

# The Summer of Psalms

By Doug Hamilton

Paul instructs in Ephesians 5:17-21 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.<sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,<sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;<sup>20</sup> always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;<sup>21</sup> and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

- In that passage he advises against being foolish by neglecting the understanding of what the will of the Lord is in our life. The Ephesians came from a culture of pagan participation of worshipping false gods and conjuring magic that had curious and sinful practices.
- One of these practices was in the group adoration to these false idols. In the ritual of communal worship, they often would consume large amounts of wine mixed with the blood of particular animals. These pre-Christians were taught when the “spirits” of the wine were combined with the “spirits” of the animals and then consumed to inebriation, that the positive attributes of the creatures would be spiritually merged with them.
- When they mixed in the accompanying of instruments along with the drunkenness, the result was a pagan spiritual high that resonated deeply for the further workings of the heathenism that defined the culture. As Christians, Paul reminds them to be filled with the Holy Spirit of God in a ritual of repetitive singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs by plucking the strings of their heart.

That is the focus of this series of lessons which is titled “The Summer of Psalms”. Over the next seven lessons we will be covering seven topical lessons on filling ourselves with the Spirit through the study of Psalms and hopefully experiencing a “spiritual high” that God would have us to acknowledge concerning our worship to Him. All the lessons will be filled with familiar songs that we as Christians know and hold dear.

## 1) Praise for God

How could we not begin in the Psalms in this series if we did not cover the topic of praise from the Psalmist’s perspective? There are 150 Psalms in the Book of Psalms and praise is mentioned 175 (NIV). Praise is the natural theme that will be chosen first to reveal through the Summer of Psalms.

- Psalm 8:1 O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! / Song 42 “How Majestic is Your Name”
  - In our songbooks this is song #42 and is quoted verbatim. It is talking about our ability to look at the stars, the sun and moon while seeing the evidence of a mighty God. His signature is not with ink, but with the evidence that Someone greater is higher than the cosmos that is before us.
  - *Psalm 57:5 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; Let Your glory be above all the earth.* The Jewish perspective of the heavens was divided into three realms called the three heavens. The first heaven was the space that was upon the earth. The second was the sky which contained the heavenly bodies of the sun, moon and stars. The third heaven was the unseen realm beyond that in which resided God and His angels. It was to this realm that Paul referred to in *2 Corinthians 12:2 “...such a man was caught up to the third heaven.”* This is the realm to which we

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cannot until the afterlife; hence the closest seen evidence would be the second heaven.

- Psalm 57:11 Be exalted above the heavens, O God; *Let Your glory be above all the earth.*
  - Psalm 113:3-4 From the rising of the sun to its setting The name of the LORD is to be praised. <sup>4</sup> The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens.
  - Psalm 148:13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven.
  - He is worthy to be praised! To that we cannot look up and sing “O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!”
- Psalm 18:49 “Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O LORD, And I will sing praises to Your name.” / song 97 “I sing Praises” / song 238 “You Are The Song That I Sing”
    - It is in our song that we can praise God in such a unique way. It is at the heart of man to worship God in music in every culture in the world, whether pagan or Christianity. That is because we are designed to worship someone or something higher than us.
    - *Romans 15:9 “...and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, “THEREFORE I WILL GIVE PRAISE TO YOU AMONG THE GENTILES, AND I WILL SING TO YOUR NAME.”* This was Paul quoting to Christians in Rome and encouraging them on what Jesus did for us. Jesus is our example and we are to be the followers. We are to put all of our focus on Someone.
    - For the Christian that someone is God and Him alone. It is to Him that we sing our praise and open the door of our heart. *Psalm 108:1 My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul.* When we open that portal to God in praise, we fulfill song #238 that “He is the song that we sing”.
  - Psalm 34:3-4 (KJV) O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. <sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. / Song 203 “Let There Be Praise”
    - *Psalm 35:27 Let them shout for joy and rejoice, who favor my vindication; And let them say continually, “The LORD be magnified, Who delights in the prosperity of His servant.”* When we magnify something, it appears bigger to us. When we magnify God through our song, He is always bigger than our struggle, our fears, our hurts and everything else that threatens our daily relationship with Him. All problems are tiny problems when we praise God in song”.
    - *Acts 16:25 “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them...”* In this account Paul and Silas ended up converting the warden of the prison as well as his whole household. This was while being beaten, imprisoned and ridiculed. Is it not fair to assume that the atmosphere of the prison was already nestled in a glorious bed of praise to God? Does it not say the prisoners were listening to the singing of praises? “Let there be praise” in our song!

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- Psalm 40:16 (NIV) But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, “The LORD be exalted!” / Song 779 “I Love You Lord”
  - We can praise God in our recitations of the Psalms for the salvation that He gives us through Christ Jesus alone. We love that salvation and need to erupt in praise to Him because of it. “We love the LORD and lift our voice to worship Him” for all that He has done for us in Christ. This can be done through praise in song.
  - Psalm 9:14 That I may tell of all Your praises, That in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in Your salvation.
  - Psalm 35:9 And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; It shall exult in His salvation.
  - Psalm 68:19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, The God who is our salvation. Selah

It is in God’s holy word that we confirm our salvation with praise.

  - Ps 98:2 The Lord has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.
  - Ps 119:166 I hope for Your salvation, O Lord, And do Your commandments.
  - Ps 119:174 I long for Your salvation, O Lord, And Your law is my delight.
- Psalm 66:8 Bless our God, O peoples, And sound His praise abroad, / Song 72 Blessed Be the Lord God Almighty”
  - It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture. To this we proclaim His praise!
  - Psalm 98:4 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.
  - Psalm 119:171-172 Let my lips utter praise, For You teach me Your statutes.  
<sup>172</sup> Let my tongue sing of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness.
- Psalm 100:1-3 “Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. <sup>2</sup> Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before Him with joyful singing. <sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD Himself is God...”
  - Song 66 “Doxology” Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heav’nly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
  - We can with great praise glorify our God and Father from the fruit of our lips that is offered to Him in song.
- Psalm 148:1-5 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! <sup>2</sup> Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! <sup>3</sup> Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! <sup>4</sup> Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens! <sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created. / Song 74 “Praise the Lord”
  - There is a word that we have in the Greek called “Hallelujah”, meaning “Praise the Lord” Revelation 19:1-6 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; <sup>2</sup> BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER.” <sup>3</sup>

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And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER." <sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" <sup>5</sup> And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." <sup>6</sup> Then I heard *something* like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

- We can praise God from every place at every time. We are creatures of praise unto the Father. That is the primary job description of the Christian. *1 Pet 4:11* "...so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

### Closing Story

Author Louis Albert Banks tells of an elderly Christian man, a fine singer, who learned that he had cancer of the tongue and that surgery was required. In the hospital after everything was ready for the operation, the man said to the doctor, "Are you sure I will never sing again?" The surgeon found it difficult to answer his question. He simply shook his head no. The patient then asked if he could sit up for a moment. "I've had many good times singing the praises of God," he said. "And now you tell me I can never sing again. I have one song that will be my last. It will be of gratitude and praise to God." There in the doctor's presence the man sang softly the words of Isaac Watts' hymn, "I'll praise my Maker while I've Breath". This is the last stanza of that song that was sung by the man.

I'll praise him while he lends me breath,  
and when my voice is lost in death,  
praise shall employ my nobler powers;  
my days of praise shall ne'er be past,  
while life, and thought, and being last,  
or immortality endures.

Lesson number one of the Summer of Psalms is focused on the number one goal of the Christian. That task before us is the praise that He deserves. *Ps 18:3* "I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised..."