

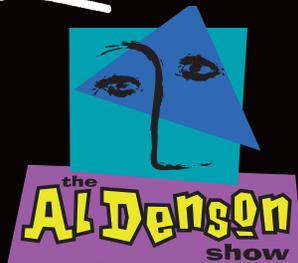
Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with God through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network dealing with the issues today's youth and parents are facing, while providing answers from a Godly perspective.

Please help us with your donation. Your support will not only keep this program on the air, but will allow us to continue providing these materials on a weekly basis to thousands of people as a gift of encouragement. We need YOU to partner with us. All gifts are tax-deductible. Please make your gift payable to Celebration Ministries and mail to the address below.

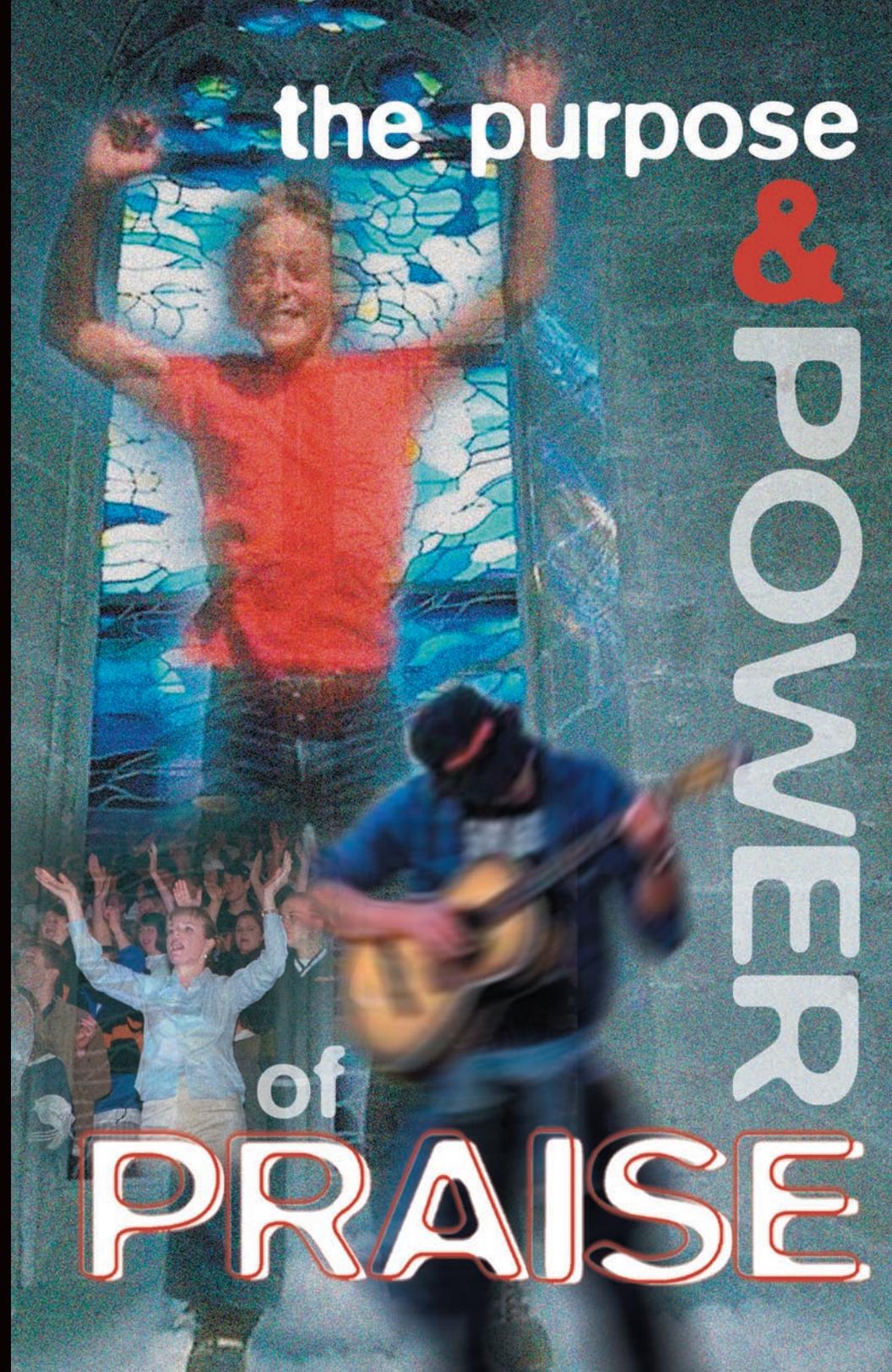
May God bless you and thank you for watching!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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the purpose

&

POWER

of

PRAISE



When Al Denson speaks to students—more than 2,000,000 face to face—he comes with his own story of struggle and tragedy. In December 1994,

Al's much publicized, near-death experience in the crash of a small aircraft led him to a rare insight about the tenuous nature of earthly life.

With seven albums behind him and a string of #1 songs and awards that includes a Dove for "Best Praise Album of the Year", Denson's songs and messages to students from junior high through college continue to touch an ever-widening audience. In addition to his own performances, Al has been featured at crusades for Dr. Billy Graham, Franklin Graham, Ralph Bell, and Dawson McAllister. His new TV show, "The Al Denson Show", is seen by millions on TBN. The program targets and involves youth and the issues they face every day.

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the purpose and **POWER** of **PRAISE**

If I were to ask you what you think a Christian's purpose in life is, you may give the "spiritual" answer and say, "to serve the Lord, of course". Well, that may sound like a good answer, but the problem is it's the wrong answer! **GOD DID NOT SAVE YOU TO SERVE HIM.**

For God to have created you to serve Him would be like your parents giving birth to you just so they would have someone to clean the house and mow the lawn! If all your Mom and Dad wanted was manual labor, they could hire a full-time maid and yard service for twenty-five years and still come out ahead by a hundred thousand dollars!

Please listen carefully. God did not save you for service to Him, but for **FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM**. The reason that you were created and saved was to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Through praise and thanksgiving you can fulfill this and have the privilege to minister to almighty God.

When we praise God, we give Him something that nothing else in creation can give which is love and adoration. He made you for Himself and wants to have an intimate relationship with you that will last throughout eternity. Our praise blesses God and makes Him glad.

We were created to be worshippers of God. God is worthy of our worship, not because of **WHAT** He does, but because of **WHO** He is. True worship is not based on our circumstances or feelings. It is praising God for who and what He is and thanking Him,

in spite of our circumstances and feelings, for what He has done.

The Hebrew title of the book of Psalms is "Praise" or the "Book of Praises". If you hold your Bible in your hand and turn to the very middle, you will be in the book of Psalms. This is true on a physical level, but there is a deeper truth involved. Praise is to be the center of our lives as well.

Why do you think God makes such a big deal out of praise? Is it because He is ego-centered? Not even close. God enjoys and delights in praise because He knows it is the way we can relate to, and be intimate with Him.

C.S. Lewis said that just as a car is made to run on gas and won't run properly on anything else, God made us to run on Himself. He is the only fuel the human spirit was designed to burn and feed on. Apart from God, there is no energy, no power, and no fulfillment for us in life. Praise releases that energy and power in our lives.

God is sovereign, holy, and all powerful. We receive all that we are and have from Him. Praise and thanksgiving keep those truths in perspective for us. God wants us to praise and worship Him, not because He needs it, but because **GIVING** praise is a need we have. Remember, praise to us is like gasoline to a car. We were designed to "run" on worship, so praise is actually a gift to us from God that helps us "run" more effectively. If you want to live life to its fullest, you will have to live a life of praise.

God's love is **TOTALLY** unconditional

Psalms 22:3 says that God inhabits the praises of His people, that He is “enthroned” upon our praises. God’s presence is always in and with us like electricity in a lamp, but praise is the switch that turns on the **PURPOSE** and **POWER** of God and makes us aware of His presence in our lives.

Are you beginning to see how important praise really is? Let’s look more closely at the **PURPOSE**, the **POWER**, and the **PRACTICE** of **PRAISE**.

THE PURPOSE OF PRAISE...

1. In Strengthening Our FAITH... Praise is a basic way to express and strengthen our faith. Faith moves God to reveal Himself to us and do mighty works for us. There is nothing magical about praise, it simply puts our faith in action. Praise is acceptance of what God has brought into our lives.

When we trust God completely, He is free to work and bring victory to our situation. The victory may come in the form of having our circumstances change, or the circumstances may remain the same, and the change comes in us. Either way, our faith is strengthened, and every time we are reminded how much larger God is than our problem, we are able to trust Him more when the next test of faith comes along.

2. In Focusing Our FAITH... Praise helps us focus our faith on our merciful, all powerful God who is so much greater than our failures. When we focus on

God, He sets us free from our unbelief and renews our confidence in Him. Praise tunes out the conflicting voices of the world that destroy our faith. True praise is unconditional. It isn’t an attempt to manipulate God into producing the results we hope for. Praise helps us accept the situation whether it changes or not.

When we focus our attention on God through praise, we acknowledge Him as our power source. We begin to see our problems in the light of His great power. When we compare our problems to His power, they immediately seem to shrink before our eyes. Praise speeds up the spiritual maturing process in our lives as we focus on our Father.

3. In The Fight Of Faith... Timothy 6:12 says that faith is a fight. Why? Because we have a source we cannot see. Right now we live among people and things that we can see. So, it is a fight to keep drawing our sense of worth and value from our “unseen Source” and believing the truth about ourselves, and not give in to all the lies that are hurled at us everyday by the people and things we can see.

In Colossians 3:4 it says, “Christ...is our life”. Is that true in your life? You can be a Christian, but still not know this truth experientially. The Bible says that not only is Christ in you, but you are also “in Christ”. It also says at the instant of salvation something supernatural takes

place. The “old” you dies, and a “new” you is born in that place. The “new” you not only has Jesus in you, but you are “in him” as well. Now, when God looks at you, He sees Jesus, and because of Jesus, you are now holy, pure, blameless, and righteous in His sight.

God’s love is **TOTALLY** unconditional and because He accepts and approves of Jesus, He **COMPLETELY** accepts and approves of you, because you are “**IN CHRIST**”. Praise is a tremendous tool that will help this truth become real in your life and will keep reminding you to see yourself through God’s eyes.

4. In The Fire Of FAITH... Praise can make us aware that difficult circumstances are God’s blessings in disguise. Praise invites the Holy Spirit to bring a confidence into our lives that God is in control. Just like fire brings the impurities in gold to the top, when the “heat” is turned up in our lives, the impurities come to the surface as well. Praise allows those things to be revealed and removed. But, if we resist, then those things just settle back into our lives and will have to be dealt with again. Usually, the next time the fire has to be hotter and the process is more painful.

When the heat gets turned up in our lives, God wants the fire to do for us exactly what it did for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You remember in Daniel 3:25 that when they were thrown into

the fiery furnace, the only thing that got burned were the ropes that bound them.

You can’t live in this world very long without being bound by ropes of fear, anger, resentment, unforgiveness, guilt, pride, self-sufficiency, bad theology, etc. However, God wants us to be free, so He allows us to go through the “Refiners fire” that will cause the impurities in our lives to rise to the surface. As these impurities are dealt with, all the hurtful things that bind us are burned away. When we respond to the fire with praise and thanksgiving, we will experience a new purification and freedom in our life.

5. In The Feelings Of FAITH... When we worship through praise and thanksgiving, we are offering ourselves to God completely. Our basic goal in life is to know Him better and love Him more. In worship we bow before the Lord, yielding to Him as fully as we know how. Often our praise will be joyful and enthusiastic. But God doesn’t enjoy our praise based on how we are feeling. We will bring Him a special kind of joy when we praise Him even if we are depressed or exhausted, emotionally or physically. At the time, everything in you is screaming, “Where is God, or God is bad”, yet we choose to trust and praise Him anyway. Praise causes us to enter the influence of His perspective. Hurt, anger, and resentment can be transformed by praise.

The Bible doesn't command us to "feel" thankful in every situation. Instead it commands us to give thanks. (1 Thess. 5:18). To give thanks when we don't feel like it is not hypocrisy; it's obedience. This doesn't mean that we should deny our negative thoughts and feelings. The Psalmists were always honest about their feelings and told God about them, but they always combined the pouring out of their feelings with sincere praise.

When with an act of our will, we choose to keep praising in spite of our pain or confusion, God has a way of calming and settling our feelings and bringing us an inner freedom and joy. We also have the Holy Spirit to inspire and enable us to praise and give thanks when everything else within us doesn't want to.

Remember, God receives more delight from our praise when we don't feel like it.

THE POWER OF PRAISE...

1. To Bridle My Attitude... Ephesians 5:23 says, "Giving thanks ALWAYS for ALL things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ". We are to thank and praise God in ALL things at ALL times.

And Psalms 34:1 says, "I will bless the Lord at ALL times; His praise shall CONTINUALLY be in my mouth". Wait a minute, "continually?"

And then Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us CONTINUALLY offer to God a sacrifice of praise-the fruit of lips that praise His name." There it is again, "CONTINUALLY offer to God". How can I do that? It sounds impossible! Let me explain. The Christian life is made up of three stages:
STAGE 1 We think it is easy (baby Christian)
STAGE 2 We think it is difficult (childish Christian)
STAGE 3 We think it is impossible (mature Christian)

Stage three is where God wants us to live. Realizing that IT IS IMPOSSIBLE in our own strength, and that we are totally powerless, helpless, and dependent on Him. Nothing keeps us aware of this like praise. Praise is acknowledging who and what God is, and thanking Him for what He has done.

Not all things that happen to us are good, so why should you praise and give thanks in the middle of trials? Remember, Romans 8:28 says that "And we KNOW that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him". That is a great verse, but it is incomplete without verse 29. "For those God foreknew He also predestinated to be conformed to the likeness of His Son..."

This verse gives us that the REASON God allows things that are not good in our lives, and it is to make us like Jesus. You may be in a painful place right now, but God has a PURPOSE in your being there and He wants to use it in your life to make you more like His Son.

C.H. Welch said, "The Lord may not have definitely planned that this should overtake me, but He has most certainly permitted it. Therefore, though it were an attack of an enemy, by the time it reaches me, it has the Lord's permission and therefore all is well. He will make it work together with all life's experiences for good."

As you praise the Lord, God not only reveals his purpose, but He releases his power as well. Psalms 50:23 says, "He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God". A sacrifice is something that is not easy to do, but as we are obedient, praise and thanksgiving pave a highway on which God's blessings and deliverance can come to us.

What else does praise and thanksgiving do for us?

- A. They cause us to acknowledge our dependence on God.
- B. A heart full of praise and thanksgiving has no room for pride, rebellion, or bitterness.

C. A praising and thankful heart is a tender heart that doesn't get hard toward God.

Philippians 3:10 says, "I want to KNOW Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings..." So often we want the power of God in our lives, but we forget that the power of the His resurrection came only after He suffered. You can't have one without the other. There is purpose in suffering and when we understand that and praise God for it, we will have a power in our lives that we never had before.

Hebrews 5:8 says, "Although He (Jesus) was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered...". You see, suffering had a place and a purpose in the life of the Lord Jesus and suffering has a place in our lives, too. We are never being more like Christ than when we choose to praise God even if we are in a place of suffering. Praise empowers us to have an "attitude of gratitude" even for the painful things in our lives.

2. To Battle My Adversary... II Chronicles 20 tells the story of King Jehoshaphat who was a king of Israel. He was involved in one of the great epic battles in that nation's history. The King received word that three enemy nations were coming to fight him and his army. The odds weren't good - three against one. The King Jehoshaphat was terrified so he called all the people to pray.

Praise is encouraging to others.

He first begins to lead the people in praise and worship. Then he tells God about their problem. In verse 12, the King says, "We are powerless before this great multitude who are coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are on Thee". God answers in verse 15, "Do not be dismayed. . . the battle is not yours but God's". In other words, God said, "Relax and let me work".

Twice in the story God tells Jehoshaphat not to be afraid. Why would God say that when the odds were three to one against Israel? Because God promised to fight the battle for them, and he has never lost a battle! So in verse 21 Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing praises to God. To do what?

Now get the picture. There are two mountains and a valley, and all the fighting is going to take place in that valley. On one mountain are the three enemy nations and on the other mountain are Jehoshaphat and the Jews. He tells the people, "O.K., here's God's battle plan. All you guys in the choir, you go first!"

So the army of Israel goes marching into battle with the choir out in front, singing praises to God. The three enemy armies got confused and ended up killing each other! What happened? Praise; a request made in faith; faith in God's Word; more worship and praise; and finally victory. Praise can play an

important role in God's moving and deliverance in our lives, too.

In Joshua 6, we are told the story of the battle of Jericho. This was a fortified city, and the Israelites, who had been wandering in the wilderness for over forty years, didn't have the weapons to take Jericho. God promised to defeat the enemies of Israel no matter how out-powered they were, and Joshua, their leader, believed God.

God told Joshua to march around Jericho six days in a row. On the seventh day, they were all to blow their trumpets and shout. In verse 5, God promised that the walls of the city would fall down if Joshua and his army did as He instructed.

This plan must have seemed pretty ridiculous to his followers, but Joshua did exactly as God commanded. The people trusted God, and when they shouted praises to the Lord, the power of God fell and so did the walls of Jericho!

Jehoshaphat and Joshua were both examples of the victories that come when God's people show their confidence in Him with their obedience and their praise.

Satan does not want us to praise. He knows that God delights in our praise, and that it enriches and blesses our lives as well. Satan hates praise because it reminds him that God is still God, and that he (Satan) has been defeated. God's Word, along with praise,

is a powerful weapon in defeating Satan and recognizing his deceptions.

This is a day and age where demon influence and oppression are on the increase. This makes it all the more important that we focus our attention on Jesus. It is a serious mistake to underestimate the power of Satan, but it is equally as serious to overestimate it. Jesus won the victory over Satan at every point, and He stripped Satan and his demons of all their powers. Through the resurrection, God showed His power that is now available to us.

3. To Bless My Acquaintances... Praise is encouraging to others. It proclaims the goodness, power, and mercy of the Lord, not only to the enemy, but to those in darkness. Through praise, we can become "priest" for others who are lost and hurting. The Bible says that Christians are a "royal priesthood". The word "priest" literally means "bridge-builder", one who "bridges the gap" between man and God.

Praise allows you to become more aware of and sensitive to the sufferings of those around you. It lets you see with God's eyes and hear with His ears. Praise also helps you feel with His heart. This gives you an awareness and sensitivity which becomes the basis for genuine love and concern for others, and the basis for reaching out to the needs of others.

1 Corinthians 1:3-7 says, "PRAISE be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts US in our troubles, so that WE can comfort those in any trouble with the (same) comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the SUFFERINGS of Christ overflow into our lives, so also through Christ, our COMFORT overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so you share in our comfort."

One reason God allows the things in our lives that cause us to suffer is to be able to minister to others who are hurting, too. Before her death in that horrible concentration camp, Betsy tenBoom told her sister Corrie that she was to take to the world for both of them the message, "no pit is so deep that God is not deeper still". "They will believe you, Corrie," Betsy said, "because we have been there".

The message of God's love, goodness, and grace is more believable when shared by someone who understands, because they have been there, and are able to still praise and thank God anyway.



Acts 16:22-24 tells us that Paul and Silas were beaten, put in chains, and thrown into prison for preaching Jesus. Verse 25 says, “About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.”

At the darkest midnight of our lives, those imprisoned behind walls of fear, pain, bitterness, hopelessness, and despair, those prisoners all around us, are going to be watching and listening. What will they learn of the love and character of God from watching and listening to you and me?

I think the reason the world is not knocking down our door to come to Christ is because many of us who call ourselves Christians are advertising something with our life that doesn't appear to be working. The way we respond to the hurts in life with the choices we make and the attitudes we display, will either give the world an accurate or an inaccurate picture of God.

THE PRACTICE OF PRAISE...

1. With Music...Zephaniah 3:17 says, “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing”.

This is one of the most beautiful pictures in all of scripture. Imagine, the Bible is saying that when God thinks about His love for us, it brings Him so

much joy that it causes Him to sing. When God wants to express Himself, He chooses music.

Music was created by God for the express purpose of honoring and worshiping Himself. Satan has attempted, and unfortunately, succeeded in perverting music for his purposes. Even Christians have been deceived by the enemy into believing that only the talented can and should sing. No wonder so many Christians are so powerless!

We are ALL commanded to sing unto the Lord. Over and over the Bible tells us to “sing unto the Lord a new song” and to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord”. Praise and thanksgiving don't automatically happen. You have to nurture this within you, and you must make praise a habit.

The absence of music, whether in the life of an individual or in a church, should always be a cause for concern. Where there is no music, the judgement of God has usually fallen. In Psalms 137, the nation of Israel had fallen because of their sin, and many were captives in a foreign land as a result.

Verse 2 says, “There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’” Verse 4 is such a sad, sad verse. The exiled,

wayward children of God said, “How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land?” You see, when they quit walking with God, they lost their freedom, their joy, and finally their song.

Psalms was the national hymn book of Israel. It contains 150 poems to be set to music for worship and worship is the central theme in all the songs. The Psalms magnify the Lord, exalt His attributes, praise His name, His Word, and His goodness. If you want to learn how to worship and praise, then let the Psalms be your textbook. Praise music will always cleanse and lift your spirit.

2. With Obedience...The Christian life has been referred to as “a long obedience in the same direction.” Just like in a race, no one ever starts out on this “long obedience” with the idea of quitting. But, the one thing that will hinder us in our race more than anything else is compromise.

Compromise is a praise-killer. You allow little compromises to creep into your life and slow you down, then fatigue and disillusionment set in. Before you know it, you have dropped out of the race, and your “long obedience in the same direction” is only a sad, faint memory.

Whenever compromise has a place in your life, and praise and thanksgiving are no longer a part of your life, then you are setting into motion a process that will eventually wreck and ruin your life.

It may not happen overnight, but it will happen.

Always remember, Satan is patient. He will destroy you one compromise at a time. You can not lose your salvation, but you can lose your effectiveness and your witness for Christ. Never think that praise is to be a substitute for confession and repentance. Worship is meaningless and incomplete without obedience.

The choices you make today will determine what is on the other side of tomorrow for you. I pray that your obedience will be a long one in the same direction, and that your life will be filled with praise and thanksgiving for the only One who will be waiting for you when you cross the finish line.