



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC The Praise-Empowered Church

SPEAKER SP Daniel Foo

THEME High Praises & A Double-Edged Sword

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

Be A Praise-Empowered Church

This new year starts with a call for us to be an empowered church. As Psalm 149:6 says, *“Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hand”* – we can be empowered through praise and the Word of God. In the first of a two-part sermon on this verse, SP Daniel Foo expounded on the importance of praise, and how we can come into the presence of God.

How can we be a high-praises church?

The Hebrew word *“halla”* (Psalm 148-150) means to *“celebrate extravagantly”*. It is the root of the word *“hallelujah”* – *“praise (halla) to jah (Yahweh/God)”* – expressing joy, jubilation, celebration. When we come together in worship, it’s a celebration of God and all He has done for us.

Knowing this, how can we be a high-praise, praise-empowered church?

We do so by deciding to bring our praises to God at all times in all circumstances (Psalm 34:1).

This requires us to consciously and continually connect with God. We should also know His covenant and promises, as God always honours His word, and is thus deserving of our praises.

Praises brings us into the courts of God. Psalm 100:4 tells us that praise is preceded by thanksgiving; we must give thanks to Him for what He has done for us and given us. Even when we have unanswered prayers, we should still come before God with a spirit of gratefulness, as unbelief and taking offence at our trials of faith are obstacles to experiencing God’s miracles.

Praise is also preceded by confidence to come into the presence of God. By the blood of Jesus, our High Priest (Hebrews 10:19-22), we can experience a guilt-free, no-condemnation relationship with God. In the midst of worship, we may encounter interruptions from the devil in the form of unclean and distracting thoughts/feelings. SP emphasises that we need to submit to God, resist the devil and take these thoughts captive, remembering that our mind is the gateway to our spirit.

Praise enables us to declare and proclaim who God is. Hebrews 13:15 and 1 Peter 2:9 say we are called to exalt His name. As we learn more about God and His ways, our praise vocabulary will be enlarged, allowing us to be true worshippers and bring more praise to Him. Psalm 23 gives us the seven redemptive names of God.

Praise enables us to call on the specific name of God in order to draw upon the specific grace that we need in our lives. It also means that we call out the specific attributes of each person of the God-head over our lives: the love of Father-God, the light (grace and truth) of the Lord Jesus, and the life of the holy Spirit. Again, it is important to develop a spirit of gratefulness so that we may recognise the blessings we have received (Psalm 69:19).

High praise is an intense level of praise, where songs are sung in the heavenlies by angels, creatures, and saints around the throne of God. When we face rejection, are heavily burdened and feel we are at the bottom of our lives, a way out is to begin to praise the Lord. Acts 16:25-26 shows that bringing our bondages before the Lord in prayer and worship can set us free. Continuing to praise the Lord in troubled times (Habakkuk 3:17-19) can lift us out of our misery and worries, and allow us to receive the peace of God in our hearts and minds.

“God has appointed the use of spiritual songs as an effective weapon against the enemy,” John Piper wrote. As we bring our burdens and yokes to God, we can sing spiritual songs to God (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). Spiritual songs are spontaneous words and praises from our hearts and spirits to God. Through these spiritual songs, we may pray, intercede, speak in tongues, or worship as led.

High praise also opens doors for God to battle for us in warfare. It enables us to overcome our enemies and the enemies of God. In 2 Chronicles 20:21-22, Jehoshaphat and his people defeated their enemies through praise and worship. We are called to commit our enemies, people who do not have our best interests, before God (Matthew 5:44). High praises on the lips of our children will give us strength and silence our enemies (Psalms 8:2). For this to happen, we must pray for our children and strengthen our family altars, both biological and spiritual. Every believer has the authority to bless their household. We also have the responsibility of sharing testimonies that bring glory to God, so that others may hear and know the works of the Lord (Judges 2:7, 10). Psalms 78:5-11 reinforces the commandment that God has given us: To make testimonies known to our next generation, so that they may set their hope in God and walk in his law.

Conclusion

God is looking for a praise-empowered church with believers that are devoted to Him. He no longer remembers our sins; we are under the Blood of Jesus. But God does remember our devotion to Him during tough times (Jeremiah 2:2). As believers, we must be wary of distractions that can lead us away from zealous devotion to God (2 Corinthians 11:3). Our spiritual fervour is a reflection of our devotion to God, so let's commit to moving from a struggling-surviving believer to a thriving-vibrant one in 2017!

QUESTIONS

Share your thanksgiving for 2016. How has God blessed you this past year?

How did you praise God for His blessings? Why do we need to praise God at all times?

What is one practical step you can take to becoming a praise-empowered believer in 2017?