

The Power of Praise

“Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever.” 2 Chronicles 20: 21

The year 2020 as with other notable years in recent times, will not be soon forgotten - at least by this generation. The first editorial of Cornerstone Magazine this year was titled “2020 Vision.” It was an exhortation to the Body of Christ to sharpen our spiritual focus. I for one, felt my spiritual vision needed to be better than it was. Little did I realize that in just a few short months the pandemic helped to accomplish this goal (my guess is that worldwide pandemics have a way of doing this!). For many, life was turned upside down, routines shattered, and a new vocabulary was on everyone’s lips. We were introduced to terms such as social distancing, CDC guidelines, masking up, COVID-19, and other health-related phrases. How quickly our lives were changed! It proves just how we *do not* know what a day may bring forth, much less a year. Fortunately, biblical Christians have the benefit of holy Scripture that shines as a light in a dark place (2 Pet. 1:19), confirming the veracity of God’s Word and shedding light to some degree of how the stage is being set for future events. (See Cornerstone Magazine’s YouTube webinars that addressed this topic). We do not have all the details, but at least we do have the big picture, and it helps to make sense of what is happening in the world around us. A world pandemic, further steps toward a cashless society, instances of the breakdown of law and order, people’s hearts failing them for fear – all significant components of end time events. It is an affirmation of the reliability of God’s Word and an inspiration for us to be busy in the work of the gospel and to wait for the Son from heaven.

How Can We Give Thanks?

With all that has transpired during this past year – the negative nightly news, a strained economy, failed businesses, family tensions, and worries about the coronavirus - what good can we find in a year whose end cannot come soon enough? It has been tough year for so many people in so many ways. Much has changed in our lives and many have gone through some very deep waters. We are told to *“remember them...that suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body”* (Heb. 13:3). Our hearts go out to our brethren (and others) who have been adversely affected during this challenging time. Is there anything for which we can give God praise, especially as we approach the time of year when are reminded to give thanks?

The answer to this question is “yes,” there have been bright spots for which we can praise God. When I think back over this year, I can see how many of us were forced to think “outside the box.” We have all taken a giant leap forward *technologically*. Though various video conferencing formats were already in place before the pandemic, I certainly was not utilizing them, even though they were readily available. But due to recommended CDC guidelines (or should we say restrictions), we were forced to find alternative ways to connect and to encourage one another in Christ. The result has been a preponderance of virtual Bible studies, webinars, YouTube messages, and hybrid meetings to help those who are unable to physically attend services. All of them have been used of the Lord in some way to multiply the ministry of God’s Word. And it looks like it will be here for the foreseeable future. Like it or not, virtual meetings have been the major means of keeping Christians connected during this time. Many seniors who had previously not felt the need to utilize these resources now had new motivation to stay in touch with their family and friends. Despite the techno glitches here and there, it still has provided great opportunities for us to connect *relationally* – a second great benefit.

A Place For Praise

Further, we have also benefitted *spiritually*. Despite being separated for a long period of time, many Christians have had more time to engage in personal Bible study and in online prayer meetings. During this time of worldwide trial, it has been possible for those ministering the Word to go from one meeting to another by simply walking into another room and connecting online, (sometimes within the same hour!) though separated by hundreds or even thousands of miles. Though travel was severely restricted, it did not prevent virtual conferences from occurring from around the globe making it possible to join from the convenience of their homes, or anywhere else. Despite the horrific headlines, the Word of God is not bound (2 Tim. 2:9). There really is a place for praise and a lot of reasons why we can find “songs in the night” (Job 35:10). The Lord truly does inhabit the praises of His people. Like Jehoshaphat, who when surrounded by adversity on every side,

made praise his primary instrument in the battles he faced, singing to the Lord in the beauty of holiness with the words, *"Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever!"* And so can we. This truly is the power of praise.