

Tending the Fruit of Praise

By Lou Ann Cochran

The word “praise” is found many places in the Scriptures. In Hosea 14:1-2 (NIV), for instance, Hosea says, *“Return, Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him: ‘Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips.’”* Recognizing our sins and asking forgiveness has to come first before our praise is real.

In addition, Hebrews 13:15-16 says, *“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess His name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”* When I think of fruit, I think about how it isn’t something that easily pops into existence. It has to come from a plant or tree that has only grown into maturity from proper nutrients and light. Praise (the fruit of our lips) does not come easily either; it truly is a sacrifice of denying our fleshly responses.

In Philippians 4:8, moreover, Paul urges, *“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”* So often I want to find things that are wrong with the situation or play the game “ain’t it awful.” Putting aside what I want to say and remembering what pleases the Lord is truly a sacrifice!

Judah, whose name means “praise,” was the fourth of the twelve sons of Jacob. Genesis 29:35 states: *“She [Leah] conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, ‘This time I will praise the LORD.’ So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.”* And it turned out that later in his life Judah was praised by his brothers who recognized his position of leadership in his family and for his people. In Genesis 37:26-27, we are told that he helped spare his brother Joseph’s life: *“Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed.”* And later, when they went down to Egypt, Judah was the spokesman for his family to Joseph (Genesis 44:14-34). Also, in later years, as the tribes were marching through the wilderness, the tribe of Judah went first. When the Jews returned from captivity, the land was called Judah. They were the “Judahites,” otherwise known as Jews. Lastly, if we follow Judah’s name through the Scripture, we find that the Messiah was prophesied to come through the line of Judah. (One such prophecy is Micah 5:2, which says, *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for Me One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”*) Jesus Christ indeed came from that line and is the Messiah!! Praise to the Lord!!

As I think about Leah who was not the wife Jacob loved (as he loved Rachel more), I remember that even though bearing Jacob’s sons did not bring her love from Jacob, GOD remembered her and gave her great honor by listing her in the line of Jesus Christ. Sometimes God has better plans for us than we have. We can look back in our lives and see God’s hand has guided us in a different direction and we can say, “Praise His Holy Name!!”

The Bible lists many things to praise God about, such as His attributes of faithfulness, forgiveness, love, grace; His Moral Law; and His creation – the list is unending. David reminds us in the following Psalms that we need to praise Him now while we are still alive as a testimony to His name.

Psalm 6:4-5: *“Turn, LORD, and deliver me; save me because of Your unfailing love. Among*

the dead no one proclaims Your name. Who praises You from the grave?"

Psalm 30:9: *"What is gained if I am silenced, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise You? Will it proclaim Your faithfulness?"*

Psalm 88:10: *"Do you show Your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise You?"*

Psalm 115:17: *"It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to the place of silence...."*

May I work on the fruit of my lips and be quick to testify about Him in praise. Time is short; let us be about it!!

(Note: Study on Judah is a summary from *Jacob's Dozen* by William C. Varner, published by Friends of Israel.)