

## The Power of True Praise *by Art Katz*

There is no deception more profound than that for which Charismatics and Pentecostals are most subject. We think, albeit unconsciously, that the euphoric thing we enjoy by our music and choruses is really the statement of our faith. *We* may enjoy it, and we *hope* that God is being blessed also, but we need to be ruthlessly honest and gird ourselves with truth; and we need first of all to be truthful about our own condition. The true statement of our faith and the condition of our lives are what we experience in fear or apprehension about death, and about insecurity, when we stand in a tremulous place where an authority is confronting us that expresses the rule of the principalities and powers. The issue is not whether our worship pleases us or facilitates the service, but whether it is in fact worship. True worship is the statement and expression of the redemptive work of God that has been experienced in our lives authentically and corporately.

Loudness is power, and it is manipulative when the sound amplifiers are turned up. It is predicated on the notion that the powers of the air will be defeated through militant or revved up 'worship.' The moment we begin to employ worship for purposes other than worship, then it no longer is worship. God knows when there is a worship that has no strings attached. True worship is simply the adoration and devotion that God deserves because He is God. But when we make of it a manipulation and a tool toward an end, even a religiously desired end, then it is no longer worship. We are on the enemy's ground, and employing an expediency to obtain an end, and still calling it worship, and we are just as much deceived to think that a vigorous, banner-waving worship defeats the powers!

*"Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you?"* may well be asked of us. "Yes, we hear your praise, and we hear your choruses, but there is something about them that is hollow. It is merely singing, and it is not, therefore, something that we are required as the rulers of darkness to acknowledge!" This is what the forces of darkness utter when they encounter a church operating in less than the fullness of its inheritance in Christ. There is a praise and worship that is mere singing, but there is also a praise that wells up to Heaven, which is more than the product of charismatic manipulation. It is a praise that is a spontaneous breaking forth

of a celebration of the God who has saved us, not only out of fear, insecurity and anxiety, but who has brought us to a transcendent place of apostolic faith. That kind of praise devastates the powers of darkness.

Our call as the church to resist the Devil is not dependent upon what we *do*, but what we *are*. It is something in the *character* of the church. Our victory will be related to the quality and continuous character of the fellowship itself. So long as there is any surrender or condescension to the wisdom of those powers, for example, fear, intimidation, threat, concern for one's life and security, then the powers have a place of penetration. When they see a people who are resolute in their faith, and know that their security does not come from the world, or from their employer, or from the State, but from God, then the powers are without any weapon. There is nothing that can be attacked.

Paul and Silas' imprisonment in Acts 16 is a wonderful demonstration of the wisdom of God. At midnight they were praying and singing praises unto God. They believed that their suffering was the very consequence of their obedience, and that even though only one woman was affected by their ministry, they were in the place of obedience to the heavenly vision. It did not matter whether they would lose their lives or not, because that was not the issue. They had such a deep faith in the sovereignty of God, and the privilege of sharing in His sufferings, that they rejoiced, and it was expressed in praise.

When you can praise God in the midst of adversity and suffering, you have the most powerful release from the powers of darkness. They cannot stand it, or bear to hear it, and they flee, because it is the overwhelming evidence of the reality of the invisible God. It contradicts their wisdom which says that when you are suffering, you are to be mourning, pouting, feeling sorry for yourself, blaming God, and accusing this man or that. But when you can praise God in the midst of your sufferings, you have ruined them. You have taken their last weapon, and they have nothing they can use anymore to threaten or to intimidate. You have broken through onto a heavenly ground. They are absolutely helpless to adversely affect you, and so they are required to flee.

The one thing that the powers of darkness are required to acknowledge is authenticity—the thing that is real. I am an enemy, therefore, to what seems to be real in worship and praise that puts such emphasis on musical ability, on instruments, on loudspeakers, on electronic technology, on song and on worship leaders. One of my greatest battles as a prophetic person is with worship leaders. Oftentimes, it happens that I have a speaking engagement, and by the time the worship is over, I am completely depleted and drained. I get up and it is a pathetic beep next to what I knew the Lord was wanting. The worship, so-called, that should have enhanced the word actually *robbed* and blunted it. There is so much emphasis on worship that almost makes the success of the church depend upon it. "Did you enjoy the worship?"—instead of it being the spontaneous expression of the redemptive work of God in the life of the believers, personally and corporately.

Jesus endured all of His suffering for the *joy* that was set before Him, in the anticipation of what would be the consequence of His suffering for eternity. This is the wisdom of God, because rejoicing in suffering is a contradiction. It is contrary to reason and *everything* we think natural to man. What is natural to man is survival, "Take care of number one." But the wisdom that can rejoice in suffering is another wisdom, and it is that wisdom which defeats the powers. It is the greater wisdom, but it is not enough just to speak it. It has got to be made manifest, to be demonstrated, by a church whose inner life is itself her proclamation of God's manifold wisdom. Whether she speaks it or not, the very inner life itself is that thing. It becomes that through trial, through testing, through the Lord allowing oppression, heaviness of spirit—all of the kinds of things against which we have to struggle and work out in our relationships. It is becoming one as He is one, in all of the differences, all of the personalities, all of the things that come up that take the guts out of you, where you want to run and find the first Charismatic and Evangelical fellowship you can, just to be relieved from the tension of all of these demands. It is in those tensions, however, that God forms *His* character