



fore all the
I took courage,
Lord my God

Where Did My Praiser Go?

Dr. Billy Thomas

It was a Homecoming Celebration. Valerie and I were invited to speak and sing at a church's homecoming celebration. They are always exciting as everyone comes home, there is great singing, always a potluck dinner, and by this, you know it was in the south! In the south means lots of butter, sweet tea, delicious home-cooked food, and amazing desserts! It was going to be a great day. We arrived early at the church, wanting to greet the pastor, see old friends, and get a feel of what was happening. We walked into the sanctuary, and they were getting ready for the "singin". Each person who would be singing was taking a turn during the sound check to make sure everyone was ready.

The fun started when the children's ministry was going to practice. There were about ten kids who made their way sleepily to the platform, not sure why they had to do this, but knowing that family would be taking pictures, so let's just get it over with. All but one small boy. Couldn't have been over 5 years old, and he was excited! He led the way on all the motions and took the front row by storm! He was stepping out and stepping up with his praise on! I thought to myself, I can't wait to see him as a worship leader in a few years. The leaders tried to get him "under control", but that was not happening, so they just let it happen!

The service began. Wonderful worship. Wonderful time of celebration. Such great music and talent. Then the time arrived for the children's ministry to come back to the platform for all the grandpa's and grandma's that had shown up to take pictures. I was excited because I knew what was about to take place, or at least I thought I did. There were new kids that came up at the insistence of mom and dad. Most you could tell had not been there and did not know the song. But where was the little worship leader? He was not there, not to be found, and then I heard the commotion in the back. Mom was trying to make him come up front. I am not sure what was wrong. He was hungry. He was tired. Was the service simply taking too long? I didn't know what was wrong, but I did know the praise had changed!

Mom moved him up to the platform. He stood with arms crossed, a foul look on his face, and simply put...there was no praise about it! Of course, he stayed in the front row. It wasn't long till he moved to the steps on the platform and just sat down. I don't mean that they all sat down; the rest of the group was trying to do the motions and keep the singing going, but the "praiser" had simply lost his praise! Psalm 34:1, one of my life verses, came to mind quickly: "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." But one thing was for sure: it was not this young man's life verse at that moment!

I know that I should have been watching the other kids, but I couldn't take my eyes off this little guy. In fact, I felt like going up, sitting down beside him on the steps, putting my head in my hands, and just sitting there. I had been sick. It was during the time that I was not able to travel far. Valerie was carrying the load that week. I just felt like I used to praise earlier, but now I lost my "praiser".

Lost my "praiser"? Now, what a statement that is. I know that some of you are going to read that and say, what's wrong with the preacher? The fact is, nothing was wrong with the preacher; it was my praiser that was broken. I went back to Psalm 34:1 and remembered it said "all times" and "continually". I wasn't given the option to have my "praiser" broken. I had to figure this one out. Why does it seem that there are times in life when we have faced mountains, giants, struggles, disappointments, that it seems like our "praiser" is broken. I realized three answers to help heal me and my little friends' "praisers".

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1. I wasn't focused on the One that I was to be praising.

Matthew 6:33 tells us to seek first His kingdom and righteousness...and then all these things will be added to us. First and foremost, my praise must be set on the One I am seeking. When I am focused, **He is faithful.**

2. I was trying to carry my burdens alone.

1 Peter 5:7 tells us to cast all our cares on him because He cares for us. With this in mind, there are two things to remember. I don't have to carry it alone, and someone really does care about me. **I don't have to carry it all myself.**

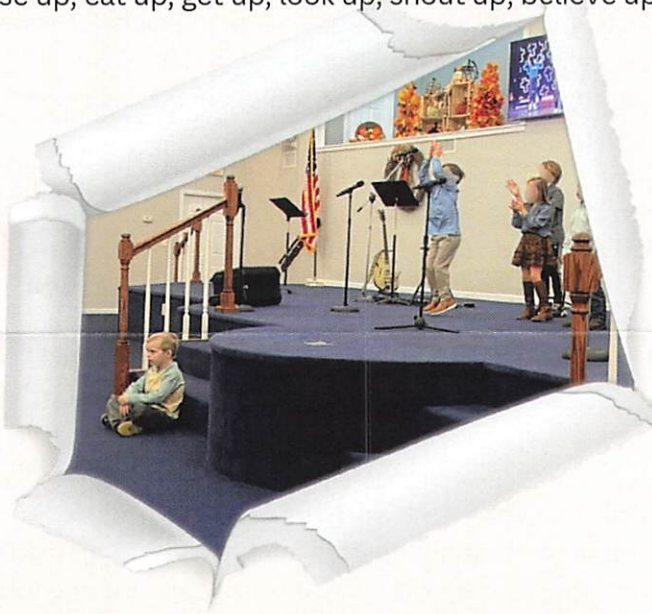
3. I was living in the present instead of looking to the future.

Romans 8:18 tells us that our present problems are nothing compared to the future glory God will reveal in us. The things going on right now, this too shall pass.

God has a plan, begin to praise Him for that future!

I didn't move to the stairs of the platform. The little guy finally ran back to his family. Later that day, during the potluck, I saw the same little guy running around playing. I guess his future glory was the potluck! At five or six years old, that is possible. But at 30, 40, 50, or even 63, the future glory is not that simple. It's not that simple to keep focused. It's not that simple to cast all my cares. It's not that simple to rely on future plans. Sometimes, you just want to sit down and claim your "praiser" is broken. But the truth is, your "praiser" is not broken; you just lost sight of the One to praise.

Some of you might be sitting on the 2025 platform steps; head in your hands, worried about life. I have good news, let's begin to get our praise on for 2026. I think that this just might be your year! This could be it. This could be the year of victory. You won't know with your head in your hands, so let's join the potluck, raise up, eat up, get up, look up, shout up, believe up, and plan for a rising up of our "praisers"!



This photo shows the actual "praiser" after he started on the top step and worked his way down to the floor. This photo is shared with the permission of his parents.

Exciting News

We are excited about all God is doing as we begin this new year! We are hopeful to meet with a land developer in the next few weeks to discuss clearing the property in Tennessee. After many calls and challenges, we truly believe the Lord has led us in the right direction and we are finally seeing progress.

We're also launching a new monthly podcast, ***"I've Got Questions!"***; unscripted conversations where I ask the questions and Billy answers them. The first episode is already out on our YouTube channel **@EzrasCourage**, with another one coming this week. If you subscribe to our channel, you will receive notification when we post a new episode. Our goal is at least one new episode each month.

Several have requested monthly giving receipts in addition to an annual receipt. We are happy to do that; please watch for those coming soon. If you prefer to receive your monthly receipt by email, simply text your email address and name of course to **(478) 396-5789**.

We love you all, and we truly believe it's going to be a **GREAT** year!