



Psalm 103
Why Do We Worship?

Summary: God has shown you tremendous mercy; bless Him for it, lest you forget!

Do you ever find it hard to worship God? Of course you do. We don't always feel like worshipping. We might not like the song. We might not like the musical style. We might be in a bad mood, or think, this just isn't me or my thing. We all have those thoughts at times. We all have times when we're just not feeling it.

One reason why is we because we lose our excitement and wonder and awe about God. We're overwhelmed by things we have going on. God doesn't seem as real as the current issue in my life. We feel the pressures and concerns of this today and don't have time for spiritual things – we'll get back to them later, but for right now, there's this other thing that's really weighing on my mind.

Perhaps David was going through a season just like that when he wrote Psalm 103. Here we find a man attempting to jump start his own soul, speaking to himself, giving himself direction and reminders, urging himself to remember: God has shown us tremendous mercy, He has showered us with benefits, and we should bless Him in response.

Read with me and let's see if we become inspired to praise God by remembering who He is and what He has done.

Psalm 103:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
4 Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

One thing you should notice as we go through this Psalm: it is entirely a hymn of praise – there are no requests made of God, just praise given to Him. And the reason for that praise is: David is stirring up his soul to remember all that he has already received from God.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:

And then David goes on to list six specific benefits we receive from God: forgiveness, healing, redemption, love, satisfaction, and renewal. These are all desirable things. Having them makes us happy. People who don't have these things are looking for them. And we have them given to us, in Christ.

So, let's take a moment and think about each one. First and foremost (#1) is forgiveness. This is the gift that makes all the others possible. Without this, you don't have anything else; but with forgiveness, you get everything else too. Forgiveness is what brings us into relationship with God.

Notice it says God forgives **all our iniquities**. That's not a common English word. But the idea behind it is something twisted and distorted – you took something valuable and didn't follow the directions and instead you broke it and made a mess of it, but God forgives you. And the great thing is: if we will confess our sin, our iniquity, the fact that we have messed up our lives by resisting God, He will forgive us, totally and completely and immediately. According to

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is what God wants you to know about forgiveness. If you will confess, He will forgive. And, notice, from both PS 103 and 1 John 1:9 He forgives ALL your iniquities; He cleanses you from ALL unrighteousness.

Now, that is GREAT news! But it also creates a bit of problem, doesn't it? Because if God forgives me of all my sins, why don't I experience Him healing ALL my diseases? Why is there illness in this world, especially in my life or the life of someone I love?

Well part of the answer is, God forgives us of the eternal consequences of sin – if you confess your sins to Him He will not hold them against you, He will not bring them up again. But, you may still face some consequences in the here and now – if you cheat on a test, God can forgive you but your teacher can still fail you.

In the same way, God promises one day all your illnesses and injuries will be wiped out. The blind will see, the paraplegic will run, the arthritis will be gone, the Lyme disease, the Crones, gone – the chromosomes will all be properly numbered and arranged. In Heaven you will have a new body and your limitations and the limitations of your loved ones who trust Jesus will be no more.

But we want that now, don't we? And there's nothing wrong with wanting that now. But the hard reality is, even if we all had perfect health, we are all still going to die. Jesus performed countless miracles of healing during His life and ministry and every one of the people He cured eventually died, even those He raised from the dead.

I have seen what appear to be miracles – fevers broken, cancer gone, pain removed. But that doesn't mean those people are going to be immortal. What we need most is what we have in Christ – the promise of a new body to enjoy, free from the effects of sin and the Fall. And it is coming.

In the meantime, it is entirely appropriate to ask God for healing. We do it all the time here at the church – read James 5 and see what it says.

We do it in my home – I ask God to heal me when I'm sick, to take away the pain when I'm hurt. I ask my wife to pray for me, I ask my kids to pray for me, and I pray for them. But the truth is: though God is able to cure anything, He's not obligated to do it. And for reasons we don't understand, and for reasons we don't always like, sometimes He allows our injuries and illnesses to remain.

Again, we don't know exactly why, but, here's something you have to keep in mind: our relationship with God is the most important thing in our lives. Sin is immediately forgiven when we repent because it destroys our relationship with God. Suffering on the other hand can actually improve our relationship with God, help us learn more about Him, teach us to rely more on Him, create opportunities for others to serve by helping us, and therefore sometimes He chooses to allow it. Sometimes pain, illness, and injury teach us things about God that we would not learn otherwise. We don't have to like it, but we do have to trust Him.

Of course, that trust becomes easier to exercise when we understand the other benefits we have, like (#3) redemption.

[God] forgives all your iniquities,
... heals all your diseases,
[and] redeems your life from destruction,

It's important to remember life is headed toward destruction.

You can buy the latest and greatest piece of technology and it will eventually fail. The battery will wear out, or some part will break. You can buy the greatest car and the gaskets are going to wear out, the tires are going to wear out. You can buy a new home and you're going to need to replace the furnace at some point, the roof, the carpet. Everything on the planet is wearing out, it's not just your body.

The question is – why? Physics would tell you it's the Second Law of Thermodynamics – the law of entropy. Theology will tell you it's because of sin. God designed a perfect world, and we have ruined it, are ruining it, by using it for our purposes instead of His.

But, there is a plan. God has taken steps to rescue us from destruction. Like a firefighter running into a burning building Jesus rushed in to save us. And God has promised that one day He will create a new heavens and a new earth to replace what is currently falling apart.

He has a plan to save people and the planet from destruction. But make no mistake, without His *direct* intervention in your life, destruction lies ahead.

Fortunately, God doesn't just sit back and watch it all burn down, He rushes in to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves – to rescue us and demonstrate love, which is the fourth benefit we must not forget.

God rushes into the burning building of your life, saves you from certain destruction, wipes the soot, ashes, and smudges off your soul and actually (#4) ***crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.***

Now, I want to remind you this is Psalm is attributed to David, who was Israel's most famous and beloved king. He knew what a crown was. And he says God crowns us, He bestows grace and mercy on us. A king is recognized by his crown, you should be recognized by the grace and mercy that has been given to you.

He also (#5) ***satisfies your mouth with good things.*** Now, this is poetry, so God isn't promising to be your personal chef – through He could Beat Bobby Flay.

Food is basic to our need for survival and it's a metaphor for everything else we need. So this is a common theme found in the Scripture:

Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

Jesus said

John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

He told the woman at the well in John 4 that He offers Living Water and whoever receives from Him will not need to go looking anywhere else.

Clearly, God wants to be the source of our complete satisfaction, but that means we must be satisfied *in Him*.

If that happens, we experience the sixth benefit that David encourages us not to forget: (#6) renewal. God

***satisfies your mouth with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.***

Think of an eagle, gliding on the air currents, seeming to coast along effortlessly.

It's an image the prophet Isaiah uses in another famous passage of Scripture. Interestingly, Isaiah was also encouraging people to remember what they may have forgotten about God and the benefits He extends to us. Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
31 But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;

Our ladies are currently going through a book on the Spiritual Disciplines, things like prayer and fasting. This past week they looked at silence and solitude – so on Wednesday night and Thursday morning when they came in for the study, instead of spending the whole time in discussion *about* silence and solitude, the leaders sent them out to experience a bit of it – they gave them time to go, sit with their Bibles, and wait upon the LORD. And for many of the women it was time that renewed their strength.

When was the last time you did something like that? Well, according to God's Word:

[...] those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

This is what God does for those that are in relationship with Him; He enriches you with forgiveness, healing, redemption, love, satisfaction, and renewal.

Unfortunately, it is all too easy for us to forget His benefits. We don't take much time for silence and solitude. We feel stressed, rushed, overwhelmed at times and we're doing our best to keep our heads above the water.

We don't have time to get up in the morning and give any attention to God and our soul, no time to read Scripture, much less a good Christian book that will encourage us, nourish us, help us grow in our understanding or application of some aspect of the faith. We don't have time to pray. We don't have time to invest into the lives of others. And why not?

Because we're busy. But busy doing what? What is all this stuff that is crowding God out of

our lives?

If what we're so busy with is keeping us from the God who wants us to experience all these benefits, are we really doing the right things? Do we really have the right priorities? Why are we starving ourselves, keeping ourselves from a generous, merciful God who loves us and wants to comfort, counsel, heal, strengthen, and encourage us? Why do we allow ourselves to become so busy or so distracted that we [forget *all* His benefits?](#)

It's not just a modern problem, David suffered from the same problem back in the days of chariots and torchlights. We are all prone to forget what God has done and is doing for us, and that's linked to the fact that we are prone to forget who He is and what He is like. So, David reminds us:

6 The LORD executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.

8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
9 He will not always strive *with us*, (accuse us, chide us)
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

If you want to know what God is like – here's a really good answer.

We're going to notice several things about God's character, but the first thing I want you to see is that God is [slow to anger](#). That's important because anger is something many of us have experienced, and some are more prone to than others.

Notice that God *does* get angry. It's just that He doesn't stay that way. In just a minute we're going to talk about the mercy, kindness, goodness, of God. But don't think that means He doesn't care about wrong or guilt. God is deeply concerned about injustice, about oppression, about violence toward others, about gossip and hurtful words and even attitudes. God is holy and just and if your transgressions are not removed from you, you will experience His wrath.

But notice that God's anger is different than ours. God has been infinitely wronged by our sins, by our persistent resistance of His commands and ways, but He still forgives and drives the memory of our wrongdoing far away, [as far as the east is from the west](#).

Think of how that compares to you and me. We love to nurse a grudge, keep an issue alive, especially with people we interact with regularly.

The first time you do something wrong to me, I can often blow it off. But if you do it again, or if what you do is big enough then I begin to give you a label in mind, and everything you do, I now begin to interpret through the label and each time you do something that makes me angry I go from 0-60 in half-a-second, because YOU did that..again!

You see this in peer groups, in couples, with roommates or coworkers. People you interact with regularly. We can generally hold things together when dealing with strangers, but our patience grows weaker with people we know. And yet God knows us with unimaginable intimacy and He is:

merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

May God purify us so that our anger is not a result of our own hurt or low self-image, or the result of taking personal offense. And may He teach us to experience righteous anger instead; anger that compels us to act out against real injustice and evil in the world.

And even then, may He also teach us to reflect His mercy and compassion. For,

13 As a father pities *his* children,
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.
14 For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we *are* dust.

God knows us better than we know ourselves and is deeply compassionate and affectionate toward us. Tim Keller says God “knows us to the bottom yet nevertheless loves us to the skies.”

His mercy is mentioned explicitly five times in this short Psalm. He is also described as showing lovingkindness, which you could translate as steadfast love – unchanging love, dependable love. He is compassionate – He has impossibly high standards but has worked out a gospel arrangement that allows us to meet them in Christ. He is established as the King of the universe yet shows grace and kindness to us in His Son.

On the one hand He executes righteousness and justice and on the other He protects us from their cutting edge through the atonement. As we have said before, justice and mercy collide at the intersection of the cross. Christ suffers in our place, as a substitute for us – so justice is done, but we receive mercy.

And then,

12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

He wipes out the record of our sin. If you are in Christ, there is nothing in your past that God is holding against you or over you. You might not believe that, but that is what God says is true and I'm not here to argue with you, you can take it up with Him, but let me ask – what might change in your life, in your mind, in your heart, if you really believed what God's Word clearly says?

As far as the east is from the west – you know how far that is? It's infinite. If you take a compass and start heading north, you will eventually get to the point where your compass, or GPS says, now you're heading south. You've crossed the North Pole. But if you start heading East and check your compass a week later, a month later, a year later, you're still going to be headed East, you never stop going east because there is no official end to that direction.

My friends, the point is, God has removed our transgressions from us, and if that is true, who are we to hold things against ourselves or to keep bringing things back up? Who are we to define ourselves or limit ourselves with definitions or limitations that have been wiped out by God?

And, who are we to hold things against others that God has removed? My friends, there is so much nourishment for your soul right here in this Psalm. Here is years' worth of professional counseling advice. Here is the power to radically transform your entire life, right here in this Psalm if we just follow it's admonition to

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:

And there's still more to see:

15 As for man, his days *are* like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
And its place remembers it no more.
17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,
18 To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.

That right there is important, isn't it? These benefits are not for everyone automatically. I don't get to decide who receives them. You don't get to decide who receives them. God says they are available to those who fear Him – now, this isn't fear like horror, it's more of a healthy fear, an awe, a deep respect, but also a little bit of genuine fear – like He could kill

me – yeah, He could.

But if, you keep His covenant and for us, that is the new covenant, the one Christ established in His blood on the cross, and if you remember His commandments and do them, you are guaranteed to receive all these benefits and much more, because:

19 The LORD has established His throne in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.

So, in light of all this, in light of all that God is and in light of all that He has done, David calls out to the angels and to all the created world to join Him in praising God:

20 Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.
21 Bless the LORD, all *you* His hosts,
You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.
22 Bless the LORD, all His works,
In all places of His dominion.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Christian, how much of our frustration, anxiety, worry, discouragement, depression, negativity is driven by the fact that we have forgotten God's benefits?

We have forgotten that we are accepted in the beloved (Eph 1:6). We have forgotten everything we have in Christ. We might know in our heads but we forget in our hearts and so we wander and we worry and we look for other ways to find happiness, satisfaction, recognition, acceptance, approval, and security.

We need to remember that God forgives us, delights in us, sees everything that is going on, and guarantees us complete healing, restoration, renewal, and a crown of mercy.

David opens this Psalm by telling himself to praise God. We need to do the same thing. Bless God by expressing gratitude for all that He is and all He does. Remember what He has done – have your own spiritual memorial day(s) so that you never forget.

And that's going to mean learning to speak to yourself like David. Don't just listen to yourself, speak to yourself – when you listen to yourself you tend to say a lot of stupid, silly, or sinful things. Speak truth to yourself instead, truth from God's Word. Remember the past and pull out hope for the present. Sometimes you have to bludgeon your feelings with facts, but speak truth to yourself.

8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

So

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities,
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4 Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good *things*,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

and who loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Let's pray.

I pray for anyone who is with us that doesn't have a relationship with you, I pray that you would help them to find that relationship and may we, as a church body be useful in that process.

Communion.