

Getting Impressed with God

"Living with Wonder in Our Hearts"

By Pastor Matt Black

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Lord's Day morning

Ephesians 1:3

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Introduction: Open your Bibles to the book of Ephesians. The title of our message this Lord's Day morning is "Getting Impressed with God." We could subtitle it "Living with Wonder in Our Hearts." We will be dealing specifically with verse 3 this morning. Let us stand together as we read the entire first chapter.

[*Read the entire chapter of Ephesians 1*]

Not many people care about the verses we just read. Most of the folk outside these doors have plenty of other better things to do with their time. They are still living in Ephesus aren't they? But we care about these words, because we are living for the Lord; we are living for the world in which God abides, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God (Hebrews 11:10).

This morning I am stuck by the peacefulness in our meeting place. It is a stark contrast to the constant hum of the world around us. People are so busy these days. The media is constantly in front of us always bringing us "to-the-minute" news or the latest update. We become impressed and obsessed with things that are truly not of eternal significance. This world that we live in loves to make worthless things seem as if they are valuable. "It's bigger, it's better, it's newer, it's hot off the press, it's the latest," and it's all clamoring for our attention and "coming to a theater near you." The world wants you to be impressed and awed by what it can give you. We live in the world of the ever present sensational. Do you find yourself impressed by this world? Have you come here today with your mind fixed on things that are going to pass away? Are you still living in Ephesus?

My motive and purpose this morning is to redirect our focus. Let us look at our text here in Ephesians 1 and verse number 3.

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

There we see it so clearly. Our focus needs to be on another world. We live in Ephesus, but our hearts need to be filled with the wonder of the "*spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*"

We need to stop being impressed by this world, and start being impressed by God. God has indeed wired us to be creatures of awe and wonder. The chief end of man is indeed to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. God created us so that our hearts might be struck with amazement and adoration at the Triune God. Though we have the constant Vanity Fair going on all around us and demanding our attention, we must be careful not to fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Timothy 3: 7). We must be enraptured with all that God is—we must be obsessed not with this world, but with God! Paul is not simply instructing us to do this, he is *demonstrating*

it! So I say, we need to live with wonder in our hearts. That's what people who are "seated in the heavenlies" do. We call this "worship."

- I. First we see the Substance of our worship. Paul says "*Blessed* be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We have to ask ourselves, what is the apostle actually doing here? What is going on in this verse? Paul here is assigning worth to God. He is saying, "God, you are infinitely valuable." "God is blessed!" Paul is consumed with God. It is as if something is weighing him down—it's great—it's awesome—he's got to say something. But what's he talking about?

A. But what does it mean to worship?

Well, worship essentially is "getting impressed with God"! This is what we were created for! The ultimate cause for sin's domination in our lives is that we are impressed with the wrong kinds of things. When you stopped getting impressed with God, you started sinning—that very moment. You may not have been aware of it, but you are aware of it now. *What are you impressed with? Because that is what you go after!*

Whatever you are impressed with will control you. I spoke with a brother this week. He said how he had given his son a lot of super hero toys. He said it was fine at first, but pretty soon, that was all his son was talking about. You see, his young son was impressed with the superheroes. He thought about them. He contemplated them. If you asked what he wanted for Christmas, that's what he wanted. The toys, the posters, the games—why? He became impressed with them.

We grown-ups get impressed with *bigger* things. We have our toys, our cars, our games. You name it. We go after them. They control us.

Some of you are impressed with material things. So you go after money and comfort. You have forgotten that should be going after God who is able to "*supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19). We go after material things because we are impressed with those things.

Others are controlled by their emotions. This thing or that thing gives me security. It makes me feel good. I need this thing. I must have it. I am impressed with how it makes me feel. I'm awed by the feeling it gives me. But what does David say?

Psalm 16:11

In thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there*
are pleasures for evermore.

We ought to find our security, our acceptance, and our pleasure in God. Are you impressed with His presence?

What is it in your life that you are impressed with? What takes your time? What delights you? One thing about a Christian is—he is

impressed with God. He goes after God. David was impressed with God. Listen to his words again in Psalm 42.

Psalm 42:1-2

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.

David said, God lights up my soul—I feel alive when I'm in His presence—I thirst, I long after God. I need Him. I'm impressed with Him. I must have Him. So, we have seen that worship is being impressed with God. Now that we know what worship is, how do we go about doing it? We see that Paul said "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Worship is not just repeating these words. Worship happens in the soul. So how do we get there?

B. How do we accomplish this worship?

1. We must have right doctrine.

The person who does not believe rightly cannot rightly worship God. A person cannot even begin to know God unless he knows something about Him. This is called doctrine. Doctrine is simply another way of saying "teaching." It's what we know about God, and what God teaches us about ourselves, about his creation, and about His plan. Without right doctrine, we cannot properly worship God.

Most all of us have at least a superficial knowledge of the Scriptures, but we have a lack of knowledge of the doctrines of the Scriptures. When we learn doctrine—we mean we are learning about who God is and what He does and how we should approach Him. And when we do that, it puts an awe and wonder in our hearts. In a moment we are going to hit some doctrinally rich material because I want you to experience this wonder in your hearts. I want to bring some truths to the forefront that are neglected in our day. Some of these doctrines, many Christians rarely contemplate. I promised you that I would teach you line upon line, precept upon precept, and I am committed to that.

You may wonder why we read the entire chapter of Ephesians when we are only dealing with one phrase of one verse. I am committed to what Paul instructs the churches to do in his letter to Timothy. He says,

1 Timothy 4:13

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

We read the doctrine, and we exhort people to follow the doctrine. Why? Because doctrine is the springboard that brings change to the Christian. For example, Paul tells us not to "walk according to the course of this world" (Ephesians 2:2). The order and direction for our lives must come from God and no one else. That's a doctrine. I exhort you to follow that doctrine. That's where worship begins. But it is not enough to simply *know* doctrine. It is

the contemplation of these doctrines that give us the very principles with which to order our lives. And that leads us to our next point. Yes, doctrine is important,

2. But we must also have right devotion. That is, we must apply all doctrine to our heart and life situations. What good is doctrine if it rots in the mind? Let it quicken your heart, and let it move to your mouth, and to your hands, and to your feet!

We need to take our focus and our affections off of the world, and place our lot with God. Being impressed and awed by God occurs when we first learn doctrine, and then we realize it and personalize it in our own hearts.

Colossians 3:2

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

- a. All of our earthly affections should point us to God, else they are illegitimate. Everything that brings awe and impresses us ought to bring us right to the throne of God. Don't set your affection on earthly things; Affection for earthly things is only legitimate if it points us to God! Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? What are you awed with? Does it point you to God? If it has no use in pointing you to God, it is an idol, and you must depart from it or it will steal your heart away from God. Solomon loved many women. Why was this an inordinate affection? Because they stole his heart for God. Men, if you are married, you must stay married. Why? Because if you depart from your wife, you will stray from God. God knows this. There is this reason behind every one of God's commands.
- b. Godly affections (devotion) do not mean our pain is ignored. We need to live with the Lord as our constant focus. That is worship. That does *not* mean that we live with our head in the clouds ignoring the pains and problems of life. Worship is not leaving life behind. Worship is bringing life to God and dealing with it in light of Who God is. Think of the Psalms—there were so many hard situations. David takes his disquieted soul constantly to God! You see, "worship is seeing God while you look life straight in the face."¹
- c. Godly affections by definition illuminate us—worship is a transforming thing. My thoughts often turn to the prophet Isaiah in the presence of God. He comes to God undone. He comes as a man with unclean lips. He leaves a transformed man. He has applied doctrine to himself, and he is changed. God is holy—I am unholy. That application.

¹ Dr. Richard Averbeck, Professor of Ancient Languages at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. I took this quote down during one of his classes in the spring of 2004.

That's devotion. I am unholy—God is merciful. God is merciful—I am forgiven. I am forgiven—I must go for the Lord! Do you see this transformation?

Worship is an enlightening of the eyes of the heart so that we see God in all circumstances, because we are constantly applying what we know about God to everything in our lives.

So a person who truly worships gets changed. It is a very powerful thing. Again Isaiah 6—some people think that the closer you get to God, the more holy you feel. The opposite is the case. The closer you get to God, the more UNHOLY you feel. The light of His glory sets your life straight—it sheds light on your sin, and it transforms your LIFE!!

So we see that worship is being impressed with something. That is the substance of worship. That awe and wonder comes by applying doctrine—or what we know about God—to ourselves.

II. Now, secondly we see the Object of our Worship. God is obviously the object of our worship. It was God's idea that we worship Him and Him alone! Paul makes it clear that his blessing has an object: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." As you can see even by the titles Paul is using, Paul is mixing doctrine and devotion! He is not afraid of teaching high and holy things to these people who have come to know the Lord, because he knows without right doctrine there will never be right devotion. Paul was impressed with one thing in his life. He had one passion, one single focus: God!! Paul was impressed with *God*!! The Lord God was the object of His worship. In our text Paul refers to God with two important titles.

A. First Paul blesses "the God...of our Lord Jesus Christ." This title speaks of Christ's humanity.

a. In this title we see Christ's Incarnation. Jesus put himself in such a position that he would become like us. He never had to call upon God as we do, but now, the Almighty can legitimately be called "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Son of God who rules and reigns, the one who in the beginning "made all things, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1: 1-3), this Second Person of the Triune God became man! "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14). Does that impress you? The Word became flesh! God was robed in a human body, and the Lord Jesus Christ called upon God, just like we call upon God. Christ made Himself like us! We rejoice that Abraham's God and our God is called the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Philippians 2: 7-8

You see, He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself..."

Christ humbled himself—men pray. God has no need of praying, but men are called to be in dependence of God. We see this applied to Christ in Hebrews.

Hebrews 5:7

Speaking of Christ it says “in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.”

Do you see in this title Christ’s incarnation? God the Son was made flesh, and in that state He called upon His God! That ought to impress us! It ought to bring fear and trembling into our hearts!

- b. But we also see Christ’s Mediation. We cannot think long upon Christ’s incarnation without also thinking on His mediation. He is our representative before God. Think about it! Go ahead and try to represent yourself before God. “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live” (Exodus 33:20). You cannot go to God on your own merit! You must put aside all your thoughts of your own supposed right to represent yourself before God. All who attempt to bring their case before God will die. They will perish in hell because we are all unholy sinners. Jesus Christ is our Advocate. He is our Mediator!

1Timothy 2:5

For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

You don’t have to represent yourself before God! God became flesh, He mediates for you. God is the “God of our Lord Jesus Christ!” Does that amaze and impress you?

- c. We then, of course see in this title our Redemption in Christ. The old Puritans used to call this relationship between the Father and the Son “the Covenant of Redemption.” Simply put, God planned and promised our salvation in Christ before the foundation of the world. That ought to excite us! Christ is working on your behalf! He is praying for you, He is your Substitute, your Advocate, and all this so that He can bring about your final Redemption. Dear friend, if you know Christ today, death is only the beginning of eternal life! You ought not fear death, but fear only God. God is greater than death. There will be a day when death and hell shall be swallowed up in victory (Revelation 20:14).

Revelation 21:4

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

There's coming a day when our final redemption will be reality, when we will sing a new song:

Revelation 5:9

"Thou art worthy...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"

Are you worshipping God because of the covenant He made with Christ to bring us Redemption? Can you say, "Worthy is the Lamb?" Is your heart filled with wonder as you think of these mighty doctrines and apply them to your own heart and life? Are you redeemed?! You cannot help but bless the Lord if you are!!

- B. Secondly, Paul blesses "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This title is unequivocal in expressing Christ's divinity...
- a. Because it speaks of Christ's Position as God the Son. Turn to John chapter 5. John's Gospel, and the 5th chapter.

Here we read that Christ is healing people and it is the Sabbath. He tells the Jews that He is doing the work of "His Father." Look at John 5: 17, "the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. 19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. 20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. 22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: 23 That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Christ can call God his Father, He can be the Lord of the Sabbath, He can raise the dead, He is honored as the Father is honored, He can grant eternal life and forgive sins. Why? Because He is the Son of God! He is the Second Person of the Triune Godhead! God is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" He can say, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), because He created Abraham, He saw the dawn of creation because He is the Creator!! Does that compel you to worship Christ? Relinquish the cares of this world. Stop following after the things of this life. Take up your cross and follow Jesus, because He demands it, and He can demand it, because He is Alpha and Omega.

So we not only see Christ's position, but...

- b. We also see our Consolation in Christ. God is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We see this title another time in John 20. Christ has just risen from the dead. He appears to Mary Magdalene. She bows before Him and apparently goes to hold his nail pierced feet. We read in John 20: 17...

John 20:17

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God.

What is it that you are facing? Fret not! Christ has gone before you.

1Corinthians 10:13

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

Everything you are facing, Christ has faced it, and more. He has suffered pain, he has been defamed and reviled. He has suffered hunger. He has been without money and without a place to even lay his head. What are you facing? Take it to Jesus. There is nothing before you that Christ does not know intimately by His own experience. Worship Christ today by giving Him all you have. And then worship Him even more, count Him worthy by giving Him all you don't have. Tell Him your needs, your sorrows, and your hopes and fears. He is able to bear them because He is the Son of God. "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous!" (1 John 2:1).

- III. Finally, we ought to heed a Warning for our worship. What are you worshipping this morning? Listen to the first commandment:

Exodus 20:3

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

God's command to us has not changed. He gave it to our brothers in the Lord who lived in the Old Testament. He says to us today, just as he said to them in that day:

Deuteronomy 6:5

Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Are you impressed with God? Or are you worshipping other gods? Has your heart gone away after gods made with hands who cannot hear and cannot see? You may be impressed by a movie or a television program. You may be addicted to what is on the TV. Cast it away! Have no other gods beside the LORD! How can we do that?

A. First, Repent of Deviant worship. If some idol has stolen your heart, cast it away. Do you need to get rid of your TV. Do it.

Matthew 5:29

If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Go ahead, tell me you can't get rid of your TV. Tell me you can't get rid of the internet. Tell me you can't get rid of whatever is controlling you! I'll tell you that you can and you must, for God commands it! What is taking the place of God today? You say, but I can't throw these things away, it's too costly! You know when Paul preached to the Ephesians they God rid of all that took the place of God, and these were costly items!

Acts 19:19

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver.

Ephesians 4:22-25

Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We not only should repent of deviant worship, but also

B. We should Repent of Dead worship.

Is your worship today hypocritical? Do you have a head full of doctrine, but you've lost all devotion from your heart? Have you stopped applying God's Word to your life? Is being here today just a religious obligation? Or do you love God with all your heart and soul? How are your prayers? Do you mean them?

Matthew 6:7

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Peter tells us to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Peter 3:1).

We must not sleep, but we must:

"Be sober, be vigilant" (1 Peter 5:8)

"Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise" (Ephesians 5:15)

We are called to have:

"unfeigned love" (1 Peter 1:22)

James 3:17 says the wisdom from above is "without hypocrisy"

We are called to be real and genuine. Is your worship real, or is it put on? Is it dead? Does God impress you? If He does, it will be obvious to all!

C. Finally, we need to Rededicate ourselves to the Duty and Disciplines of worship.

Proverbs 4:23

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.

Worshipping God is not just going to happen. If you are waiting for lightening to illumine the sky, or for some mystical experience, you will be waiting a long time! That's not how worship happens! What are you doing to learn doctrine? Remember you cannot have right worship without right doctrine. Perhaps you know doctrine, but it does not excite you. That is because you've stopped applying it to yourself. It's not real to you any more, so it becomes irrelevant. Wake up! Awake to all that Christ is! He is our God, our Maker, our Mediator! He has the power to create and destroy you! Worship Him! Count Him valuable in your life. Give all that you have and all that you are to Him!

Appeal: Let's have heads bowed and eyes closed. Perhaps you are here today without Christ. You need to repent and believe the Gospel. It may be that you've never really considered who Christ is and His claims on your life until today. You say today I want to become a Christian. Would you raise your hand so that I can pray for you?

Christian, Are you impressed with God? Or do you just act like a Christian on Sundays? Worship is worthless if it is only feigned. Are you awed by God? Do you fear Him? Do you tremble before His majesty? It most certainly shows in every aspect of your life. Does doctrine bore you? Without right doctrine, you will have misplaced and deviant devotion. Does God have your time and your TV? Do you worship Him when it is convenient? Or are you so impressed and awed by God that He has you entirely?

The front of the church is open. If you need someone to pray with, we have a counselor here ready to help you. Come now and bring your heart to the Lord. Are you impressed with Him? Do you make much of Him? What if I were to stay in your home this week, but you didn't know that I was there. I think I would see how much you are impressed with God. Father, are you neglecting your duties to your wife and children? Are you disciplined in your walk with Christ? Can you see growth daily, or have you stagnated? Are you helping your wife to have her devotions? It is your responsibility Father if your home goes south! Let's take our responsibilities seriously. If we are impressed with God no burden is too great, and no discipline is too much for us! Those who are awed by God have hearts filled with His love and praise!!

Closing Hymn: 26 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty