

The Blessings of Praising God

Scripture

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ And Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.’ And the angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.’ And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, ‘Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people.’” (Luke 1:5-25 NKJV)

Commentary

What a wonderful thing God did for Elizabeth and Zacharias. We can tell from Elizabeth’s comments she had long suffered from her barrenness. Now God had blessed this couple with a child of great importance. Zacharias would be father to John the Baptist, the forerunner for Christ.

As a father, I know how proud I am of my son. Whenever he does something special I want to tell people about it even to a fault. Imagine what Zacharias must have been feeling. His son was going to herald in the Messiah. Unfortunately, because of his disbelief he would be held in silence until his son was born.

Thinking about Zacharias made me realize what a blessing it is to be able to praise God before believers and the world. We still have the freedom in this country to speak loudly the blessings of God.

Then I asked myself this question, “Am I, as excited about what God is doing in my life as I am about my son’s baseball exploits?” I am, but I also realize I sometimes compartmentalize my life. Sometimes I treat my relationship with God separate from the rest of my life. This is a terrible mistake that causes me to focus on the creature instead of the Creator. Whatever my son or anybody does, it is only by the grace

of God. We should remind our children and ourselves of that by praising God. Remember what was written, "My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you. Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:1-6 NKJV)

What can you bless God for today? How can you acknowledge Him? Start praising God for all things and you will discover what a blessing it is. Zacharias had that blessing temporarily taken away from him because he would not give praise but disbelieved. Maybe that is the issue: believing and praising are two sides of the same coin. Think about it!

Prayer

Father, we believe, help our unbelief, amen.