

- PRAISE -

"So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

(1 Peter 1:7)



PRAISE HIM!



Berean Lamp Ministries
For the Body of Christ

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The Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)

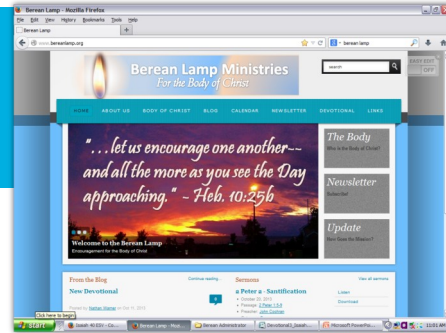


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Visit our website at www.bereanlamp.org.

The Berean Lamp Ministry is a service of the Berean Christian Fellowship of Zimmerman, MN.

The Berean Lamp Ministry seeks to:

1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

Visit www.bereanlamp.org/lampstand/ for an explanation of the cover art.

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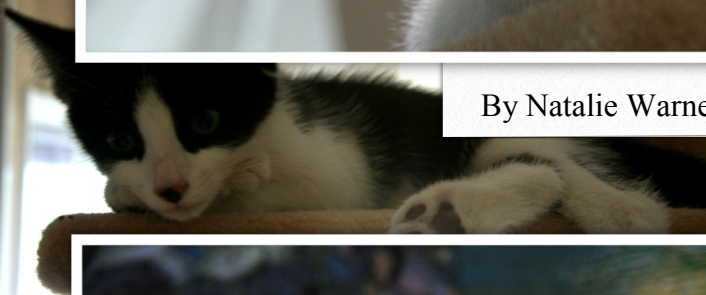
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"I call UPON the Lord, who is WORTHY to be praised, And I am SAVED from my ENEMIES." (2 Samuel 22:4)



By Natalie Warner



By Nathan Warner



"Sing to HIM, sing PRAISES to Him; SPEAK of all His WONDERS." (1 Chronicles 16:9)

Praising God in the Valleys

By Nathan Warner

God desires praise at all times. Three Hebrew words often translated as “praise” mean to “give thanks, confess, to sing praise, honor, or commend.” All these meanings contain the idea of acknowledging God’s hand in your life for good, regardless of what your present circumstances are.

Unfortunately, the modern re-interpretation of the Gospel as a “self-help” tool in this present life has twisted much of the Church’s worship and praise. The vast majority of what is called “praise” music today is less influenced by the Word of God as by positive thinking — “A positive person anticipates happiness, health and success, and believes he or she can overcome any obstacle and difficulty” (www.successconsciousness.com). Positive thinking Christians see God more as a helpful insurance policy that they pay into with praise, good-deeds, and church attendance and who they get benefits and rewards out of. They don’t see God as their Lord and Savior, and there is no expectation that they will face trials or endure suffering for “signing up.” This has transformed the Church’s worship, cheapening the Gospel because it avoids the unmarketable reality of the Believer’s call to “*suffer with [Christ] so that we may also be glorified with Him*” (Romans 8:17b NASB). This is why hymns like “It is Well with My Soul” or “Take My Life and Let It Be” help us to praise God from a place of understanding the trials and the costs of our faith, unlike the repetitious praise worship that makes us excited, positive, and emotional for a few minutes but does not rise from a humility where we understand we have come to the end of ourselves. This is a problem because suffering and praise are necessarily intertwined for the Believer in this life.

A good question to ask yourself is “What is the testimony to the Gospel of this music?” Contrasted to many modern praise songs, the old hymns are often more closely tied to Scrip-

ture. These songs of praise and worship are a testimony to the Word of God, and God said His Word “*will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire*” (Isaiah 55:11).

If you were to turn on the radio and tune to a Christian station, you’ll likely find that many of these praise songs are drowned in “mood-enhancing” instruments, they are short on Scriptural substance, and they deliver a shallow, “feel-good” message repeated over and over again as if to make it more “true.” These songs lift us up on the warmth of an emotional experience. The problem is that as soon as the song is over, our eyes sink down to earth again. This shouldn’t surprise us because just like a hot-air balloon, it’s a bunch of hot air with no substance. These sorts of songs are designed to recreate an “experience” for people whose hearts “just aren’t into it.” Their praise isn’t coming from a spring of living water in their hearts – instead, it’s like a drug that eventually wears off because your body doesn’t make the chemical. If you read the songs of Deborah, Moses, Mary, David, and the Elders in Heaven (Revelation 5), you will notice a difference – they know what God has saved them from and you can feel it!

Many modern praise songs do not address the richness of our salvation or the cost of our faith. They do not lift our eyes to Christ in any meaningful way. Instead, they appeal to the immature Believer who has not faced the steeply descending road into “*the valley of the shadow of death*” (Psalm 23:4) or endured “*a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan to torment me*” (2 Corinthians 12:7) or asked “*Why did I ever come forth from the womb To look on trouble and sorrow, So that my days have been spent in shame?*” (Jeremiah 20:18) Yet, these very words were spoken by faithful Believers who praised God up to the very end.

David, Paul, and Jeremiah knew that the walk of the Faithful in the world is not a rose-petal road of songbird soundtracks. Every Believer who has walked a distance on the pathway of Sanctification knows it. We know from the Scriptures that there were terrible trials and difficulties even for those who are best

remembered for having “conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight” (Hebrews 11:33-34), just as many Believers “were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground” (Hebrews 11:35b-38). Scripture is clear that the Believer will suffer for Christ’s name: “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5).

Suffering in the world is seen as a problem, a disease – something that needs to be fixed. It reminds people of all that they

fear and that the world is indeed fallen. Suffering is not reserved for Christians: “The whole creation groans” (Romans 8:22), and the world is always searching for a way of life, a fix, or a cure that will make the suffering go away or explain it as something they can overcome. They jump back and forth between teachings of “self-empowerment” and invest their money in “cures” for their present life. And if these don’t work, there is an infinite array of drugs to numb you to the reality of your pain.

To the world, trials and suffering are seen as something to “power through” with the will of your human spirit, but the Believer is told in Scripture that our lives will be marked by suffering and trials for Jesus’ name. We are also told to praise God. How can these two be reconciled? After all, we don’t always feel like praising Him – I know I don’t. We can get distracted, discontent, frustrated, maybe even ungrateful, but we are commanded to “Praise

“All FLESH is grass, and all its loveliness is like the FLOWER of the field. The GRASS withers, the flower fades, When the BREATH of the LORD BLOWS upon it; Surely the PEOPLE are grass. The grass withers, the flower FADES, But the WORD of our God stands forever.”
(Isaiah 40:6b-8)



By Katie Moller

the Lord in song, for He has done excellent things; Let this be known throughout the earth” (Isaiah 12:5).

But when do we offer Him praise? Much of the praise men give to God is for the blessings they receive from Him when they receive them from Him. They raise their voices to acknowledge His goodness when they receive good things from Him. Is this wrong? Of course not, but this is not the end of praise for a Believer: *“Through [Jesus] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).* To praise God for good things we receive is no sacrifice on our part – it is our duty to acknowledge God’s provision. We don’t normally think to praise God when we aren’t in receipt of blessing. We don’t think to give Him glory when we are struggling or suffering. Yet, Paul and Silas give us a different example. They praised God after they had been slandered in Macedonia, wrongly arrested, severely beaten, and were languishing in a prison with no hope of a positive conclusion to the ordeal: *“But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:25).*

How is that possible? How can people praise God in the midst of pain and suffering? The simple answer is that they recognize the immeasurable, unquantifiable value of their eternal Salvation. They understand that a price tag cannot be put upon it. They understand that nothing can be worth more than life eternal with God. *“Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord! For He has delivered the soul of the needy one from the hand of evildoers” (Jeremiah 20:13).* Though we are often distressed and we toil and struggle and suffer in this life, God will deliver our souls from the influence of evil – its grip cannot hold us, and we will be caught up to reign with Christ for all the ages of eternity – this is the Gospel for a Believer.

The problem with the worldly church’s praise is a misunderstanding of what the Gospel is. The Gospel isn’t a magic spell promising all your problems to go away. The Gospel

is *“the Power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18b)* that is doing a work in you that will be revealed in eternity, for eternity. If you don’t understand that, then you don’t understand the Gospel and you are not following Christ.

Suffering puts the Gospel in perspective. I remember when I was a teen my dad would shake his head at the world and say, “Christ is going to destroy this place when He returns, and He’s going to rule it with a rod of iron.” I would look at the sunrise and feel the strength in my young body and a world of opportunities at my feet and wonder what was wrong with his coffee. I would think, “Yeah, but people are pretty good, the air is fresh and crisp, and I can do so much!” I hadn’t matured enough to experience the trials that tarnish all the joys of the flesh and the pride of life. I wasn’t looking at the present world with a gaze destined for eternity. Eternity changes everything. If your eyes aren’t on eternity, then your eyes aren’t on God.

Peter gives us some more insight into how we can praise God from a place of suffering: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ**”* So, though we suffer now, the proof of our faith will result in praise and glory in the end. But is that it? No, let’s read on: *“**And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory**” (1 Peter 1:3-8).* Beyond simply enduring now until we can praise God once we’ve received

our inheritance, we are to rejoice and praise God NOW – in the suffering without sight of the promise. We are to praise God in the faith of His unseen promise to us.

For “*faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1) – those things hoped for but not seen are the bright treasures of our inheritance in Christ that He promised to us. As Believers we know we have been saved from our sins and eternal separation from God. We have an assurance that “*the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him*” (Romans 8:16-17), for God has “*qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light*” (Colossians 1:12b) to inherit a “*city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God*” (Hebrews 11:10b), which is “*the promise of the eternal inheritance*” (Hebrews 9:15). This is why no matter what Believers endure, they can “*continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name*” (Hebrews 13:15b), praising God right now for His mercy and love and also for our inheritance in Him and His gifts, even though we cannot see it clearly – because He has promised it!

This doesn't mean we can't petition God or cry out to Him from the anguish of our tormented souls. Of course we can – Scripture is very clear about that (look to the Psalms). And we will go through many days where we cannot but cry out to Him in anguish, pain, or frustration. Yet, we must always remember that the Believer has a higher calling than to simply praise God for the good they see around them or the good they experience in this life. The Believer praises God for His character, His mercy, and His Salvation no matter how their lives are going. In this way, the Believer never ceases to offer up praises to God, because though they suffer now, they will be glorified with Christ later. May we praise God from our hearts, and may we live our lives praising God! Amen.

Praise and Worship in Spirit and Truth

By Ginny Larsen

“Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens! Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with lute and harp! Praise Him with tambourine and dance; praise Him with strings and pipe! Praise Him with sounding cymbals; praise Him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!”
(Psalm 150:1-6 ESV)

We do have a God of unspeakable Glory – so much so that even a small glimpse of that manifested to us here in this life causes our hearts to swell in praise to Him – praise that cannot be held back. His glory is our delight. It causes our hearts to rise up in praises to Him. We want to use all that we have available to us to express that praise. When our eyes are turned to Him, we receive the truth about ourselves, being humbled before Him, and seeing the truth about Him, true praise comes forth from our spirit and we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

PRAISE, v.t. [L. *tollo*, *extollo*; *pretium*.] (Webster's 1828 dictionary)

1. To commend; to applaud; to express approbation of personal worth or actions.
2. To extol in words or song; to magnify; to glorify on account of perfections or excellent works.
3. To express gratitude for personal favors. Psa 138.
4. To do honor to; to display the excellence of.

Why would this God command worship and praise? Some think He must have such a big “ego” to have to continually have beings that praise Him. That would be true if He were

merely a man with flaws and selfishness. But Who He truly is with all the true and very real glory that goes with that—His attributes, His majesty, His flawless perfection in every way, His love and goodness toward mankind - this in itself is what commands His praise, because He is truly worthy of it, and one cannot help but praise Him when these attributes are seen and manifested in some way. As we worship Him, we receive of that glory into our own souls and partake of His divine life. The hymns many have written attempt to explain His attributes and His glory. When we sing these hymns it reminds us of His goodness. When reminded of His glory our hearts are lifted up to Him. We receive life as we see the truth, and our hearts are set free in His presence. Men will praise themselves and each other, though deceptive, self-centered, and undeserving of such praise, but they will not praise the God Who created all things and Who is the only One that is truly worthy of such praise. After all, to do so would admit submission to such a God and then they couldn't be their own god, which is what our sin nature desires.

I remember a time when I was in a Christian meeting, and it was time for “worship.” I had just had a very bad day and a conflict with someone. I said, “Oh Lord, how can I worship You when I'm feeling this way?” The answer came to me quickly: “You can worship Me because of Who I am.” I realized it wasn't about how I felt, what mood I was in, or if I could conjure up some *feelings* of praise. It was about turning my eyes to the One Who is true and worthy and about looking at Him and not myself. It was about pondering His attributes and Who He is and giving the thanks and praise due to Him. As I did that, I was lifted above my situation and was able to rejoice in Him.

During many worship services in my early Christian life, the worship became a “worship of the worship” rather than a praise to God and a true *bowing down* to all that He is in reverence and praise to Him. In fact, the carnal feelings it brought was akin to the carnal feelings I had at dances I went to before being saved. Many mistake the carnal good feelings

for spiritual experience or the presence of God. Who is worthy of true praise but God Himself? So many “worship songs” can be repetitive, meaningless phrases sung over and over about how we feel rather than words of Who God is and what He has done for us and our response of thanks and praise to Him. It's those truths of praise to Who He is that lift our hearts in true love and praise to Him. We can work ourselves up to an altered state of consciousness singing meaningless phrases over and over, worshipping the feelings we have while doing so and call that God's presence. I know; I've been a part of worship teams that have done that many times. In fact, in one instance after singing the same phrase over and over and over, when we as a team tried to change to a different song, the pastor said to us, “No...when you change, it *breaks the anointing*.” It was no *anointing*: it was a mesmerizing that was being built up in order to put people in a trance so that they would receive whatever this man told them to receive. When we get away from the true presence of God and His Word, we cannot tell the true from the false in what God's “presence” is. I did not see it until I got out from under it.

Feelings are a funny thing. They can counterfeit a true presence of God. They can lie to us in many ways. If we are a person that depends on feelings, sensational experiences, or impressions, we can easily be deceived. God had to chastise me in my walk to break away from what my feelings told me and learn to trust in Him alone and what His Word told me. I had to choose at one point between what I was being *told* to accept from God and what *His Word* was telling me when the two were in conflict. I had to choose His Word alone as the only true “Word” I could count on and the voice of the Spirit, which is expressed to us in His written Word. I remember in an intense “worship” service one time – supposedly during “revival” in a church I was in at the time – I suddenly realized that in all the hype, liveliness, and supposed manifestations of the Spirit, I was sensing a wall between God and myself. I said to myself, “I have to get away from this and get back to God.” What? Dur-

ing revival I had to get “back to God”? I shocked myself. Here I had been going to all these meetings to get “revived.” I was spending time fasting, praying, worshipping, etc. Why was I so spiritually dry and empty? I did get away from it all and got alone with my Bible instead and sought God with all my heart, bowing down to Him in spirit and in truth.

The Lord, little by little, began showing me I was depending on the wrong thing to draw me close to Him and that He was testing my heart to see if I would truly submit to Him. I saw what I had thought was my pursuit of a stronger spiritual life and more of God as a very self-centered pursuit. It was for me, not for His truth and glory. I got on my face before God and said, “Lord, I surrender every experience, every feeling, all of what I've learned, to You and ask You to cleanse me, to teach me all over again, and to lead me in Your truth.”

God has been doing that, and He has opened up His Word of life to me in so many ways that my heart cannot help but delight in His glory and from my innermost being give Him true praise and honor. My desire to glorify Him with my whole life grows stronger and stronger the more I see His glory. That glory is manifested more through my life as I spend time “sitting at His feet,” feasting on His manna from Heaven. My eyes are on Him as I see Him revealed to me through His Word, and my sin and pride becomes repulsive to me. I would rather die than fail to please Him, and it grieves my heart when I do. This was not a feeling worked up in a moment of hyper “praise”; rather, it is something He has slowly worked in my heart over time of learning from Him and letting Him teach me and reveal Himself to me. I learned there are no shortcuts to “spirituality” or spiritual maturity. To be truly filled with the Holy Spirit, one must be truly filled with and submitted to His Word, which has control of his or her life. The Spirit and the Word agree, and the Word is the written expression of all He is and does and desires to do in us and through us. It has not changed because God never changes. It is perfect and needs no adjustments according to cultural changes.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

(Colossians 3:16)

I'm sitting here listening to hymns as I write this. The words are rich and full of meaning of God's glory, His grace to us, His love, and His attributes; and my heart responds in delight and in praise to Him. It is in true response of our heart toward God's revealing Himself to us that causes true praise. It is a living according to that, once our hearts are open to Him, that shows a worship “in spirit and in truth.” I always wondered why some people could loudly praise God in a service at church raising their hands and tears coming down their eyes and then continue in a very carnal Christian life where self is obviously first in all they do and little thought is given to God's will in their life. It's because their so-called worship was an emotional experience worked up more for themselves than to God's glory – rather than a response to God's holiness truly seen, calling them to a holy life in Him. There was no bowing down to Him in adoration and submission.

There is a difference between praise and worship. We worship Him not just with our words, but with our lives and how they are lived.

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

(John 4:23-24)

Worship (Webster's 1828 dictionary)

1. To adore; to pay divine honors to; to reverence with supreme respect and veneration.
2. To respect; to honor; to treat with civil reverence.

3. To honor with extravagant love and extreme submission; as a lover.

Strong's Concordance

h

shaw-khaw'

A primitive root; to *depress*, that is, *prostrate* (especially reflexively in homage to royalty or God): - bow (self) down, crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship.

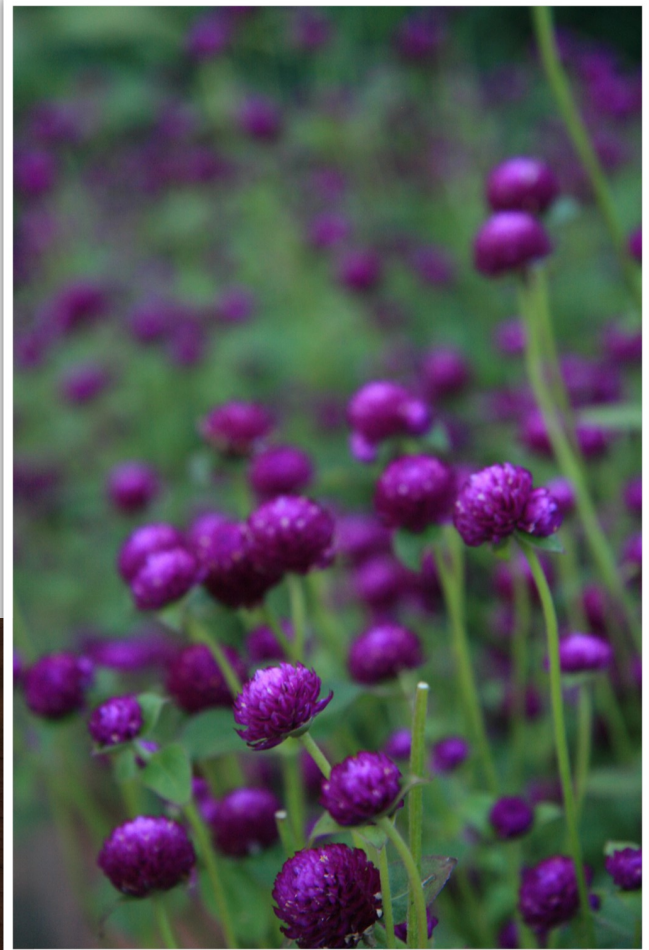
So much of what pretends to be worship today is a mockery of truly bowing down before a holy God, prostrate before Him in submission to Him and giving Him the praise and thanks due His name. To bow ourselves down before Him in true humility and submission to all that He is, adoring Him, giving reverence to Him, and praising Him – extolling Him in gratefulness for all He is and has done – this is what God is looking for. This is the kind of true worship and praise that truly glorifies Him in our hearts and to all who are around us. This is the kind of praise and worship that changes our lives and strengthens our hearts toward righteousness and living in harmony with His Word. It's what purifies our hearts before Him, because the more we truly look at Him, the more we want to be like Him and live lives pleasing to Him. This kind of worship takes us out of ourselves and is not about “me” but about God and continues in our life lived for His glory.

True praise and true worship will bring true experience with God that will last and have an effect of godliness in our lives and our desire to walk as He walked, pleasing to God always in all we think, do, and say before the God Who sees all. And that day when we finally see Him face to face, we will truly not be able to hold back the praises that will want to come forth from our innermost being with all that is within us in a very true purity. That will be an amazing day! – a day we will share in His glory and know Him fully as we are fully known.

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”

(1 Corinthians 13:11-12)

Amen, come Lord Jesus! We long for that day!



By Natalie Warner

“Be EXALTED, O Lord, in Your STRENGTH; We WILL sing and PRAISE Your POWER.”
(Psalm 21:13)

Your Life Is My Song

By Jane Titrud

*It is for You that I sing.
You're above everything,
The beginning and end—
Way too much to comprehend.*

*In the darkness of the night
Your glory shines pure and bright.
Eternal power and majesty
Are visible for all to see.*

*You command every star
To send its light from afar,
To teach the height of Your ways,
Elicit fear and endless praise.*

*But, when You reached down in love,
And sent Your Son from above
To redeem what was lost,
And You did it at great cost—*

*That love reached down low to me.
It changed my life and set me free,
Bringing vict'ry over sin.
Your Spirit now lives deep within.*

*How can I help but praise
Thy great goodness always?
It's to You I belong
And Your life is now my song.*

*Still, I have one request:
Do what You think is best,
But, let my life be
A song of endless love to Thee—
Please LORD, evermore.*

*"Because YOUR
lovingkindness is
BETTER than life,
My LIPS will
PRAISE You."*

(Psalm 63:3)

The Heavens Declare His Glory

By Jane Titrud

The Bible says, *“The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world”* (Psalm 19:1-4 NASB). It also tells us that *“the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:18-20).

Before becoming a Christian and having the eyes of my heart transformed by the Word of God and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, however, I could not even see that God existed let alone discern His attributes merely by looking at the heavens. I am not excusing my guilt—only saying that I was blind to these things in my unbelief.

As a biology major in college, I was taught to see the origin of life and the universe through the eyes of evolution. *Naturalistic* science is the measure of truth in that frame of reference, and this seems to imply something entirely different than what the Bible says. *Naturalistic* science rules out the existence of God by definition because it leaves no room for *supernatural* explanations. Hence, when I looked at the heavens, I saw nothing there that spoke to me about God—indeed, I saw just the opposite.

In the days of my unbelief, I saw vast distances in the heavens that could only be measured in terms of light years rather than the six literal days of creation as recorded in Genesis. Hence, I assumed the universe was more on

the order of billions of years old rather than the few thousand years documented in the Bible. I saw an expanding universe that seemed to confirm the Big Bang Theory, natural laws governing and explaining the operation of everything, and the planet earth in a very insignificant place in the overall scheme of things. So I ordered my entire worldview accordingly.

It was not that I adopted evolutionary thinking in order to justify some sort of evil lifestyle, which some might be quick to think. I believed in right and wrong. It was just that morality to me was basically a matter of common sense. Bad choices in life can have ugly consequences. Like most people, I had made some “mistakes,” but I thought that I was basically good. Believing in God, therefore, not only seemed unscientific to me but altogether unnecessary. I was not very happy. But, whenever I felt sad or lonely, I simply read my science books. It used to bring me comfort to think that any problems I had here on this earth were insignificant when compared to the vastness of the universe.

Today I shudder at the thought that God could so easily have left me in that state, but He didn’t. In His mercy, He had a co-worker witness to me about the truth. Interestingly enough, this person did not argue against my views about evolution. He said he did not really know how to answer the questions I had along those lines anyway. Instead, he picked up on a statement I had made about people being basically good and confidently denied it. He said that, contrary to being good, we are all sinners by nature. Then, like the proverbial light bulb switching on, this suddenly made more sense to me than what I had previously come to believe. In truth, people did not always treat me right. Some had even been rather cruel, dishonest, unloving, selfish, etc. Then, almost in the same instant, I also came to realize that I was just as bad. I was guilty of some of those same things myself. My “mistakes” were sins.

To make a long story short, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior shortly thereafter, and He changed my life. God immediately directed me to read His Word so that I could

understand the gospel. However, I still did not know how to deal with the subject of evolution. Science was important to me, and I could not pretend otherwise. Yet, that left me with a fair amount of inner turmoil.

For a time, I became a theistic evolutionist in order to resolve the remaining tension within. I now know that this was ultimately wrong, but it did serve as a stepping stone to the radical change that needed to take place in my mind. God was still at work in me. I faithfully read His Word as much as I could and came to love Jesus deeply. I also heard faithful Christians make repeated statements about how the testimony of the Bible and evolution do not mix. I just did not know how to deal with this situation.

Then, one day, God clearly showed me through His Word that Jesus Christ was the Creator. I read, *"All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being"* (John 1: 3). And again, *"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together"* (Colossians 1:16, 17).

Hence, I came to realize that I had to deal with my beliefs about evolution if I was to fully accept Him as He was and continue to grow in faith. This led to an intense crisis intellectually. I can't begin to describe how hard it was for me to deal with this. It about tore my mind apart. But my heart knew the answer. By this time I was totally in love with Jesus, and—praise God—*love won!* I may not have understood everything about the universe, but I knew *Him!* *He* was real! *His Word* was the answer to the unknown. *He* was the Creator! It was all about *Him!* Praise God! The biggest crisis of my life was over!

A lot of people helped me over the next several years to cleanse my mind from the brainwashing effects of evolutionary teaching. Creation scientists were especially helpful in this regard. I learned that I did not have to give up science in order to believe in God and

His Word. Rather, I came to understand that *"the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"* (Proverbs 1:7a). In other words, proper thinking requires a proper foundation of truth, and science is not the ultimate measure of truth it is purported to be. Science itself is a product of human reasoning and, as such, begins with certain assumptions. In the case of origins, for example, *naturalistic* science assumes that there is no God. But this assumption is not based upon any sort of authoritative knowledge. It is merely a choice. The outcome naturally favors an evolutionary scenario rather than creation because creation demands a Creator. Nevertheless, accepting the authoritative, infallible Word of the Creator as recorded in the Bible leads to a completely different conclusion.

Today I am much better equipped to understand what the Bible says in Romans 1:20 about the creation clearly showing the invisible attributes of God—namely, His eternal power and divine nature. I clearly see the heavens confirming that the God of all creation is infinite in nature, all powerful, and outside the realm of both time and space. We live in a universe that stretches beyond the limits of our imagination when it comes to the distances involved and the amount of energy contained therein.

One does not have to look very far at all to realize that God is powerful. All matter is basically just organized energy. Yet, a lot of power is locked up in that organization. Think of the amount of energy released from the small amount of atoms that are split apart during an explosion of an atomic bomb. During World War II, this was enough to destroy a major city. We proved that twice. Now ponder the amount of energy locked up in all the atoms in the universe. It is virtually unfathomable, just like God.

The sun is the most powerful body in our immediate frame of reference. Yet, God created myriads of suns. We call them "stars," and some of them are many times larger and brighter than our sun. The stars, moreover, tend to be gathered together in groups, clusters, and galaxies. Galaxies, in turn, also tend to be

grouped into clusters. On the grand scale of the universe, this clustering pattern appears as a gigantic web-like structure involving filaments and voids. In other words, everywhere one looks there is order in the universe as well as power—not random chaos. This confirms what the Bible says about God being a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Laws also appear to govern the workings of the heavens just as they do here on earth. This reflects the fact that God *“upholds all things by the word of His power”* (Hebrews 1:3b). The universe itself may indeed be expanding, as many scientists believe, but this does not automatically confirm the “Big Bang Theory.” There are Scriptures that can account for such a phenomenon. Isaiah, for instance, tells us that *“it is He who sits above the vault of the earth... Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in”* (Isaiah 40:22).

Explaining how light from distant stars would have had time to reach us here on earth if everything were merely created a few thousand years ago might seem problematic. Some estimates put the farthest known reaches of the universe at over 15 billion light years away. Moreover, these distances seem real. Even the closest stars to us are light years away. Yet, the problem may only be that we are trying to explain a miracle in terms of natural law. If God was able to create the sun, moon, and stars all in one day, He could certainly see that the light from each of them made it to earth on schedule. All of these heavenly bodies were created to immediately shed light upon the earth (Genesis 1:14-18).

As for the earth being in a rather insignificant place in the universe, this is not really a problem either. It would mean that God sent His Son Jesus Christ to a seemingly unimportant planet. Yet, the Son of God was also born in a tiny little town, in a stable of all things, and placed in a lowly manger. His mother and Joseph were poor and humble people. Plus, the Bible says that His earthly body had no form or particular majesty that would cause people to look upon Him differently than anyone else (Isaiah 53:2). This was just God’s

way. People are what make this planet important to God. He loves us. Those who assume that God would have exalted the earth to a unique place in the heavens if this were truly His special domain of influence are simply mistaken.

What about the claim that God created the sun, moon, and stars all in one day (Genesis 1:14-19)? Isn’t this a bizarre idea to say the least? Why would God even do such a thing? Well, I see in the Scriptures that the sun is often figuratively likened to God, the LORD, or the Son of God (Psalm 84:11; Isaiah 60:1-3; Luke 1:78-79). The Bible similarly compares Believers to the stars or individual lights in the world (Daniel 12:3; Philippians 2:15). Plus, the moon has natural properties that are comparable to the present state of the Church. There is only one moon that dominates our night skies, just as the Church is only one Body. Plus, neither of these has any light of its own but rather each rules over earthly darkness by reflecting light. The moon reflects the light of the *sun*, while the Church reflects the light of the *Son*.

Three important events that correspond to these symbols also happen to have occurred in close proximity to each other with respect to time: (1.) the revelation of the Son of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus [the sun/Son revealed], (2.) individual Believers were first indwelt with the Holy Spirit to serve as lights in this darkened world [the stars/individual Believers first produce light], and (3.) the Church was established as the Body of Christ [creation of the moon/Church]. Creating the sun, moon, and stars all on one day (Genesis 1:14-19) may thus have been a figurative representation of these three great events that would occur in close proximity in the future. Figurative representations of future events and/or aspects of Christ or salvation are common in Genesis. They are a form of Bible prophecy.

Consider also that when Jesus was dying on the cross, the light of the sun was obscured (Luke 23:44, 45). Later, when the physical sun went down in the evening, this corresponded to time of His burial. At the same time, the moon

rose full to give light to the earth. We know this because His death occurred on Passover, which is always associated with a full moon. Some say the moon at this particular time may have even been a “blood moon”—the result of a lunar eclipse. If so, then this particular full moon could easily have been a visual representation of the birth of the Church washed in the blood of the Lamb. What is more, if the timing of this observation is correct, then the sun would likely have gone down within the constellation of Aries the Ram from our vantage point on earth, signifying the death of the Lamb of God. Truly then, the sun, moon, and stars would each have abundantly fulfilled the purpose of their creation as signs in the heavens on the Day of Christ’s death (Genesis 1:14).

Indeed, whenever the sun goes down and the moon rises, the reflected light from the moon tells us that the sun is still there and is coming back. Is this not the message of the LORD’S resurrection and His coming again repeated almost daily in the night skies? When the Church properly reflects the light of the Son, this too tells the world that the Son of God is alive and well and that He is coming back! This takes me back to Psalm 19:2: *“Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.”*

Praise the LORD! Praise Him for who He is and what He has done! The heavens truly declare His glory! They tell us repeatedly of His manifold wisdom and power and majesty. They even reflect the gospel message of His death, resurrection, and imminent return!

I know that I am thankful that He looked upon this insignificant world with love and mercy and sent His Son to die for me, as is every true Believer. All praise and glory be unto Him forever! Amen.



By Beth Moller

“Then God said, Let the EARTH bring forth LIVING creatures after their kind: CATTLE and creeping things and beasts of the EARTH after their KIND’; and it was so. God MADE the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the CATTLE after their KIND and everything that creeps on the GROUND after its kind; and God saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1:24-25)

Sing A New Song

Words by Frances Ridley Havergal

Music by César Malan

"Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise"



Take My Life,
and Let It Be Consecrated

ASPIRATION, DEVOTION 534

Consecrate yourselves and be holy. Leviticus 20:7

1. Take my life and let it be Con - se - crat - ed,
2. Take my feet and let them be Swift and beau - ti -
3. Take my sil - ver and my gold, Not a mite would
4. Take my will and make it Thine, It shall be no

Lord, to Thee; Take my hands and let them move At the
ful for Thee; Take my voice and let me sing Al - ways,
I with - hold; Take my mo - ments and my days, Let them
lon - ger mine; Take my heart, it is Thine own, It shall

im - pulse of Thy love, At the im - pulse of Thy love,
on - ly, for my King, Al - ways, on - ly, for my King,
flow in cease - less praise, Let them flow in cease - less praise,
be Thy roy - al throne, It shall be Thy roy - al throne,

Frances R. Havergal HENDON 7.7.7.7.

Take My Life and Let It Be

By Maggie Moller

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of
God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living
sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is
your spiritual act of worship."*

(Romans 12:1 NIV)

*"Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing
praises to our King, sing praises."*

(Psalm 47:6)

Praise can take on many forms in our worship. Sometimes it comes pouring out of our hearts like loud crashing waves that cannot be stopped or contained. Other times it is much more peaceful, like a cool summer breeze that brings refreshment for our souls. But whatever the form, praise is a vital component of our

walk with the Lord and our daily worship. I want to emphasize that it is meant to be a DAILY part of our journey with Christ. I am ashamed to admit how many days I fall into bed after flying through my crazy schedule only to realize I spent more time during the day asking God to fix my problems rather than praising Him for all my blessings. Nurturing a complaining heart is such an easy pattern to fall into. But this is not glorifying to Christ! One of my favorite authors is Corrie ten Boom. As I read her accounts of the horrors she faced during World War II in a German concentration camp, I am ashamed of all the petty things I find to grumble and be dissatisfied about. Although the natural human tendency would have been to complain and foster unhappiness, Corrie and her sister Betsy continually found ways to praise God in the midst of their torture at the hands of the Germans. A heart of praise was what sustained Corrie and allowed her to

return to minister to her persecutors after the war. She understood that her happiness was not founded upon her earthly circumstances, but completely on the work her Savior had done. Praise is our weapon against discontent and the cure to an ineffective ministry for the Lord.

Praise is not merely a component of our life, it is meant to be demonstrated with every aspect of our life all the time. Often we think praise comes in the form of singing hymns or pouring out a prayer of praise to the Lord. I don't mean to say that it is not these things; it most certainly is! But it can be so much more! The Lord has been showing me over the last few months how every activity I do throughout my day can serve as an act of praise to Him! We have so much to be thankful for that if we were to fill the entire day with praising God for what He has done in our lives and the blessing He has bestowed upon us, we still would run out of time!

One of my favorite hymns is "Take My Life and Let It Be" by Frances Ridley Havergal. Oftentimes when I am struggling to surrender an area of my life or needing to refocus my heart, this is the hymn I am drawn to. The words offer up such a beautiful prayer! As I researched the life of Miss Havergal, I was greatly encouraged by her complete dedication to her Lord. I hope your heart is encouraged by her life as much as I was.

Frances Ridley Havergal was born on December 14, 1836, in England. Her father was a minister, and both her parents were sincere Christians. Very early in her life it became known that young Frances possessed a gift for learning. By the age of four she was able to read the Bible and other Christian literature. When she was only seven years old, she had already composed her first piece of poetry. Her musical talents came from her father who composed over 100 pieces of music to accompany his sermons. Her first steps towards committing her life to Christ came when she was 11. As her mother lay dying, she called her daughter to her and told her that the most important decision she could make in her life was to commit to following Christ as her Sav-

ior. She finished by telling young Frances, "Fanny, pray to God to prepare you for all that He is preparing for you." These words greatly influenced Frances.

As Frances began to turn over her life to Christ she found ways to serve Him and bring others to salvation. She began teaching Sunday school and kept detailed records of each of her students so she could more effectively minister to them. Part of her daily routine included scheduled prayer times throughout the day. Her prayers included the following:

Morning Prayer: Watchfulness. Guard over temper. Consistency. Faithfulness to opportunities. For the Holy Spirit. For a vivid love to Christ.

Midday Prayer: Earnestness in spirit of desire, in prayer, and in all work. Faith, hope, love.

Evening Prayer: Forgiveness. To see my sinfulness in its true light. Growth in grace. Against morning sleepiness as hindrance to time of prayer.

Her dedication to prayer demonstrates her strong desire to continually grow more in her relationship with Christ.

Although she possessed great musical talents and could have used her abilities for enormous personal gain, she considered her talents as mere loans from the Lord. She committed to using her talents only for the Lord's service and to bring souls to Him.

The story behind how she came to write "Take My Life and Let It Be" is beautiful. It was written during a short five-day visit to a home. The other ten guests were either unbelievers or not living wholeheartedly for Christ. Before arriving, Frances prayed that the Lord would use her to bring all ten of the other guests into salvation before the conclusion of the visit. The Lord answered her prayer and by the last night of the visit, the final two committed their lives to Christ. When Frances returned to her room after praying with them, her heart was pouring over in praise to God! As she was praising God, He gave her the words to "Take My Life and Let It Be."

Throughout her life, Frances suffered from poor health. At the age of 43, she passed into the glorious presence of her King. While we may say her life was cut short, Frances was finally in the presence of the One she spent her life glorifying. What an amazing reward for her life of dedication!

Frances Ridley Havergal demonstrates to me what a life looks like that is completely devoted to praise and service for Christ. I hope you are as encouraged by her story as I have been.

<http://www.truthfulwords.org/biography/havergaltw.html>

<http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biorphavergal.html>



By Natalie Warner

Tending the Fruit of Praise

By Lou Ann Cochran

The word “praise” is found many places in the Scriptures. In Hosea 14:1-2 (NIV), for instance, Hosea says, *“Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him: ‘Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.’”* Recognizing our sins and asking forgiveness has to come first before our praise is real.

In addition, Hebrews 13:15-16 says, *“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”* When I think of fruit, I think about how it isn’t something that easily pops into existence. It has to come from a plant or tree that has only grown into maturity from proper nutrients and light. Praise (the fruit of our lips) does not come easily either; it truly is a sacrifice of denying our fleshly responses.

In Philippians 4:8, moreover, Paul urges, *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”* So often I want to find things that are wrong with the situation or play the game “ain’t it awful.” Putting aside what I want to say and remembering what pleases the Lord is truly a sacrifice!

Judah, whose name means “praise,” was the fourth of the twelve sons of Jacob. Genesis 29:35 states: *“She [Leah] conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, ‘This time I will praise the LORD.’ So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.”* And it turned out that later in his life Judah was praised by his brothers who recognized his position of leadership in his family and for his people. In Genesis 37:26-27, we are told that

he helped spare his brother Joseph's life: *"Judah said to his brothers, 'What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.' His brothers agreed."* And later, when they went down to Egypt, Judah was the spokesman for his family to Joseph (Genesis 44:14-34). Also, in later years, as the tribes were marching through the wilderness, the tribe of Judah went first. When the Jews returned from captivity, the land was called Judah. They were the "Judahites," otherwise known as Jews. Lastly, if we follow Judah's name through the Scripture, we find that the Messiah was prophesied to come through the line of Judah. (One such prophecy is Micah 5:2, which says, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."*) Jesus Christ indeed came from that line and is the Messiah!! Praise to the Lord!!

As I think about Leah who was not the wife Jacob loved (as he loved Rachel more), I remember that even though bearing Jacob's sons did not bring her love from Jacob, GOD remembered her and gave her great honor by listing her in the line of Jesus Christ. Sometimes God has better plans for us than we have. We can look back in our lives and see God's hand has guided us in a different direction and we can say, "Praise His Holy Name!!"

The Bible lists many things to praise God about, such as His attributes of faithfulness, forgiveness, love, grace; His Moral Law; and His creation – the list is unending. David reminds us in the following Psalms that we need to praise Him now while we are still alive as a testimony to His name.

Psalms 6:4-5: *"Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of Your unfailing love. Among the dead no one proclaims Your name. Who praises You from the grave?"*

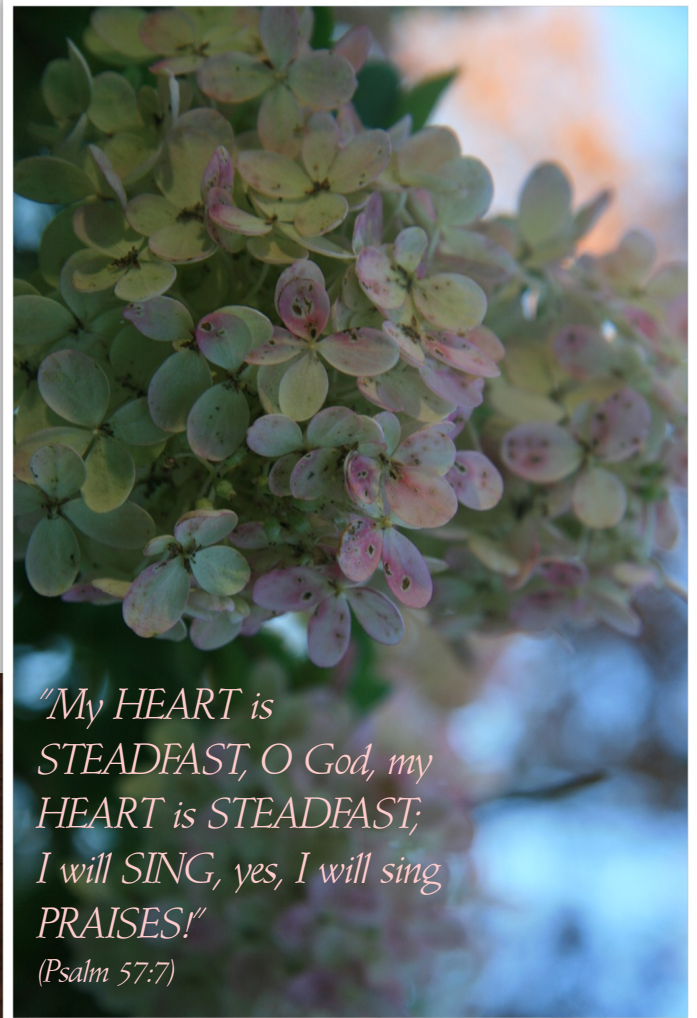
Psalms 30:9: *"What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it proclaim Your faithfulness?"*

Psalms 88:10: *"Do you show Your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise You?"*

Psalms 115:17: *"It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to the place of silence...."*

May I work on the fruit of my lips and be quick to testify about Him in praise. Time is short; let us be about it!!

(Note: Study on Judah is a summary from *Jacob's Dozen* by William C. Varner, published by Friends of Israel.)



*"My HEART is
STEADFAST, O God, my
HEART is STEADFAST;
I will SING, yes, I will sing
PRAISES!"
(Psalms 57:7)*

By Natalie Warner

May/June Newsletter Theme— TESTIMONY

Submission Deadline: May 31

Publish Date: June 9

Testimony...

- What is a testimony?
- Why does God desire testimony?
- What is a witness?
- Should we share our testimonies?
- How are we to share our testimony?

Verses on TESTIMONY (from the NASB version)

Exodus 26:34 — *“You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies.”*

Exodus 31:18 — *“When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.”*

Psalms 19:7 — *“The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”*

Psalms 78:5 — *“For He established a testimony in Jacob And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers That they should teach them to their children.”*

Luke 21:12-13 — *“But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.”*

Matthew 24:14 — *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”*

John 3:10-11 — *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know and testify of what we have seen, and you do not accept our testimony.’”*

1 John 5:9 — *“If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.”*

Further Out—July/August 2015: ETERNITY