

## **SILENT PRAISE**

### **PSALM 65**

Introduction:

Can praise ever be a matter of silence before God? The religious culture of our day would seem to say, “No!” We seem to have assumed that praise always involves making a “joyful noise to the Lord.” But the Psalmist knew about praise being offered to God that never utters a sound, which is void of noise of any kind.

Our culture is generally afraid of silence. Are you aware of how little time you actually experience silence? Do you find yourself becoming uncomfortable with silence? Many do! We wake up to the clock-radio and music. We may even end the day with soothing music as we seek sleep. We surround ourselves with sounds throughout the day. In the car, in the office, at the restaurant, in the doctor’s office, while on hold by someone on the telephone—we hear sound. Yet the psalmist refers to a response to God that is characterized as silent praise.

Actually when you compare the different translations of the first verse of the psalm with the Hebrew text, it obvious that the translators have struggled with the idea of silence and praise. The New American

Standard Version actually comes closer to the literal translation of the text, “There will be silence before you, O God, praise in Zion”.

This silent praise should not be a mystery to us. It is the silence of awe.

When a person becomes so overwhelmed by the greatness of God that words fail them; that is the ultimate experience of praise.

There is also the silence of surrender. This is probably the primary idea of the word in this text. When the servant realizes the greatness and the goodness of his master, and bows before him in complete surrender, this is also a part of ultimate praise. The psalmist had been so overwhelmed by the greatness of God at two points that all he could do was bow in silence. May God grant to each of us the experience of silent praise.

## I. THE ATONING WORK OF GOD PROVOKES SILENT PRAISE (V. 1-4)

1. When we become aware of the greatness of the sin God removes, we are moved to silent praise.

“Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, you forgive me.”

You begin to understand the greatness of our sin when you number them. The old Evangelism Explosion illustration about the number of our sins might prove to be helpful.

In the illustration you emphasize the number of your sins. You propose, “If I only committed three sins a day, I would be a pretty good person, would I not? This would include the things I did that I should not have done, as well as the things I failed to do that I should have done. But three sins a day, would mean that I am guilty of over a thousand sins in a year, and now I am almost seventy-one years old, this would mean that I am guilty of seventy one thousand sins.

Can you imagine what would have happened to me yesterday if I had been stopped for speeding, and then when I went before the judge, he discovered that I had seventy one thousand speeding tickets? What do you suppose the penalty would be? That is my situation before God. The number of my sins are overwhelming.

Consideration of the nature of our sins emphasizes their greatness as well. “Iniquities” points to their source—they are an expression of the inner corruption, the depravity that indwells all of us. “Transgressions” reminds us that they are personal acts of rebellion against Holy God.

These are not innocent mistakes—they reflect a much deeper problem.

There is a flaw in my nature and an attitude problem toward God.

Yet God has “atoned” for my transgressions. The root idea in the word is to cover my sins. We know more about this than David knew. We know that ultimately the only thing that could cover sin was the blood of His dear Son.

When you realize what this atoning work of God cost and what it accomplished, surely you will be left speechless before Him. There will be a time of silence before Him in awe and surrender.

2. When we become aware of the privileges his atoning work restores, we are moved to silent praise.

“Forgiveness” is the NASV translation. To forgive is to remove, to cancel.

The next verse speaks of being chosen and being allowed to come near to God. The testimony also includes the satisfaction that comes to the soul of the person who has been forgiven.

You will remember the incident from the life of our Lord that Luke reports. Jesus was a guest in the home of Simon the Pharisee for a meal. As they sat the table, a poor woman of the street came into the room bringing with her

an alabaster box filled with fine ointment. To the embarrassment of his host, the woman broke the alabaster flask and began to wash his feet with her tears. Then she broke the seal on the flask and anointed the feet of Jesus with the precious ointment. The Pharisees immediately began to raise questions about a man who would not understand the uncleanness of such a woman and would allow such a display of affection in such a public way. Surely a holy man would not allow such a woman to touch him!

But Jesus defended the woman. He told Simon and his friends a story about two debtors who were forgiven. One was forgiven five hundred denarii, while the other was forgiven only fifty denarii. Jesus asked Simon, "Which of them will love him the more? The one who was forgiven five hundred or the one who was forgiven fifty?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who was forgiven more." Jesus commended his answer.

Did you ever notice that this poor woman never said a word? Even when Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Even when Jesus added, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." She did not say a word. She just bowed before him in awe and in the surrender of faith.

Someone may think I have forgotten to whom I speak. Am I not preaching to the best of the best, men and women who have devoted their lives to the

service of the Lord? I know that. But I have also discovered that they are the ones who are more apt to really understand the marvel of the atoning work of our God. They are the ones who declare, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They are the ones who write the great hymns about the work of redemption accomplished on the Cross.

God’s atoning work is more than the mind can comprehend! Is not the silence of awe and the silence of surrender appropriate in such a moment. There is a time for the Hallelujah Chorus, but there is also a time for the moment of personal silence before God in awe and surrender.

## II. THE PROVIDENCES OF GOD PROVOKES SILENT PRAISE (V. 5-13)

The providences of God are his faithful activities in the world on our behalf. He acts providentially on behalf of the just and the unjust, so all of us have benefited from such loving activity on His part.

### 1. God providentially provides for our needs in answer to prayer. (v. 5)

“By awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us, O God of our salvation.” Did you ever try to calculate how many prayers God answers per day? How many has He answered across the course of your days? Sure there

have been some unanswered prayers for most of us, but there have been so many instances of His awesome deed of righteousness—He did the right thing at the right time.

2. God providentially controls the flow of history for the good of His people. (v. 6-8)

“You who are the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of the far-off seas; who established by His strength, being clothed with power; You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples. They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice.”

The “seas” are often used as symbols of nations in the poetic sections of the Old Testament. The Psalmist believes that God is moving among the nations close by and the nations far away to accomplish good for His people Israel. Attempting to comprehend God’s governance of the affairs of earth will leave you speechless and broken before Him in submission.

There are solid reasons for believing that God is still in control, even in our secular age. Democracy is on the rise around the world, but that does not

mean that man is in control of history. A good God still controls the seas in their apparent and noisy displays of power.

3. God providentially blesses the world of nature to provide for the needs of His people. (v. 9-13)

“You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, for so You have prepared it. You water the ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth.”

Water will have to be carried from the Mediterranean Sea over several hundred miles, and then be poured out on the fields from the sky. Carried? How much does it weigh? Well, if one inch of rain falls on one square mile of farm land during the night, that would be 2,323,200 cubic feet of water which is 17,377,536 gallons, which is 144,735,360 pounds of water. .

That's heavy. So how does it get up into the sky and stay there if it's so heavy? Well, it gets up there by evaporation. Really? That's a nice word. What does it mean? It means that the water stops being water for a while so it can go up and not down. I see. Then how does it get down? Well, condensation happens. What's that? The water starts

becoming water again by gathering around little dust particles between .00001 and .0001 centimeters wide. That's small.

What about the salt? Yes, the Mediterranean Sea is saltwater. That would kill the crops. What about the salt? Well, the salt has to be taken out. Oh. So the sky picks up millions of pounds of water from the sea, takes out the salt, carries the water or whatever it is, when it is not water) for three hundred miles, and then dumps it (now turned into water again) on the farm?

Well, it doesn't dump it. If it dumped millions of pounds of water on the farm, the crops would be crushed. So the sky dribbles the millions of pounds of water down in little drops. And they have to be big enough to fall for one mile or so without evaporating, and small enough to keep from crushing the wheat stalk.

How does these microscopic specks of water that weigh millions of pounds get heavy enough to fall (if that's the way to ask the question?) Well, it's called coalescence. What's that? It means the specks of water start bumping into each other and join up and get bigger and when they are big enough, they fall. Just like that? Well, not exactly, because they would not bounce off each other instead of

joining up if there were no electric field present. What? Take my word for it..

John Piper, Taste and See, p. 25

“You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance. They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; they shout for joy, they also sing.”

Every nation has its unique story of Divine providences. This is one of the things we do when we get together, we share the story of the good providences of God. Maybe we begin to talk about our children and grandchildren, but it is really a story of divine providence. Maybe we begin to tell of some recent blessing, but it really the story of divine providence. When you begin to extend this to its universal dimensions, it will leave you with a profound sense of awe.

Each Individual has their unique story of Divine provides. The story stretches from sea to shining sea.

Our God is the source of every good and perfect gift. Why don't you try to number the many forms his enriching providences have taken? Do we dare speak of the goodness of the Lord that has enriched our lives.

The psalmist describes the blessings in terms of nature—how God makes the fields and valleys fruitful. But he views the fruitfulness of the earth as part of God's faithful provisions for his people! O the wonder of the enriching goodness of the Lord.

They bless us and make us a blessing.

Praise should begin in silence, the silence of submission, but it will rise in song, a song of gratitude. You may remember the word of the Lord that came through Habakkuk the prophet, "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all of the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20)