

Sacred Songs, Life Lessons
A Glimpse into the Heart of God
Psalm 68

June 16, 2024

HDBC

From 1986 to 1990, Frank Reed was hostage in a Lebanon cell. For months at a time he was blindfolded, living in complete darkness, or chained to a wall and kept in absolute silence. On one occasion, he was moved to another room, and, although blindfolded, he could sense others in the room. Yet it was three weeks before he dared peek out to discover he was chained next to Terry Anderson and Tom Sutherland.

Beaten and tormented, but his greatest despair came from thinking that no one cared. He said in an interview, *Nothing I did mattered to anyone. I began to realize how withering it is to exist with not a single expression of caring around [me]. ... I learned one overriding fact: **caring is a powerful force. If no one cares, you are truly alone.***

We've all had times when we felt that no one really cared. But the Bible reveals a different reality. God does care. He has a heart of compassion. It is unfortunate that so many people fail to see just who God is. They make assumptions based on what they see happening in this broken and distorted world and make some bad assumptions about the heart of God. They fail to see His love, his compassion, His heart.

One of the best places to look into the heart of God is the songbook of the Bible, the book of Psalms. It reveals the brokenness of human hearts, but also the **tenderness of the heart of God**. If more people could set aside their preconceived notions about God and just get to know Him, they would find Him to be a loving, gracious, compassionate God.

So, let's take a ***glimpse into the heart of God*** by looking at one of the songs written by David, the shepherd, warrior, king and songwriter of Israel. There are other songs that enable us to see the warmth and goodness of

God, but none do it better than Psalm 68. This is a psalm of David written to be used in worship. It declares the great victory of God. Notice the first couple of verses. Those are verses that speak of victory in battle. But it is also a psalm that takes us deep into the heart of God. Not only does this psalm declare his power and victory on the battlefield, but also his compassion and tenderness with hurting people.

The God who spoke the entire universe into existence has a soft and caring heart. He is filled with compassion for his creation. **He feeds the birds and notices when the smallest of them falls.** But His compassion is most often seen not in his action towards the animals, but toward people. His tender compassion is seen in six roles that He embraces. These are found in 4 verses. Verses 5-6 and 19-20.

1. **Father of the Fatherless (5)**

Fatherless – The orphan. The one with no father.

Here God reveals himself as an adoptive father. One who reaches down to the person who has lost the stabilizing force in his or her life. They have lost their dad. **Without him they will lack direction, incentive, encouragement, and the security of having the basic needs of their lives met.** But God declares that He will step into that situation and become the substitute dad. And what a substitute he is!

Shortly after the Korean War, a Korean woman had an affair with an American soldier, and she got pregnant. He went back to the United States, and she never saw him again. She gave birth to a little girl, and this little girl looked different than the other Korean children. She was ostracized by the community.

Mom tried to raise her little girl as best she could. For seven years she tried to do that, until the rejection was too much. She did something that probably nobody in this room could imagine ever doing. She abandoned her little girl to the streets.

This little girl was ruthlessly taunted by people. They called her the ugliest word in the Korean language, *tookki*, alien devil. For two years she lived in the streets, until finally she made her way to an orphanage. One day, word came that a couple from America was going to adopt a little boy. All the children in the orphanage got excited, because at least one little boy was going to have hope. He was going to have a family. So this little girl spent the day cleaning up the little boys giving them baths and combing their hair and wondering which one would be adopted.

The next day the couple came, and this is what the girl recalled: *I saw the man with his huge hands lift up each and every baby. I knew he loved every one of them as if they were his own. I saw tears running down his face, and I knew if they could, they would have taken the whole lot home with them.*

He saw me out of the corner of his eye. Now let me tell you. I was nine years old, but I didn't even weigh 30 pounds. I was a scrawny thing. I had worms in my body. I had lice in my hair. I had boils all over me. I was full of scars. I was not a pretty sight. But the man came over to me, and he began rattling away something in English, and I looked up at him. Then he took this huge hand and laid it on my face. What was he saying? He was saying, 'I want this child. This is the child for me.'

Source: Lee Strobel, "Meet the Jesus I Know," Preaching Today Audio #211

2. Judge for the Widows (5)

Judge –a judge or advocate: **Defender, Champion**

God reveals himself not only as one who steps in for the orphan but also for the widow. Widows also have it tough, even in our day. But in Bible days a widow could easily find herself in serious trouble. Often with no real means of support and little opportunity. They were very dependent upon others and were often taken advantage of. They were easily preyed upon, unless there was a defender.

A grandmother was sliding her groceries across the self-checkout at Walmart. Scanner beeping, her total climbing, She pulled from her cart a package of steaks. She had counted the money in her wallet. "I just didn't have enough."

Holding the steaks she'd promised her family for dinner, Sarah made a split-second decision, ***I didn't have enough for them and I just bagged them anyway.*** She was walking out of the store when a store employee stopped her. Police were called.

She had been taken to a room away from other customers. Her 18-year-old daughter, Danielle, who'd accompanied her to the store, was sobbing when Officer Wagner entered. In addition to Danielle who is autistic, eight other children & grandchildren live with her. Her husband had been the family's provider until his death. She said, ***You get to a point where you're drained, you can't even think.***

Wagner wrote Sarah a citation, then returned to his car and ran a background check. ***There was nothing. She has fewer speeding tickets than I do. That's when I decided that she needed help.***

Sarah left Walmart and drove home with her daughter. Roughly an hour later her phone rang. It was Wagner. She pictured herself being led away in handcuffs. She thought, ***He's coming back to get me.*** He wasn't. Officer Wagner had made a stop at Christian Food Bank. The volunteers started packing. They filled his back seat and trunk. He drove to her house to deliver the groceries.

She resisted saying she didn't deserve this. She had committed a crime. He persisted and delivered them to her kitchen. He told her that he had even called Walmart and they agreed to void the citation.

Throw it in the garbage. God gives us second chances.

3. Friend for the Lonely (6)

Makes a home - To sit down; to dwell, to remain; to settle.

HCSB – ***God provides homes for those who are deserted***

The orphans and widows are not the only ones who need compassion.

There are those who are lonely. No one to turn to. Been deserted.

Everyone needs a friend. Someone to be with them, care for them.

What is a friend?

One who listens.

One who responds.

One who forgives.

One who sees the bad but loves anyway.

One who defends.

One who is present.

One who stays, no matter what.

That's who God is. He is a friend for the lonely.

Nursing Home – NY – What a Friend we have in Jesus.

4. Redeemer for the Prisoners (6)

Leads out – To go out, bring forth, break out

He will lead the prisoners to freedom and prosperity. Don't misunderstand this picture. He is not breaking people out of jail, who need to be there. The picture is not simply of the prisoner being set free, **but of having a positive future**. He doesn't simply open the prison doors, he provides for a future.

All kinds of prisons. Physical prisons. Psychological prisons. Emotional prisons. Financial prisons. Spiritual prisons. Regardless of the prison that has kept you captive, He can set you free and give you a wonderful future. He is a God of fresh starts and new beginnings.

In his book ***Ghost Soldiers***, Hampton Sides tells the story of a dramatic rescue during World War II. On January 28th, 1945, 121 hand-selected Army Rangers slipped behind enemy lines in the Philippines in an attempt to rescue **513 American and British POW's** who had spent three years in a prison camp near the city of Cabanatuan.

Sides describes the first effects of liberation as chaos and fear. The prisoners were too mentally brittle to understand what was taking place. Some even scurried away from their liberators.

One particular prisoner, Bert Bank, refused to budge, even when a Ranger walked right up to him and tugged his arm.

"C'mon, we're here to save you," he said. "Run for the gate."

Bank still would not move. The Ranger looked into his eyes and saw they were vacant, registering nothing.

"What's wrong with you?" he asked. "Don't you want to be free?"

A smile formed on Bank's lips as the meaning of the words became clear, and he reached up to the outstretched hand of the Ranger.

The Rangers searched all the barracks for additional prisoners, then shouted, "The Americans are leaving. Is there anybody here?" Hearing no answer, they left.

But there was one more POW—Edwin Rose. Edwin had been on latrine duty and somehow missed all the shooting and explosions. When he wandered back to his barracks, he failed to notice the room was empty and lay down on his straw mat and fell asleep. Edwin had missed the liberation. But there was a reason why. Edwin was deaf.

Four Americans died in the rescue; two Rangers in the firefight and two prisoners who perished for reasons of poor health. The freed prisoners marched 25 miles to freedom. With each step, their stunned disbelief gave way to soaring optimism. Even Edwin Rose made it. He finally woke up and realized liberation had come.

That is what God does for us. He sets us free and launches us into a new beginning. Such is His compassion.

5. Support for the Weak (19)

KJV says *daily loads us with benefits.*

HCSB – ***Day after day he bears our burdens***

In the final film of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Return of the King*, Frodo and Sam climb Mount Doom carrying the ring of power. The only way to save Middle Earth from the forces of evil is to destroy the ring by throwing it into the fires of Mount Doom.

The climb is treacherous. Fireballs hurl through the air like meteors. Lava seeps down the mountain. Gollum, a pitiful creature who once possessed the ring and is now obsessed with it, looks to kill Frodo and seize the ring. Sam protects his master by fending off Gollum's attack and knocking him back down the mountain.

With Gollum temporarily gone, Frodo and Sam resume their climb up the mountain. Frodo alone must carry the ring, and the burden becomes so heavy that he collapses. His exhaustion is so great, he can only whisper and feels unable to take another step.

Sam cradles Frodo in his arms and seeks to comfort him. ***Do you remember the Shire, Mr. Frodo? It will be spring soon. Do you remember the taste of strawberries and cream?***

No, Sam, Frodo replies, *I can't recall the taste of food, the sound of water, the touch of grass. There's nothing.*

Sam responds, *Let's be rid of it [the ring] once and for all. Come on, Mr. Frodo. I can't carry it for you. But I can carry you. Come on.*

Sam hoists Frodo onto his back and carries him to the top of Mount Doom where the ring is destroyed.

6. Savior for the Lost (19-20)

The almighty God who is the initiator of a relationship with us is the **source of our salvation and security**. He, alone can save us. But He is enough. He has chosen to be our salvation and to deliver us from the power of death. But in order to do so, it cost him dearly. It took the death of His son as payment for our sins. Never underestimate what your salvation costs God and His Son.

The second daughter of Queen Victoria was Princess Alice. Her son, at the age of 4, was infected with a horrible affliction known as black diphtheria. Doctors quarantined the boy & told the mother to stay away.

But she couldn't. One day she overheard him whisper to the nurse, ***Why doesn't my mother kiss me anymore?*** His words melted her heart. She ran to her son and smothered him with kisses. Within a few days, both were buried.

Jesus Christ was willing to enter into our world, to touch us with his love, and ultimately to die for our salvation. In doing so He was shielding us for the death and condemnation that we so deserved.

Father of the fatherless
Friend for the lonely
Support for the weak

Judge for the widow
Redeemer for the prisoner
Savior for the lost