministry for me and the most difficult to get away, God impressed my heart to honor the desire of my parents, of my dad.

So I went home that Friday night and my family went out to dinner together. As we were turning home, one of my brothers had a friend with him that night. And my dad turned to the friend and said, you know, it's really incredible that you'd get to be with us in a situation like this.

He said, you know, we'll probably never all be together like this again. The next day, Saturday, my parents took me to the airport, put me on a plane to go back to Lynchburg, Virginia where I was ministering at the time. And as we, as was our habit, we hugged, expressed our love to each other.

So thankful for that. When I arrived back in Lynchburg, it was to go to, immediately from the airport to the home of one of the professors there at the university, his wife. As I arrived, they explained that my mother had called a number of times.

The phone rang again as I came in and my mother was on the phone with the message that in the intervening hours as he returned to the house, my father, 53 years of age, had had a heart attack and was instantly with the Lord. You know, for 21 years, my dad had taught us to trust that God knows what he's doing, that God does not make mistakes, and that he's in perfect, absolute, total control. It's one thing to have that in your theology, but when the chips are down, you find out what you really believe.

How thankful I was that what had been ingrained into my heart and life stood that test. My dad was my closest friend. Brother Alec asked if I would say something about my background, my father.

Some of you are aware that he was a Christian layman and one of those people who when he got saved in his mid-twenties, really got saved. That's the way I think it's supposed to be with all of us, but it was really that way with him. God just, for those 28 years he walked with the Lord, never had anything less than his whole heart.

We said when my dad went to be with the Lord, there was a sense among all of us that he was probably a lot more comfortable where he was. He just never quite fit in down here. He was just so filled with eternity in his heart.

Every fiber of his being lived for eternity. We just thought he never was quite as adjusted here as we knew he would be in heaven. Most of us are more adjusted here than we will be in heaven.

I was the oldest daughter. Just a very special relationship. We used to spend hours, even when I went to college, and through those years, talking either together or on the phone we had even that weekend I was home, about how together we were going to touch the world for Christ.

Not for ourselves, but strategizing. We used to have conversations, how could the world be reached for Christ? That's a dad and his daughter talking. Wonderful conversations.

I never ever thought that we would be doing it other than together. In the days and weeks that followed, there were months and sometimes now even years, there were many, many tears. I think we get this false idea that if you love God and you're committed to Him and you trust Him, that God wraps you up in a little cocoon and you never feel pain.

Tell that to Jesus on the cross. It's just not true. There were many tears.

Great sins, overwhelming sins sometimes of loss. Nearly ten years later, there's sometimes still when I miss Him so, so many things I wish we had talked about, so many things I wish now I could ask Him about. And such a motivation.

His life continues to be to mine. And there were many times of feeling that loss and hurt. But I want to tell you something.

In the first instant upon receiving that phone call, before there were any other thoughts, there were many thoughts to follow, but the first conscious thought as best as I recall was a verse that God had drawn my attention to just a few days or weeks earlier from Psalm 119 verse 68. God is good. And everything He does is good.

It's been nearly three years now that from that point on it seemed in my family as though things came one after the other. My mother at the time was 40 years of age. She had seven children ages 8 to 21 with all those major decisions ahead.

Tremendous responsibility. And it seemed to be that my family gathered from that point on, has gathered more times for funerals than almost anything else. And I'll tell you what, even when you add all that up, you realize how overwhelmingly good God has been just to us as a family.

You sometimes begin to feel ashamed talking about these things as pain and sacrifice when you see the kind of suffering that God entrusts to some others. But in the course of a brief period of time, my mother's mother, the only living grandparent, went to be with the Lord. Her only sister, age 38, after a year of lung disease, went to be with the Lord and left three young children.

And then came the third. Two and a half years ago I received a phone call while I was in Chicago that my brother David, number six of the seven children in my family, had been in an automobile accident and that we were all to come home immediately that if he lived there would be at best severe brain damage. We came that night from all over the United States and gathered together at the University of Pennsylvania hospital in Philadelphia and saw something you just can't ever forget.

You have to understand, David was 22 years of age at the time. He was, I believe, a junior at Liberty University in Lynchburg studying for the ministry. And he was always... Everybody knew and would agree with this.

Somebody was just telling me this recently. He was a very unusual kid. His priorities were different than other people's.

He was for many years the baby of the family and he had some of those characteristics like irresponsibility. We were forever trying to get him through school. You know, David, you've got to go to class.

You've got to turn in your papers. You've got to take that test. You can't just not show up for it.

It wasn't that he was rebellious against it. There were just other things that were important to him and school wasn't one of them. What was important to him was people.

He was the world's best friend. And it's almost, although I don't think this is true, it's almost as though he knew that in a short life God was going to give him the things that mattered so much to us weren't really going to matter in his life. So he was the kind of guy who'd be up all night talking to some kid whose parents were going through a divorce or somebody was hurt.

He was just a friend of everybody from the president of the school to the janitors. Knew them all. Didn't know the teachers as well.

He would have made a great missionary. He would have never learned the language, but he would have been able to win the people to Christ. So he was just full of heart.

And giver to the hilt. Just always looking for ways to minister to and bless other people. Never put on.

Just genuine and from the inside out. And here he was. He was a handsome, athletic, strong, virile young man who had devoted his life to the Lord and the Lord's work.

Now he was clinically, legally, and medically brain-dead with all the tubes and the hoses and the machines working to sustain those last possible moments. There was a sense among all of us as we stood around the hospital bed that any one of us should have been there other than David. And there's no human explanation.

To this day, you couldn't put it in a court of law and find it to be just. There's no understanding on earth. During that week, by the way, at David's memorial celebration, and that it was, a week or so later, one of

the men of God who addressed that gathering said words I've never forgotten.

He said, It's not wrong to ask why as long as we ask with a searching heart and not with a clenched fist. Well, during that week there in the hospital as the heart was sustained by means of the respirator, the vital signs began to deteriorate. The decay set in.

Death is ugly. It's an enemy. It's the final enemy.

It's been overcome. Praise God. Death is the entrance into life.

The cross of Christ has rendered the devil and his tactics of death powerless. But in the human realm, death seems so ultimate and so final, so irreversible. We cried a lot.

We prayed a lot. We asked a lot of questions as we hovered over that bed during those days. And then came the word on June the 6th, Friday night, that as we came into the hospital that night, that the heart had beat for the final time.

And as we went into that room, there was a dear couple, wonderful servants of God, who had stood with us during that week and cried and prayed with us. And our dear friend pulled out his Bible and began to read to us from 2 Samuel chapter 12. Remember the passage, after David's great sin.

David in the Bible. With his great sin with Bathsheba, the child that was born as a result of that illicit union, the prophet came and said to David, part of your punishment for this sin is that that child will die. The child became ill, sickened to death, and David began to pray and to plead with God and to fast and to weep and to beg God to spare the life of that child.

He was beside himself with grief. When the child finally died, the servants were afraid to tell David the news because of how they felt he might respond. David perceived that they were withholding the truth from him.

He said, is the child dead? They said, yes. And then our dear friend read to us that passage, the words in 2 Samuel 12, where it tells what David did. It says, then David arose, washed himself, anointed himself, changed his clothes, and went into the house of God and worshiped.

And our friend said, our David is now dead. Now is the time for us to rise up and worship. And we did.

Not because there was anything in us that felt like it. Nothing. The flesh is screaming.

But through worship, through saying, Lord, we choose to thank you for that which you may never give us the privilege of understanding. God was able to preserve and protect and guard our hearts. Doesn't mean you don't hurt.

Through the sacrifice of praise, God is well pleased. He is blessed. He is glorified.

And our lives are set free. Set us free from bitterness. Set us free from anger toward God, toward our circumstances.

It will bring down the presence of God. It will precede and prepare for deliverance. What a powerful, awesome weapon in the hand of a believer.

By him, the Lord Jesus, therefore, let us offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually. That is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name. Can we just bow our hearts in prayer for a moment? Wonder if there might be anyone here that God is directing to offer today sacrifice of praise.

Even in ministry, we get so preoccupied with ourselves so easily. Even in the act of serving others, we get caught up in earthly things. And even as I've shared today, I felt the need myself, to go spend some time in the presence of God, worshiping, adoring, magnifying Him.

You can't magnify Him and your circumstances at the same time. I believe the glory of God will fall when His people praise Him. I wonder if there's a deliverance that you need.

Some sort of bondage that you're facing. It may be circumstances that are the result of your own sin. It may be circumstances that are beyond your control, the result of the sins of others.

It really makes no difference, in a sense. Praise precedes and prepares for deliverance. Is there something in your past, your present, your future, for which you need to say, Lord, I choose to thank You for that which You may never give me the privilege of understanding.

I'm thinking of something right now, and I've not yet, until this moment, thanked God for it. But Lord, I choose to, at this moment, thank You for that circumstance which has been gnawing at me, creating turmoil in my spirit, I've not understood Your purpose in it, I still don't, but I'm choosing to thank You and offer a sacrifice of praise. May You be pleased with it.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19996.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/nancy-leigh-demoss/the-sacrifice-of-praise/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net