

## **GETTING DRESSED IN PRAISE**

by Pat Keady

***Praise is a concept that not many people today really 'get'.*** We either picture images of large gospel churches raising their hands and bursting into chants of 'Hallelujah', or stoic traditional congregations singing hymns like 'How Great Thou Art' on TV. Because these images feel removed from our everyday life, we subconsciously think *'that praise stuff is not for me'*. Then **if you're a muso like me**, then 'praise' is also the first part of that word *praise and worship* which means 'the fast songs you play before the slow ones at Church', or that section at the back of Christian bookstores you go to find the latest Hillsong CDs. But all this is just the surface. There is SO much more to the gift of *praise*.

***Praise is not a feeling of happiness, the unthinking recitation of a string of words on Sunday, a marketing tool, all about us, or optional.*** That's a fair bit to take in at once, so I'll let you sit on it for a bit.

*"Hang on - what's this 'not optional'? Are you telling me God's up there with a big ruler saying 'You better do this or else?'"*

Of course not. But *I am saying that God deserves to be praised by us.* The scriptures say *"He is worthy of our praise"* - this means, simply, that God is 'worth-it'. He's the Creator - I am the creature. He's the King - I am the servant. He's the Saviour - I am the rescued one. The crazy thing is, when we neglect this activity that we were created to do, we're the ones who miss out!

I love the line Jesus said to the Pharisees who told him to silence his disciples singing and noise on Psalm Sunday; ***"If these do not praise me, even the rocks will cry out."*** ( Luke 19:40)  
**Do not let a rock do your job!**

OK. Then what IS 'praise'? Singing? Lifting your hands? Saying 'praise You Jesus' over and over in the middle of a song? Yeah, it can be all these things and more. They're certainly not bad, I do them myself! But *praising God is larger and greater than any of the activities that help us to do it.*

**Praise is a privilege. An opportunity. An open-heart disposition towards our Creator. Praise is a GIFT** – one that comes *from God* in order to help us draw closer *to God*. It's almost like the Big Fella knew we wouldn't remember the way to the throne room by ourselves, so He graciously left us a pathway to get there. Praise is that pathway -which is actually more like a *freeway*. We are able to enter the presence of God faster when we praise Him than with any of the other tired tracks we're so used to taking. Take complaining for instance. We like to grumble and complain our way to God, because this is just easier to do. But it takes SO much longer and we're still left feeling miserable ourselves at the end.

**Praise is like putting on clothes.** We're talking those nice clean ones that make you feel good when you're just about to go out on the town. **Isaiah 61:3** says that God gives us **"the garment of praise for the spirit of despair."**

When our attitude sucks or we're down in the dumps there's nothing we need to do more than put on the *garment of praise*. This requires a choice; lifting your mind and heart toward Heaven doesn't come as naturally as you'd like to think. Just think about the last time you got cut off in traffic, or waited for your internet connection to start up! Frustrating wasn't it??! We prefer to hang about in our dirty, smelly 'complaining clothes' *because they're comfortable*. But it sure makes us miserable to be around, and prayer feels like an uphill struggle. Praise was created for all these kinds of situations that happen to us throughout our day. At first it might be simply a glance upwards or saying a few words under your breath, but it all helps. Praise is an very practical thing.

**"Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks to God in all situations."** (1 **Thess 5:16**). What the?? *'All situations?'* Yes! What if, the next time you're about to 'blow up' over that ridiculously annoying person or situation that almost *always* seems to happen without fail, you made the decision to praise God? Try it and see. I bet you'll eventually find the negative power lifting away. The clothing of praise lifts the 'spirit of despair' and you regain perspective. *Things could be worse. I'm not dead, dying or starving! God is still God. He's in control. Thank You Jesus. Help me grow in patience. Breathe out.*

**Praise is not about you** - it's about God. So you don't have to *feel like it* (actually that's when you need to do it the most!). So you may hate it at first. Yes, it will take effort, some cringing and dying to your flesh. That's excellent. Praise is a sacrifice; it's gotta hurt a little or it's worth nothing! Remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and how much that hurt? It kinda puts things in perspective when you wanna have a big whinge about the speed of your internet connection.

**Tell yourself the truth; 'Praising my Creator is not optional. I am not going to let a rock do my job. God is worth-it all the time, no matter what's going down or how I feel right now'.**

The great thing is, once you make the shift, take your attention off yourself and plave your focus upon God, you will naturally start to feel better yourself too. WHY? I dunno, God just wired us that way; something to do with being 'made by God and for God' I suppose. We just function better. Try it sometime. You'll like it. And hate it. But it doesn't matter; our Saviour deserves it.

**"Through Jesus therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that proclaim his name."** (Heb 13:15)