

The Barnabas Files

Insight from the leadership of Northwest College

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A Christian's Indispensable Companion

by Dr. Dwaine Braddy

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For me, one of the most exciting times of winter was to sit down with my family and plan our summer vacation. If that vacation was to be successful, we had to make a checklist of what to take—everything from traveler's checks to the right number of socks and underwear. The frustration of it all would be preparing for the climb to an 11,000 foot mountain pass or a stroll alone an ocean beach only to find that we had forgotten to take a warm sweater—a necessary companion if we were to enjoy the altitude of the mountain pass or the stroll on the shore.

Just as there are indispensable companions which are necessary to our daily lives, so there are spiritual companions necessary to our spiritual lives.

The summer also affords us one of the most enjoyable opportunities for relaxation and fun—the family picnic. The picnic table is set and in all areas of the park the picnickers have arrived and are anxiously waiting to fill their plates with baked beans, corn on the cob, sliced tomatoes, potato salad, fried chicken, and anything else they can pile on their plate. The hot sun is shining, increasing the thirst and the tantalizing smell of the food. Then it happens. You look all over the table only to realize you forgot to bring the ice, or the silverware, or paper cups—all of which are necessary companions if the picnic is to be an enjoyable occasion.

It's Friday night and you've just put the last grocery item in the shopping cart. You're standing in the check-out lane. Finally, after

what seems like an hour of waiting, the clerk says, "That will be \$95.76, please." You reach into your purse or pocket only to find that you forgot to bring your checkbook, VISA card or enough cash—necessary companions if you are to take those sacks of groceries home.

Just as there are indispensable companions which are necessary to our daily lives, so there are spiritual companions necessary to our spiritual lives. One of these companions is doxology—or the companion of praise. Ascribing worth, honor, and power to God.

Several times in the Book of Romans, which is an argument for salvation by faith, the Apostle Paul interrupts his argument with a burst of praise. One such interruption occurs in chapter 11:33-36. After a lengthy treatment of the tragic situation concerning the Jews, from whom came the Christ but who had not believed in Him, Paul breaks off his argument suddenly and begins to sing:

"Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen" (NIV).

Why does Paul do this? How can he do this? Wasn't it Paul who said to the Corinthian church:

"I was in labors, in stripes, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often, of the Jews five times I received forty stripes except one. Three times I was beaten with rods, I was stoned once. Three times I suffered shipwreck, even spending a night and a day in the deep. Often I have been in perils of waters, robbers, by my own countrymen, by heathen—in the city, wilderness, sea and among false brethren. I have been in weariness and pain, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness... Beside these things I have had the daily care of all the churches" (II Cor. 11:23–28).

Look at Paul in the Philippian jail.

"And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison . . . into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks" (Acts 16:22–24, NASB).

Paul could break forth into songs of praise in a Philippian jail, or on the deck of a storm-tossed ship, or while sitting at his desk writing about the grand themes of creation, salvation, and redemption because he was himself a creation of the very grace he spoke about and experienced. From the day he began the great fight of faith, he learned to take praise along with him. He never left doxology behind. It was his companion until his last words in a Roman prison, "The time of my departure has come. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith . . . the Lord . . . will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (II Timothy 4:6-7, 18)

So it should be with us. Whether we spend our time in the factory, office, school, or the street doxology is our indispensable companion. It is never out of place.

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I don't want to give the wrong impression by what I say, however. I am not saying we should praise God for everything unpleasant that happens to us. Praise God, I broke my leg! Praise God, I lost my job! Praise God, my husband is an alcoholic. When Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks," he wasn't instructing us to praise God for the specific discouraging, unpleasant event or situation in which we might find ourselves. No! He was instructing the Thessalonians, and us as well, to recognize God's love for and presence with us in spite of the situation—that even in difficulties and tribulations there are some valuable lessons we can learn.

I remember a child in a church where I pastored. She was in the hospital for open-heart surgery. The day before her surgery, I visited her and held her on my lap. As I prayed for her, she began singing the chorus, "How Great Thou Art". From her lips came not just words to a chorus, but a praise to God in the midst of an uncertain outcome. That day Debbie taught me that praise is indispensable, and there is never a place where it is inappropriate to say, "for from Him and through Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen!"

A minister, going about his daily pastoral duties, made a stop at the hospital to see a lady patient who was dying of cancer. The seriousness of the visit prompted him to leave doxology in the car. Doxology insisted on going on in and was not at all convinced by his reasons for considering it inappropriate to take doxology into the room of a dying patient. So he locked doxology in the car. The lady was awake and was glad to see the pastor. But he awkwardly skirted the subject of death.

"It's all right," she said. "I know, and I have worked it through. God has blessed me with a wonderful family, good friends and much happiness. I am grateful. I do not want to die, but I am not bitter."

Before the pastor left, it was she who said the prayer. Back at the car, doxology asked, "Should I have been there?" "Yes," he said, "I am sorry I did not understand."¹

Once in a while we hear of a Christian who gives up. Not suddenly but slowly, zeal cools, faith weakens, appetite for the things of God disappears, the springs dry up, and the soul becomes parched. What happened? Did evil storm his or her life and take over? Not necessarily. Did attractive alternatives to Christianity turn his or her head? No! Perhaps nothing quite that dramatic. He or she simply failed to take doxology along daily. Doxology was lost and faith died.

Doxology, as an indispensable companion of our Christian lives, performs many valuable services for us. It is therapeutic. It is medicine for our minds. It is a mental sanctuary. We don't escape reality through praise; however, we are better equipped by it to deal with reality. The story of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, in II Chronicles 20 illustrates that fact.

Jehoshaphat was the king of Judah, and the nation was being invaded by the enemy. They were hopelessly outnumbered. God told Jehoshaphat to send the singers into battle; and as they sang the praises of God, God gave victory to Jehoshaphat and to the nation of Judah.

Whoever heard of sending a robed choir into battle? But II Chronicles 20:21-22 reads:

"He appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, 'Give thanks to the Lord, for His loving kindness is everlasting' and when they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes against (those) who had come against Judah; so they were routed" (NASB).

But perhaps the most valuable service that praise performs for us is to inspire within us and keep before us a God-awareness. We praise God not only for what He does, but for who He is. He is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides. He is

Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord who is our peace. He is Jehovah-Shamma, the Lord who is always present. He is Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord who is our righteousness. To praise is to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, and to devote the will to the purpose of God. Do you want to know God more intimately? Then let praise be your indispensable companion.

Dr. Fred Craddock, former Professor of New Testament at Phillips University, helps us see the necessity of making doxology our daily companion in the following story:

It was from the class on Romans that I was called to the phone. My older brother had just died. Heart attack. When stunned and hurt, get real busy to avoid thought. Call the wife. Get the kids out of school. Arrange for a colleague to take my classes. Cancel a speaking engagement. And, oh yes, stop the milk, the paper, the mail; have someone feed the dog. Who can take my Sunday School class? Service the car. "I think I packed the clothes we need", the wife said as we threw luggage and our bodies into the car.

All night we drove, across two states, eyes pasted open against the windshield. Conversation was spasmodic, consisting of taking turns asking the same questions

over and over. No one pretended to have answers. When we drew near the town and the house, I searched my mind for a word, a first word to the widow. He was my brother but he was her husband. I was still searching when we pulled into the driveway. She came out to meet us and as I opened the car door, still without a word, she broke the silence.

"I hope you brought doxology." Doxology? No, I had not. I had not even thought of doxology since the phone call. But the truth is now clear, if we ever lose our doxology we might as well be dead. "For from him and through him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."²

¹Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority*, 3rd edit. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 164-6.
²*ibid* 168.

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Below is a list of books which Dr. Dwaine Braddy has found helpful in his teaching of Homiletics and preaching ministry. We hope they will be useful to the reader.

DeBrand, Roy E. (Ed.). *Guide To Biographical Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988.

Duduit, Michael, (Ed.). *Handbook of Contemporary Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992.

Fee, Gordon D. & Stuart, Douglas. *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth* (2nd). Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers House.

Galli, Mark & Larson, Craig Brian. *Preaching That Connects*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House.

Hybels, Bill & Briscoe, Stuart & Robinson, Haddon. *Mastering Contemporary Preaching*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1989.

Loscalzo, Craig A. *Preaching Sermons That Connect*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992

McDill, Wayne. *The 12 Essential Skills For Great Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

Miller, Calvin. *The Empowered Communicator: 7 Keys to Unlocking an Audience*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.

Biblical Sermons: *How Twelve Preachers Apply the Principles of Biblical Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989

Shoemaker, H. Stephen. *Retelling the Biblical Story: The Theology and Practice of Narrative Preaching*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985.

Wiersbe, Warren W. *Preaching & Teaching with Imagination: The Quest For Biblical Ministry*. Wheaton, IL: Corporate Ministries Victor Books, 1994.

Zuck, Roy B. *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide To Discover Biblical Truth*. Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, 1991.

The Professional Journal for Preachers: Preaching. Preaching Resources, Inc., Jackson, TN.

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If you want to establish a scholarship program call Rev. Bruce Cole, Development Director at (206) 889-5205.

If you need a Summer Ministry Team call Jeff Lockhart, Director of College Relations at (206) 889-5208.

If you need a Church Stewardship Seminar contact Joni Campbell, Northwest College Foundation at (206) 889-5203.

If you need transcripts contact the Registrar's Office at (206) 889-5300.

If you are interested in A.G.T.S. contact Gloria Hollefreund at (206) 889-5237.

If you have Alumni questions contact Thora Jean Bulger, Alumni Coordinator at (206) 889-5206.

If there are other questions you have feel free to contact the Receptionist at (206) 822-8266.

The Barnabas Files newsletter is published monthly by Northwest College. It is our intention that this publication, written by our faculty, will be an inspiration and will encourage the reader.

If you have any questions or comments please contact Reverend Bruce Cole, College Advancement Office, PO Box 579, Kirkland, WA 98083. (206) 889-5205. bruce.cole@ncag.edu