

Christian Praise

by J. Glyn Owen

Christian praise is a fundamental aspect of biblical worship, expressing gratitude and thanksgiving to God for His grace and blessings.

Duration: 45:46

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Praise"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of praising God and recognizing His grace and mercy. The apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians is highlighted, particularly the long sentence in verses 3 to 14 that expresses praise and gratitude to God. The speaker uses vivid imagery to describe the intensity and passion of this praise, comparing it to a snowball rolling down a hill and panting steeds. The sermon also mentions the transformative power of praise and how it can change a worship service. The importance of having a heart that is focused on God and His glory is emphasized, as well as the need for believers to constantly recognize their indebtedness to God and respond with praise.

Transcript

I would like to invite your attention this morning to a word that is found in the third verse in the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Praise be to God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Praise be to God.

Christian praise. Now this remarkable document, the letter that Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, has been called the Queen of the Epistles. And that not without reason, for its teaching is unquestionably of the rarest, richest variety.

Its six chapters are a veritable goldmine of spiritual truth. If there are young Christians here this morning, I would advise you to try and memorize as much as you can of this delightful letter that Paul wrote to the Ephesian church of old. It's a very wonderful document for a young Christian to meditate upon.

I'll assure you of this, of course, you'll not get all the meat out of Ephesians in one reading. And you will find that however often you come back to this document, you will always see something more in it, and something greater. For it is veritably a feast of good things.

Now this, our text this morning, is the first of many such expressions of praise that we find interspersed throughout the letters that the Apostle Paul wrote, and which we have in the New Testament. Over and over again the Apostle would be moved, as it were unrehearsed, and just suddenly he would break off his line of reasoning. In order to praise God, you have it in so many places.

So that his writings are interspersed with this kind of thing, all indicating the gratitude that welled in his soul as he contemplated the amazing grace of God. And really, you know, I believe that this is surely one of the things that distinguishes a true believer from an unbeliever. If we really do behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, if God has really come to us and is continually coming to us, in and through his Son and by his Holy Spirit, if we are in fellowship with God and we are really touching reality, then we shall have to praise him.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said that God has no dumb children. Now that may be a strange way of putting it, but this is what he meant. The man or the woman that is touching God, or who is being influenced by God, to whom God is real, has of necessity to give expression to gratitude and to worship.

If you and I can go through a day, let alone a week, without having to gather our thoughts together and turn Godward in a teal of praise, then it means that we are scarcely touching the realities of the New Testament. The desire within our hearts to meet on the Lord's Day is indicative of the quality of our spiritual life. And our desire to meet with God alone in our own quiet places is equally so.

The man or the woman who knows nothing of praise to God is surely a man or a woman who is blind to the goodness of God and can hardly be tasting of the good things of God's grace. Now, this is indeed a remarkable passage that we have before us this morning. It's a paeon of praise and it continues, if you will care to read on at your leisure.

It will continue right through to the end of verse 14. That's what Paul is doing here. It's not only the opening verse, the verse of our text, this is not the only one that speaks of praise, but he continues in the attitude of pouring out his great soul to God in thanksgiving and more than that.

He is here as a kind of soloist in the first place who is trying to unite the Ephesians with him to make a choir. All to the praise and the glory of the God of all grace and the source of all mercy. Now, I want us to look at two or three of these, of the main things that emerge here this morning.

For I believe that in a time, even such a time as this in world history, one of the things that ought to characterize our lives if we are the Lord's people is this. It is the praise of God. For God's grace is to be experienced not only in sunny days, but in dark days.

And if we know anything about his presence with us and his joy given to us and his peace, then we need to be, we need to be and we ought to be a praising people. Now, look at the song upon the lips of this apostle Paul. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus or in Christ.

The one word which Paul uses and is translated praise be or blessed be, expresses what ought always to be a Christian's heartfelt emotion. Gratitude, thanksgiving, bursting the banks of the heart. What do you know about this? The apostle had to give expression to it and he does so right at the beginning of his epistle.

Now, he's not the only one to do this in the New Testament. We won't go after others this morning. Though in our midweek service here in the Winchester room we have been thinking of Peter as well as Paul being involved in this same kind of praise offering ministry to God.

Something that goes on all the time even in suffering according to Peter. Praise has always been a feature of biblical religion. The choir have reminded us of that this morning by their rendering of Psalm 150.

But that's only an illustration of a principle in the Old Testament. Job says that at the creation, right back at the very beginning, the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy. Turn over the pages to the book of Exodus and you come to chapter 15 where you hear Moses and the people of Israel praising God for his redemption from Egyptian bondage.

And the whole community seemed to be, seemed to be jubilant with a sense of gratitude that God should have delivered them after 400 years in bondage. Heard their cry, come to their rescue. They have to praise him.

Solomon was not only a person who uttered 3000 Proverbs but we read in 1 Kings 4 verse 32 that his songs were a thousand and five. We read in 1 Chronicles These are the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the Lord after the ark rested there. You see, in the ark was the law of God and Aaron's rod that budded and a pot of manna indicating the goodness of the Lord to the people in the wilderness.

Now you can't have these things in the midst of you and you can't have the covenant symbol of God in the midst of you without having to praise him. You can only have such things in the midst of a congregation if they are thoughtless. Then if they are thoughtless they can cease from praise.

But the thoughtful will always want to trace the goodness and the mercy of God to its source. Elihu speaks of God as one who gives songs in the night and the Psalter was not only the product of Old Testament religion and Old Testament faith it was indeed the veritable hymn book of the Old Testament church. But when you turn over the pages into the New Testament you find that it is even more so.

Praise is even more evident here in the New Testament. It is an inevitable accompaniment of the experience of saving grace in the soul. The whole atmosphere of the New Testament is charged with such emotion as love, joy, peace and thanksgiving in consequence.

You remember that Jesus said to the woman at the well who was an outstanding sinner in her day that God does not only seek to save that which was lost. He does that. But God seeks men and women to worship him.

He seeks worshippers. Has he found the worshipper in your heart, in your life? Has he opened the fountains of the deep in your soul? Have you ever had a moment when you've been caught up with God so that you have to give up all to him? Recipients of the good news cannot other than join the chorus of the ransomed and the redeemed. They need not be cajoled or persuaded to praise God who are living in conscious relationship with God.

I always think of new Christians as, in terms of that man in Acts chapter 3 you remember he'd been lying by the gate of the temple for many years and he was lame. And people brought him there at the beginning of the day and they left him there and he was begging. But Peter and John came and he was healed.

And he was there to walk again. And we read of him going in with Peter and John into the temple walking and leaping and praising God. Not a very, not a very, not the kind of spectacle that many people might like to see.

But a very beautiful one. You see you didn't need to persuade that man to go into the temple to worship because he had received something from God and he knew that he'd received it. If you are on the receiving end of God's saving grace and you know you're receiving it, surely it must move your soul.

Now this is, this is the logic of the New Testament. If we learn to fellowship with God, if we recognize the source of all grace and of all mercy, then in the depth of our hearts there should always be the sense of indebtedness which is the key to praise. It's not surprising therefore that every evangelical awakening, personally and socially, leads to an added impetus to Christian praise.

And evangelical revivals, properly so called, have invariably led to new hymnories appearing in the church of Jesus Christ. Now this is true. This is historically true.

Where you have men and women coming to a knowledge of God, they have to sing because they have to praise. And so many of our hymn books were originally brought into existence or were brought into existence by the original impetus of a renewal, of revival of religion in the soul. Clouds may gather around us, but the undertones of the believer's experience should always be one of praise.

Now that spirit of praise is evidently and eloquently illustrated in the words of our text today. No sooner has Paul tend his Christian greeting and begun to think of the theme of the gospel than he has to praise. Praise God.

Can you think of the gospel? Can you think of the cross? Can you think of the incarnation? Can you think of the glory that your Savior left behind? Can you think of the humiliation of God incarnate and the working out of your redemption? Can you think of it all without wanting to praise God? And there's something wrong. Something's awfully wrong. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He can't keep it in. And he would have all the Ephesians join him as his mind moves from one divine boom to another. The apostle seems to catch fire.

Now it may not be evident actually in the English. You notice that there are a number of sentences in the English translation. But as a matter of fact, in the Greek of verses 3 to 14, we only have one sentence in the Greek.

One long meandering sentence. And it's a very, very long one. Moving from one step to another like the gushing of water released from a dam that has given way.

And one writer, William Hendrickson, speaks of it in this way. Let me just quote a few words from him because it's very true to fact. The sentence begun by the words, Blessed be God, rolls on, says William Hendrickson, like a snowball tumbling down a hill, picking up volume as it descends.

Its 202 words and the many modifiers which they form, arranged like shingles on a roof or like steps on a stairway, are as a matter of fact like prancing steeds pouring forward with impetuous speed. That's exactly it. Have you ever caught yourself there? You just have to sing praise.

Brothers and sisters, we don't know enough of this. I remember preaching with Dr. Paul Rees of World Vision now who has occupied this pulpit a number of times. I remember Dr. Paul Rees saying how praise could change a service of worship.

And he referred to a lady that he knew very well in the United States. I believe she was a black lady, Amanda Smith by name. It's one of the names that registered here with me.

Who used to sing in conventions and conferences. But she was a deeply, deeply spiritual woman and very sensitive to the goodness of God and had a marvelous voice. Well, he had been involved with her in various conferences and conventions and had come to know her.

He said the first time he sat on the same platform with Amanda Smith, he said the preacher wasn't really getting on very well. You know what that is? When his throat gets dry and his thoughts begin to wander and he's not quite sure where he's going and where he's going to end. And everything's rather cold and tepid.

There was Amanda Smith listening to him and it seemed he was going nowhere. But out of the depth of her big soul when he said the words, Jesus Christ our Lord, praise the Lord, she said. And the man was taken back in his stride.

And he thought, well, there's somebody being blessed here. And he said, that was one of the greatest meetings I've ever been in in my life from that moment forward. It seemed as if an anointing from the throne of God came down upon the people.

Now, said Dr. Paul Rees, and I must give you the end or you'll think it's something ordinary or something queer. Amanda Smith knew how to control herself. For on another occasion, he said, and we were together and the minister in the pulpit or behind the rostrum was having a very good time and the Lord was evidently blessing him and people were in rapt attention.

I saw Amanda Smith physically beginning to move with praise, he said, and adoration. She put her hand over her face and she would move her head, but she didn't say a word. And ultimately, he said, I saw her opening her purse and taking her handkerchief out and pushing it into her mouth.

And I asked her afterwards, what were you doing? Oh, she says, when the Spirit of God is unmoving, I didn't want to disturb him. But you see, there was wisdom there along with a spirit of gratitude and praise that has to overflow the bank sometime. Have you ever found yourself exploding with gratitude that you couldn't keep to yourself? That's what honors God.

And I was very thrilled when I heard from one of our young sisters here of Hager Lee in hospital just a couple of nights ago before her second major spinal operation, writing a little note to the Lord to thank Him for all His goodness to her and saying that if He calls her home, she willed everything to Him. Hallelujah. Bless Hager.

You'll be glad to know the hand of the Lord is upon her. Do you know anything of that, my friend? Do you know anything of that? Now, the substance of the boon that excited the Apostle Paul here is too much for us to consider this morning, but we are going to consider what he says about it in verse 3 only. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with, notice, every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The blessings that gladdened Paul's soul are spiritual in nature. I'm not suggesting for one minute that Paul wasn't grateful for material gifts that came his way. He was.

And you only have to read his references of gratitude to the Philippian church, for example, for supplying some of his material needs in order to recognize that. Paul was grateful for those who helped him materially and made it possible for him in certain cases and at certain times not to go along working with his hands but to have freedom to preach the gospel and teach it from dawn to dusk and even later. But ultimately, what really made this man praise God was not the fact that he had adequate material provisions but rather the spiritual benefits that God had placed at his disposal in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word translated spiritual blessings puts the emphasis where it ought to be. The benefits that really bring the song from the soul of the apostle are the spiritual blessings that have been made ours in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now you will doubtless detect a considerable difference of emphasis between what we have here and what we often have in the Old Testament.

There in the Old Testament in the days of shadows and types the material was often symbolic of the spiritual. Let me say what I mean a little clearer. In the Old Testament days to be materially blessed was more than simply to be materially blessed.

The material benefits were symbolic of the fact that God had seen fit to bless us in that way. And the spiritual benefits of God were symbolized by his material kindness or material benefits given to men. Now you can see this in a number of ways.

Canaan for example, the land. The children of Israel, the spiritual among them did not so much praise God that they had so many acres promised them in the land. It wasn't the acreage.

It was the fact that God had promised them a land for them. It was the divine promise that was the big thing. And the land was symbolic of God's pleasure and of God's grace.

When you come to the tabernacle in the first place and then the temple of course they thanked God for these material edifices. The one that they could dismantle in the wilderness and carry on and erect it again and the other a static building, an edifice in Jerusalem. But ultimately it wasn't for the material edifice either the tabernacle or the temple.

They were really praising God because it was God's dwelling place. That was the big thing about it. It was symbolic that God wanted to be among them and dwelt among the cherubim and by the blood of atonement the high priest could represent them at least once a year in the very shrine of God.

That was the cause of their praise. And so if they were blessed with cattle, kind or children all were the benefits and the gifts of God to them. They were symbolic you see.

So the rich man in the Old Testament was invariably the good man. Now in this connection it is interesting and instructive to note that though Abraham was given the promise of the land and promised the land for himself and his seed as an eternal inheritance when we come to the New Testament the New Testament has very little to say about that. And actually the New Testament says next to nothing about Abraham and the land.

You have to go back to the Old Testament. Well what was Abraham grateful for and praising God for according to the New Testament? Ah, listen. By faith he made his home in the promised land as a

stranger in a foreign country.

He lived in tents as did Isaac and Jacob who were heirs with him of the same promise. Well I can understand there's nothing strange about that you say. He was a stranger there because he'd come from another land Ur of the Chaldees.

That's not what the epistle to the Hebrews says. Listen. He was a stranger there for this reason not because of where he had come from but where he was going to.

For he was looking forward to the city which has foundations whose builder and architect is God. Abraham was rejoicing not in the land but in the city that he saw beyond the land. The land was symbolic of something beyond itself.

And he was a stranger in the land even when he was there. His home was not there. He was a pilgrim there.

He was a lodger there. He always saw beyond the fertile plains beyond the hills beyond it all even the river Jordan. The land was not his goal apparently.

His eyes were beyond the land was a symbol of something beyond itself. Here in Ephesians however the material has receded more and more into the background and the spiritual has become everything. You see when once we see and recognize this our values become altogether different.

Once we see that God's ultimate is spiritual we shall hold material and carnal things in proper perspective. Every gift of God is to be prized. Every gift of God is to be accepted with gratitude.

But oh when we have known something of his spiritual benefits in Christ these are the things that warm our hearts for our whole understanding will have been changed by his grace. Lest there be anyone who doubts the supremacy of God's spiritual gifts however let me put it like this which I trust will solve any difficulties you may have. God could bring the vast complicated cosmos in which we live with all its material wealth into existence by the mere word of his mouth but God could not give us one spiritual blessing without the work of his Son.

He could bring creation into existence and give it to mankind to rule within it and to be blessed by its produce by the breath of his mouth but his spiritual blessings had to be purchased by the blood of his Son. That's the difference between the material and the spiritual. The breath of God brought the creation into existence the blood of Christ and nothing less was required to bring into existence these spiritual blessings.

Now the composition or nature of the boon that makes the apostles so full of praise then is this God's spiritual benefits in Christ. But notice he's got his eye on the comprehensiveness of what God has done for us. He's got his eye on the fact that God has given us everything every spiritual benefit conceivable in Christ.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Now I don't know whether we really take this in but this is what makes us praise God if anything does that everything that we can conceivably need in this world at any given time every spiritual blessing that we shall conceivably need is already given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ. Now if you're tempted to doubt that well let me remind you that Peter says exactly the same thing.

In 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3 we read His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Now there are two things there that we need to notice. God has given us every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The second is this. He's already done it. Paul uses here a tense of the verb the aorist tense which refers to a finished act in the past a completed act and what the apostle is saying is this that every Christian man and woman who is in Christ has already been blessed as an act of sovereign grace in the past tense it's finished and done with because God has done it everything has been given to us.

You say that's incredible. What does that mean? Well if you read this passage Paul will go back and tell you that before the world was made in eternity God actually did this. It is as precious and as profound as that.

No spiritual benefit that we shall ever need has been omitted. Not one. Every spiritual need that we can ever encounter has been given to us in promise in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now those blessings are not necessarily in our possession today but they are in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. You see there's a world of difference between what a man or a woman has in his pocket or in her purse and what he or she has in the bank. Isn't there? You may have very little in your pocket this morning or in your purse just enough to get along with I suppose for a week or two.

But that does not mean to say that you have nothing more in the bank. Now what the Apostle Paul is saying here is this that Christ is the treasury of grace and God has actually put to our account in Christ every conceivable spiritual benefit that we shall need to go from the world of sin into glory. Everything we need it's in Christ.

And he's put it there. It's there already. It's in your name believer.

He's chosen you to be holy and without blame before him in love. And that means that he's made provision for holiness and blamelessness in Christ Jesus. He's put everything in Christ.

It's a blessed thing to be able to wake up every new day and even if you can foresee some of the problems of the day from your bedside to be able to say before you go out into the world God has already given me grace for this in Christ. Oh this is wonderful. I'm going to see some people today who are suffering.

I'm going to visit some people today who are in terrible trouble. I'm going to meet some people under terrifying burdens today physically, morally, spiritually. But in Christ his saints have been blessed with everything already and it's only a matter of coming to our Lord Jesus Christ and making those provisions our own by faith and trust and obedience.

You see this is really the difference between one Christian and another. Unfortunately many Christians are unaware of what is theirs in the Lord Jesus Christ. They come up against the difficulty in life and they think that God's left them alone.

There's no way out. They have to live under the clouds. There is no light in the darkness.

You've never seen this that God has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. And others well they've learned the lesson and they know the truth they know the doctrine nevertheless they do not

bother to come to our Lord from day to day with all their needs and make their requests known with thanksgiving. And so they live try to live today on yesterday's blessing and on yesterday's experience of the grace of God.

Now that's wonderful as far as it goes. Let yesterday's faithfulness on God's part inspire us for today. But God doesn't want you to live on stale bread.

He wants you to gather your manna every day. He wants you to live on the fresh provisions of grace coming from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit every day. This is to what we're called.

A Christian's riches then must not be computed by what he has in his pocket but by what he has in Christ. You and I ought to be ashamed that we are living like paupers all too often when God has so lavishly endowed us with all things necessary for life and godliness. Lastly I conclude.

Now you notice Paul traces the source of such substantial benefits to God the Father. And so his praise and his thanksgiving here is specifically, specifically centered in God the Father though the Spirit and the Son come in as we read in the context. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

The source of our every spiritual blessing then is God the Father throughout Lord Jesus Christ. In the person and the coming of Jesus we see the deity of God as well as his paternity. And these are the two things that are stressed here.

God is God. He's the Father of our Lord Jesus. In the sending forth of his Son to be our Savior we see the deity of God, the reality of God, the power of God, the might of God as well as his mercy.

He promised him. In the Old Testament he promised him in Eden. He had planned to send him before man was created.

So we're told in this passage. But he promised him. He promised him to our first parents.

And the promise was reiterated. And in the fullness of the time he came. And God prepared a virgin girl called Mary.

And by the Holy Spirit he separated her. And he kept her to himself. No man touched her.

And then the Spirit of the Lord came upon her. And there was conceived in her womb the Holy One, the Son of God. And God became incarnate of the virgin.

You see it. God sent forth his Son. That's his deity.

He can promise beforehand. And he can fulfill what he's promised. And he comes.

That's not all. Having come, our Lord Jesus set his face steadfastly to do what the Father had given him to do. My Father worketh hitherto, he says, and I work.

They wondered why he was performing so many miracles. Why he was continuing to do this and to preach that. Wherever he went he was doing the Father's will.

My Father's at work, he says, and I have to work with my Father. We are in fellowship together. My Father worketh.

And I'm working with him. And because the Father and I are one, this is why I do this. This is why I go there.

And this is why I will not turn back until I lay down my life for the sheep. Can you see this? The deity of God. The glory of his Godhead.

And over and above that, I shouldn't say over and above that, but equal to that is this concept of his paternity. The Father of our Lord Jesus. I do not only need to know that God is God.

Oh, we need to know that God could be a father to his child. And in the life of our Lord Jesus we see this. We see how he always spoke of God as his Father.

Always a Father who was wise. Always a Father who could be trusted. Always a Father who could be sought in all kinds of circumstances for all kinds of needs.

And a Father who remained when every other Father had gone. A Father in heaven. You and I need to see the deity of God and we need to see his paternity for the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ becomes our Father in him.

And he blesses us not simply as the divine creator of the universe, but as the divine Father of his people. There's a warmth in his blessing as well as adequacy of provision. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be praised because in Jesus Christ he has blessed us with everything.

Brothers and sisters, this is where we close. I just want to ask the question, do you feel that you are a worshipper of God? Does your life bear testimony in his presence this morning that you're in tune with the hosts of heaven who ever sing praises to God and the Lamb? Would you be at home if you were transported into heaven this morning? For the praise of God and the worship of God is the main thing that goes on there. Would you be like a fish out of water? Or would your heart be at home because your heart has been set on holy things and on the pleasure and glory of God as you've pilgrimaged along the pilgrim way since God called you to himself? Oh, I beg of you, let's look at ourselves this morning.

In vain we say so much that is true and right as we seek to witness in a world of fallen men and women. In vain do we say so much unless we can speak of God and of his Son and of his Spirit out of a heart that is full of it all because we're living at the receiving end of all things that God has given us freely out of sheer grace in the knowledge of his Son and by the ministry of his Spirit. God forgive us that we are not more praising.

God make us a people that will be to his praise in life and in death, in speech and in service. Amen. Let us pray.

Our God and our Father, you do make us conscious of our inadequacies and of our unworthiness when we come into your presence and we acknowledge that again today for we cannot contemplate a passage such as this and a teaching such as this without having to confess that our lips are so utterly preoccupied with the praises of men or the blame of men and so little with the praise of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Lord forgive us. We pray that you will lead us to the realization of what you have done for us that by the reading and the study of your word, by fellowshipping one with another, by daily launching out in trust and in faith in you, we shall discover more and more from our own experience what we read to be true in your word that everything is given us and that we can make our own those things which are already ours in our Savior and therefore live more than conquerors in the midst of a world gone mad.

Oh Lord, teach us, teach us how to grow in grace and in the knowledge of yourself and thus in worship and praise of you alone. Write this truth upon our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and until Jesus comes again and then forevermore. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4561.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/christian-praise/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net