

God's benefits

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- [0 : 00] So then, let's turn back to Psalm 103 then, and we'll look together at verses 3 to 5. We may just read them again.
- We'll read that verse too. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. And then they're listed. Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit or from destruction, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.
- I want us just simply to think about the key points that are in these verses, and in terms of thanksgiving for our communion season, to bless the Lord, who forgives all your iniquity, and who heals the heart, and who bestows his many mercies.
- Now, you've probably heard it before, but you're going to hear it again tonight.
- And that is, this psalm begins with a spiritual instruction on a spiritual art. And the art is, of speaking to yourself, of steering yourself, to bless God.
- [1 : 41] I have a feeling that there's one person here, who listened to verse 5 of this, or part of verse 5, fairly recently, because I was having a look at it at home.
- And I said at the time, that contrary to popular opinion, it's good to speak to yourself. It's particularly good for a Christian believer to speak to himself or herself, and even to answer oneself back.
- It's no madness. It's something we should do. It's something we should stir ourselves to do. See what I mean?
- Bless the Lord. He's talking to his soul. Bless the Lord, O my soul. And all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul.
- And forget not all his benefits. The fact of the matter is, we are more than able to forget the benefits the Lord has given us.
- [2 : 49] And so we need to stir ourselves up to this important spiritual art to remember the blessings and benefits of God, particularly with regard to our salvation.
- And we have to stir ourselves again and again and again to that. He focuses in these verses on a call to bless the Lord for the blessings of salvation.
- And that's what we're going to do tonight. After all is said and done. We may live a very long time.
- We may have acquired over many years a lot of what the young ones call stuff. And end up, at the end of our days, lost.
- And therefore what we need to do here is to recognize the importance of the salvation of God and how God blesses people with everlasting life in his son.
- [3 : 59] And we were singing about that. And clearly what David is doing here is he's reflecting on what is vital to our eternal well-being.
- As well as life he lived on planet Earth. A life lived for God. And if you think about it, the burden of the Hebrew prophets was preaching repentance and faith.

Pointing the people to the promises of God concerning the Messiah who was to come. The Messiah Savior, the Shepherd King and so on.

And what he's doing here is he's focusing on the blessings we want to think about. Making sure we embrace them and know them in our experience.

And to bless God for them. And if we're already there, as many of you are, I know. Then we thank him for what he's done for us in the past few days.

[5 : 06] Meeting with us as he did. First of all, I want us to ponder for our own benefit that he forgives all our iniquities.

It's interesting that David starts there. David knew very well personally what it was to sin and to be guilty of iniquity.

He tells us in his own psalm of repentance that he acknowledged sin and he did not cover any longer his iniquities.

And God mercifully and graciously forgave him. But I want us to ponder for a few moments because it's important to us.

If you think about the Christian way. The Christian way is quite distinct from all other religious outlooks.

[6 : 04] I'm not going to get into atheism and secularism and all that just now. We'll stick to religious outlooks. And what all other religious outlooks have in common.

And what I might call a non-biblical Christian view. As I can end with my note of it. We'll call it the non-Christian biblical view. What they all share is they try to either placate the gods or to placate God as they understand them to be.

By what they do. They devise means that they think will tweak things between them and the deity or the deities of the Hindus or whatever.

And that they all share this. That they try to make peace with God. They try to. The idea of placating them is to smooth out the problems.

To make them pleasant towards them. By what they do. Two exceptions to that of course are found in Judaism and Islam.

[7 : 18] Because they don't think they need an atonement. They don't need to placate God by their own means. They don't need a covering for their sin.

And that is true even in Orthodox Judaism. Because repentance is what it's about.

What they do by way of repentance. Except for a few exceptions. Of the Hasidim. They kill a cockerel and so on at Yom Khor.

But leaving that aside. All that shows is there's a deep need. To satisfy what is not right in their hearts. So in the main.

With those two exceptions. Islam and Judaism. They don't think they need an atonement. The rest think they can achieve it for themselves.

[8 : 16] And put things right with God. Or put him right with them. But even in these religious viewpoints.

There remains in the heart of the heart of human beings. This sense that all is not well. There's a restlessness.

There's an unease. There's a sense of judgment to come there. And man may suppress it. A person may suppress it.

For a time. But it keeps rising up. And there are those of us here tonight. Who are brought up. In a Christian background. Who can remember too. That we were dodging.

The things of God. We were dodging Christians. Before they would be baton-holing us. And telling us what we needed to know. And the worst place to be. As I recall.

[9 : 14] When you were dodging. The things of the Lord. Is at a funeral. Because the minister was sure to hit you with it. Maybe not all of them.

But once I knew anyway. They were going to have an opportunity. And they weren't going to miss it. And they were going to tell you what you needed to know. Actually they were going to trigger.

What you were suppressing. That there was a day coming. That you were going to be found out. That you were wrong. But in the scriptures.

The Bible. The Old Testament and the New. The Bible makes no bones about it. Man is a sinner. He's out of kilter with God. He's out of a good healthy relationship with God.

And that's the way he wants to stay. He's separated from God. The Bible says he's separated from God. By his wicked works.

[10 : 13] Now wicked of course is relative. And I've heard people get all iraise. When they've called them wicked. Because they thought. I was saying something exclusively to them.

To this person or that. But see. There are wicked people. That have been in this world. Horrendously wicked people. Now a person may not be as wicked as the worst.

Adolf Hitler comes to mind. But in more recent times. Paul Pott and people like that. Brutal. In Africa. Barbaric cruelty. People were exceedingly wicked.

Human traffickers today. Exceedingly wicked. Living of young women. Living of poor people. And so on and so on. Horrendously wicked.

So. At that level. There are degrees. That's what we're saying. There's degrees of wickedness. But the rub on it for us is. God's verdict is. We are sinners.

[11 : 14] We're wickedly opposing. His way. His way. Of forgiveness. And David. Is saying to us here. First and foremostly.

Bless the Lord. Who forgives all your iniquities. Now it's an interesting word here. For forgiveness.

Because in the Hebrew. There. It's the word. Salach. Now. I guess. No one here is modern Hebrew. But if you had. And you bumped into somebody.

On the street. In Israel. You would say. Slicky. Excuse me. Pardon me. And. And they use. Either. Slicka.

Which is a sort of. Like this. It's a way of saying. Pardon. Or. Slicky. Pardon me. And the thing is. They use it all the time. But they never think of it.

[12 : 12] In the biblical sense. And in the biblical sense. It means. God. Deal. With. My. Sin. What makes this.

More interesting. Still. That there was a. A. A. A. A. A. A. A. A. A. A. Translation.

Of the. Old Testament. The Hebrew Bible. By. Jewish scholars. Way back. Before. the New Testament era. And the Septuagint translates the word Salach which is he who forgives with a word for be propitious.

Chilasmos, be propitious. And to me that's very illuminating because what David is talking about here is deal with your own wrath against me.

And David even as a believer knew that if he was left to himself for the way he behaved even with the light he had he deserved to be cast away forever.

[13 : 27] He knew it. And it's interesting you see that the word here forgives who forgives all your iniquities who pardons but more precisely who is propitious to you who deals with his own wrath against my sin.

And that's the glory of the Gospel in 1 John 4:10 we read the words God sent his son in his love to be a propitiation that's the word *Chilasmus* concerning our sins.

So what I'm doing is I'm taking you back to what David is saying there and then I'm fast forwarding you to the New Testament era and the New Testament writings. And they're connected perfectly.

Wonderful it is to be able to say I know that by God's grace and goodness and mercy to me he has dealt with my iniquities.

He has rendered himself propitious in his sin. He has dealt with his own wrath and wonderfully he has dealt with the relationship between us.

[14:47] He's put it right through the blood shedding through the death of his own son. And of course you know very well all of you here because you've got background on the church on the Bible's teaching and you know that the whole burden of the sacrificial system was about the once and for all sacrifice that pulled all these together and that was the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And to me the most superb part of the New Testament on that subject has to be the book of Hebrews. Hebrews 9:28 and Hebrews 10:10 tells us that that Jesus offered himself through the eternal spirit once a propitiation for our sins.

And that word once is a beautifully rare word in the New Testament but it means what it says HAPACS in Glasgow it means a one-off once unrepeatedly job done mission accomplished a holy sacred package for us.

He did it once unrepeatedly and I may say it needs no representation by anyone professing to be priest/priesthood he has done it and David by the spirit knew in his own day that the day was coming when he would know that mission was accomplished he was looking forward trusting in the promises concerning the great substitute the propitiation and he trusted and he knew God was propitious to him we are in the happy position we look back to mission accomplished we were pondering today the reality of the lamb in the midst of the throne as it had been slain and it tells us mission accomplished the songs we were singing were about his victory unless we leave the communion season

I'd like to think that that's what you're going to take with you the victory he has achieved for you friend believing friend that is what it's about and it's wonderful that for us who are followers when even when we put our best efforts forward and we sin and come short we have an advocate with the father 1st John 2:1 tells us little children I write these things to you that you sin not but if anyone does sin we have a paraclete we have one who comes alongside he is our advocate our helper with the father he doesn't need to plead excuse me if you take the view that he pleads with the father he doesn't need to plead his very being there is enough he's there as the lamb still bearing the marks of sacrificial slaughter as we thought earlier on the job is done and we are when we come and ask to be pardoned for our sins again sins against light and knowledge we are asking to know the benefits of what he has accomplished applied to us we need to know so that's the first thing bless

[19:10] God for sins that have been dealt with that God has been propitious to us as sinners the second thing he tells us is he heals all our diseases/sicknesses it could be translated sicknesses now this has caused people bother because they say well if he healed all our sicknesses we wouldn't die of disease and logically that would be true but that's not what's being said we have to remember that the psalms are poetic they're full of images they're full of pictures of figures of speech that communicate more often than not they communicate at a spiritual level now hear me out

I'm not saying God doesn't heal let it never be said we affirm gladly God heals today he heals through prayer through the prayer of his people we've seen it we know it we rejoice in it but that type of healing is according to his will we can't say Lord you've got to do it that's a reverence we can't do that we preface our pleadings for loved ones friends who are ill perhaps seriously ill we can't dictate to him and say Lord you've got to do this no we say to him Lord I know you can do it your will be done please please act for friend or sister or brother or whatever believe in he can waiting upon his will and in that sense we can look to him to do it knowing that if he destined it's not because we weren't believing it's because it was his will not to do it one of my sons is cerebral palsy he's wheelchair bound he's come through many scares as we have and a lady came in from a certain background and she comes occasionally to us with the church there in part and she pounced a couple of times with my wife and said if you had faith

David wouldn't be that's my son's name you wouldn't be like that which of course was a bit of nonsense you can't undo damage simply by saying God you've got to do it what we do is we manage things prayerfully believingly trusting him you know it I know it let's make that clear to ourselves but the Bible still says and David is saying forget not this benefit he heals all our diseases I like an Anglican bishop of a bygone day a good solid evangelical he was Bishop Horn he did a commentary on the Psalms and to me he's got the real heart of the matter and Bishop Horn says what the Psalmist is talking about chiefly here is the sicknesses of the soul the sicknesses of the human heart because they're the heart of our problem so many things think of the problems caused by human pride pride is almost blind as to what we really like and some people are so are so full of themselves it's almost like a madness pride is a problem pride is a problem right at the beginning

Satan wanted to be in God's place and he didn't get his way and so he worked on our first parents to make them feel God was cheating them he was not being fair to them and they doubted and the rest is history what history it is so pride is a disease of the soul anger is a disease of the soul those of us who have a short fuse will know it that we wish we could have taken back many a times the words we uttered in anger and as for being angry and sin not I think we know more about being angry and sin but anger is so unchristian it's so unlike what we should be it burns it gathers heat as we ponder and will remember the words nursing her wrath to keep it warm those of you remember

Tamashantha will remember that one she was sitting waiting for him to come home to let him have it and anger is like that it smoulders and then it gets more heat and generates more fury that's a disease of the human heart lust that is desires for things we ought not to have not ought not to desire that's a major problem to us the scriptures talk about the lust of the eye the lust of the flesh of the sinful nature the pride of life these things make us unfit for the Lord's service they make us unclean because we sin we desire and we go after what is not appropriate and it's a disease of the human heart of the soul jealousy is a serious malaise in the human heart it's a disease of the human heart the Bible says it's like a raging torrent my vision my picture of of of of this is that it is that it goes forth like a like you know how lava goes and spreads as it goes out onto the ground and it's going and it's going further and further it jealousy is like that and everything in its path is marred and scarred that the

[26 : 27] Bible says that jealousy is as cruel as the grave it's a serious disease of the human heart of the soul of man I unless you forget he's talking as a believer so he knows the business he's talking by the spirit slothfulness is a disease of the human heart are we safe from that no we're not I remember reading some of you won't know it but Professor John Murray was a man from the county of Southern where I belong and Professor Murray was a hugely able systematic theologian he lectured for 40 years or so in Westminster

Theological Seminary and I remember reading something that stuck with me and it's been a challenge to me there on the shoulder from time to time and it's about sloth and this is what he said and it arrested me he said we all try to afford to be as lazy as we can afford to be and he was not in my opinion a lazy man but he was susceptible he knew that sloth was a spiritual malady it was a disease of the human soul that we the fallenness of our nature even renewed is pressed down and if we can get off without doing something we'll try it and by sloth of course I mean plain old laziness and we can be as lazy as we can afford to be and that's wrong we should be other we should be diligent we should use our opportunities wisely and well one last one on this by way of healing all our diseases and that is stubbornness

I wonder how many of the men have heard the missus say oh you're so stubborn I'm not going to look oh you what stubborn see maybe maybe it's the other way maybe the husband has had to say it to the missus but see I in my Christian experience which goes back a wee bit now there's one thing I've noticed certainly in my county and in the highlands they they all misregarded being stubborn as a mark of grace as if it was a woo yeah stubborn oh yeah woo it's not it is the very opposite I remember a chap he was so stubborn he stopped going to church actually it was a relation of the late professor

John Mary he was a Mary and he stopped going to church because he was stubborn he had fallen out with someone over this or that and he stubbornly refused to change his view and in the end it hurt him it's not a mark of grace it actually the bible tells me that stubbornness is idolatry because you see friends what we do when we're stubborn is we idolise our own view that it's right and there isn't any other competition to be considered it's right right right and it's wrong we can become impervious to the word of God if we glory in being stubborn and that's dangerous to us and my dear friends these are just a few to be thinking about but what a few they are how sobering they are how solemn how they should make us tremble if we think at all of ourselves in these ways that we've looked at cursed pride anger that is the very antithesis of what we should be the wrath of man

James says does not work the righteousness which God loves and that means the right conduct the quality of life that God loves in his own anger is a problem actually the first minister of my first charge which was Creek and the other two bits the first minister of the Creek parish was a chap called Gustavus Eard and Gustavus Eard was renowned for having a very short fuse and one communion a chap came a minister came along and he preached on that text it said chapter 121 the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God and of course Gustavus Eard got it right but he needed it and we need that you see and we need to bless God that he heals these spiritual maladies these diseases of our inner life well time must be going on let's look at the third point here he redeems my life he says who redeems your life from destruction we've been thinking about redemption and here the word for redeemer is the great

[32 : 52] Hebrew word goel the kinsman redeemer he comes and at risk to himself and at inestimable cost to himself he puts himself in our place he buys us out from under the curse of the law of God that says cursed is he who does not continue in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them Christ became a curse for us as our redeemer forget not all his benefits and of course we read that there is plenteous redemption ever found in the Lord and it is so because we have a redeemer as we were singing earlier Jesus God's own son precious lamb of God Messiah holy one lastly we read he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy love love now

I didn't know what the translation was here in your bible the ESV but it's an excellent translation of the Hebrew word chesed for that's the word behind steadfast love and it's a good translation an excellent translation because it incorporates the love of God and it incorporates his steadfastness in that love even when we air and just because we've enjoyed a communion season doesn't mean we'll not be airing this week I wish we will and even though we do he does not deal with us according to our sin he is steadfast in his love for us see we're different aren't we when we fall out even husbands and wives when they fall out we don't feel very loving but the

Lord's not like that he's steadfast in his love and that's a wonderful thing not to be abused but it's a wonderful thing and we ought to bless the Lord that he's like that that he's steadfast in his love for us Jeremiah looking forward to the days of Messiah in 31 3 says I have loved you with an everlasting love let us thank the Lord for that steadfast love let us appreciate all the more that he crowns us with it what a lovely picture that is what a lovely image he crowns us with his steadfast love he wants to feel it's there over us with love and mercy and he satisfies us with the good well we've been

I hope we can say those of us who enjoy these days of communion preparity and today already I hope we can say he has filled us with good that he has satisfied our souls that he has brought us nearer to himself that we have in Jesus one who promises us to satisfy our longing souls again and again and again actually I once heard a Lewis man who was a teacher Neil Macleod was his name used to come and preach he was an elder in Dingwall Free Church and used to come and preach for me if I was away or if I happened to be unwell and my family loved him because he was such a likeable man he was such a wonderful Christian man and I remember him saying on one occasion about Jesus when he was thinking about the words he that comes to me

John 6 35 he that comes to me shall never hunger and he that believes in me shall never thirst and the question was how is it that he says that and yet we do hunger for him how is it that he says he who believes in me will never thirst and we do thirst for him and the answer was he feeds us with hunger and he slates our thirst with thirst so that we keep on having the experience of being satisfied by him and yet we long for more and I thought that was a most useful way of thinking that's what I'm telling you tonight wonderful it is that the Lord has done great things for us and he has blessed us and will and see in all this it enables us to be what we have in the last bit of this so so that your youth is renewed like the eagle you're replenished in your spiritual life as long as we have in

[38 : 42] God's providence our mental faculty we are allowed to be replenished my people shall be like a well watered garden whose streams do not fail and my prayer is as we leave this is that we know much of that and we become more skilled in the art of blessing the Lord for all his gracious benefits to us and I hope this is relevant to all of you here tonight Amen