

## ECF 16<sup>th</sup> December 2018 Psalm 103 Don't Forget

**Video: Taken for Granted** I think we can all fall into the trap of taking things for granted - of forgetting to be grateful for what we have, and who has given us it. And possibly, the danger of falling into this trap is greatest at this time of year.

We're told that Christmas is supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year - when our lives are filled with big parties and expensive presents, with celebration and fun, with friendship and love. And yet for many people, the reality is far less than this.

Christmas can be a difficult time because of the strain on our limited finances, or the strain on our fragile relationships, or strain on our broken hearts. Feelings of loss, loneliness and sadness can intensify because it feels like everybody else is having a great time. And when we're in that place it is easy to forget what we have and instead focus on what we don't.

So this morning we're going to challenge some of those thoughts and feelings by looking at Psalm 103. Here, David encourages us not to forget all the amazing blessings that we have received from God. He wants our attitude to change so that we can thank God for all that he has done and praise him for all that he is!

Psalm 103: "Praise the Lord, O my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

<sup>2</sup> Praise the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—

<sup>3</sup> who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,  
<sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,  
<sup>5</sup> who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

<sup>6</sup> The Lord works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.

<sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:

<sup>8</sup> The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.

<sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbour his anger for ever;  
<sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.

<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;

<sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

<sup>13</sup> As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

<sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.

<sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass,  
he flourishes like a flower of the field;

<sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more.

<sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting  
the Lord's love is with those who fear him,  
and his righteousness with their children's children—

<sup>18</sup> with those who keep his covenant  
and remember to obey his precepts.

<sup>19</sup> The Lord has established his throne in heaven,  
and his kingdom rules over all.

<sup>20</sup> Praise the Lord, you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
who obey his word.

<sup>21</sup> Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts,  
you his servants who do his will.

<sup>22</sup> Praise the Lord, all his works  
everywhere in his dominion.  
Praise the Lord, O my soul.”

### 1. Don't Forget to Praise

This psalm is a call to “Praise the Lord.” Psalm 103:1, to exalt, to magnify, to thank God for his greatness and goodness. It is about showing appreciation of, and our gratitude for, all that God is and has done.

#### a) Everyone Should Do It

And in this psalm, David called everyone to do it.

##### i) Heaven

This included all the inhabitants of heaven: “Praise the Lord, you his angels... Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts.” Psalm 103:20-21

When Isaiah had a vision of the throne room of heaven, he saw flying seraphs who declared: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah 6:3

##### ii) Earth

But it isn't just heaven who should praise the Lord. David also spoke to the whole universe: “Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion.” Psalm 103:22

##### iii) Us

But David's focus in this psalm is not really heaven or earth's responsibility to praise the Lord. It is his own! He started and finished this psalm with: “Praise the Lord, O my soul.” Psalm 103:1

David was talking to himself here. He was telling himself that he should wholeheartedly praise the Lord: “All my inmost being, praise the Lord.” Psalm 103:1 In effect, when we read this psalm, we are doing the same. We are encouraging ourselves to enthusiastically and passionately praise the Lord.

#### b) We Were Saved For It

But why should heaven and earth praise him? And why should we praise him? Well, one of the reasons is that this is our God-given purpose. “In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ... to the praise of his glorious grace.” Ephesians 1:4–6

If we've trusted in Jesus, then God loved, chose and adopted us to magnify his name and to reveal his glory. This is our calling. We were saved to praise God!

#### c) We Are Blessed By It

But when we do this, we're also blessed. We all praise what we value, what we enjoy. And when we do, it does not only express our enjoyment of it, but it completes the enjoyment of it.

- This is why sports fans shout and sing the name of their favourite player.
- Or why parents love to show off photos of their kids.
- Or why when people fall in love they can't help talk about them.
- Or why when someone gets a new car, new phone, new job, they can't help tell others about it.

They don't do this out of duty, because they have to. Neither do they do it, because they want something in return. It is that we praise what we enjoy because the delight in those things is incomplete until it is expressed in praise.

And this is the same with praising God. It isn't supposed to be just a duty or responsibility. It is supposed to be the expression of, and completion of, our joy in the Lord. Psalm 9:2: “I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.”

#### d) God Is Worthy Of It

But we shouldn't praise the Lord just because we were saved for it and blessed by it. In his vision of the throne room of heaven, John saw 24 elders who declared:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honour and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they were created  
and have their being.” Revelation 4:11

Then later in the next chapter he saw hundreds of thousands of angels in a loud voice singing: [“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!”](#) Revelation 5:12

So ultimately we praise the Lord because, we believe that God is so wonderful, so amazing, so awesome, so glorious, that above anyone else, he is worthy of it.

And so David said: [“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”](#) Psalm 103:2. Incredibly, we have a tendency to forget. We forget who God is. We lose sight of what he has done. So David tells himself, and us, to remember all the amazing things that God has done, so that we will recognise his worth and respond with praise.

So what are some of these truths that we mustn't forget?

## 2. Don't Forget How Much We Are Loved

Well, first of all, we mustn't forget how much we are loved by God.

### a) Unequalled

When we look up at the sky on a beautiful clear day, the blue just seems to go on forever and the sun that we see is 93 million miles away. On a clear night, when we look up, we are looking at stars and galaxies that are literally billions of miles away.

These distances are difficult to comprehend, and yet David said that:

[“For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.”](#) Psalm 103:11.

This is how much God loves us. His love towers above us. It goes on and on. It reaches from heights of heaven all the way to the depths of earth. So we can't fall so low, that God's love can't reach us.

This is why it is so difficult for us to comprehend. It is so unequalled in this world, so different from the small and limited love that we are able to show to each other. It blows our minds. That is why Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers [“may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,<sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”](#) Ephesians 3:18–19

### b) Unending

But God's love is not just unequalled, it is also unending. We are used to things only lasting for a short time.

[“As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field;<sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.”](#) Psalm 103:15-16

Our lives are so short. Gone in a flash. We are like the fragile grass or wildflowers that spring up and then are gone forever. But God's love is completely different:

[“But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him.”](#) Psalm 103:17

God's love is truly unending. The Bible tells us that we were loved in eternity past, before the creation of the world. And the Bible assures us that we will be loved for all eternity to come.

And Paul wrote that [“I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,<sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”](#) Romans 8:38–39

### c) Undeserved

But in v11 and v17, this love is for those who fear him. So does this mean that God only loves those who have always had a right respect and reverence for him?

Not at all. In Psalm 103:8, David quotes from the revelation given to Moses on Mount Sinai when says that: [“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.”](#)

We deserve his anger against our transgressions, iniquities and sins. And yet, the Lord is compassionate to those who deserve his judgment. He is gracious to those who deserve his condemnation. He is abounding in love to those who deserve to be separated from him forever. He does not love us as we deserve, instead,

“As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;  
<sup>14</sup>for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.” Psalm 103:13-14

### 3. Don't Forget How Fully We Are Redeemed

And because of this love, then secondly we must not forget how fully we are redeemed.

#### a) Wonderful Mercy

We need to remember the amazing mercy of God, that

“He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbour his anger for ever;  
<sup>10</sup>he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.” Psalm 103:9-10

God didn't need to do this.

- He has the right to accuse us, because we're guilty.
- He has the right to be angry, because we're rebellious.
- He has the right to reject us, because we're sinners.
- He has the right to punish us, because we've gone astray.

And yet, in his mercy he chooses not to. Instead he sent his Son to the cross in our place. And so if we've trusted in Christ, then:

- We're declared not guilty, because Jesus took our guilt.
- We're brought into God's love, because Jesus experienced God's wrath.
- We're accepted, because Jesus was forsaken.
- We're forgiven, because Jesus was punished.

#### b) Complete Forgiveness

And this forgiveness is complete and total. David said that the Lord is the one “who forgives all your sins.” Psalm 103:3.

On the cross, Jesus paid for all our sins. Our public and our private ones. The ones we are aware of and the ones that we've forgotten. The things that we did that we shouldn't have. As well as the things that we should've done, but didn't. “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” 1 John 1:7

So it doesn't matter who we are or what we have done, or have failed to do – God's grace is sufficient for us. Through Christ we are completely forgiven!

#### c) Eternal Forgiveness

And we are forgiven forever. Psalm 103:12 says that “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

This is an immeasurable distance. If we travel east, we can keep going and we never get there. If we travel in the opposite direction, we keep going west, but we never arrive. East and west are in opposite directions and they can never be brought together. They will forever be infinitely separated.

And this is what God has done with our sin. It has been completely and forever separated from us. Because of the sufficiency of the cross, our guilt will never be given back to us. It is gone and gone forever! This is the promise of the new covenant in the blood of Jesus: “I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” Hebrews 8:12

### 4. Don't Forget How Abundantly We Are Blessed

And this redemption, brings so many blessings into our lives.

#### a) With Satisfaction

So David said that God is the one “who satisfies your desires with good things.” Psalm 103:5. The world gets excited about Christmas because of the presents and parties, the dinners and decorations. But those things will never satisfy our hearts.

Only God can do this, because our hearts were designed to be satisfied only with his love, his presence and his peace. And so Hebrews 13:5 says: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

#### b) With Strength

God is also the one who gives us the strength we need, “So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” Psalm 103:5

It doesn’t matter how strong or energetic we are. Sooner or later, we come to the end of our resources. But God is “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” Ephesians 3:20

#### c) With Healing

And that power, can even overcome the weakness of our bodies. The Lord is the one who “Heals all your diseases.” Psalm 103:3 And we praise God for our experience of this healing in our lives.

But some people think that, because Jesus and the apostles did amazing healing miracles, and we are encouraged in the Bible to pray for healing, then we should experience this in full now. And yet, none of us see that. We all still experience sickness and disease. If we live long enough, all of our bodies will get frail and wear out. All of us will die!

#### d) With Eternal Life

But even with this reality, we can rejoice, because this blessing of full healing will be experienced one day. The Lord is the one “who redeems your life from the pit.” Psalm 103:4

The pit is a synonym for death. Maybe for David, this meant rescue from physical death. But for us, we know that the greater danger is spiritual and eternal death. And this is what Jesus has redeemed us from. He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” John 11:25–26

#### 5. Don’t Forget How Amazing It Is That God Is In Control

And so even in the darkest of day, we can remember that God is in control. “The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.” Psalm 103:19

It might not look like this today. We might be suffering because of injustice and oppression. But because God is in control, we can rest in the knowledge that

“The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.” Psalm 103:6.

One day, God will sort out this world. He will right every wrong and he will lift up his people. One day, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Revelation 21:4

#### Conclusion

So let’s not forget what God has done for us. Instead let’s keep telling ourselves

- How much we are loved.
- How fully we are redeemed.
- How abundantly we are blessed.
- How amazing it is that God is in control.

If we do that, then we will not take things for granted and we will not spend this Christmas focussed on what we do not have. Instead, we will be so amazed by all that God has given us, that we will spend it praising him, because he alone is worthy.

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