PRAISE

CHANGES THINGS

Mrs Charles E. Cowman



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by

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"Let the peoples Praise Thee, O God;
Let all the peoples Praise Thee

THEN

Shall the earth yield her increase and
God, even our own God shall bless us"
(Psalm 67:5,6)

I heard a bird at break of day
Sing from the autumn trees
A song so musical and calm,
So full of certainties.

No man, I think, could listen long
Except upon his knees.
Yet this was but a simple bird
Alone among dead trees.

PRAISE CHANGES THINGS

A booklet bearing the title "Prayer Changes Things" was written by Dr SD Gordon several years ago. Dr Gordon's books on prayer are well-known throughout the world, and this particular booklet has made a deep impression upon multitudes of Christian people. In many homes may be found the motto, PRAYER CHANGES THINGS, and great blessing has resulted from this simple statement. We are all aware that prayer, believing prayer, does change things. We know also, that many times the enemy has not been moved one inch from his stronghold, although we have persisted in prayer for days, months – yes, often years.

Such was my own experience when passing through a time of very great pressure, and prayer **did** change things. I came into possession of a wonderful secret. That secret is simply this: after we have prayed and believed, **Praise** changes things.

One morning during the summer time a fellow-missionary who was then a guest in our home went out into the garden for a stroll among the flowers. He returned after a short time holding in his hand a lovely white pigeon which he had found beside the garden walk. One of its wings was injured and it could not fly.

The missionary became greatly interested in its welfare, building a cote from an old wooden box to shelter it from the weather, and feeding it morning, noon and night. As the days came and went the

pigeon became quite tame. It would watch its mates as they soared away up through heaven's blue, making no attempt to use its wings and follow them in their flight. Poor little bird with a broken wing! Our hearts were knit to the wee thing in tender sympathy, for were we not also prisoners?

Prayer had gone up from our hearts almost unceasingly: one long, yearning cry for deliverance from bondage which held us. Not one rift in the cloud could we discern. Although our "prayer-wing" was fully developed, we were like the little bird – BOUND. We do praise God, that throughout those dark days we were kept from fainting. Faith ever beheld a star of hope!

Our loving Lord drew our attention at this time to an altogether new line of attacking the enemy. His Word unfolded step by step, and such a revelation of the secret of obtaining victory was given that our prayer life underwent a complete transformation. We discovered that two wings were necessary to mount the soul God-ward: prayer and praise. Prayer asks, praise takes, or obtains the answer.

I fancy that some who read these lines may say, "I, too, have prayed and prayed, but I do not **feel** like praising God. Praise when my heart is bleeding and torn? Praise when the pressure is greatest? Praise when walking through the valley of the shadow with the one I have loved better than my own life? Nay! Tell me rather to weep. How can I praise God at such a time?"

In Psalm 107:22 we find these words – "Sacrifice … the sacrifice of thanksgiving." What is a sacrifice? It is an offering to God. A "sacrifice of thanksgiving" is to praise God when you do not feel like it; when you are depressed and despondent; when your life is covered over with thick clouds and midnight darkness; this is acceptable to God, a "sweet-smelling savor to our Lord and King." While we are admonished to "pray without ceasing," are we not also commanded to "rejoice evermore?" Again, "for this is the will of God concerning you."

When shall I praise God? When I feel happy, and when everything is moving along smoothly? When there is no trial crossing my pathway? It would be no sacrifice to praise God at such a time as this. Sacrifice **hurts**! It **costs**! It costs **blood**!

The book of Jonah contains a very precious truth which throws a great deal of light upon this subject. No-one could have been in a place where the outlook was darker: Jonah was at the bottom of the sea with the "weeds wrapped about his head." What a desperate situation! Humanly speaking, every ray of hope was gone, and he said, "My soul fainted within me." But listen! In his trouble he also said, "I will look again toward the holy temple." He did the very sensible thing when he took his eyes off the discouraging surroundings, put them in the rightful place, and began to pray. He then went a step further, and determined to **praise** without feeling, saying, "I will sacrifice with the voice of thanksgiving." What a place for a praise meeting! And what a song! "Salvation (deliverance) is of the Lord!" As he sang and praised, the great

whale began to rise toward the surface of the water, and move out toward the shore, and Jonah soon found himself upon the dry land.

Praise has a wonderful lifting power! We need not be anxious about the outcome of things, if we will but take the attitude of deliverance and begin to **praise**. When Jonah's soul fainted within him he deliberately looked right away from his surroundings and uttered these wonderful words: "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." Let us note this lesson: when Jonah was hemmed in on every side, everything that he could see which suggested disaster he called a "lying vanity." If he had not taken his eyes off these "lying vanities" he would have forsaken the mercy that God offered him. We never get faith by looking at ourselves, our surroundings, our difficulties.

We read in 1 Samuel of Saul being tormented by an evil spirit. David was sent for, and the record says, "When David played upon his harp the evil spirit left Saul and he was well." Is not this a splendid way of getting rid of the enemy when he attacks us with mental depression?

"The weakest saint
may Satan rout
Who meets him with
a praiseful shout."

Martin Luther once wrote these words: "When I cannot pray,
I always sing."

It is said that there is not one despondent note to be found in the New Testament.

In 2 Chronicles there is a thrilling narrative concerning a battle won through **praise**. Jehoshaphat was told that a great multitude was coming against him from beyond the sea. He fully realized the difficulty of the situation, and went to the Lord with his trouble. His was a humble prayer: "We have no might against this great company … neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee." Not upon the greatness of the difficulty, but upon Him. It was a crucial test, but the Lord did not leave Jehoshaphat in doubt as to His will, but made it known through one of the young men, who spoke these words of the Lord: "The battle is not yours but God's … ye shall not need to fight … fear not, nor be dismayed." **Fear** is a deadly enemy. Let us remember, when we are tempted to tremble, that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

And then Jehoshaphat appointed singers who should go forth before the army singing, "Praise the Lord; for His mercy endures forever." All this they did, and yet not one visible sign of the promised salvation of the Lord. Right in the very face of battle against an army mighty in number, they sang, "Praise the Lord!"

The inspired record says: "When they **began** to sing and to **praise,** the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir … and they were smitten." Two of the allied opposing armies began to fight the third, and when they had demolished them they turned upon each other until the valley was

filled with dead bodies and "none escaped." They had **more than victory** after this, for we read: "Jehoshaphat and his people … were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much." So you see they were much richer at the end of the trial then at the beginning. They had **added good** which they never dreamed of possessing and the "way of the wicked was turned upside down."

There are two songs in Jehoshaphat's great battle: the song of praise **before** and the song of deliverance afterwards. We also, should have two songs: a song in the valley of Berachab (blessing) praising God for the fulfillment of all that He has promised; but it is more precious to have the song of praise **before** – praising Him without sight or feeling while we see Him set ambushments against the enemy and complete the victory. Shall we not have both?

The marvelous experience which Paul and Silas had while in prison is but another example of the result of **praise at midnight.** They were bound in an inner prison, their feet fast in the stocks because they had preached the Gospel of Christ. Such preaching always stirs up opposition and brings persecution for the enemy does not wish any invasion of his territory. There was no earthly way of escape for them and it looked as if they would lose their lives the next day. But there is always a Divine way out of a difficulty! No matter how great the difficulty may seem, we have the sure promise made by the unfailing Promiser: "But God … will, with the temptation (testing) also make a way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13). The God of the impossible can make ways where there are no ways. Do we hear Paul and Silas complaining of the hardness of

the way? Are they grumbling, weeping, wondering why the Lord has allowed them to get into this peculiar predicament? We do praise God that no sound of murmuring came through those prison walls. In that uncomfortable position in prison, their backs bleeding from the wounds inflicted by the thongs, they praised God, offering unto Him the "sacrifice of thanksgiving."

I think their duet ran something after this fashion:

"His grace is sufficient for me,
His grace is sufficient for me,
His strength is made perfect in weakness;
His grace is sufficient for me."

As they sang and **praised** the miracle was wrought! The foundations of that dingy old prison began to tremble, the building rocked and swayed, the doors burst open, and they were free! "Everyone's bands were loosed!" Thus the Lord takes the things that are against us, and transforms them into blessings for ourselves and others, even using our enemies to fight for us.

Beloved, is it a midnight time in your life? Are you in a dungeon? Your feet held fast in the stocks? Have you given up in hopeless despair, thinking that escape is impossible? Begin, right now, to praise God! "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me …" (Ps. 50:23) God's word is true! When you begin to praise He will send the earthquake and set you free! He will "break every yoke," (Isa. 58:6).

Habakkuk, that prophet of old, knew something of this wonderful secret of victory, for he too sang a song of **praise** in his darkest hour.

Catch the echo.

"Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
(Hab. 3:17,18).

May we not conclude, that at the close of his song he did what some real Christians were accustomed to doing? For he adds, "He will make my feet like hinds' feet."

We read in the book of Joshua how the walls of Jericho fell flat after they were compassed seven days. God had declared that He had **given** them the city. Faith reckoned this to be true, so they began their march around the walls using as their only weapon, that which indicated triumph – a ram's horn! Unbelief might have prayed this kind of a prayer: "O Lord, make the walls totter just a little, or loosen a few stones so that we may have a sign that Thou art going to answer our prayer, and **then** we will praise Thee."

Prudence might have said, “It is not safe to shout until the victory is actually won, lest the Lord be dishonored before the people, and we be greatly humiliated.” This would not have been faith at all. They acted on the authority of God’s Word, and shouted the shout of faith **before** there was a sign of encouragement, and the Lord accomplished the rest. It is **after** we make a full commitment that “He will bring it to pass.”

“Thou waitest for deliverance,
O, soul thou waitest long!
Believe that NOW deliverance
Doth wait for thee in song!

Sigh not until deliverance
Thy fettered soul doth free;
With songs of glad deliverance
God NOW doth compass thee.”

How many walls of difficulty would fall flat were we to simply march around them with shouts of praise? As we compass “walls” with praise, the Lord has promised to “compass us about with songs of deliverance.”

There is a legend which tells of two angels who come from heaven every morning, and go on their rounds all the day long. One is the Angel of requests. The other is the Angel of Thanksgiving. Each carries a basket. That belonging the the Angel of Requests is soon filled to overflowing, for every one pours into it great handsful of

requests, but when the day is ended the Angel of Thanksgiving has in his basket only two or three small contributions of gratitude.

"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"
Luke 17:11-19

A missionary in dark China was living a defeated life. Everything about him seemed to be touched with sadness. Although he prayed many months for victory over depression and discouragement, no answer came. His life remained quite the same. He determined to leave his post and go to an interior station where he could be quiet and spend long hours in prayer till victory was assured. Upon reaching the place he was entertained in the home of a fellow-missionary.

On the wall of his bedroom hung this motto:

TRY THANKSGIVING

The two words gripped his heart, and he thought within himself, "Have I been praying all these months, and not been **praising**?" He stopped and began to **praise** God and was greatly uplifted. Instead of hiding away to agonize in prayer, he returned immediately to his waiting native converts to tell them that **praise changes things**. Wonderful blessing attended his simple testimony, and the bands that had bound others were loosed **through praise**.

I wish to add my own humble testimony to that of my fellow-missionary. It was a dark, dark night in my life when the words

"Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion" (Ps. 65:1) were impressed upon my mind. I had been waiting in prayer for months. The months were now stretching on into years – piled up, as it were, before God. Could I not now **wait in praise** before I saw the answer, or must I wait for signs and wonders before I believed His Word? God was waiting for me to take this final step in faith, and when I **began** to praise Him for the answer, **to wait in praise**, to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," He **began** to answer in a manner that was "exceeding abundantly above all" than I could ask or think! The possession of the secret of victory has transformed my life and filled it with unutterable gladness.

The story is told of Sir Michael Costa, that he was holding a rehearsal one night with his vast array of musicians and hundreds of voices. The mighty chorus rang out with thunder of organ, sounding of horns, and clashing of cymbals. Far back in the orchestra one who played the piccolo said within himself: "In all this din, it matters not what I do." Suddenly, all was still! The great conductor had stopped, flung up his hands. Someone had failed to take his part! The sweet note of the piccolo had been missed.

Is your "praise note" missing from the heavenly choir, beloved? Are you waiting, waiting, yearning for God to answer your prayer? He is waiting to answer.

TRY THANKSGIVING!

TRY THANKSGIVING!

If A bird in a cage can sing, my dear,
As tho' the days of the Spring were here;
If a bird, forgetting the time of year,

Can sing in a room that is dark and dim,
As tho' he sat on a greening limb –
Yea, sing for those who imprison him;

If a bird, when all that he knows are gone
To the lovely south or the crimson dawn,
Can sit alone and can still sing on –

Surely then you and I can sing,
Whatever shadows around us cling,
Or what the moment may chance to bring;

Surely then you and I can be,
Tho' bound in body, in spirit free –
Can sing a little as well as he.

We lose some loves as we pass along,
There are some go far, there are some go wrong,
But still there is joy enough for a song.

No night so dark but the dawn is near –
Oh, we can find some thought to cheer,
If a bird in a cage can sing, my dear!

Douglas Mallock

Mrs. Charles E. Cowman was the wife of Rev. Charles Cowman, founder of the Oriental Missionary Society. This organization was founded by Rev. Cowman with the purpose of evangelizing and setting up native ministries in Japan, Korea, China, and Formosa. Rev. and Mrs. Cowman served for 20 years until Rev. Cowman's failing health forced them to return to their home in California. Streams in the Desert is a devotional compiled by Mrs. Cowman from various sermons, readings, writings, and poetry she had read over the years. The immense popularity of this book has allowed at least 19 editions of the book to be printed. The initial response to the devotional brought letters from China, Japan, Korea, Australia, Africa, and many island countries. The widespread appeal grows daily as new readers discover the joy, challenge, and inspiration found in Streams in the Desert and Mrs. Cowman's other compilations.



Lettie Burd Cowman (March 3, 1870 – April 17, 1960)

Praise Him for His mighty acts;

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!
Bless the Lord, O my soul; ~ *Psalm 150:2*

And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness
And of Your praise all the day long. ~ *Psalm 35:28*

Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving;
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the Lord
is the great God, And the great King above all gods.
~ *Psalm 95:2-3*

And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:
Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,
Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with
lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with
good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
~ *Psalm. 103:2-5*

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to
God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.
~ *Hebrews 13:15*

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
~ *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*