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USING OUR GOD
GIVEN ABILITIES

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PRAISING AND WORSHIPING IN GOD'S PRESENCE "Peculiar People Praising God"

Some of the greatest achievements of man have been accomplished by people who weren't Christians. Many great accomplishments have been by Christians. How do we explain this? It's really simple, God has given abilities and talents to all the peoples of the world. God made us that way for the betterment of man and to glorify his work-manship in us. I want to touch into an area where we as Christians sometimes miss it. Instead of recognizing our God-given abilities and talents, we wait upon God to do things for us and through us. Certainly we should ask His blessings upon our gifts and thank Him for the results; but it's equally important to act upon what we have. The inspiration that moves upon an artist to create a masterpiece doesn't have to be the Holy Spirit, it can be a God given inspiration that is placed upon a man with the gift of art. We are not to walk around as zombies trying to be super spiritual. Much of what we do each day is done through God given abilities. What we need to do is always ask the Lord's blessings upon what we do and thank Him for the results even before they occur. When we use our God given abilities and talents, we glorify God by expressing His handy-work in us. No one got left out. You are unique and talented in your own way. USE IT!!!

Pastor George Ferrington

Thank & You!

*THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH FOR
YOUR PRAYERS AND CONCERN.
WE HAVE GRATEFUL HEARTS FOR
ANSWERED PRAYERS.*

*IN CHRIST
HINES & MARY DAVIS*

In this month's article, I am starting a series on "Praising and Worshiping in God's Presence." It was God's idea to have a race of peculiar people who would praise and rejoice in Him in all things. There was a time that God avouched (declared) before all Heaven that He would have such a people. This idea is supported in Deut. 26:18, **"And the Lord has declared this day that you are His peculiar people, as He promised you, and you are to keep all His commandments."** The word declared in the above verse is *amar* in the original Hebrew text, and means to command through speaking a vow of what is in one's heart. It was in God's heart to raise up Israel as His selected people. His hopes were that they would assist Him in bringing His desire to fulfillment. The very purpose of these peculiar people was told in verse 19: **"And He will make you high above all nations which He has made, in praise and in fame and in honor, and that you shall be a holy people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken."** The nation of Israel typed and shadowed the fulfillment of what was in God's heart. They could not fulfill God's desire because Jesus had not yet died for the sins of the world. That fulfillment would come in the form of a spiritual nation called the Church. It would consist of a race of peculiar people whom God would anoint with the anointing of the prophet, priest and king. They would be the Royal Priesthood of God, and would consist of men, women, Jews, Gentiles and all colors of people who accept Jesus Christ as Savior. These anointed saved people would no longer be of this world. They are new creations! Yes, they are in this world but not of this world. They have become the Ambassadors of the Kingdom of Heaven. All of this is supported by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20: **"So we are Christ's ambassadors, God making His appeal as it were through us. We [as Christ's personal representatives] beg you for His sake to lay hold of the divine favor [now offered you] and be reconciled to God."** The fulfillment of this is recorded in 1 Peter 2:9, **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, [God's] own purchased, special people, that you may set forth the wonderful deeds and display the virtues and perfections of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."** This spiritual holy nation (the Church) would demonstrate God's desires to this world **"in praise and in fame and in honor. . . ."** which is what Peter referred to as **"wonderful deeds"** displaying **"the virtues and perfections of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."** The honor given to Christ is shared freely with the first born. Why? Because we are **in Christ and Christ is in us**. This is reason enough to celebrate the fact that we are joint heirs with Jesus and share **"the virtues and perfections of Him, , ,"** This idea is supported in 1 Peter 2:9 as we return to this verse and see, **" . . . that you may SET FORTH the wonderful deeds and display the virtues and perfections of Him."** The words **"set forth"** in the original Greek means to publish and celebrate God and His works of redemption in our behalf. The speaking forth and celebrating is about God's **"wonderful deeds."** It is important for us to see that the highest honor has been afforded us as **"Royal Priests"**, and that is to praise our God for all His goodness. The world in it's estimation considers it all to be foolishness. Truly, we are **"peculiar people praising our God."**

Gene R. Brown, Associate Pastor

IT IS A GOOD THING TO GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD!!!

DEATH

Speak to a twenty or thirty year old under normal circumstances about death, and you will get a blank stare for your trouble. There is a reason. Young people of that age do not believe that they will ever die. Wars and dangerous ventures excepted. It is natural for the young to be in the process of planning their life, not their death. But death is ever present. A weapon to be used by satan to destroy their lives. Few things are more blessed than a young person coming to know Christ at an early age, and then spending their life in

Christian endeavors. How greatly they will be blessed. But there is another side. To an older person, who has had a rough and difficult life, and then found salvation in their older life, that person is just as saved as the younger one. This is further borne out by the story in Matthew 20, where the owner of a vineyard hires people who end up working for differing lengths of time. But then he pays each one the same silver coin. The owner's statement that he is able to do as he wishes with his own money, and that he can be as generous as he will, tells us that there are no degrees of salvation. Either you are saved, or you are not.

But now there are varying degrees of rewards. Many of the books of both Old and New Testaments show clearly that there is going to be many levels of rewards for God's people. How this will be manifest is not totally clear, but those who work for the Kingdom of God will receive their reward. Our own death then, is not something to be outmaneuvered or outrun. Wealthy men in years past have paid vast sums to doctors who promised that the transfer of certain glands from certain animals would extend life. These are people who have such wealth that they cannot endure the thought of having to leave it all. Knowing Christ, and being God's child, holds out a promise that far exceeds the greatest wealth that has ever been accumulated on this earth. No sum, no amount of this earth's money can purchase anything close to what God has in store for His own.

Death then, can be thought of as the leaving behind a very grubby world, and life (even one of great wealth) and going to a life that we can not describe. For a person that is growing older, death does not loom as a cloud over us, but as a welcoming promise that in the near future things are being prepared for us. Things that will more than make up for the things we endured here on earth. It is appointed for man once to die. To some of God's people, death is as simple as going to sleep in this life, and never waking up. But to wake up in the next life. Others go through much physical pain and endure long hard illness right up to the end. We have no way to know the whys and wherefores of this ending, except to know that if that person is saved, they will go to be with the Lord. For a family left behind, this is sometimes not a lot to hold on to, but it has a happy ending, regardless. The promise is that anyone who surrenders to Christ, and pursues a life in line with His teachings and commands, will one day have eternal life and be forever with God. That may seem like a simple way of putting it, but in fact there are times in the life of a dedicated Christian when it seems almost impossible to do as Jesus would have us to do. All that is left then is forgiveness. But that is enough.

We live out our designated years in a kind of drumbeat of repetition. We are after all creatures of habit. We get up at the same time, eat at the same time, read or listen or watch some form of entertainment for a certain time, and then to bed at much the same time. Our lives work themselves out in a certain way for better or worse as the case may be, but just when we think we have got it all together, we wake up one day and realize that we have gotten old. We can no longer do the things that we used to do with such frenzy, and we get slower each day. From a physical standpoint, we have already done all that we are going to do. But that is not the end. Then comes years and years of trying to see that our youthful plans work themselves out. This then is not the time to diminish our faithfulness to the Lord. It is instead a time to more closely cement those relationships that we have with the Host of Heaven. Our praise and thankfulness should increase as though we were already with Him. Our closeness should draw us even closer and the transition from this physical life should pave the way to our life with Christ. Not to be feared, but to almost look toward. With a great longing, that the pain and misery of this life is over. This is the Christian's dream.

Most people that have been ill for a long period, or those who are growing old, do not fear the finality of death as much as they fear prolonged and agonizing pain before death. It is often said of many sufferers that when death comes, it is a blessing. It is a blessing to those left behind because they too could not endure watching the suffering. We do not know what it feels like to die, and then come back to life, because none of our day has done so. There are however several cases in the Bible which tell of being raised from the dead. The best known of course is Lazarus. Tradition tells that Lazarus and his sisters finally ended up in the work of a church carved into rock in what is now Marseills, France. He lived more than 35 years after being raised from the dead. He left no records of his feelings, or experiences that would tell us what occurred during his death, and subsequent four days in the tomb.

Our best and only way to defeat the effects of death are to live our lives in the will of Christ and abide by His teachings. This is our guarantee of a life after death, forever. That life will be in the close proximity of both Jesus and God. It will be one long endless life of joy. Boundless happiness, May God Richly Bless Us All.

Bro. Vic Clayton

Christian Fellowship is made up of many different types of people. God certainly has a sense of humor. You will find all occupations, races, denominations, and, yes, even differences in philosophy. There is a common thread that binds us all together and keeps us in unity. That common thread is our belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Regardless of what we may do in life, we are always drawn back to that one element in our being that assures peace and hope forever. At the Fellowship, you are encouraged to find your place in the Lord, one-on-one, and not depend on someone else to mediate for you. Jesus Christ in us is the only mediator we need to the Father. Of course, your brothers and sisters at the Fellowship are always available if needed. To learn to lean on Jesus, trusting Him for your all and all, is the greatest lesson ever taught and the greatest message ever received. May you all be blessed greatly in the knowledge of Jesus, and share your light and life with a world in darkness. Bro. Mike

DON'T "GO FIGURE!" God cannot be confined to a shoebox! Hebrews 13:8 says, **"The Lord is the same, yesterday, today and forever."** He does not change. I suppose all of us at one time or another have tried to pin the Lord down—to say that He is this way or that way. We want to believe that the Father will change something in our lives and He will change it our way.

Something Pastor said a few Sundays ago really got my attention. He said, "Don't try to take God away from His agenda." The Father has a perfect plan for each of our lives, whether we believe it or not. Sometimes things in this life get so hectic we want to just throw up our hands and call it quits. The Spirit spoke something to me once. He was telling me to stop spending all of my time trying to straighten myself out. Because you get into areas you don't need to be in. The Father not only wants us to stay out of the past, but to stay away from thoughts that make us feel so guilty. By that I mean trying to figure out why and where we went wrong. I admit it is not an easy thing to stay away from the negative at times. But it is much more laborious to try to figure out why we do this or that.

The Father doesn't want us to figure anything out about our shortcomings. If we would spend more time thinking on what is positive in our lives, we wouldn't have time to think on the negative. This is where the proper mindset comes into play. Stay away from thought patterns that have anything whatsoever to do with the past. Any and all condemning sentences, and anything that would capture our thoughts to lead us away from the proper mindset.

If we weren't so concerned about things around us, we would clearly see that everything is in order, just the way God planned it to be. We are not by nature good. As a matter of fact, we are just the opposite. The Word says, **"There is none good, but God alone."** Because of the sin nature in every human being, we can never of ourselves expect anything to be perfect. We are living in a world that is fastly decaying. If we as Christians could only see God's plan for our lives, and let Him tend to our failures, then the rest would fall into place. We cannot always see what is ahead. And just because we can't figure things out or see just around the corner is no sign that God's plan for us has changed. We cannot force the Father to do anything! Now that I think about all of this, I wouldn't want any part of something God doesn't want me to have. Sometimes we may feel like we're on the wrong track, and perhaps we are. In truth, I would rather be patient and wait until I get the answer from the Lord, than to blindly strike out on my own and end up worse off.

All of us, at times, want to do things our own way. We make a decision to do something and, having no truth to base that decision on, we fall flat on our faces. Of course, the Lord always picks us back up. We cannot honestly say that the Lord is this way or that way. He, the Father, does not change. He is not concerned about time limits. He is not concerned about time—period! I believe that Father loves us so much we cannot even fathom the idea. We cannot figure out His purpose sometimes, but we know deep down that the Lord knows what is best for us. He will in His time reveal to all His people what His purpose is. Each man and woman who belongs to the household of faith has a very special place in the body of Christ. There is not one above another or one below another in the Father's eyes. Remember that the Father does not change His plan for us. If you miss the first ship, there will be another along shortly to take you to your destination. Sometimes things along the way tend to slow us down because we take our eyes off of the end result. Nevertheless, our destination is still the same. The Father wants to take us from where we are to the place He wants us to be. If we are willing to trust the Lord, He will see to it that we get our needs met. Each day we live, the Father is bringing us closer to Himself.

It is a difficult thing sometimes to trust the Lord. I mean, we can't see the Father. Sometimes it would be nice to see Jesus face to face! Talk about twenty questions! But more than likely, we won't see Jesus face to face until we are with Him in Heaven.

Well, the Father knows the desires and intents of our hearts. Our minds are not bent on doing evil continually. We have too much of Jesus in us for that. The Father does not change and you cannot pin Him down and say God is this way. I believe we would be shocked and perplexed if we found out that the Lord does like different kinds of pie. All I'm saying is that we waste a lot of time trying to figure out why we went wrong and where. Thinking like this brings about only worry and confusion. The Lord expects us to tell Him about our troubles. But I believe the Father is much more concerned about us than He is with the troubles. God is still the same yesterday, today and forever. He does not change. It almost sounds like I've been contradicting the Word, but in fact, the Lord will always be the same. What we need to understand is that He does like different things. And that He does things in His own way and in His own time. May you be blessed.

Bro. Neal Emfinger, Jr.

Recently I received this story. It is so good that I wanted to share it.

"Last week I took my children to a restaurant. My six year old son asked is he could say grace. As we bowed our heads, he said, 'God is good, God is great. Thank you for this food and I would even than you more if mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And liberty and justice for all. Amen!'" Along with the laughter from the other customers nearby, I heard a woman remark, "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream! Why, I never!"

Hearing this, my son burst into tears and asked me, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?" As I held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job and God was not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked at my son and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer." "Really?" my son asked. "Cross my heart," said the man. Then in a theatrical whisper he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started the whole thing), "It's too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

Naturally, I bought my kids ice cream at the end of the meal. My son stared at his for a moment and then did something I will remember for the rest of my life. He picked up his sundae and without a word, walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile, he told her, "Here, this is for

