

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!



SABBATH—MARCH 27

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 22:37, 38; Romans 12:1; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Ephesians 5:2; Colossians 3:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 John 4:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!” (Psalm 103:1, NKJV).

SEVERAL YEARS AGO A ROCKET WITH A VERY POWERFUL TELESCOPE¹ went up to explore the universe.² If we cannot understand the universe itself, how can we fully comprehend the God who made it?

Zophar the Naamathite asks Job, “ ‘Do you know how deep the mysteries³ of God are? Can you discover the limits of the Mighty One’s knowledge?’ ” (Job 11:7, NlrV).

The true answer is that no one can.

This God who created the universe is the same God (Jesus) who put on human flesh⁴ and accepted our sins on the cross. The God who created the universe accepted the punishment⁵ for our sins so that we could have eternal (forever; without end) life.

Now we have this truth with us. So how then could we fail to love this God and offer Him our very best praise and worship?

To view and/or download a Hope Channel show on this week’s lesson, visit www.lifesbeat.org.

1. telescope—a special instrument (tool) that lets people see things very far away; used to study stars and other planets.

2. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

3. mysteries—things that cannot be fully understood or explained.

4. human flesh—having the body of a human being (person).

5. punishment—a penalty (price to be paid) for, or the result of, doing something wrong; when someone must suffer loss or pain for doing something bad, wrong, or against the law.

SUNDAY—MARCH 28**OUR GOD OF LOVE
(2 Timothy 1:9)**

God gave humans⁶ the freedom of choice. This means humans have the right to obey or disobey. In giving us freedom to choose, God also made sure we had a way out of wrong choices. That way out is known as the gospel. The gospel is the good news of what Jesus has done for us. He has offered us a chance to regain the eternal life we were created at first to have.

What does 2 Timothy 1:9 tell us about the idea that God prepared the plan of salvation⁷ even *before* the world began? What does it tell us about God's love for us that He would do this even before we were created? How does this verse help us understand what grace⁸ is all about?

God's great love and grace were at work for us even before we began our life on earth. In a way, the gospel was a warranty (guarantee) on our souls. God knew what was going to happen. So, in His love and wisdom, God had the plan of salvation ready to meet the crisis (problem) when it arrived. And, of course, at the center of that plan was Jesus' death in our place. The only way we could be saved from our sinful condition was through the Cross. On the

Cross, God Himself as a man accepted the punishment for our sins. Nothing else would have been enough to pay the price. Nothing else could have. No matter how great the price was, Jesus was willing to pay it for us.



The gospel was a warranty (guarantee) on our souls even before life began.

How then are we to act toward such love for us, according to Ephesians 4:32; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:5–8; and Colossians 3:13? What is the same basic message of all these verses?

To love unselfishly is strange to the human heart. There is almost always a hidden, selfish reason. But, at the same time, if we had to wait until our reasons were pure, we might not get anything done. How much time should you spend thinking about the character of Christ?⁹ How could that help you

6. humans—men, women, and children.

7. plan of salvation—what God has done and is doing to save us from sin.

8. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

9. character of Christ—who Jesus is; having and understanding the character of Jesus is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God's law (Ten Commandments) shows us His character.

learn to act more and more out of the kind of unselfish love that has been shown to us in Jesus?

MONDAY—MARCH 29

GOD OF GRACE (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

Write in your own words the meaning of Ephesians 2:8, 9. Ask yourself these questions, Why must salvation be by faith and not by works? Why can works not save us? Read Galatians 3:21.

A youth who had epilepsy¹⁰ fell onto the New York City subway tracks as a train was nearing the station. Without wasting any time, a stranger threw himself on top of the shaking youngster. Holding the boy flat, the man lay still until the train stopped above him. Then the stranger called out, “We are OK!” This man’s unselfish act of courage was the only thing that saved the boy from certain death. What a powerful example of grace to show what Jesus has done for us. Imagine how thankful that boy must have been to that man. Then, how much more should we be thankful to Jesus for what He has done for us?

The very important question for all of us is, How do we show we are thankful for Jesus in our lives? It is one thing to talk about how thankful we are for Jesus or how much we love God because of what Jesus has done. But the true test of our faith is

our works. Our works do not come from trying to earn salvation (we cannot). Instead, they come from a heart filled with thanks and praise for what we have been given and promised in Jesus.

Sometimes it is not easy for us to appreciate fully what Christ has done for us. A youth class was discussing the plan of salvation. A boy raised his hand and said, “I have not done anything to deserve dying.” Well, the truth is that we all deserve death. Or, perhaps, we could ask this question another way. What have we done to deserve life? What have we done to deserve eternal life? What is it about us that God would go through so much to save us?



What have we done to deserve eternal life?

Think about the paragraph above. What answer do you have to those questions? After all, what has any of us done to deserve eternal life? Who among us is so worthy that it would make sense as to why Jesus would die for that person? How does your answer help you better

10. epilepsy—a disease that causes a person to black out, fall to the ground, and shake for a short while.

understand just how thankful we should be for salvation? More important, how well do your works show that thankfulness?

TUESDAY—MARCH 30

A LOVE RELATIONSHIP (Matthew 22:37, 38)

Jesus was asked what was the most important of all commandments. He answered, “ ‘ “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.” This is the first and most important commandment.’ ” (Matthew 22:37, 38, NlrV). What do these verses mean? How are we to do what Jesus commands here?

Think of what these words mean. According to Jesus, the most important of all commandments was not to keep the Sabbath. It was not any of the laws against killing, stealing, and adultery.¹¹ Instead, the most important of all the commandments dealt with what was in our hearts and souls. It dealt with what is inside of us and not with our outward actions.

Indeed, the most important commandment deals with our love to God. So the foundation¹² of all the commandments deals with a relationship.¹³ After all, what is love if it is not a relationship, in which we love

God above and beyond everyone and everything else?

Why would love for God be the most important of all relationships? Why would that be so important? What spiritual dangers arise if we love something, anything, more than God?

God had planned from the start that humans would enjoy a special relationship with Him. It was God’s purpose to give a higher level of experience to humans than the rest of the living things He had made on earth. This truth is shown in Genesis 1:26, (NlrV), “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our likeness. Let them rule over the fish in the waters and the birds of the air. Let them rule over the livestock [animals] and over the whole earth. Let them rule over all of the creatures [animals] that move along the ground.’ ” But none of the living things was made to look like God except humans. None of the other living things had the same responsibility (duty; work) that humans had. So, humans are not just highly developed monkeys. There is a great gap (separation) between humans and the rest of God’s creation on earth. So, we are shown to be special in the love relationship that we are to have with God. This is something the animals and plants cannot experience.

11. adultery—breaking the marriage vow by having sex with a person who is not one’s spouse; not being faithful.

12. foundation—the basis on which an idea or belief rests.

13. relationship—your emotional connection (tie) to another person and how deep your feelings are for that person.



Humans are not just highly developed monkeys. We are meant to be in a special love relationship with God. This is something animals and plants cannot experience.

What is your own experience in loving God? How do you know you love God? Write out a paragraph explaining what that means and how that love has changed your life. Bring it to class on Sabbath.

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 31

PRAISING THE LORD (Revelation 21:4)

“Be joyful in God. Christ is light. And in Him is no darkness at all. Look toward the light. Speak the praise of God. Make others happy. This is your first work. It will bring out the best of your character.¹⁴ Throw the windows of the soul wide open heavenward, and let the sunshine of Christ’s righteousness [holy life] in. Morning, noon, and

night your hearts may be filled with the bright rays of heaven’s light.”
—Adapted from *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 7, 1904. How can you take these words and make them real in your own life?

No question, as Christians we have good reasons to give praise to God. We may have our struggles. We may have our fears. We may have our pains, our losses, and our disappointments. But we all have much to be thankful for. In the end, no matter what happens to us on earth, we still have the hope and promise of eternal life in Jesus. It is the hope and promise that “there will be no more death or sadness. There will be no more crying or pain. Things are no longer the way they used to be” (Revelation 21:4, NIV). That alone gives us reason to praise God.



Throw wide open the windows of the soul, and let the sunshine of Christ’s love shine in.

14. character—who someone is; all that a person does, feels, and thinks are what he or she is made of.

Whatever your problems are right now, what are things that you have to praise God for? Write down a list of these things and why you are thankful to God for them.

Before we can praise God, we need to experience how good the Lord is to us. We need to know for ourselves that God's love for us as individuals (persons) is real. This experience is something the Lord will give to anyone and everyone who is open to His leading. Only our stubborn hearts and sinful natures¹⁵ keep us from knowing the goodness and love of God. And once we come to know God's goodness and love, we will want to praise the Lord.

How can you learn to thank and praise the Lord more and more, no matter what problems and sufferings you have?

THURSDAY—APRIL 1

A "REASONABLE [WORSHIPFUL] SERVICE" (Romans 12:1, NKJV)

So far, we have learned that God is a God of love and grace. He desires to have a special relationship with us. No other creatures here on earth can enjoy this relationship. At the center of that relationship stand the Cross and the plan of salvation. We have many reasons to love God. But the Cross remains by far the best reason.

How does 1 John 4:10 show what it means to love God?

When you love someone, it is natural for words of praise and thankfulness to come out. When we, as Christians, give our hearts to the Lord, we get the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit fills the Christian with a deep sense of a thankfulness. From such thankfulness there will arise a heart filled with praise and honor for God.

Yet, there is an important point many people forget. True praise for God involves the whole person. That means we praise God with our spirits, hearts, and minds. But we also praise God with our bodies. Healthful habits in life give us clear minds and balance our whole health.

Scientists have discovered interesting physical changes in the brain that lead to practices by habit. For example, drugs influence changes in the brain that make the users hooked to them. Then our blood vessels decline (become worse) and make our brains dull and unable to work well. A disease like Alzheimer's¹⁶ comes from destruction (death) of brain cells. Clearly, we need healthy bodies so we might enjoy clear relationships of the mind, heart, and spirit. Many foods and drinks will not seem to harm our bodies. But they become problems when they become habits. We give our God praise from the whole of ourselves by offering our whole life as a living sacrifice.¹⁷

15. sinful natures—the fallen qualities or aspects of humans (men, women, and children) that we are born with. Without God, our natures are sinful, fallen, selfish, proud, unkind, and so on.

16. Alzheimer's—an illness that destroys the brain cells over time. People who are ill with Alzheimer's disease can lose their memory and the power to think clearly.

17. sacrifice—someone or something of value, such as a life, that is given up to save or to help save someone or something else.

Think more about the idea of praising God with our bodies. What might that mean? How might lifestyle choices be a way of praising God? At the same time, how might wrong lifestyle choices be a way of denying God?

FRIDAY—APRIL 2

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Anointing¹⁸ of David,” pages 637–642, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.¹⁹

“In the beauty and strength of his young manhood, David was preparing to take a high position as king among noble people on earth. David’s talents were valuable [important] gifts from God and were used to give glory²⁰ to God. David’s ability to think deeply served to fill him with wisdom that endeared [brought closer] him to God and angels. As David studied how perfect God was, a clearer understanding of God opened before his soul. Unclear themes [ideas; subjects] were made clearer. Difficulties were made easier. Problems were better understood. And each ray of new light brought David closer to the glory of God and the Savior.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 642.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ In class, discuss your answer to

the question of what it means to love God. How do we as sinful humans love God? What does that mean? How does love for God differ from love for other people or other things?

❷ Why is praise to God so important to us? How does praise and worship bring us closer to God? How does praise and worship help us to better know and love God? Also, why is praise to God very important during troublesome times? Anyone can praise God in good times, right? But how are we able to praise Him during bad times?

❸ As we have been studying all week, salvation is by faith alone. None of us is good enough to deserve salvation. None of us ever could be good enough to deserve it either. Salvation has to be a gift from a loving and kind God to sinful humans who have nothing to offer the Lord. But, at the same time, we have been asked often in the Bible to obey God. In others words, we are not saved by works. But works are a part of what it means to be saved and to have salvation. How do we understand the relationship between faith and works? How can we learn to praise God and show our love to Him through our works? How can we do so while at the same time not falling into the trap of believing that these works can save us?

18. anointing—a special ceremony making a person an official leader for ministry (work done for God) to the people. It also means the Holy Spirit’s leading.

19. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are given messages by God to give to His people.

20. glory—praise, honor, and respect.