

# ***Glory To God!***

**Catechism Q/A 128 & 129  
Psalm 148**

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We have been spending the last few months working on a study of the Lord's Prayer, learning much about how our prayer life ought to function, and how that affects our lives as soldiers of Jesus. The catechism has functioned as our guide, basing its questions and answers on the version of the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6.9-13..... all except this evenings question and answer.

You may well know that it is without good biblical precedent. If you look in the hymnal at Q/A 119 you will see a footnote that reads "earlier and better manuscripts of Mat 6 omit the words, "for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen."

Indeed that is the case.

Writers of the Catechism worked with early translations of the Scriptures. And those translations depended on the manuscripts available to them, which at best were only a few hundred years old. Since then archaeology has unearthed much older and better New Testament manuscripts. No manuscript before the 6th century includes the words we're reflecting on today.

And no modern translation includes the words.

So here we sit with the words that have no immediate biblical reference. And yet no church assembly has ever seen fit to revise this question and answer. And that's probably because, while the immediate textual basis is not correct, there still remains a very vast body of biblical evidence that supports the teaching of this Lord's Day. It's just that we'll have to go to passages other than Matthew 6 to learn about the topic at hand.

That topic is, of course, the place of doxology in prayer;

doxology coming from the Greek word that means speaking words of glory about someone, words of praise - in this case God.

We're pausing to consider where doxologies,  
where words of praise to God,  
fit in our prayer life -  
- their purpose  
- their effect.

Let's begin with a quick review of the basic concept of Praise as revealed in the Scriptures.

And we can turn to, among other places, the passage we used as our call to Worship this evening - Psalm 92.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,  
to sing praises to the Most High.  
It is good to proclaim his unfailing love in the morning,  
His faithfulness in the evening...

Here's the essence of praise:  
to publically give credit to God where credit is due.

Read with me from Psalm 148, p.582 (Old Testament).

Listen to the writer repeat himself:

*Praise the Lord*  
*Praise the Lord*  
*Praise him,*  
*praise him,*  
*praise him,*

*praise him,  
praise him,  
praise him,  
praise the Lord  
- and for variety -  
praise the name of the Lord.  
praise the Lord.*

Like the Psalmist has a one-track mind.

Praise is so important that the bible gives over 400 examples of people praising God or direct commands for us to become involved in praising God.

We make a big, hairy deal in the Church over topics with far less biblical precedent, like baptism or sexual morality or the trinity.

Seems to me that, given the amount of Scriptural imperative, Praise needs to be raised right to the very top of the agenda of the Body of Christ.

Let us, here at Calvin, raise up as of singular importance the lifting up and making great the reputation of God in the eyes and ears of other people,  
telling of the great things he has done,  
and telling of how good and powerful and loving he is.  
Because, after all,  
that is what praise is.

Praise sentences are sentences beginning with

"God is...  
God has done...  
Lord you are..."

Praise, as presented to us in the bible is a very wide-ranging event.

There are three different Hebrew words for praise, all of which have meanings that overlap somewhat, but also have their unique aspects.

The first is *halel* –

– from which we get "hallelujah" - Praise the Lord. It is often found in praise of God in song, especially delighted singing, rejoicing, and joy. It is exuberant. Psalm 149.3 calls for us to engage in *hallel* with dancing. One gets the picture of people singing at the top of their lungs. One sees David leaping and twirling before the Ark of God.

The second word is *zamer*, –

a word that is closely connected with the playing of instruments, and again, also with song. People are given musical ability by God and the call comes, especially in the Psalms to use that gift to praise him: trumpet, harp, cymbals, stringed instruments of various sorts.

The third word is *yadeh*,

which comes initially from the noun for "Hands." It is a praise word that implies activity: through art, daily work, helping others.....

As sometimes we pray, "Lord, let the activities of my life be a cause for honour to be given to you, and NOT a stumbling block or a cause for blasphemy."

song and dance,

making instrumental music  
working with our hands  
all with the goal of enhancing and bringing attention to  
God's reputation.

Have you ever wondered why we're called to do this?  
Why, more than 400 times, are we challenged and invited and prodded and downright *commanded*  
to enhance God's reputation,  
to, for lack of a better phrase,  
go around bragging about God.

If I asked you, 400 times, to praise me, I suspect that the rumor might begin that I am self-centred,  
vain, or insecure.

So, if such calls to praise are invalid and inappropriate for me to issue, why are they OK for  
God to issue?

One part of the answer is that praise, expression of enjoyment and appreciation in an overt  
manner, is **necessary** for the human soul to truly complete the enjoyment of the thing or person  
concerned.

That's how God made us.

And so, for us to have complete enjoyment of Him, we need to praise Him.

It works like this. Praise happens spontaneously in all different areas of life -  
lovers praising their partners,  
readers praising their favorite writers,  
hikers praising the beauty of the countryside,  
players praising their favorite game.

We praise good weather, fine beverages and dishes, horses, countries, colleges, children, flowers,  
rare stamps, you name it.

And not only do we praise things we enjoy, but we urge others to join us in that praise, "Isn't  
she wonderful? Didn't he cook a splendid meal? Don't you think that is magnificent?"

- [adap. C.S.Lewis *Reflections On The Psalms* p.95-7]

Don Postema, in his book *Space For God*, talks about the circle of joy. A mother comes to  
the cradle of her infant child and gives a huge smile of joy. The child coos back and gurgles in  
delight. Which makes mother give the child a tender kiss of affection.

Joy is experienced, expressed, and returned.

It is felt, shared, and as a result is magnified.

Perhaps you've experienced it yourself in one form or another:

You read a terrific book but don't have anyone with whom you can share the experience. Or  
you see a terrific sunrise as you drive across the city, but the other person in the car cares for it no  
more than for a tin can in the ditch, and you end up remaining silent - but you feel as though you are  
bursting inside, and their lack of appreciation actually stifles your enjoyment.

That's how it is with praise. In commanding us to praise him God is actually enabling us to  
"complete our enjoyment of him" [Lewis *ibid*].

Second, praise builds a stronger bond between God and his people. It draws us away from  
attention on ourselves and focuses our attention on God.

In our daily lives we spend a great deal of time with our own concerns, our own advancement  
and our own well-being in life.

When too much time is spent on that our sense of reality can become distorted.

Praise helps us realign our priorities; it resets our life's compass; it puts everything back into perspective:

Who God is and who we are;

what God's place in the cosmic scheme of things is, and what our's is.

It anchors our relationship with God.

With that anchored relationship comes a third benefit of praise: it builds strength of Christian character, making us more able to work productively for Jesus and to become more effective, bolder witnesses for the Lord.

All of which makes praise a threat to Satan, who wants nothing more than that our relationship with God grow steadily weaker and more lethargic. The devil wants us to push God to the **outside** of our lives, rather than to the center - which is what praise does.

When a Christian is praising God

it is **Satan**

that is pushed to the outside.

And, finally, a fourth benefit of praise occurs in community. When God's people join together in praise it is like each person bringing a flower and forming them into a giant bouquet which is presented to our Master.

In that way praise is probably one of the most healing, uplifting, and strengthening activities in which the church of Jesus Christ can engage.

It draws us closer to God

**and**

closer to each other.

We forget our needs our pet peeves and our petty differences and our irritable idiosyncracies, and instead we find what it is that truly unites us - brother and sisterhood in the great family of God.

At least, that is, if we focus on actually praising, and not get all balled up and nattering about the **form** of the praise!

Given all this, it is no wonder then that we would want to ensure that praise occupies a significant portion of our time of our Christian activity.

And that includes our prayer time.

### **Praise belongs in prayer.**

The scriptures portray for us how praise can fit in prayer.

Take 1 Chronicles 29, where David prepares to hand the throne over to his son Solomon. Before he does he assembles all the people in Jerusalem and dedicates the great wealth he has accumulated for the building of the temple. Right at the beginning of his prayer, looking at the people, looking at all the treasures laying before him, and looking at his son, the new king David gives praise to God.

Although the praise here is found at the beginning of the prayer, it serves precisely the same function as the praise which we pray at the end of the Lord's Prayer. In the words of the catechism:

*We present all these requests to you because, as our all-powerful king, you not only want to, but are able to give us all that is good; and because your holy name, and not we ourselves, should receive all the praise, forever.*

Think for a moment about the nature of prayer.

In its essence, prayer is communion with God. It is relating heart to heart with God; opening the deepest parts of ourselves to God; becoming totally honest and totally vulnerable to God.

It is, as we saw when we discussed the phrase "Our Father in heaven" the intimate time of relationship between a perfectly loving divine parent and his human child - you, and me.

And, as we already saw, praise helps us turn our attention away from ourselves and focus on God. Therefore, praise helps prevent prayer from degenerating into a selfish session of us praying "Gimme, gimme, gimme;" It helps us to treat God more as Father, and less like some divine magician whose task it is to grant our wishes. Praise puts a badly needed balance into our prayer life.

We do well to begin and end our prayers with doxology.

And our worship services.

Begin and end with glorifying the One around whom it all revolves.

So - here's a chance for a bit of self-inventory.

Do we, in our praying, give sufficient space to the praise and adoration of God, to declaring his holiness and worthiness and wonder, or has prayer become strictly a time of asking things from God?

In preparing for this meditation I was amazed how many authors refer to prayer as strictly bringing petitions to God. The element of praise was treated separately, as something outside of prayer.

Hey, *I've* done that - just a few weeks ago, in fact. Led you through an evening service that I advertised as a "*Praise 'n Prayer*" service - inadvertently suggesting them to be separate.

In fact, prayer makes up probably **the** most critical element of prayer. It is not an option. It is not an extra.

I will go so far as to say that the person whose prays regularly without praise experiences a crippled prayer life.

So, now back to the beginning. Since Matthew 6 doesn't include the doxology, words of praise, in the Lord's Prayer, should we drop such words out of our prayers?

And the answer is, a resounding **NO!** We would be crippling our Christian experience, and be derelict in our duty to God if we did such a thing.

And so, with one voice and heart, we can conclude our study of the prayer saying -

For **YOURS** is the kingdom....

It's all yours, O Lord!

The Power,

the glory,

everything!

Amen!