

you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.” Praising God keeps on lifting you! Remember Job 13:15 “Though He slay me, yet will I keep my hope in Him.” He kept His trust and was able to praise the Lord in the face of the mental torment that was heaped on him by his wife and his friends. His praise lifted him through the whole terrible experience.

We must be liberated from our self-seeking and learn to love God for Himself alone. As long as we focus on selfish wants and desires and problems, we cannot be free to praise the Lord. Praise turns defeats into victories. Paul and Silas prayed at midnight in jail. Why were they there? Because they preached the story of Jesus! Doing good! What was God’s answer? He sent an earthquake, the doors were opened, a revival meeting started in the jail and spread throughout the city of Philippi, Europe was entered with the gospel, and today it has reached all the way to Memphis! Paul and Silas were freed and more than conquerors because instead of thinking about themselves and their problems in jail, they thought of the power and love of Jesus to overcome all obstacles and change a city. Because praise is powerful, it makes prayer powerful.

Conclusion: The highest expression

of your faith in God is not how much you ask from God and how much God has given you but how much you praise the Lord! Psalm 34:1 “I will praise the Lord at all times, His praise will always be on my lips.” Praise is catching and you spread the joy of the Lord whereas bragging creates an atmosphere where Satan can tempt to envy and distrust. I challenge you to think of one reason you have to despair and doubt God today.....go ahead.....Okay.....now listen to the prophet Habbakuk 3:17-18, “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior.”

Praise brings us in line with God. One pastor who was concerned about the spiritual condition in his church, there was no sign of spiritual revival, called for the church to enter a week of praise. After the week of praise, the church experienced revival.

Now the question is: Is the joy of Jesus singing in your heart and will you be able to spend the rest of the day in praising the Lord? Hear His invitation now and open your life to Him.


FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Let Us Share First With You.



March 2, 2008
Fourth Sunday in Lent
Sermon by:
Pastor Charlie Chilton, Interim Pastor

The Law of
Praise
Psalm 148

First Baptist Church of Memphis
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Introduction: In my heart I believe that the Lord wants us to have a time of joyful praise together. I remember Paul saying in Philippians 4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice.” It is sad when people go to church and then go home without a song of joyful praise ringing in their hearts. Perhaps many do not know that we are commanded to praise the Lord. Yes, it is a positive instruction, a command, an imperative. Notice the words that we have read for our text today. Psalm 148 is a command. If we obey this command, there is a side blessing that can make a difference for us everyday on our Christian walk. Many believers have difficulty praying because they aren’t praising. The two are linked together. Prayer’s fruitfulness waits on praise. When your times of petition before God turn to empty words, turn to praise and see things change in your spiritual life.

I. The place of praise: A spring of praise should be bubbling up in our souls. “Praise the Lord” should come often from our lips. Psalm 34:1 says “I will bless the Lord at all time, His praise shall forever be in my mouth.” In our text, some of us find it surprising that all of the creatures of God are commanded to praise the Lord. Beginning at verse 7: “Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do His bidding. You mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild

animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds.” Psalm 103:1-2 challenges us, “Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” We need to resolve right now: Nothing shall ever deter me from praising the Lord. If you have a hard time getting started in praising the Lord, use your Bible and hymnal to prime your pump. Give God back His own words filtered through your personality.

II. The purpose of praise: Praise puts our praying on the highest plane. Indeed, praise will purify our prayers. Prayer is cheapened when we come to God with our shopping lists. To compare this to something wordly: In our southern culture, to love a woman just for her money would be considered an insult. If we are loving God just for what we can get, it is likewise an insult. We should be praising the Lord for His provisions for us! Whatever they are! And then tell Him our needs. But don’t get distracted from praising. “Count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done!” Surprises bring joyful smiles! We need to get our praying out of our local surroundings where we tend to center on our problems and wants. Listening to prayer requests in the average church prayer meeting, where the focus is 95% inward, would prove my point. Praise will purge our prayers of unwor-

thy elements, selfish manipulation, and bargaining. Praise will focus our praying correctly. We are warned in Romans 1:25 about worshipping the creation rather than the creator. God is greater than His gifts!!! In a spirit of praise I know that if I never asked God for anything (or anything else), but still had Him, I would be extremely rich, my cup would still run over and my joy would still be unspeakable if I still had my relationship with God. Thinking of Calvary alone reminds me that I am rich beyond measure in the face of most of the world. The purpose of praise is to lift us out of our selfishness and free us up to rejoice before the Lord and constantly praise Him.

III. The power of praise: When I am praising God I am taking sides with God. I am lining myself up with God, regardless of my circumstances. I know I am on the winning side in every situation so I can act like a winner while praising my God. Instead of grumbling and finding fault about life events, I can just praise God that Romans 8:28 is still true – “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” Right away my outlook changes. What about the great statement in Isaiah 43:2-3, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When