

Keynotes from Pastor Tim's am Sermon on 29/08/2021

Title: "Forgiven!" Mini-Series from Psalm 103 (Pt 3 of 3)

Text: Psalm 103

Scripture references from the ESV

Psalm 103 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 iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵ who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.⁹ He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.¹⁴ For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field;¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children,¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.²⁰ Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!²¹ Bless the LORD, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will! ²² Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Sin always damages relationships. When a person does or says something that hurts us, or we do or say something that hurts someone else, our relationship suffers. At the very start of the Bible, we see how sin damaged humanity's relationship with God. Before Adam and Eve disobeyed him, God would come and talk with them in the garden he planted for them. There was nothing to hinder the enjoyment of their relationship with God.

After they had sinned, Adam and Eve were banished from the garden where they had formerly had fellowship with God. Their relationship had broken down because of their sin.

- God is a holy God, and in his holiness, he must deal justly with sin, which means the whole of humanity (not only Adam and Eve) is banished from God forever.

Sin has broken our relationship with God, and as a result our human relationships are broken too.

We would have remained under this sentence of eternal death, banished from God forever under his just and righteous wrath, if God had not chosen to do something about it. The heartbeat of God is the heartbeat of love.

The love that existed between Father, Son and Holy Spirit flowed over into love for the people he had created – into love for you and me.

Psalm 103 praises God for his steadfast love – the covenant love that caused God to commit himself to a people of his choice forever. If you are a believer in Christ, then you can say:

God is my God and I am his forever and forever

This steadfast love results in God dealing with sin and death, the twin problems that all humans experience, and we have already seen how God deals with death by redeeming our life from the grave.

- How does God deal with our sin?

God works to restore our relationship with him by forgiving not just some but all of our sin (vv1-3 above).

David, who wrote this psalm, broke at least nine of the Ten Commandments, which meant he was guilty of breaking them all, and yet God forgave him. However, Jesus spoke of one sin that could never be forgiven – the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (**Mark 3:28-29** see p4). You might be wondering if you have committed that sin

and so will never find forgiveness. What is that sin? To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is to ignore him speaking to

you when he convicts you of sin and calls you to repent and trust in Jesus to put you right with God.

There can be no way for God to forgive us, if we don't come to him through the only way he has opened up.

Today, if you feel in your heart that the Holy Spirit is convicting you of sin and offering hope in Jesus then don't ignore the voice of the Spirit.

Speak with the God who is speaking to you, confess your sin and commit yourself to Jesus. Then you will discover that God truly does forgive all your sin. Three foundational truths underlie that forgiveness (vv9-14 above).

1. The greatness of God's love toward us – why he forgives us (vv9 – 11 above) Some people never let go of a grudge, but God isn't like that (v9). It is true that he convicts us of our sin, and there are times when we feel his divine displeasure, but this is all done lead us to confession and forgiveness. When we have confessed, he forgives us and that is the end of the matter. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is eternal death, but God doesn't pay those wages to his people (v10). Instead, we get the gift of eternal life.

There is also a benefit in this life. Not a day goes by when we don't sin against God in thought, word or deed yet God's judgements on us have been few. He does not afflict us every time we sin.

He patiently bears with us despite our transgressions.

When God does afflict us, however painful it may seem, it is light and momentary compared to the weight of our sin against him and it is for our eternal good. We have repaid God's goodness with evil, but he has repaid our evil with good and every day he pours out his good gifts on us even in this life.

He not only forbears to punish us, but bountifully maintains those he might justly destroy (John Calvin)

- Why does God not deal with us as our sins deserve nor hold a grudge against us? It is because of his steadfast love (vv10-11).

For those who have entered into this covenant relationship with God, and fear him,

God's steadfast love knows no limit – it is infinite.

2. The distance of sin from us – the effectiveness of God's forgiveness (vv9-10, 12 above)

However far east you travel, there is always more east to travel – **east and west never meet!** David is making the point that God removes our sins from us and puts them in a place where we will never meet them again. That is hard to grasp because we are so painfully aware of our sins. On a daily basis:

- We commit sins and are convicted by God over them
- We confess our sins and trust in Christ to forgive us
- But we go on to commit more sin

We may feel continually dogged by our sins, grieving over them every day, and feeling that sin is what defines us. If that describes you, then take heart from what this psalm says. As far as God is concerned, those sins have been forgiven and put away in a place where they will **never** be brought up and used against you.

- Why can a holy God, who must punish every sin, do that? He can do it because Jesus carried our sins to the cross in his body and cancelled the debt for us through his death. (**Colossians 2:14** see p4).

God abundantly pardons his people, not just forgiving our sin, but choosing to never remember the wrong we have done against him.

Because God puts sin FAR away from us, it means he can draw NEAR to us

3. The closeness of relationship with us – the result of God's forgiveness (vv9-10, 13-14 above)

God relates to his people as their heavenly father. Your relationship with your earthly father may have been painful or difficult, but please don't allow that to influence your ideas of the fatherhood of God. All earthly fathers are imperfect and that role is meant to be shaped by God's care of us, rather than our view of God coming from our earthly fathers. When we let the Bible shape our view of the father heart of God, we discover that

Our God is a compassionate Heavenly Father.

He knows us intimately and so:

- he is aware of our weaknesses and what motivates us
- he knows what he is doing in our lives and how best to help us

He sets very high standards for us (to be holy as he is holy) and yet:

- he makes allowances for our weakness and patiently teaches us
- he gently rebukes and graciously corrects us to form the image of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in us.

Sin damages our relationship with God, but in dealing justly with our sin through the death of his Son on the cross, **God is able to bring us near to himself as his adopted sons and daughters. He is now our Father.**

This is all because of his **steadfast love**, which he set upon us from eternity to eternity. How should we respond?

- a) **We must trust in God alone to forgive us** – we can only come to him through Jesus.
 - Don't be like the religious men who refused to listen to Jesus when he warned them not to ignore the Spirit of God speaking into their hearts. Those men, real people who lived 2000 years ago, are now eternally lost.
 - Please don't resist the Spirit of God, who might be speaking to you even today. The Bible warns us 'Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts'. (**Hebrews 4:7**)
 - All the blessings of which Psalm 103 speaks are only for those who fear God and come to him through Jesus.
- b) **We must forgive as God has forgiven** - how God has dealt with us is how we are to deal with others
 - God forgives me my sin against others when I repent, and likewise forgives them their sin against me. If that person has repented and God has forgiven them, but I don't show that same forgiveness then I am setting myself above God. Therefore, I must not refuse to forgive the one whom God has forgiven.

- As parents, we need to discipline our children in a way that demonstrates God's heart of love. We can only do so as God, by his Spirit, works in us, keeping us close to our heavenly Father, so that he can be seen in us.
- c) **We must fall to our knees in praise** – Psalm 103 is written to lead the whole of creation to praise God

David lists all the benefits God has given us, speaking of how God deals with sin and death, highlighting God's compassion as our perfect heavenly Father and he weaves throughout the theme of God's steadfast love.

- He uses these great truths to motivate **his own soul** to praise God (vv1-2)
- He calls **the angels** to praise God (vv20-21)
- He calls **us** to praise God (v22)

As we take time to think on these truths, to talk to God about them and to pray them back to God we will discover that, whether we feel like praising God or not,

the contemplation of the greatness of God leads to the praise of God.

Colossians 2:14 God wiped out the charges that were against us for disobeying the Law of Moses. He took them away and nailed them to the cross. (CEV)