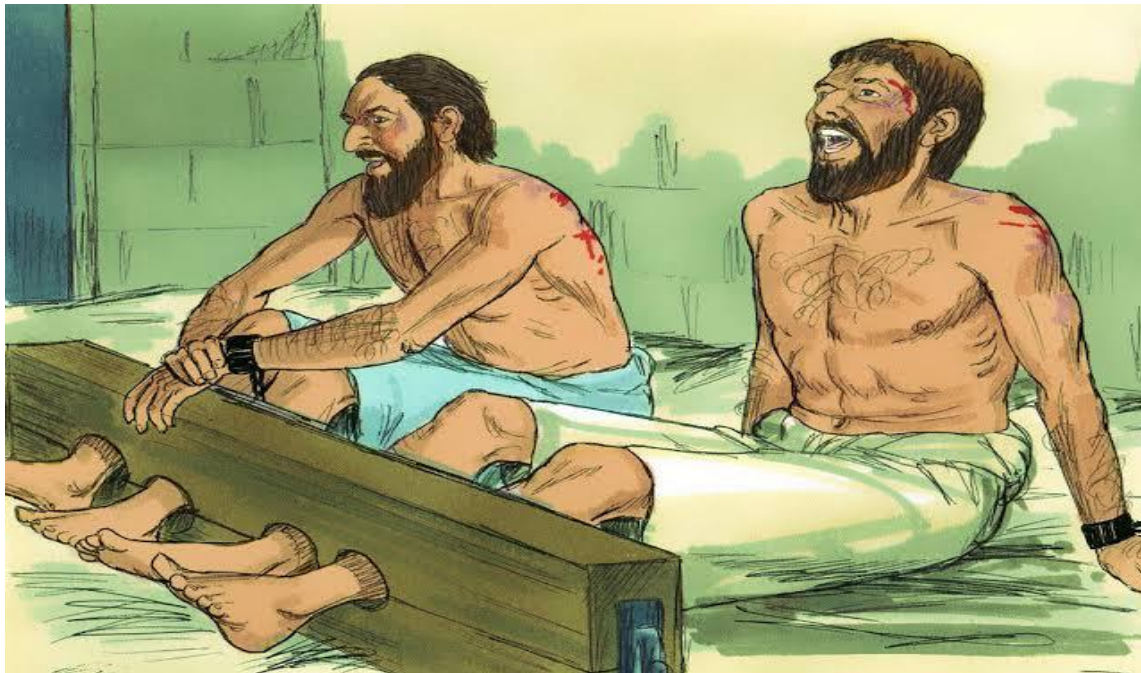


PRAISING GOD - NO MATTER WHAT



Act 16:16-28 KJV 16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. 18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. 19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. 25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there

was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

The phrase “no matter what” is used to emphasize that something is always true or that someone must do something. It has synonyms like: regardless, irrespective, disregardless and disregarding. in any conditions, regardless of what happens. in spite of all obstacles.

So my question is this: Is it possible to actually praise God no matter what?

So many times when we find ourselves in trouble or in one challenge or the other, our immediate reaction is to blame God on why those negative things happen or why He should allow them to happen or permit us to fall into such a problem.

We will begin to list out to Him how we have been faithful serving Him. paying our tithe, being a worker in the Church, etc. We will even compare ourselves to other believers that are not as committed as we are and yet no evil of such befell them.

Some of us will even begin to doubt God. However, there is nowhere in the Bible that said a Christian cannot or will not experience challenges, tribulation or problems.

Some people do feel that if somebody is in trouble he must have been a sinner or that God must be punishing the person for the present or past sins irrespective of whether he is born again or not.

Jesus warned His disciples before he departed

Joh 16:33 KJV These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Apostle Paul say in much trouble we will see the kingdom

1Th 3:4 KJV For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

2Ti 3:12 KJV Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Apostle Peter says we may suffer for our faith.

1Pe 3:14-17 KJV 14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

In all these we are not immune from challenges of life but there is a bigger hope.

In the text we read Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke sought the face of God before venturing into Europe. Paul saw revelation of a man of Macedonia beckoning him to come and help them and it was from the vision they concluded that God wanted them to preach in Europe.

Act 16:9-10 KJV 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

So they were in the perfect will of God for coming to Macedonia. However, the devil came after them and brought issues with their work.



One day as they were going to prayers a possessed girl following them was delivered. The whole town was against them. They were arrested, beaten with rods and imprisoned.



Act 16:22-23 KJV 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. 23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

But God has a way of turning whatever the devil means for our hurt into blessings.

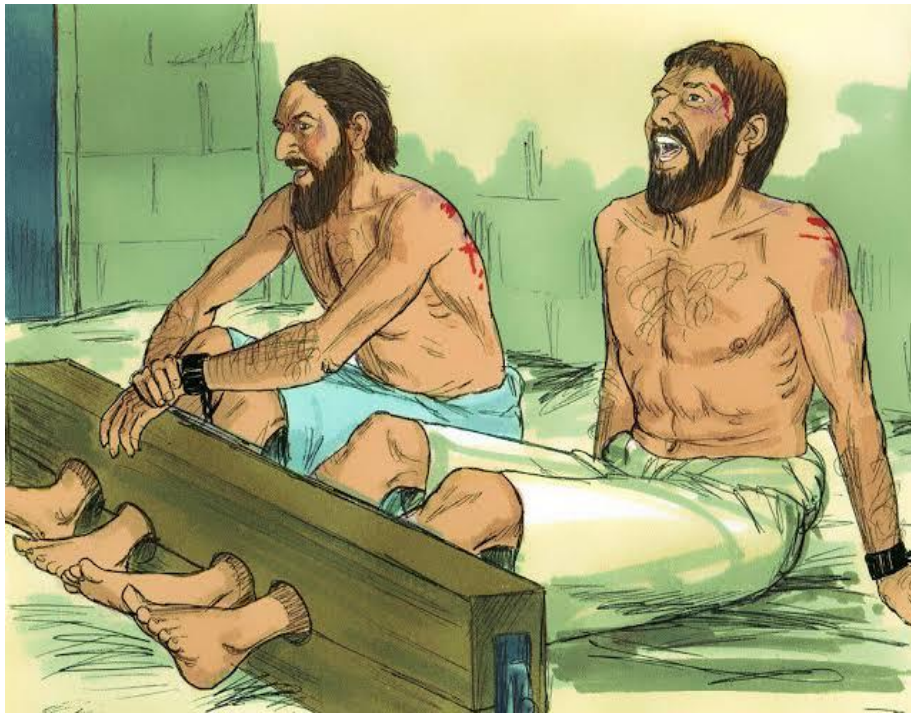
I pray for you whatever the devil is doing and it seems it's hurting you shall be turned into your favour.

Joseph told his brethren and brothers in Gen 50 that they meant it for evil be selling him off as slave but God turn it around. God shall turn things around for you in Jesus name.

Gen 50:20 KJV But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

While they were in the prison with their feet in the stock, back bleeding, they could not sleep or rest and so they started praying and singing praises.

Act 16:25 KJV And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.



I have heard certain preachers that said when they pray and nothing happens then they sing and something happens. It is not true.

Lit., praying, they sang hymns. The praying and the praise are not described as distinct acts. Their singing of hymns was their prayer, probably Psalms.

The Greek verbs in this verse are in the imperfect, and the literal translation brings the scene that night more vividly before us, thus: 'Paul and Silas in prayer were singing hymns to God, and the prisoners' (in the outer prison) 'were listening to them' when the earthquake happened. The verb is present middle participle and imperfect active indicative: Praying they were singing (simultaneously, blending together petition and praise)

Both praying and singing were done concurrently in their prayer they sang and in their songs they prayed and since God inhabits the praise of his people according to psalm, there were earthquakes, bonds got broken, prison doors opened and they became free.

Today we do those things when we are in trouble but they were not doing it to get God to move on their parts, they were just praising God and so they stayed back even when the doors of the prison were opened. There had been no precedence to that kind of a thing. There was nothing like that in the Old Covenant where people while in prison praised God and there was a miracle so they were not trying to do what had been done before.

As you praise God every prison door shall be broken in Jesus name.

Naturally people praise God when conditions are favourable, when everything is going on fine: business is prosperous, more customers are coming, children are doing fine and at the age of 9 they are already in part one, wife is doing well, husband doing great. So we testify and we dance. Anybody can do that. When things are fine anybody can praise God.

I also know of few Christians that will want to put up an appearance of praising God but their utterances expose them that this praise is coming out of gritty teeth and not from the heart. Their heart and their mouth is not congruent.

However in the case of Paul and Silas, things were worse, they were beaten above measures much more than the required flogging of the jews.

The Jews never gave more than thirty-nine stripes to any criminal; but the Romans had no law relative to this: they gave as many as they chose; and the apostles had,

undoubtedly, the fullest measure. And perhaps St. Paul refers to this, where he says, 2Cor 16:2; 2Cor 11:23, in stripes beyond measure or moderation.



They were thrown into the dungeon and feet were put in stocks and yet they could still find their voice in praise despite their conditions. This is beyond ordinary.

Do you also know that they were going to the place of prayer when the incident happened to them. Probably it was 3 o'clock prayer that corresponded with our own 9am. From that time till the moment they were thrust into the dungeon they had no food to eat. That was compulsory fasting. Maybe you are saying you have nothing to eat but Paul and Silas were beaten and had no food to eat yet they praised God

What is the lesson here from the text?

We can praise God no matter what the conditions are or wherever. Habakkuk reinforced this.

Hab 3:17-19 KJV 17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Verse 17 is enough to make any farmer cry and be sorrowful when the figs are not budding, and camels are not producing and in verse 18 he says “yet”. The word “yet” is very significant.

It is synonymous with nevertheless, in spite of, be that as it may

He says I will rejoice in the Lord.

Hab 3:18 KJV Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

It was deliberate and will power. Very emphatic. It was a choice. So you can choose to praise God even in seemingly bad conditions. There are not many people that can do that.

The Hebrew word for “salvation” there is “yesha’ yêsha’ It means: deliverance, salvation, rescue, safety, welfare, safety, welfare, prosperity and victory.

He didn't just say I will rejoice. That would be crazy. There is nothing to rejoice at when your crop is not grown and all labour in vain. That is why he said he will rejoice in the Lord God his salvation. In the Lord God his salvation means that God is able to turn those negative things around. Those things they were not producing now even though we did expect them and yet they didn't produce, but that will not deter him from praising God.

What would make Habakkuk think differently like this? Because there is no farmer that will experience crop failure and will still praise God. He must have known some things we don't know about this God. I found out something in the psalm.

Psa 67:5-7 KJV 5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. 6 Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. 7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

May your land yield her increase for you in Jesus name. Your land could be your store, business, career, education, etc. it shall yield her increase in Jesus name.

I believe this is part of what Habakkuk found out. When people praise God no matter what, then the Lord will bless us because he will take it as a challenge that goes beyond humans. Humans only praise when things are okay with them.

Somebody may say Habakkuk was an old testament personality. Paul the apostles writing to us encourages us along this line too.

Phi 4:4 KJV Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

1Th 5:18 KJV In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

The Greek word for "always" is "pantote" and it means: at all times, always, ever.

What is Habbakkuk and Paul talking about when they say I will rejoice in the LOrd.

For our information Paul wrote this letter from the Roman prison. He said rejoice and in case someone missed it he repeated it rejoice in the Lord., Our rejoicing is not in material things, our children's academics, our cars, money in the bank, success and exploits, our cars when we buy new clothes, buy lands, etc. but in the Lord.

When Paul says rejoice in the LOrd people will think that he was in a good place but he wrote the letter from the prison. So how could he be saying that kind of thing? It is because he saw it differently

Phi 1:12-14 KJV 12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

When your joy is in the Lord, external circumstances do not matter. Price of goods does not bother you. Threat of insecurity is of no concern.

When our joy is in mundane things and things of this life then our joy is dependent on them and since they fluctuate so also our reason for joy will fluctuate. That is why you see some Christians, they are happy and excited now and in the next few hours or days they are moody. Because their joy is not really in the Lord but in the temporary things of this life. The things of the Lord are constant and consistent. Salvation is consistent and we can thank God and praise God for it always and all days.

When our joy is in the LOrd, the present challenges will be nothing to us. Paul told the Colosians something:

Col 3:2 KJV Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

When our affections are on things from above we will praise God no matter what.

When we process our problems in the light of eternity, our problems diminished

2Co 4:17-18 KJV 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

What Paul calls "light afflictions" are the things that he enumerated in 2Cor 11 where he listed all the things that he had suffered for the gospel's sake. He saw them as temporal things and things that will soon pass away, therefore they cannot deter him from praising God. What a great attitude.

What is it about the Lord? It is in the Lord God our salvation. For who God is, for what God has done for us through the sacrifice and substitution work of Jesus, for the redemption He has provided. In fact Paul wrote the Colossian people like this:

Col 1:12-14 KJV 12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

This should be one of the reasons why we thank God. However, many don't even know that it is essential.

Motivating factors to praise god

1. When understand that God is not the author of the affliction or the challenge and that he is on your side
2. when you understand that He can turn bad situation around for your good
3. when you understand that it will end up in praise even though presently you can see any good in the challenge.

Some advantages of praising the Lord.

1. Praise engage the enemies

Psa 8:2 KJV Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

and Jesus quoted this Psalm in this manner when the religious leaders wanted Him to stop the children from praising God.

Mat 21:16 KJV And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

The Lord interchange "perfected praise" for what the psalmist says "ordained strength" When you put it together, the Lord is saying praise "still the" enemies.

The Hebrew word for "still" is "shabath". it means: to cease, desist, rest, to rest, desist (from labour), to cause to cease, put an end to, to exterminate, destroy, to cause to desist from, to remove, and to cause to fail.

It is from the same word they got our sabbath of rest. In other words, praise will put an end to the activities of the enemy. It will destroy them, it will bring God into focus and at the center of your battle. Whatever the enemy is doing now does not matter as you praise God an end shall come.

A very good case study is the event recorded in 2 Chron 20. As Judah began to praise God in the battle line, the enemies were busy killing one another. Every power that has risen against you shall destroy themselves.

2. God will take over your battles for you.

Isa 42:12-15 KJV 12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands. 13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. 14 I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

3. Your faith abounds

Col 2:7 KJV Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

You can praise someone on the same level, higher level or below your level but you worship someone that is higher than you. Show me the man that abounds in praise, thanksgiving and worship and I will show you a man abounding in faith.

The implication is when you abound in faith, your faith begins to perform for you. Heb 11:6 says without faith it is impossible to please God. We receive by faith too.

In conclusion, God is looking out not for seasonal praisers, fair-weather praisers or people that praise when and only when all is well. He is looking for people that will praise Him no matter what. Be one of them.