

Live with Praise on Our Lips

By Pastor Matt Black

15 January 2006

Lord's Day morning

Ephesians 1:3

Introduction: Open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. The title of our message this Lord's Day morning is "Living with Praise on our Lips." Today we are going to see that the first mark is that those who live for another world "Live with Praise Always on their Lips." We will be dealing specifically with verse 3 this morning. Let us stand together as we read the entire first chapter.

[*Read the entire chapter of Ephesians 1*]

This morning we are bombarded and confronted with temptations on every side. We, like the Ephesians, still live in a fallen world—we all have our "Ephesus" to deal with. And in our lives, every day we are faced with the harsh realities of this "*present evil world*" (Galatians 1:4). Reality number one is, if you haven't yet noticed, Christ is *not* honored by this world. This world hates Christ, and this world hates you if you are living for Christ (John 15:19). And so, as followers of *Christ*, this world many times shakes us and mocks our faith with every conceivable temptation. We not only have to constantly deal with the world, but later in Ephesians, we read that we even have to deal with the principalities and unseen *powers of darkness* that are in the spiritual realm that we cannot see (Ephesians 6:12). And if that isn't enough, Paul tells us we are carrying around a rotting corpse of sin that is strapped to our soul. Isn't it true that we are in fact sometimes enslaved all over again by the sins we used to live in before we were saved. We say with Paul:

Romans 7:24

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

These things are very real to us, because you and I deal with them every single day. These are the realities of living in the world! This morning you may be here dealing with a sin problem. Perhaps it is something that has been ongoing. Or perhaps it is something that just took you off guard. It could be an attitude of pride and self sufficiency. Maybe you're just nonchalant about sin, and this morning you need to be spiritually woken up. Perhaps you fell into an angry action. There are some here certainly that are facing discouraging thoughts and are burdened by worry. You've come here after a week of battle against your flesh, the world, and the devil. Perhaps you are wounded from the battle. Did you fall into sin this week? Were you angry? Were you lustful? Did you blaspheme God in your heart or with your words? Did you lie to someone this week? Did you neglect your time with God? Have you not prayed? Were you caught off guard and fell into sin, depression, or discouragement? All of us can answer yes to one or more of these questions.

This morning our text gives us the only answer there is in the fight against your flesh and the world. The reason we are so often caught in the traps of sin is because we have forgotten that we are citizens of another city. Yes, we are living in this world, but we need to be living for another world altogether!! If you are saved, you are united with Christ; you are seated with Him in the heavenlies; and you are therefore "*blessed with all spiritual blessings*" in Christ. We need to live with this constant

focus. We need to live for another world entirely. This is the emphasis of our text this morning. Let us read it again

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ

Are you burdened down with the weights of this world this morning? Don't you want to live *somewhere* else? We need to look for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God" (Hebrews 11:10). How can we live for another world? "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through!" We are strangers and pilgrims here. We are out of place! Our eyes are fixed upon the land of promise, but for now we live and dwell in "a strange country" (Hebrews 11:9). In the next few weeks we are going to be learning how we can live for another world. I think there are at least five ways in this verse that we can do that, but today my heart is so full, that we will only make it to the very first mark.

So let's begin. Look at verse three, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Today we are going to see that as true Christians we cannot help but to lift our voices in praise to God. Just like a baby needs no classes to learn to cry, a Christian needs no classes to learn to praise God. When we encounter the grace and peace of God in our hearts, it causes us to lift up our voices in praise to God! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" He has blessed us! And Blessed be His Name!

Do you find yourself saying that? "Praise God!" That's what we need to do as we live as pilgrims and strangers in this world.

Oh how we need to Live with Praise on our lips. Paul says I want to bless God! That is so different from the world! The world hates God. So much of the world is cursing and complaining, but, let us see that....

- I. *Praise* is the mark of true Christianity. We are always praising God, because God's work in the heart always makes it's way to our lips. We are genuine Christians. Christians may never be happy in *circumstances*, but they are always happy in *God*. They are always saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Can you say that this morning? Vital, living Christianity is always marked by PRAISE! This is the starkest contrast between the children of heaven and the children of hell. Paul says that one of the primary marks of those who are unregenerate, in Romans 1:21, is that they are not "thankful." Do you find yourself fighting against the message today, hanging on to bitter thoughts? Come to Christ, and He will sweeten your soul with praise. Praise is not just a sentimental response to God, it is a command. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). All true Christians will have a happy spirit in God. David knew this unfeigned love of God. He said, "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard" (Psalm 66:8). So does today find you blessing God, or cursing your circumstances, or even cursing Him? When you are all alone, can you say that no matter what is happening in life, that it is well with your soul? Are you praising God, or are you blaming God? Praise is the mark of the genuine Christian. That is why...

- A. We should bless God in truth and sincerity. Sometimes we have ulterior motives for praising God. We think that if we live for God, He will give us earthly happiness! Not so! That is a false prosperity gospel. Love God and he will have a wonderful plan for your life. That is patently false. "All they that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And not only that, they will suffer just like every other human being suffers. They will suffer financial loss and sickness and tragedy. God is not a cosmic genie. God does not owe us three wishes. We don't praise God so that God will bless us in return. Praising God *is* the blessing! We praise Him in sincerity and truth, expecting nothing but what we deserve, which is sorrow and misery. God owes nothing to no one! He is servant to no one. We owe the Lord our praise even if we live in misery all the days of our lives. If God gives us sorrow for the rest of our days, we have only gotten what we deserve, but no matter what we get in this life, God always deserves our praise because He is our Creator. He is the Source of all life and goodness. He is our Alpha and Omega. It's easy to bless the Lord when He is extravagant toward you, but have you come to the place where you can bless God in every circumstance? It's easy to bless God in the good times. Are you blessing God because you fear if you don't those good times will end? Don't bless God with false motives. Bless Him with sincerity and truth of heart. Worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Love Him without hypocrisy. Be genuine. Be truthful. Be sincere.
- B. We should also bless God in poverty and in wealth. Some of the people to whom Paul wrote were slaves and could barely read or write. It is certain that they had almost nothing but empty pockets, and empty stomachs, and empty barns, but their hearts were filled with praise to the Lord. They didn't have much by way of earthly possessions, but what they had, they gave to the Lord! Look, you may be here today, and all you have has been taken from you. You may be like God's servant Job, and you've lost that which has been most precious to you. It was easy to bless God when you were rich with this world's goods, but how are you doing now that you are poor? Some of you here know how sweet Jesus is, because God brought you to the place where He was all you had!

James 2:5

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

The poor of this world are rich in praise to God because that is all they have.

- C. We should also bless God in sickness and in health. There are some Christians who God allows to be deaf. They have had an accident or were born that way. But you know what? They may not have hearing, but they can still hear the voice of the Shepherd and thank God that though our hearing may fail, but God never fails! And Marva can tell you this morning that though she has no sight, that her eyes of faith are fixed on the Lord. She does not have sight, but just talk with her for a while! Her lips are filled with praise to God. And even

the mute—those with no voice—can at least lift up their hands and praise the Lord! And yet even though we all do have voices here this morning, how many of us are acting like we have no tongues. “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” Brethren, if we keep our voices silent, then the rocks are going to “cry out” and give praise to God (Luke 19:40).

*O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemers praise
The triumphs of my God and King the triumphs of His grace!*

So, do you need sight to praise God Marva? Do you need hearing to praise God? Do you need health to praise God? No you just need a regenerated heart if you want to praise God.

Let me ask you, are you different from the world today? Do you bless God in all your struggles? Have you counted all the blessings you have in Christ today? God may take away your money. He may take away your health. This world can take away your reputation, they can persecute you, they can revile your good name. But Christ says to us, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Do you find yourself bitter today, or is there a sweetness in your soul that no one, no trial, no testing, that no one and nothing can take away? What trial is so great that we cannot bless God for making us depend on Him for grace to endure it? Bless God for your trials. Bless God for your enemies. Your trials, your enemies, your money, and even this earthly body—they’re all going to pass away. There’s coming a day very soon when the heavens and earth will be shaken. All in this life will be but a distant memory, but the blessings we have in Christ will endure forever. So, you may have nothing in this world, but if you have Christ, you have all the reason in the world to lift up your voice today and bless God.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Read with me Psalm 103: 1-5—

Psalm 103: 1-5

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

Bless the Lord, dear friends today with everything you have! And when you have nothing else, bless him because He is all you have, and He is all you need!

Does it seem strange to you that we as Christians are marked by praise in every thing? We praise God for all His benefits, and we praise Him when *all we have* are His benefits. If we live, we praise God; and if we die we bless Him the same. If He gives us plenty, or if He strips us of all we have, we bless His holy name. We bless God because God has done a work of grace in our hearts. We bless Him because though all that is seen in this world is taken away from us, there is something that is unseen that we love, that we cherish, that we treasure, and that no sickness and no

hardship, and no amount of pain and suffering can take away! So, please mark my words this morning. When you find someone who is truly joyful. Someone who can rejoice in all things, you have found a Christian! You have found someone in whom God is at work.

All true Christians are found in every circumstance praising God. Go to Europe. Even in that sad continent, that continent that has forsaken God, you will find Christians praising Jesus. Go to China, and in the midst of unbelief, you will find the faithful blessing God. Go to the persecuted places of the world. You will find suffering Christians who have nothing with which to comfort themselves, but the love of God alone, and for that they even bless God, and they do so continually.

Praise is the mark of a genuine Christian; that much is clear. But what is also clear is this:

II. *Pleasure* is the motive of all our praise. "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us...*" It is so clear in this text that our pleasure comes by blessing God. We should bless God, because God has created us to praise Him. We are created to reflect God's glory. You need to come to the realization in your life that the only way you are going to find true happiness, is if you find your happiness and pleasure in pleasing God. Man's chief end, the reason God created us, is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

A. Pleasure in God is infinitely valuable. You see the reason we can bless God when things are taken away from us is because God means infinitely more to our soul than whatever our trials robbed from us. Perhaps our car breaks down. Do we like our cars? Sure. But what is a car in comparison to God? We can bless God because whatever we have is a gift from God. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4: 7). Job said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). Job's prize was not his lands, or his children or his cattle or his health, and not even his own life! His prize, his treasure, his love, his all, his pleasure, was God and God alone. God was infinitely valuable to him. That is why we can sing:

*Take my life and let it be
Consecrated Lord to thee
Take my silver and my gold
Not a mite from thee withhold
Not a mite from thee withhold*

Why should I withhold a mite? What is money in comparison to God? Let the trials or loss come, but my pleasure is not in health or in riches. My pleasure is in God.

Are you holding something back from God today? Are you afraid if you let God have it, then you won't be happy? What is it you are keeping back from Him? That thing you are holding back will not make you happy! It is worthless in comparison to God. Give it to God, and let God be all you need.

Luke 12:34

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Are you finding pleasure in your possessions more than finding pleasure in God? How much does God mean to you? Do you set Him aside easily? May Jesus Christ be truly precious to us all today. Pleasure in God is not only valuable...

- B. Pleasure in God is also eternal. If you lay hold on God, you have an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). Our pleasure in is eternal! God has created us as beings of pleasure. He calls us to take up our cross, yes. He calls us to self denial, yes. But why the cross? Why the toil and pain? Because when we take up our cross and follow Jesus, all the temporal things of the world are put in their rightful place (Galatians 6:14). The world is worthless because it's not going to last. We can be crucified to the world because the world is temporal. Brethren, this world is all going to pass away. Cars and boats and toys and even health and marriage, and businesses; and all our families' treasures are all going to burn up. You see, "*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*" (2 Peter 3:10). Is your pleasure tied up in earthly things? Well go ahead, "pull down your barns and build greater." Say to your soul "take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry." But God will say to you "*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*" (Luke 12:18-20).

Matthew 16:26

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

The soul is eternal. Why would you fill the soul with pleasures in temporal things? We should find our pleasure in God because our pleasure in God will last forever. So, I say, go ahead, take my barns—my house, my land, and take all my earthly goods. Even take my health and my life, but only give me Jesus. He is my pleasure. He is my joy in sorrow, my happiness in heartache, and my life in death. He gives me something that lasts longer than the pleasures of sin for a season. The joy of Christ in us is eternal. Our pleasure in God can never be taken away.

Psalm 16:11

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

Forevermore is our delight in God. Is His praise on your lips? Do you delight in God more than in goodies? Pleasure in God is the motive of our praise. And that leads us logically to our final truth. If God is our pleasure, then we ought to meditate on Him, and we will be even more satisfied.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ

So we see that...

III. *Praise* flows from meditation on the person of God. "In Christ." What is praise, but the expression of pleasure? To say "I love you" is to praise that person. I express my pleasure to my wife when I say I love her. And when I meditate on all that she is to me, I want to praise her again. And so it is with God.

The blessed man of Psalm 1 delights "in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

King David gives us a little insight into his explosive prayer life and walk with God. He says in Psalm 104: 34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.

For David, and for all of us, praise always flows from the meditation on the person of God.

So how can we meditate on God? What are some practical ways? Let me give you three Cs of meditation.

A. First, meditation on God in our own Conscience will lead us to praise. We call this natural revelation. What is the light of nature in man? It is an old way of saying conscience. The fact that even the unregenerate man has a conscience and feels a sense of condemnation tells us that there is a God. Only those with a pure conscience can truly lift their voice in praise to God. The Christian is constantly applying the Law of God to his conscience. He is not just filling His head with knowledge. Those who are too smart for God are not praising God! But those who are broken and crushed because they have applied God's Word to their conscience have something to truly praise God for. Do you have a pure conscience this morning? Is your heart condemning you? What is it that is condemning you? Face that sin. Face that guilt. Turn to Christ with all your heart and find a pure conscience in Him.

Paul said Acts 24: 16 I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men.

God has created you with His Law written on your heart. I don't have to teach someone that it is wrong to murder. Paul says in Romans 1: 15 that all men have "the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

If you are weighed down in your heart and in your conscience, you will never praise God. Our conscience tells us we are going to be judged by God one day. We will have to give an account. It is constantly accusing us! Face those accusations! Do not run from them. Only by the grace and help of Christ can you face your sin and repent. Repent of your sin today and be free in Christ! Then will your burden be lifted and then you will praise God!

B. Second, meditation on God in Creation. This is also called natural revelation. We should wonder at God's creation, and praise

Him for all His works. We should realize that everything we have is God's. Turn now to Psalm 19.

Psalm 19:1-6

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. 3 *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, 5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. 6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

If we are going to praise God this morning, you need to understand that God has created all things. He has created them for Himself. God owns you, and he owns this world. Meditate on that. God says to Job:

Job 38:4-7

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. 5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

God says to Job and to all of us "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who is holding up the world? Where were you when I created the angels—the morning stars—and they sang my praise?"

Meditate on God's power in all creation. Look at the trees and the waters, and think about how big God is. Think about the planets' rotation and the distance and power of the sun, and realize these are just tiny rocks in God's universe. He owns you, so acknowledge that ownership. You will not be able to lift up your voice in praise until you do.

Is there any one more miserable than that child, or that adult that has his arms crossed, and that poochy lip, and the scowl on his face, and he says "Mine!" It's mine! Lift up your eyes to heaven and see that God owns you. Nothing is yours. It's all His. He created you. Acknowledge that, and yield to God's ownership of your life. Proclaim Him Lord! He is your maker. He created you for His own purposes. If you try to find purpose outside of God you will be truly miserable. Glorify God with all that you have.

Psalm 24:1

The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Meditate on that, and you will find praise in God.

C. Finally, we should meditate on God in the Canon of Scripture. Look at our text again:

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ

How do these Ephesians know the blessings of God in Christ? Remember Paul was sent out to them with the Word of God? Without the Word of God—without God revealing Himself to us in a personal transcendent way, we have no praise because we have no salvation. You see, ultimately, no one can find praise in God apart from God's revealed Word in the Bible. You will not come to God through your conscience. You will find no one lifting up their voice to Jesus Christ and having fellowship with the Father and the Son because they learned it from Creation. Creation and Conscience only have the ability to condemn us. They reveal that God is the King and owner of our lives. But only the Word of God can tell us of redemption in Christ!

John 8:32

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Romans 10:17

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

1Thessalonians 2:13

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe

Has God's Word through His Spirit worked effectually in you? Have you been "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"? (1 Peter 1:23).

You will never begin to praise God until God has had his Work in you.

Conclusion: So let me conclude with this—are Living with Praise on your lips? Can you say with Paul "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ"? Are you a Christian? Christians are always found praising God! Do you live for pleasure in God, or pleasure in things? What is it you are holding back from God? Are you meditating on God in His Word? The things of this world are going to pass away—bless God in plenty—bless Him in poverty. Bless Him for a clean conscience. Bless Him because He owns you. Bless Him because He's given you eyes to see and ears to hear. "The eyes of your understanding" have been "enlightened!" (Ephesians 1:18). Bless Him, Bless Him, Bless Him! Praise His Name!!

Appeal: Let's bow our head and hearts in prayer this morning. Maybe you are here today and you don't know Christ. Your life is miserable because you are not a Christian. You've looked for pleasures in the world, and they never satisfied. Come to Christ today. Repent of your sins and put your dependence on Him today. He is mighty to save. Come as you are to Christ. He has come to save sinners. If you come any other way, He will resist you. Come and find your praise in God today. Is there anyone this morning you say, pray for me, I want

to be a Christian. This morning I want to turn to Christ. Just raise your hand so that I can see it, and that way I will know to pray for you. Perhaps you are here today, and you call yourself a Christian, but you've stopped praising God. Is that you today? What is it that has put a wall between you and God? What is it that you are finding pleasure in outside of God? Name it in your heart right now. Cast it away. The Lord says "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Let the Lord be God today. You say Pastor, I've not praised God as I should, but pray for me that God might give me grace to praise Him even in the hardest of circumstances. Would you lift your hand today so that I can pray for you? The front of the church is open now. Come and pray. The Lord's house is a house of prayer. Come and bring your burdens to Christ. Mother, do your children see you praising God, or are you frustrated with your children? Father are you angry with your wife and children, or are you blessing God? Children, are you coveting after this worlds pleasures, or are you coveting after God? Repent today.

Let's pray

Let's close with number 130 The Love of God