

A Reason to Live

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[0 : 00] Then take your Bibles before the preaching of the Word and you can turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1. Here we read of that wonderful sovereign love of God that is shown towards us in Christ.

! Ephesians chapter 1. We'll begin with verse 1. This is the Word of the Lord. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus 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. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless, in his sight.

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

[1 : 21] And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in accordance, in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

Our nation, indeed our world, is in a crisis without an answer to the why question. Our teens, our young adults, our middle-aged and even older folks alike are languishing without a purpose in life, a reason to live.

And so, children are told, study hard, to get good grades. Why? Well, so you can get into a good college. Why?

[2 : 49] So you can get a good degree. But why? So you can get a good job. But why? So you can make good money. But why?

So you can buy the things you want and live comfortably and even retire early in life. But why? For what?

The world has no satisfying answer to the why question. what's the reason to continue doing anything difficult?

To work hard at your job. To stay in a difficult marriage. To be consistent in raising your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

To be a faithful church member, selflessly serving your brothers and sisters in the Lord. To do the hard right instead of the easy wrong. To love your neighbor as yourself.

[3 : 44] What's the reason for it all? What's a purpose big enough to endure all the hardship and pain and disappointments and sorrow that also comes with life?

Well, our world has no purpose big enough to cover all of life. No real satisfying reason to live. And increasingly, some are seeing that hopelessness and are choosing to exit this life by taking their own lives.

Finding no reason to live. They choose not to live. But most just muddle on, not knowing what's wrong, not even stopping to think about the why question, just grabbing to get the most pleasure out of this meaningless life until the curtain is finally drawn and it's game over.

Just eat, drink, and be merry because tomorrow we die. Now, one of the beauties of the Christian religion is that it has an answer to the big why question.

It gives you a reason to study, to work, to play, to get married, to have kids, to make money. It gives you a reason to spend and be spent in advancing the kingdom of Jesus Christ around the world.

[5 : 08] It gives you a reason to be killing sin, stubborn sins, and doing the hard work of holiness. A reason to suffer as well as to succeed. God has given us in the Bible an answer to this question that is most satisfying and most complete.

great. It's big enough to gather in its arms the hardest things as well as the best of things. This all-encompassing purpose and goal in life.

It's a reason to get up every morning with something most satisfying to live for each day. And so my sermon this morning is just entitled, A Reason to Live. A Reason to Live.

I wonder what your reason to live is. The soul of man cries for such a reason. And blessed be God in Jesus Christ, we have it.

I invite you to turn to Psalm 119. Today we're beginning a new series of messages.

[6 : 12] It belongs in the category of great chapters of the Bible. In that series, we've seen in Romans 8, God's so great salvation. We've seen in John 17, that high priestly prayer of our Savior.

We've seen in Hebrews 11, faith in action. We've seen in Psalm 110, the coronation of the risen and reigning Christ.

We've seen the majesty of God in Isaiah 40. Now, today we turn to a chapter that is not only great in its meaning, but great in its length. It's the longest chapter in the Bible.

176 verses. No other chapter in the Bible even comes close to that. For the last year, I've been soaking my soul in this great chapter.

And I've been using Spurgeon's treasury of David. Just one verse a morning and not always every morning. But my meditations have been enriched by the comments of Charles Spurgeon and also the cream of other commentators in his vast library, most notably the Reformers and the Puritans.

[7 : 23] So my plan is not to go through the psalm verse by verse, but to select certain texts and to draw lessons from this longest chapter in God's Word.

The author is most likely David, the man after God's own heart. And though his name is not on this psalm as it is in some of his other psalms that he wrote, his fingerprints are all over it in terms of style, in terms of vocabulary words he chooses, and in terms of the content.

There's much material here that matches his other psalms that do bear his name on them and that match his experiences in life of suffering and as being a king.

All but four verses are prayers, cries to God, prayers that plumb the depths and the breadth of Christian experience, which means that they're ready-made prayers for you and me to pray.

And I trust these verses will deepen our communion with God and teach us how to pray as we look over the shoulder of a man after God's own heart and hear him crying to God.

[8 : 44] Often in a dull and prayerless frame, I have found these stirring my heart to pray, putting desires that I have in my heart, stirring them up and then giving me words with which to address those desires to God.

So, turn to Psalm 119, verse 175. Yes, we're going almost to the very end to begin our study because it's here that we find an overarching purpose for which David draws breath, the very engine that is driving all the activity of his life, his very reason to live.

Notice his cry in verse 175. Let me live that I may praise you and may your laws sustain me. Let me live that I may praise you and may your laws sustain me.

You know, there's a natural instinct in man to live. We instinctively cling to life, perhaps because death is so unnatural and unknown.

We were made to live and death is the intruder. It's the result not of our creation but of our fall into sin in Adam. The Bible says sin entered the world through one man and death through sin and therefore all men died.

[10 : 11] Death came to all men. So, the desire to live is natural but the reason to live is not natural. The world through sin has lost its God-implanted reason to live.

And so, we see David telling us where it's to be found in this verse. Three simple points here. The first is David's petition. Let me live.

Let me live. And throughout this chapter, David's cry for God is seen to deliver him. Indeed, just five verses before, he's crying out, deliver me, Lord.

And David clearly wants to live. We think of how many times his life was severely threatened and his prayer would have fit his experience.

This prayer would have fit his experience. As a young boy, he's out tending his father's sheep and a lion comes along and carried off one of the sheep in its mouth.

[11:16] David went after it. But the lion turned on David. That's a time to pray. Let me live. But David seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it.

Another day, it was a bear robbing one of the sheep. And the same thing happened. And a little later, it was a giant, a seasoned warrior, Goliath, seeking his life.

Let me live. A fitting, fast prayer in each of these cases. A little later, he's playing his harp in Saul's palace and suddenly, Saul takes his spear and hurls it to try to pin David to the wall.

And he dodged it. Not even time to pray, let me live. And it happened again. And again, David dodges it.

It happens twice to him. And after that, Saul told all of his attendants to kill David. And then he sent his hit squad to kill him right in his own house.

[12:24] And David narrowly escaped by the skin of his teeth. And that began ten years of King Saul and his army hunting down David like a partridge in the forest, trying to kill him.

And David was often within a whisker of death. He had many opportunities to pray. Let me live. Deliver me. And then there were his many wars that he fought for Israel.

This was not firing missiles from miles away, but this was close up hand-to-hand combat, sword-to-sword. And in one situation, he kills 200 Philistines.

Another time fighting the Philistines, David's arm grew so exhausted that he was about to be killed by a giant called Ishbi-Benab.

And at the last minute, one of David's soldiers stepped in and saved his life and killed the giant. And from that point on, they didn't let David go into battle with them.

[13:30] So many close brushes with death. Let me live. And then it's his own son, Absalom, seeking his life and his throne.

Another time, his own band of discontented men that he had before he was crowned king, they were talking of stoning David. They were so discouraged with the way things were going. There were plagues. There were killing diseases and even threatening judgments of God upon him for his sin.

And David's life was full of these life-threatening situations that would have elicited this prayer. Lord, let me live. Let me live.

But his petition does not end there, does it? It continues. Let me live that I may praise you. And here we have, secondly, his reason to live.

[14:31] Now, many people will pray foxhole prayers when they're in some life-threatening danger of war or disease or storm or terrorism or famine.

Let me live just to avoid dying. But that's not David here. He tells us why he wants to live. Here's the reason to live.

His highest aim and goal in living. That purpose that dominated all of life. Let me live that I may praise you. That's it.

Give me life and breath that I might use that life and breath to praise and honor and glorify you. To speak well of you. To extol you. To show forth your excellencies.

David prays that all of his living might serve this highest end to praise the Lord. To honor his God and Savior. I wonder, is that why you want to live?

[15:32] Is that why you want to continue living? Is that why you exercise? Why you watch what you eat? Why you seek to do the healthy things? We're not just to live to live.

Richard Sibb said. There's a reason to live. Now, David tells us that reason and it's not just an empty foxhole talk with David.

This is exactly what we find David doing in so many of his songs. So let's unpack this glorious reason to live. Let's let David show us what this is, what it looks like.

Consider five things about praising the Lord. That's the reason to live. Five things. The first, the object of our praises is God.

Let me live that I may praise you. Praising you for your greatness, your goodness, your attributes, your works, your words, your promises, your titles as we've just done from our scripture reading. [16:42] Great is the Lord. He's the one worthy to be praised. I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart. I will show forth your marvelous works.

Psalm 9-1. I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised. 18-3. It's fitting for the upright to praise Him. 33-1. 73 times in the Psalms we're told praise the Lord.

The Lord. He's the object of our praise. That means God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit and each have reasons to praise them distinctively for their distinct offices and ministries to us in life.

Praise the Lord. Secondly, who are the hearers of our praises? First of all, God Himself. David addresses his praises directly to God.

Listen in Psalm 36 for the you and the yours that tell us David is having dealings with God. He's talking to someone and directly to Him.

[17:55] Psalm 36-4-9. Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens. Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains.

Your justice like the great deep. O Lord, You preserve both man and beast. How priceless is Your unending love. Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of Your wings.

They feast on the abundance of Your house and You give them drink from Your river of delights. With You is the fountain of life and in Your light we see light.

And so that's the first person who hears our praise. It's directed directly to God. What a privilege it's ours to come into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise.

You say, I don't see Him here. No, but He is here. He's here by His Spirit and He's glorified in His throne room in heaven and by faith we enter into that scene and we bring our praises into His presence and sing them into His ears and praise them into His ears.

[19:13] God Himself. It's seen in so many other psalms. Psalm 139, 14, I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well.

Verse 17, how precious are Your thoughts of me, O God. How vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. And when I awake, I'm still with You.

There's never a time your thoughts of me are not going. I'm always in Your mind. Do you ever praise the Lord for how many thoughts He has of you?

You say, I hadn't thought of that. Well, that's the beauty and usefulness of the psalms. They lead us into the praise of God. They take us into paths that we wouldn't think of ourselves.

But as soon as we see them, we say, yes, Lord, thank You for Your many thoughts of me. Because as I go through the day, my thoughts go to other things than necessarily so.

[20:14] But Your thoughts are always with me. I'm always on Your mind. And even when I wake in the morning, I find that I'm still with You. I've been with You all night.

And Your mind is still toward me. Let the Word of God lead you into the praises of God. He delights to hear His people praise Him. Let me live that I may praise You.

Who else is to hear our praises? Not only the Lord Himself, but others, both saved and lost. Think of the saved. David says in Psalm 111 in verse 1, Praise the Lord.

I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Psalm 34 that we memorize together as a church is David doing this very thing.

He's going public with his praises. He's coming to praise and extol the Lord to his brothers and sisters in the family of God.

[21:13] So he says in verse 2, I will boast in the Lord. Let the afflicted hear and rejoice. You little know all the afflictions that your brothers and sisters seated around you are going through even as you come to praise the Lord.

Their spirits may be dull and dragging, but in hearing you praise the Lord, they're lifted up to rejoicing. I'm so blessed to live among believers who do this very thing.

I can count at least four times in this past week that I was significantly encouraged by the testimony of another believer in the gatherings of the saints.

This is no small way in which we spur one another on to love and good deeds. It's one of the important reasons we're not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together so that we can do this

spurring of each other on to praise the Lord together in song and in true fellowship.

You get that opportunity today in your small groups. I trust you'll take advantage of it. So David shows us how to do it. Let me tell you what the Lord has done for me.

[22 : 34] This is too good to keep to myself. God deserves praise for what he's done in my life this week. Help me praise the Lord for his goodness to me. And so David says glorify the Lord with me.

Let's exalt his name together. I sought the Lord and he answered me and he delivered me out of all my fears. Any of you have any fears this week? Did you seek the Lord and cast them on him and did he deliver you from your fears?

Have you told anybody? Wonderful opportunity today to do that very thing. This poor man called and the Lord heard him. He saved him out of all his troubles.

Been in any trouble lately? Has the Lord answered any prayers this week? Have you told anybody? This is true fellowship.

True koinonia. The shared life. We share our burdens. We share our praises for our good and great God. And God's praises multiply when we share.

[23 : 43] So let me live that I may praise you to my brothers and sisters as well as to you. But not only brothers and sisters, our praising the Lord is also to be heard by the lost.

The lost who don't know our God. Who cannot say is, we can say, this is our God. He's my God. They can't say that.

They don't know him. They don't know who he is and what he's like by experience. All they know is the slander of the world and of the devil, that father of lies.

Oh, he's not so good. Eve, if he were good, he'd let you eat from all the trees. You see, he's slandering him. No, but that's why we share praises with the lost people to tell them what our God is like and what he has done.

Psalm 96, the praise is to reach the nations of the world as they're worshiping other gods. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

[24 : 45] For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. He is to be feared above all gods. Yes, your gods, whatever they be. For the gods of the nations are idols. But the Lord made the heavens.

The heavens. Say among the nations, the Lord reigns. So it is. We're to be telling the world about our wonderful God, about our Savior who does everything for sinners who can do nothing to save themselves.

So we praise God to himself, to others, saved and lost. But there are even times that we praise the Lord to ourselves.

What I mean is what David is doing in Psalm 103. He's stirring up himself to praise the Lord. Do you? He's giving himself a good talking to.

He's heaping up reasons to praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being.

[25 : 55] Praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits who forgives all your sins, your sins, soul, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things, soul, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

He's praising the Lord to himself to stir himself to praise. So that's who hears our praise.

Third, how are we to praise the Lord? And we could say, well, we find David doing it with his lips and his life. With our lips, when we speak well of him, Psalm 34, 1, his praise will continually be on my lips.

We're to declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. And those spoken words can either be sung or spoken. We've sung the praises of Jesus together.

We can also now speak them to each other. And then with our lives, praise. Because when we live well for him and before others, we bring praise to God.

[27 : 21] Remember Jesus' words, let your light so shine before men that they may see what? Your good deeds, your good works. And do what? Praise our Father in heaven.

You can bring praise to God by the way that you live. as you adorn the doctrines of God our Savior, making the gospel attractive by the way you live.

What must her Savior be like that makes her so joyful, so full of peace in the midst of trouble? What must his Savior be like that causes him to think about others and not just be turned in on himself?

People see that and bring praise to your Father. That's the way to praise him with your lips and with your life. And then fourthly, the time of our praise.

When are we to praise the Lord? And again, we take our cue from David in Psalm 34, 1, I will extol the Lord at all times. His praise will continually be on my lips.

[28 : 32] At all times, here refers to all seasons, all occasions. When times are good and times are bad, when times are happy and when times are sad, when times are hard, when times are easy, it's time to praise the Lord.

And so Job can say, the Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. May the name of the Lord be praised. That's it.

All times, Job, that's what I gave you a mouth for. That's what I gave you a heart to do, to praise Him. Paul and Silas beaten, bleeding, put in stocks that make them sit at uncomfortable positions in the inner dungeon and at midnight, they prayed and sang praises to God.

And the prisoners were listening. The praises directed to God, but also in the presence of sinners in good times and bad times.

1.13.2, let the name of the Lord be praised both now and forevermore. You know, the thing about now, it follows you around. It's now, oh, and it's now, and it's now.

[29 : 53] I'm never out of now. So we're to praise the Lord. When? Now and forevermore. The now never ends. Psalm 145, 1 and 2, I will exalt you, my God, the King.

I'll praise your name forever and ever. Every day, I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever. Do you?

Every day? Let me live that I may praise you. a worthy prayer to our God.

Put all this together. The time to praise the Lord is every day, all day. It's now and forever. Well, if I'm to praise the Lord at all times, I'm desperately in need of a long list of reasons to praise Him.

I mean, if I'm just left to a few things, I'm going to run out of things to praise Him for. So, I really need some reasons to praise the Lord. That's our last point.

[31 : 05] Reasons to praise the Lord. Well, there's a book I'd love for all of you to read and it's just full of many reasons to praise the Lord. In fact, I would guarantee you that if you read this book all your life, you'll never run out of reasons to praise the Lord.

In fact, it's 66 books in one book. You know what I'm talking about. It's the Bible. Did you ever think that it was written to teach you how to praise the Lord?

Did you ever think that God put in that book reason after reason after reason? You can't, I don't know where you're reading in your Bible reading program, but you're going to be bumping into it every day.

Reasons to praise the Lord. Did we not in our scripture reading in Joshua 3 this morning? Loaded with reasons to praise this living God who is our God who reigns over all the earth.

And this is David's point in the last phrase of our text. He says, let me live. Let me live that I may praise you.

[32 : 15] And then he says, let me live that I may praise you and may your laws sustain me or your laws help me. David is here speaking of God's word and sometimes he uses one of ten words that are used in this psalm to refer to God's word.

Here it's his laws or his rules. But it's clear that David expects God's word to be food sufficient to sustain this life of praise every day continually now and forevermore.

That there is enough in here in the word of God to excite daily praise in my life. If that's the case, that ought to give a different slant to our reading of the word of God.

And I would just challenge you this week as you're reading God's word to be looking for reasons to praise him while you're reading. You say, well, I pray afterwards. No, no. Time out.

You see a reason to praise the Lord, you praise him right then and there. And then he'll talk some more to you and you'll say, oh, Lord, I thank you that that's true of you.

[33 : 31] And then he'll talk to you some more in here. Oh, God, I've not been doing that. Forgive me. And you see, we praise him as we see reasons to praise him.

Do you have sessions that are set aside for nothing but praise? Take a walk. Take a walk and say, for the next five minutes, till I get to a certain tree, a certain marker along my walk, I'm going to do nothing but praise you.

You say, well, I'd only get a few steps and I'd run out of things to say. Well, okay, if that's where you're at, then take along a chapter of God's Word.

Take along a chapter, a psalm. Because every time you see that praise the Lord, you almost always have reason after reason to do so. So, look up the praise the Lord in Psalms and take that

psalm along with you.

Copy it on a piece of paper and walk along and take each verse and praise the Lord for the things that he's done, that he is, that he promises.

[34 : 46] Let me live that I may praise you. You know, Paul has the same reason for his life.

Ephesians chapter 1, the reason we, I had that passage selected because it begins, Ephesians 1, 3, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He doesn't just stop there, telling you to praise the Lord. No, he tells you all kinds of reasons why to praise him. Because he chose you.

He chose to save you, to have you be one of his holy, precious ones. And he did that choice before the creation of the world. Is that not reason to praise him? He predestined you to be adopted as one of his children.

Is that not reason to praise him? He had his own son sent from heaven to redeem you with his blood. Is that not reason to praise him?

[35 : 59] To praise him. When you believed, he sealed you with the Holy Spirit who's the guarantee of that eternal inheritance.

Is that not reason to praise you? Take Ephesians 1, 1 to 14 with you and over and over. But at different points in those 14 verses, we kept bumping into this line.

That you might pray for the praise of his glorious grace. Why did he choose you and predestine you to be adopted? To the praise of his glorious grace.

Why did he give Christ to be a ransom and redeem your soul? That you might be to the praise of his glory. That you might exist.

That's the word. That you might be and exist to the praise of his glory. And why has he given the Spirit to seal you until that coming inheritance? It is to the praise of his glory.

[37 : 07] The Holy Spirit through Paul that wants to drive that fact home to us over and over again. You see, we're so me-focused. Why has God chosen me and predestined me and sent his Son to save me and his Spirit to keep me in the way till the inheritance is mine?

Oh, it's so that I can have pleasure in this life and forever and ever. No, there's a bigger reason. There's a much bigger reason behind why God has done that for your pleasure.

And that's for his own pleasure. For the praise of his glory. For the praise of his glorious grace. That's why he saves sinners.

That he might receive honor, glory, and praise. And so we are to align our praises with his word.

This is to be our reason for living. I trust we've seen something this morning that of the importance of praising the Lord and that this is not some minor point on the fringe and the periphery of our lives.

[38 : 20] Some footnote to our lives. No, this is dead center. Why I draw breath. Why I get up in the morning. Let me live that I might praise you. It's the reason you were saved, Peter says.

That you might declare the praises of him who saved you, who brought you out of darkness into life. That's why he saved you. Not just an end in itself, but that you might be to the praise of his glory.

It was David's reason to praise the Lord for his many deliverances. It was his reason to praise the Lord in the way that he lived. You know, that was the reason David ventured down into the valley of Elah to fight the Goliath, the giant.

That the whole world might know that there is a God in Israel. And that all those gathered here this day might know that it's not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, but the battle is the Lord's.

You see his driving impulse. I want to see God's name praised. It's being cursed. Jesus is nothing more than a curse word, a filler.

[39 : 27] I want this world to know who he is and to hallow his name and see his name honored, praised. That's why I get up in the morning to do whatever I do that he might be praised.

We're not those believers. We're not aimlessly meandering through life, frittering away our lives without any target. This reason to live is given to every child of God.

The moment you're born again, you get a new heart and it's a heart that beats for the praise of your God. You want him to be known. And it gives new purpose to everything.

The most mundane thing. The hardest things. The easiest things. We have a reason. A reason to get up. A reason to live. A reason to love.

A reason to suffer. A reason to serve. A reason to persevere. We have a God to praise. And this is a purpose that will never end.

[40 : 32] For the song in heaven, the very atmosphere of heaven, the very happy occupation of heaven is praise to the Lord.

So may we embrace more and more God's praise as our reason to live and relate all of life, all that we do, to do it for his praise. That will make every day a day worth living.

That will make no day a wasted day. Why do you want to live? Don't live just to live. That's animal life.

Just to fill our earthly appetites. No, we were created for far more than that. We were given a soul to praise the Lord. I fear some of you here this morning might have no real interest in living for that reason.

You live for yourself and not for God. If that's the case with you, you're not ready to die. You're not ready for heaven because as I said, heaven is a place where the very atmosphere is praising God.

[41 : 41] You wouldn't fit there. And God lets no one into heaven but what he fits them for heaven. And he begins that even here and now by putting in your heart a new heart to want to praise him.

Are you tired of living for no really big, grand reason? Are you just circling around your little selfish interests? Oh, the invitation of the gospel is come to Christ and he will make you a new creature and he will plant in your heart a desire to live for the one who made you.

the one who knows the reason you were made. The most satisfying, the most flourishing way to live in fellowship with him.

He delights in mercy, he turns none away. And if you come to him, you'll wonder why you waited so long to come to him. Well, in our text then, David prays to live.

He prays to live a life of praise and he prays to be helped to do so by God's holy word. May he help us to do the same. So may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

[42 : 57] Amen. Amen.