

Voices: 'He is your praise'

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He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. (Deuteronomy 10:21)



Steve Bezner I often am stunned at the things that strike me when reading the Bible. In 2008, one of my mentors challenged me to read the Bible in its entirety each calendar year. I practiced regular Bible reading at the time, but I never had read the entire book in that span of time. I now am working on my 10th consecutive year of reading the Bible from cover to cover.

New verses jump off the page each year. I am certain my caffeine intake and alertness levels are culprits. Yet I also believe the Holy Spirit is at play. The Lord seems to draw me to Scriptures that are necessary in the very moment I need them each year. I have not been able to discern any sort of pattern to these scriptural revelations, but they come with incredible timeliness.

Reading vs. slogging



Most recently, while reading Deuteronomy, I could sense my energy and alertness flagging. I once heard a preacher say Deuteronomy was Jesus' favorite book of the Bible. He supported his claim by pointing out that, when confronted by the devil, Jesus consistently quoted Deuteronomy. His proclamation has haunted me, because I often find myself doing something other than reading Deuteronomy. I would describe my annual journey through Deuteronomy more like logging.

It was in the midst of a low-energy slog that I read the first bit of Deuteronomy 10:21: "He is your praise."

I was a few lines past that verse when the short sentence caused my consciousness to suddenly bolt awake. He is your praise.

I read the verse again. And then I read it again. I read it in its entirety: "He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen."

No need for (human) praise

The notion that the Lord himself is my praise was something I never had considered before, and, for some unknown reason, I found it shaking my spiritual core. I have openly divulged to my church and friends that the greatest temptation I face as a pastor is the desire to be loved. I want to be wanted. I want to make decisions others will laud. I want to preach sermons others will compliment. Put simply, I want praise.

And now Deuteronomy 10:21 turned that notion on its head. The Lord himself is my praise.

Why? The second sentence explains. He has done incredible things for his people. He has done these things so we might know that our need for human praise is unnecessary, for his works already have bestowed the highest of praises upon our heads.

This is the essence of the gospel. As a sinner, continually weak and wandering from the Lord, I was stuck in a morass of morality and self-help, seeking to impress others and myself. I was impossible. I was dirty. I was a poser.

God gave himself

And yet, in the midst of that difficulty, the Lord saw me, and he gave me himself. He became human. And he gave himself for me.

God deemed me worthy of Jesus—and that is the greatest praise I ever could receive.

I need no compliments on my work ethic or my sermon. I need no approval on my leadership decisions. I have been given the ultimate compliment of praise in the person of Christ.

When God did this great and terrifying thing in giving me his Son, he made it clear I am worth something—even when the internal voice of temptation might whisper something differently.

God gave Jesus, because Jesus is the highest form of praise I could ever receive.

He is my praise.

And God gave Jesus for you, as well. You do not need the approval of

others. He has done this great and terrifying thing for you.

Jesus has given himself for you; he has declared you worthy.

He is your praise.

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