

I Will Bless the Lord at All Times

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Yesterday, it was announced as you may have heard, that due to circumstances beyond the control of WMBI, their program "Talks From the Pastor's Study" would not be heard. And that those circumstances were also beyond my control. In Pittsburgh, we stayed at the Roosevelt Hotel, Harry Post the missionary, Walter Arnold, Mrs. Tennies from South America, Paris Reidhead, myself and I think one or two others. The last three days were taken up by a Serbian basketball tournament. And they never went to bed, those people. They never went to bed, literally never went to bed. No one took their clothes off at all. They stole a pass key. They took over the elevator and set off the fire alarm. They ran up and down the aisles and banged on doors, they whistled, they sang, they shouted. They played instruments, and generally raised the devil from all the time. Poor brother Paris Reidhead was staggering around bleary-eyed as if he'd been one of them, and I didn't get to sleep till five in the morning. Brother Cop didn't get to sleep till six o'clock Sunday morning, so he couldn't go with us to the prison. And we were generally down. I came back with a bad throat. That was the circumstance over which we had no control. And they seemed to have no sense at all, enjoyed being beasts. I said on the elevator to a new man who had just checked in and wanted to know what it was all about. I said it's a convention of baboons. And a couple of the fellows that were part of the convention laughed and say, that's right. That's right. You got it, a convention of baboons. They were satisfied to be baboons, acted like them, except baboons don't drink. And I'm a little hindered this morning as a result of the convention of the simians, but I'll preach anyhow, I trust to preach tonight.

This is Palm Sunday among the churches, and everybody's thinking about praise. So, I want to talk on praise. Reading the first three verses of Psalms 34, Psalm 34. I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. The humble shall hear thereof and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together.

Now, we're talking about praise this morning. I will praise, I will bless the Lord at all times said the man of God, David. I've said here before, and it is no new truth. No one could preach a new truth about it, because it's known to all theologians, that true religion lies in the will. The Bible declares it and all that we can learn about ourselves confirms it, that religion lies in the will. What the heart wills to be, the character will become. And what the heart determines, God accepts as real. The soul swings into line with whatever the heart determines. I will, said the man of God. We have the impression that David ran about with a harp in his hand continually and that he never ceased to

praise God. And he was shouting like Mary continually, like camp meeting Mary from morning to night.

But I noticed that David uses the word "will" a great deal. He determined some things and made his vows and stuck to them. He knew that what he was determined to be, God would see that he became. For if the heart determines, then the emotions follow in the set of the will and move into line. So, the man of God said what he willed to do, what he was determined to do, was to bless the Lord.

Now, I suppose there is no word that has been more misused than the word "bless." And when we don't know what else to say, why, we ask the Lord to bless us. I do it myself, for it's one of those big stretchy tarpaulin words that cover everything, covers everything. And the word here could mean almost anything, but actually it means to salute, to congratulate and to praise. So, he said, I will salute God at all times. And I will congratulate God. I like to break it down like that and to think of what it means for a man to get up in the morning and congratulate God Almighty on who He is and what He's been doing and what He is doing and what He plans to do. To offer God the earnest and sincere congratulations, and to praise and please God. All these are found in the word "bless" that's used in the Hebrew by the man David.

So, he said that I will salute God and I will congratulate Him. And I'll make this my business in life to offer congratulations to the Lord God Almighty, to congratulate God because of His greatness. It's amusing to me to see how greatness is a relative thing. The little man by an adroit shift of his psychology can think of himself as great. I don't want to reflect on anybody that I have no reason to doubt is an honest and sincere man, but there is a political card up on the telephone poles that has given me chuckle this week. It is a councilman. He's running for Ward Councilman or Alderman. The ad says "for peace and prosperity, elect" so and so--alderman.

Well, it's nice to think highly of yourself, and I suppose that if we elect this brother to the job of Aldermen in his ward, that peace and prosperity will flow out as a result, all over the world, I wouldn't disillusion the man for anything. No doubt he's a good man and loves each wife. But I'm inclined to think brethren, that whoever becomes aldermen in that ward will not be in a position to make a very noticeable effect on international relations. But greatness is big or little. It's whatever men want it to be.

But when we come to God Almighty, all the bars are down and all the limits are off. The greatness of God exceeds all wards and all cities and all states and all countries and all empires and all worlds and all the universe. God is greater than all greatness and mightier than all Might. God is great. And so we salute and congratulate God. We congratulate Him because of His greatness and because of His holiness. And against the dark background of our sinfulness and the sinfulness of the world, it was very difficult in Pittsburgh to keep from seeing in those young people that had

taken over that hotel and pushing us old fellows around, it was difficult to keep our faith in humanity. That the cities of the country could spill and spew out that many abandoned people and get them all together for such a harmless business as a basketball game, made it pretty hard for me to be cheerful. I wonder what Norman Vincent Peale would have done if he had been there. I just wonder?

Against the background of such unholy carryings on as human beings are capable of, to think of the holiness of God is a most healing and consoling thing. I determine that I will congratulate God because He's holy. He is holy beyond all holiness, holier than the angels, holier than the seraphim that burn at the throne, holier than the holiest man or woman that ever lived. He is a holy God intimately and perfectly holy. And so, every day I'm going to salute God, because of His holiness, and then of course because of His kindness and His providence and atonement and mercy and care. His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Now, I want to point out to you friends, that you do have continually, some kind of words in your mouth. You've got something in your mouth all the time. You have either such words as David talked about, or you have profane words, or unclean words or complaining words or gossiping words or boasting words or empty words or mundane words, or some other kinds of words, but always our mouths are full of words, profane words, for instance. When I think of the beauty, the versatility of the English language, and yet how some people use the language, I think that it is like somebody pointed out recently that to hear a certain man do a certain thing, was like hearing an orchestra play Pop Goes the Weasel, a symphony orchestra. And to use the English tongue, which is an orchestra, an organ capable of almost infinite variations, subtleties, overtones and undertones in all direction and yet to hear some people use the English language, it reminds me of using a \$50,000 Stradivarius to pound nails into a chicken coop. It is a grotesque and profane misuse of language the way some people use it. And if you don't have the praise of God in your mouth, you're likely to have some other kind and they might be profane.

And there are unclean words. In my work. I don't often meet men like that. But I have met men whose only vocabulary was soiled, so badly soiled, that if they were forced to use only clean words, they would be for a while silent, unable to speak, because their vocabulary was dirty. And then there are complaining words. Now, let's check up over last week for a little. If the praises of God we're not in your mouth, then the chances are that there were complaining words in your mouth. You say, how did you do in Pittsburgh Mr. Tozer? Well, I didn't bat 1000, but I did try to praise God when you wake up or come out of a troubled sleep with these fellows yelling around and say, when morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries, May Jesus Christ be praised. And instead of complaining, we ought to have His praise continually in our mouths.

Now let you think it over with me for a little while. This isn't for me to stand up here and get after you. It is only to say, how did we do last week about this complaining business? You say, but there

was lots to complain about. And I don't doubt that at all. I think there's lots to complain about in the world. But if you and I complain about everything there is to complain about, we're not likely to get very much else done.

And then there are gossiping words. If all the words used on the North American continent this coming week that were gossiping words were suddenly outlawed by some strange law and not permitted, there would be a silence such as had not been heard for a long time between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Gossip is still done and it's still done even by Christians.

Then there are the boasting words. Somebody said, and it's been quoted in the magazines and gets into the little quips here and there in the printed magazines and newspapers. Somebody said recently that an actor is a fellow which, if you aren't talking about him, he isn't listening. And I would say that it's not only true of actors, but it's really true on a less aggravated degree, but most people, we want to talk about ourselves. We boast very tenderly and gingerly. I don't want to be too cynical, but I hear preachers boasting and then saying, I say this to the glory of God, and actually they said it to their own honor. And God put up with it.

Well, there's boasting and then there are empty words, words that just have no content at all. I wonder if they are what you call idle words, words that have no content. Then there are mundane words. I told you many years ago, of an experience I had had in the state of West Virginia when I was a young pastor there. I got acquainted with a bird called the Wood Thrush. And the wood thrush, as you know is, is very close relative to the Brown Thrasher and is one of the two or three greatest singers in North America. There's nothing to be compared with it, perhaps the Mockingbird, the Brown Thrasher and that bird are the three greatest singers on our continent. And the lovely thing about the Wood Thrush is that it's such a beautiful bird with a brown coat, and long brown tail, and round beady eyes, in a very charming lovely shape. And then its voice is a flute voice. It plays a flute up and down the scale, up and down the scale. And usually, it's in the deep woods and can't be seen, though I made it my business to see them a few times and have seen them since. I fell in love with this beautiful bird, unseen that sang among the branches, sang in the twilight, sang on until it was pitch dark.

And then one evening I was walking in the backlot, and I saw my Wood Thrush. I had come to think of him as a sort of an ethereal thing, rather not a bird, but a wandering voice. And here, I found him scratching contentedly away in a refuse dump. And up until this hour, I've never quite gotten over the shock of seeing this lovely bird with its mysterious presence, its mystic overtones of sound, as though some hidden player was playing the flute in the shadows, up in the trees, now scratching your way digging and pecking like an ordinary hen. And I've never quite gotten over it.

And I thought immediately of how God must feel about us, his children, capable of such language, as say, the Psalms and Paradise Lost and the hymns and the book of Matthew and the book of Luke

and the book of Isaiah, capable of putting words together like that, capable of all of this, mysterious and transcendental and elevated. And yet, the average one of us, the language we use, is the language of the rubbish heap, just the earthly and mundane language, the language of the earth down below, nothing elevated, nothing wonderful, nothing glorious, but just the common language of the world.

I had a week with Paris Reidhead. And my friend, that's an experience for anybody, to spend the week with Paris Reidhead. We met and talked and outside of an occasional reference to his wife and children for whom he's desperately homesick, we talked about very little else. But the things of God, very little else. The language, the words were not mundane words. They were not geared to the earth, but were heavenly words. And I greatly enjoyed the contacts I had with him there in Pittsburgh the week before last. But mostly our words are earthly words, mundane words, words that belong to the ground and to the dust. You know that if we follow David and fill our mouths with the blessings of God, we could keep saluting and congratulating God continually, it will expel these other words and purify our unnecessary talk.

Now, he says, I will do this at all times. And David was a writer, and a singer and a musician. And I suppose it's easy to say, well, it's a writer or a singer or musician. He can praise the Lord at all times. That's his business. He doesn't have to do anything else. But notice that David was in addition to being a writer and a singer and a musician, David was also a family man, a king, a soldier, the head of a nation, the head of a home. And in every particular, a man like our President, who had constantly to meet the public and constantly to be giving himself over to listening to complaints of the people, uprisings and wars. He was constantly involved. And yet he said, at all times I will praise God. I will salute God. I will congratulate God, and fill my mouth full of His praises, not only when I'm singing and playing the harp, but I'll do it also in my capacity as a family man, as a king, as a soldier, and as the head of the state.

Now, he said, my soul will make her boast in the Lord. God seeks his own glory. I've said many times here, it's one of the foundations upon which truth is built, that God seeks His own glory because the health of the universe requires that God should be glorified. And so, God actively cooperates in any effort to glorify Him. And He gives instant assistance to anybody who dedicates himself by a vow to glorify God and to salute and congratulate God at all times and continually. So that anyone who makes a vow and says, if God will help me, I'll put unclean words and complaining, gossiping words, empty, boasting words out of my mouth, and I will fill my mouth continually with divine congratulations. God will give immediate assistance to such a person, and enable that person by the in-living Spirit to fulfill that vow. Otherwise of course, we find it impossible. But with the aid of the Holy Spirit, we find it possible.

Now, does this mean that I must be a camp meeting Mary? And does it mean that I must be always going about praising God with a loud voice? No, it doesn't mean that. But it does mean that my

determination to praise God is a determination to form a habit, a habit of praising God under all circumstances, audibly under the right conditions, and silently when speech would be unseemly. You know, there are times when speech is unseemly. God's people can't find that out, and I suppose that's one reason we stand so poorly with the public, because the zealots in the kingdom of God and we ought all be zealots, the zealots in the kingdom of God can't seem to know when to keep still and when to speak. So, we, you sometimes speak, when we should have been keeping our mouths quiet.

But the Spirit-led Christian will make blessing God to be a constant habit of his life. And then when the conditions are right, he will audibly praise the Lord. And when conditions are not right, and speech would be unseemly, then he can silently praise the Lord. I'm having to break myself of the habit of silent prayer almost exclusively. Because I have learned to pray silently so much, that I feel that I have got to correct that by praying aloud more than I do. You can learn silent prayer my listeners. You can learn to have a harp sounding in your heart continually of your own free will, determinedly blessing God, offering salutations and congratulations to the great God for what He is, and filling your mouth with His praises, when it's proper that you should, and your heart with His praises at all times.

Now, this is one of the mighty trifles that will transform our living, if will only let it. You know that there are trifles inside your mortal body that are so trifling that they wouldn't get the attention of anybody. Scarcely, nobody would take a picture of it. Nobody would buy one. I suppose nobody would pay any attention to it, yet they're there. And if they disappear from your body for a day, you will begin to get sick and for a week you'll die. They're called the vitamins, little granules of something or other and not any good in themselves, except that they act as catalysts to set off certain other reactions inside of your body which are necessary. People die. You get Beriberi, if they're caught out on the ocean without the certain vitamins.

Well, this little thing that I'm giving you is a trifle, probably, nobody will write a book about it. Nobody would preach a series of sermons on it, and it'll never get into the newspaper. Nobody will quote, pastor says, praise will drive out gloom. You have never saw a headline like that, because that's not interesting. Nobody's interested in anything like that, but it's there nevertheless. It's a little trifle, a mighty trifle, so small that we're likely to overlook it, but so big that it'll change the whole direction of our lives. If we let our minds and hearts and mouths be filled with words that are unclean or complaining or gossiping or boasting or empty or earthly, we go that direction. But, if we insist upon filling our mouths with congratulations to the Lord God Almighty at all times, under all circumstances, and learn the joy of inward prayer, and of sending up incense from our hearts continually to God, it will change the whole direction of our lives, the whole complexion and color of our lives and make us altogether different.

Now I went to the trouble of copying on to a loose-leaf notebook and I carry around with me. I'm never without it. Any place I go, I've got it with me all the time. A great number of things, but among them a kind of a devotional scrapbook that I carry around with me. But one item is the famous, When Morning Gilds the Skies. And you know, I've tried to live in this and I've tried in the morning when I get up before I've said hello to anybody, to say, when morning gilds the skies, my heart awaking cries, may Jesus Christ be praised. In all our work and prayer, we ask his loving care: May Jesus Christ be praised. I've quoted these and we've sung them. But you know, there are some verses that are not found, some stanzas that are not found in our hymn book at all. And they couldn't be because there are 2,4,6,8 or about 12 of them. Nobody can sing a verse of twelve stanzas. But one says, does sadness fill my mind? A solace here I find, May Jesus Christ be praised. Or fades my earthly bliss, my comfort still is this, May Jesus Christ be praised. To Thee O God above, I cry with glowing love, May Jesus Christ be praised. This song of sacred joy, it never seems to cloy, may Jesus Christ be praised. To God the Word on high the hosts of angels cry, may Jesus Christ be praised. Let mortals to upraise, their voice in hymns of praise, let Jesus Christ be praised. Thee this while life is mine, my canticle divine, may Jesus Christ be praised. Be this the eternal song to all the ages long, May Jesus Christ be praised. And then, this last one. In Heaven's eternal bliss. the loveliest strain is this, may Jesus Christ be praised. Let earth and sea and sky from depths to height reply, may Jesus Christ be praised.

My friends, I believe that if we were to take this, and memorize this, and hum it over to ourselves when we're in the worst possible mental states, when our moods are down, and when we don't feel like praising God, I believe that God will honor our determination and would give us the ability and create in us the habit of always praising God. And always saluting and congratulating the great God Almighty, for that's what we're going to be doing when we get over there. Don't forget it. And never is anybody going to complain in heaven.

So, if you're doing a lot of complaining, remember it's going to be cut off very suddenly in that day when you go to heaven, if you do. I wonder if a complaining Christian will go to heaven? Some of you theologians and you that read the Sunday School quarterly, let me know about that. Can a complaining Christian go to heaven? I don't know. I don't believe in purgatory. And I don't believe that there's any place that they can take complaining Christian and purify him. So I don't know about that. But it's better to get used to praising God now, so that when you step over into the world above, you won't have to change. You won't have to tune your harp.

Have you ever seen these musicians that when they're asked to play or something, they get up and put their instrument to their ear and go twing, twing, twing, twing, twing a while until I get ready to go home wondering what's going to be. Finally, after they've tuned it very carefully, then they play something. Well, I think a lot of us when we get to heaven are going to have to spend the first few thousand years tuning our harp and getting it ready. I always wondered why these brethren

that are going to play, don't tune the thing before they come to church. Why they subject us to the necessity of adding to, or listening to a tuning up exercise for five minutes?

Well, I wonder the same about the people of God. If they cut you off at 10 o'clock Wednesday morning, or seven o'clock Thursday morning or eight o'clock Friday night, or Saturday morning at 9:15. If you'd suddenly have been taken off to heaven like that, would your harp be in tune? Or would you have to ask God to please let you have some something corresponding to purgatory, long enough to get your harp tuned? I think we ought to keep our harp in tune all the time. And whether we feel like it or not keep saying it. Because it's our will to praise God and not our ability to feel like it, that God accepts. So, if you will to salute Him, congratulate Him and praise Him continually, you're praising Him continually, whether you feel like it or not. Keep that in mind. Amen. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Oh, magnify the Lord with me. And let us exalt His name together.