

Bless the Lord and Forget Not His Benefits (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Well, Micah, thank you for being here.

When Micah's not here, the piano accompaniments that you hear that are recorded, he made those. But still, there's nothing like live, right? And so it is such a privilege when you're here. Micah lives about an hour from here, maybe an hour and ten minutes here in a couple of weeks maybe, as he's moving out on his own and God's giving him favor in his work situation. And so it'll be interesting to see just as what God does with Micah and his new context coming up. But we always, we don't want to scare him off. It is your birthday. I mean, Thursday was your birthday and we've put you to work.

So thank you for being here. Jeff is always like, Micah, when are you going to be in town? We won't put you to work. So thank you. Thank you for being here, son.

[1 : 06] It's a privilege and a blessing. And I don't know, I'm ready just to close in prayer after worshiping that music, right? Right. Right. And we picked these songs this morning because I really wanted to find songs that were all about worship and praise.

And we've sang Behold the Wondrous Mystery. That's the gospel, right? We just sang the gospel. And then we're singing Exaltation to our Lord here. We have a couple of more as we close out our service to sing as well.

So anyhow, as I mentioned, our theme today is worship and praise. And so if you would, open your Bibles to the book of Psalms. It should be no surprise if we're talking about worship and praise that we're going to go to Psalms.

For our church folks who have been here for a while, so Jeff is working his way verse by verse through 1 Peter, right? The epistle written, the first epistle written by Peter.

He actually started that series back, it was the Sunday after Thanksgiving. So we've been in 1 Peter for a while. He's hit the pause button a couple of times to share some other things here from the pulpit.

[2 : 15] And I think, Lord willing, when he and Suzanne get back from California, he'll be raring to go to restart 1 Peter as well. But you never know how the Lord leads him.

Sometimes he may have something else in mind that he feels is something for our church. But today we're going to do something different. I've never preached a psalm before, and it was a bit more challenging than I expected as I prepared this week.

So what I'd like to do today is spend maybe a third of the time in my sermon giving you a little bit of a Bible study, a little bit of an overview of Psalms. And then we're going to jump into Psalm 103, at least the first few verses in 103, and just walk verse by verse through that.

As we call one another, and as you call yourself, as we see David in Psalm 103 call himself to worship. So the title of my sermon today is Bless the Lord and Forget Not His Benefits.

And that will make sense as we get into Psalm 103. But first, like I said, I want to spend a couple of minutes doing an overview of the book of Psalms.

[3 : 25] Now I'm guessing most of us, and this is a bit of assumption, but just thinking back in my life, and I know some of you quite well. So as I think about how we typically interact with Psalms, it's likely that you interact with it in more of a devotional way, right?

You may read a psalm here, you may read a psalm there. And I don't know, you may have been in a Bible study where you studied and went through the whole book, all 150 chapters of Psalms.

But has anybody done that, has studied through all of Psalms? And that's okay, that would be a very long study, right? Psalms, after all, is the largest, longest book in the Bible, right?

So I think for most of us, as we look at Psalms devotionally, and even our Bible reading plan that our church is going through, it has either two or three psalms each week that we read.

So again, sort of like a daily vitamin or an every other day vitamin of interacting with Psalms. But that doesn't afford the opportunity to sort of step back from the trees of Psalms, from the details, and look at the forest of the whole book of Psalms.

[4 : 32] And so that's what I would like to do this morning. Again, part of mine and Jeff's job is to equip, right? And so we want to equip in different ways. And so I want to equip you just to have a more working understanding of the book of Psalms.

So I've already, I was going to ask you a question, but I already answered the question. Most of you know how many chapters are in the book of Psalms. How many? 150, right? So I guess most of you know that.

But do you know that those 150 Psalms are grouped in five books or sub-books? If you happen to have a study Bible, and maybe even just a regular Bible with no study notes at the bottom, typically you're going to see, I think you'll come across, and we'll have you turn to a couple of places in Psalms.

But Psalms is divided or grouped into five books. So chapters 1 through 41 is referred to as book 1. Then chapters 42 through 72 is book 2.

Chapters 73 through 89 is book 3. Chapters 90 through 106 is book 4. And then book 5 are the concluding chapters, 107 through 150.

[5 : 48] I do not, by the way, I do not have slides this morning. Most of what I'm going to share with you, you can find a good study Bible perhaps, especially some of the introductory material.

I'd be glad to share my notes if you so are interested. So the whole book of Psalms divided into five sub-books. And why are there five books that are grouped that way in the book of Psalms?

No one knows, right? So as I did research, the best that some Bible scholars are estimating or speculating that it's a nod in honor or in respect to the five books of the Old Testament Torah, right? The Hebrew Torah, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. There's five books in the Hebrew Torah. And so there's some thought that in antiquity, as the Psalms were being put together, that they were grouped in five groups.

You're not going to find, like book one doesn't have a specific theme, and book two doesn't have a specific theme. It's a mix of different themes that we'll talk about in just a minute.

[6 : 58] Chapters one and two, and by the way, Psalm chapter one is our scripture memory for the month of May, right? Six verses. Blessed is the man who walks not in the right.

And so chapters one and two, Psalms one and two, sets the stage from a thematic perspective of the rest of Psalms. And then the last five books of Psalms, 146 through 150, are considered the Hallelujah Psalms, right?

And why are they called the Hallelujah Psalms? Well, each one of those Psalms, 146, 147, 148, 149, and 150, start, praise the Lord. Hallelujah, praise the Lord.

And so Psalms is bookend by chapters one and two, which sort of sets the theme and the direction for Psalms. And then it's bookended on the end with these five great, majestic, exalting Hallelujah Psalms.

Turn with me, if you would, to Psalm chapter 41. So Psalm 41 is the end of book one. And I wanted just to show you, again, this is just a, I'm adding tools to your toolbox and either hopefully growing your knowledge, just a practical knowledge of Psalms, or maybe just affirming what you might already know.

[8 : 18] But at the end of each of the five books within Psalms, there's a doxology. And so we see chapter 41 being the end of book one. And we see verse 13, the doxology as book one finishes up.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and amen. All right, it's a doxology as book one, chapter 41 finishes up.

Now turn forward to chapter 72. This is the end of book two. And we'll see the doxology that wraps up book two of Psalms.

Verses 18, 19, and 20. So again, chapter 72, the last three verses. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

Blessed be His glorious name forever. May the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended.

[9 : 26] So you'll see that, and we're not going to look at all of them, but you'll see that there's a doxology sort of statement that finishes up and wraps up, sort of puts a bow tie, if you would, on the end of each book.

Well, in Psalms, similar to how there is in all of Scripture, right, there's different genres. In Psalms, there's different types of poetry, right? Old Testament, we're in Psalms, we're talking poetry. But just like in the whole Bible, right, there's different genres, right? There's historical narrative. There's books of the law. There's books of wisdom. In the New Testament, there's gospels. Acts is historical narrative. And then you have a whole bunch of epistles, and then Revelation being prophecy book. So similar to how the Scripture has different genres, and it's important to understand what those genres are to have a proper handling of God's Word, right? It really helps you, at a high level, understand whether you start with interpreting Scripture literally or figuratively, right? Poetic language, clearly, you would start more on the figurative side, versus Paul's teaching of Romans, you would take very, very literally.

[10:41] And so in Psalms itself, when you think of the different categories of poetry, so it's all over the place. In my research, depending on who I was reading, everyone has their own way of sort of systematizing and categorizing the various types of poetry in Psalms.

So I landed on a very sort of general, basic high level, which is there's basically two. And then I'll drill down a little bit in just a moment. But basically, in Psalms, we see laments, right?

So a lament, right? A lament, it lays a troubled situation before the Lord, right? Either an individual or a community has a troubled situation, right?

Turn to Psalm 51. If you're familiar with Psalms, then this one will be very familiar to you. To give you an example of what a psalm of lament sounds like and looks like.

So Psalm 51, it's a psalm of David. And I'll just read the first four verses. David writes, So you see David pouring out his heart.

[12:20] And do you know the occasion of Psalm 51? In your Bible, you'll see a title of that psalm right above the first verse. And this is called a transcription or a Bible.

And in my Bible, it says, Do you see that in your Bible?

All right. So those words were put there in antiquity. This is not what that particular reference is in the Hebrew language. It's not the study Bible summaries that you may see right above that one.

And those are important. And we'll get to that in just a minute as you study psalms to know about that. So there's laments. And then I sort of group all the other psalms.

And I call them sort of praises, psalms of praise or psalms of thanksgiving. Right. So and I'm really generalizing here. But just for purposes of simplicity, when you look at psalms, you either have laments, which are sort of sad, dark, heart yearning, you know, bad situations.

[13:32] And then you have psalms of praise or adoration or thanksgiving. Some of the Bible scholars and commentators that I read sort of breaks down the praise and thanksgiving psalms because there is a difference between praising and thanking the Lord.

Right. We praise God for his attributes, for who he is. Right. Where other psalms, we praise God for what he has done or what he is doing. Right. We thank him. We show our gratitude.

So some Bible scholars like to be very granular and say, well, there are psalms of praise. There are psalms of thanksgiving. There are psalms in there that Bible scholars would categorize as psalms of wisdom.

And they reflect some of the wisdom writings in Job and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, some of the wisdom books from the Old Testament. There's also sort of in this subcategory, there are royal psalms.

And what I mean by royal is that you will read about the Davidic monarchy and you'll read about the king and, you know, give success, you know, deliver the king.

[14:44] In some psalms, you'll see where there's a lesser David, which is David the king, but looking toward the greater David, Jesus Christ.

Right. And more messianic in nature. And so some commentators, some Bible commentators or scholars will sort of categorize those as royal psalms. So why is that important? Greg, this is starting to feel like a theology class or a seminary class.

It's really to give you, again, just a working knowledge that as you read psalms and as you use them, whether in a devotional context or if you are more methodical and you want to start reading through Psalm 1 through Psalm 150, that you recognize the type of writing that is, again, for better understanding, for better comprehension, and then for better interpretation, for more accurate interpretation, rightly dividing God's word.

One last note about the categories of poetry and psalms. So there is an overall movement from chapter 1 to chapter 150 from beginning to end.

And you're going to see, if you were to maybe color code each psalm and look back and see sort of what that looks like, you're going to see, starting in book 1, right, so book 1, which is what, chapters 1 through 41, and then on to books 2 and books 3, you're going to see more heavily concentrated in lament type of psalms.

[16:20] And basically the movement goes, so I'm a math and science guy, if I were to chart, you know, if I were to put this on an xy axis and sort of chart lament versus praise and adoration and thanksgiving, so book 1 is sort of you start here, sort of right in the middle, and you start declining.

And book 2 is still, it's very sad, very, again, you see just heart-rendering, heart-yearning engagements with God in the writing, in the psalms.

Book 3, as you get to sort of chapter 88, 89, you know, maybe just halfway past the full book of psalms, is when things sort of bottom out, right? It's like, wow, man, you know, life is miserable, life is horrible.

And you can see that in the psalms, right, now in these lament praises. Now, sidebar real quick, before I leave, so we're at book 1, book 2, book 3.

We're sort of at the bottom. We're at the pinnacle, if you would, of lament and sadness. Side note, isn't it interesting that God includes this in His Word?

[17:28] Isn't it interesting that David, we see in David's life so many chapters and psalms of God working in David's life, of David undone.

He's undone by how he sinned, right? He committed adultery, he committed murder, and we see him, again, in Psalm 51, right, once Nathan sort of opens David's eyes to what he had done, he's broken.

Does it give you confidence that, hey, you all, it's okay to approach God in your brokenness? It's okay to approach God saying, Lord, where are you? I'm undone. You're grieving. You're sad. Maybe you're frustrated, right? You're at a point where you have very little hope in a particular situation in your life. Approach your God.

[18:32] David models this, and others model this in Scripture, to approach your God. He knows. He knows your heart. Be faithful to Him. Approach Him.

But pour out your heart to Him. There's example after example of this. And that's one sort of comforting assurance that I have in Psalms when I read this, that, you know, where you may feel uncomfortable standing up right now and speaking.

Whoa, I am undone. You know, God, where are you, right? You know, in the context of church, you may be embarrassed. You may have the fear of man. You may think, I would never say that in front of my church family.

I don't want them to think bad of me. I don't want them to think that I'm immature or that I don't have my act together. But before your God, who already knows your heart, you do that.

You do that, as David did. So the movement of Psalms goes, again, from book one, book two, book three. But however, then when you get into books four and five, things accelerate and ascend very quickly so that at the end of Psalms, you're up here.

[19:43] It's all about praise and adoration. And like I mentioned earlier, you know, those last five Psalms in the book of Psalms are the Hallelujah Psalms. Okay? So the movement, again, stepping back from individual Psalms to look at a whole, is we see more lament in the first half of Psalms, and then we see more praise and adoration in the second half of Psalms.

Now, there's always exceptions, right? There's going to be Psalms, not every Psalm is only one category, right? We could see, and there are many Psalms where David or the Psalm writer is sort of sharing, woe is me, but then the last couple of verses is like, but God, you are my rock and you are my salvation, right?

It's sort of both. It's both a lament, but it's both a praise or an assurance of God's goodness and His faithfulness. And so, again, these are sort of broad generalizations, but I think it's important, again, to understand the general movement if you look at Psalms as a whole, from lament, more laments in the first half of Psalms, and then more praise and adoration in Thanksgiving in the second half.

All right, last thing before we jump into Psalm 103 is a little bit of technicalities here. So, who wrote Psalms? Tell me who wrote Psalms. David.

And that's it, right? No, no. So, if you were to look at all the Psalms, right, all 150 of them, David did indeed write about half of them. He wrote, there's 73 Psalms that are attributed to his name, but there's also six or seven other authors or groups of authors.

[21 : 21] So, we see that David contributed, again, half of the Psalms. We see Asaph, or his sons, contributed or is associated with about a dozen of the Psalms.

Korah and his sons, 10 Psalms. Solomon, King Solomon, we see two Psalms that are associated with him, written by him.

Moses has a Psalm. I think it's Psalm 89 or 90. Psalm 90 is a Psalm that Moses wrote. And then two less known names, Ethan and Heman, both wrote one Psalm each.

And so, if you do the math, that adds up to roughly 100 Psalms. So, two-thirds of the Psalms we see is attributed or associated with an author.

The other 50 are unknown, right? We don't know who the authors are. But, and that will, we know that God, right? God's the ultimate author of all 150, of all of the Holy Scripture.

[22 : 21] But when we look at the human author, the ones who God used to pen these words, we are able to identify about two-thirds of the Psalms with authors. Now, I mentioned Moses.

And so, if you were to look at what's the oldest Psalm and what's the most recent Psalm, right? So, those 150 Psalms, they weren't all written at once, right? So, when you think of Moses, now you're thinking back to around 1400 B.C. or thereabouts, right?

So, you have a Psalm of Moses that spans, starts at 1400, I think 1400 B.C. And then Psalm, what is it? Psalm 126 refers to the exile, to the post-exile period, which is around the 5th or 6th or 5th century B.C.

And so, the time frame, if you spread that out with Psalms, is about 900 years, right? So, over the 150 Psalms represents roughly 900 years of authorship.

Pretty cool, pretty cool. Last thing is, and I mentioned this just a minute ago. So, if you look again, are you still at Psalm 51? And again, I mentioned this, you know, some Psalms have transcriptions, right?

[23 : 38] Or titles, they're right before verse 1. And it's part of the Hebrew text. And these, I'm sorry, I said transcription. I mean superscriptions, right?

They happen at the beginning, they're superscripts. These superscriptions provide various kinds of information, such as authorship, dedication, historical occasion, like this, right?

Psalm 51, we see the historical occasion in David's life. Some liturgical instructions and or assignment to a particular choir director or choir master. And so, again, 116 of those Psalms.

So, that helps you with context, right? Helps you with understanding, right? What do they say? Text without context is pretext. You don't want to do that.

And so, leverage those superscriptions at the beginning of each Psalm when they're there to understand the context of the Psalm that you're reading. All right, lastly, I've said lastly twice, but I really mean lastly this time before we get into Psalm 103.

[24 : 41] So, for you trivia buffs. So, we already talked about what's the longest book in the Bible? Psalms. What's the longest chapter in the Bible? Psalm 119.

What is the shortest chapter in the Bible? Psalm 117. Psalm 117 has two verses. So, if you want to impress your Christian friends, say, hey, I memorized a whole Psalm last week.

Two verses, right? So, two verses in Psalm 117. And lastly, something else that's a bit interesting is trivia about Psalm 117. Psalm 117 marks the very middle of the Bible in regards to chapter count.

So, you're at the 50-yard line when you're in Psalm 117. There's just as many chapters before 117 as there are after 117. So, Psalm 117. Thank you, 50-yard line.

All right. So, if any of you go to a game show and have a Bible category, and that's the question, and you win a million dollars, remember me. Okay? That's right. Remember me.

[25 : 48] All right. So, that's some fun facts about Psalms. All right. So, let's dive into Psalm 103. Let's get into the Psalms here. So, Psalm 103.

So, this is my intent. I'm going to go ahead and just share with you what my intent is instead of making it a secret or slowly reveal it to you. So, up to this point, again, I've given you some practical sort of, you know, working understanding and knowledge, high level of the book of Psalms.

So, what I want to do now is spend the rest of our time in the first few verses of Psalm 103. But I want that to be a springboard for you in your praise for the rest of this day and perhaps even this week and perhaps the rest of the month.

If you don't have, if you aren't following a regular devotional in your life, a regular time of Bible reading, our church is going through a Bible reading plan. But if you have not chosen to jump on board that train and do that, today, would you consider starting today with spending time in devotion in Psalm 103?

And we're going to talk, we're going to look at some practical ways that you can praise God through using Psalm 103. All right, I'm going to read Psalm 103.

[27 : 04] I'm going to read the whole thing, just 22 verses, and then we're going to camp out on the first five verses today. Psalm 103. What's the superscription say?

Of David. So, we know that David is the author of this psalm. David writes, 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, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

[28 : 15] He does not deal with us according to our sins. You can say, Hallelujah, praise the Lord, if you want to at that point. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass. He flourishes like a flower of the field. For the wind passes over it and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

[29 : 25] The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word.

Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers, who do his will. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. If you would, I want to pray right now. So let's just bow real quick. So Father, I just want to thank you for your word. As we dive into Psalm 103, verses 1 through 5, Lord, Lord, would you teach us, would you give me words to speak, clarity of thought?

Father, would you give us all clarity of hearing and clarity of mind, Father? Help us to eagerly anticipate what you will teach us and guide us in your holy word, your living and active word.

Thank you, Father. Amen. All right. Psalm 103. So initial observations. So I mentioned that Psalm is authored by, Psalm 103 is authored by David.

[30 : 37] And did you notice this Psalm? So remember just what we talked about, the different categories of poetry in Psalms. This Psalm is pure praise, right?

There's no lament, right? There's no sort of, you know, supplication, reaching for a quest. This is not necessarily even thanking him, although there are some references thanking him for what he has done.

This is pure praise for who God is. Multiple Bible commentators have noted, and just in my research, multiple noted that this Psalm, Psalm 103, is one of the most joyful, upbeat Psalms of the Psalter, of the book of Psalms.

And if you remember from our reading during the call to worship in Psalm 104, notice it's right there. They're side by side, 103, 104. Look how they start. They start the same way, right?

Bless the Lord, O my soul, right? And then look how they end. Bless the Lord, O my soul. And so there is sort of an association.

[31 : 46] Some of the Bible commentators talked about there being a pairing or an association between Psalm 103 and 104. But if you are paying attention, there is a pretty significant difference

between Psalms 103 and 104.

So maybe you English majors may have caught on this, but if you read 103, notice references to the Lord, that it's in the third person, right?

Bless the Lord, forget not His benefits, heals all of your, talking about the people, your diseases. The Lord works righteousness. Verse 7, He made known, right?

Verse 9, He will not chide. Verse 10, He does not deal. Psalm 103, as David has written, is in third person. Psalm 103 is praise about God.

Now look at Psalm 104. Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my God, You are very great, right? Now, verse 3, He switches over to third person.

[32 : 50] He lays the beams of His chambers. He makes His messengers winds, right? But verse 6, He switches back. You covered it with the deep, as with the garment.

At your rebuke, they fled. And so right here, we can sort of differentiate and distinguish. Psalm 103 is a praise psalm about God, where Psalm 104, you notice that the author, in this case, it's, or do we know?

See, in the superscription, it doesn't say of David, but it's likely it's David. But Psalm 104, the psalmist addresses the Lord directly, right?

So that's more of prayer, right? What is prayer? Talking to God, addressing Him directly. And so there are some differences between Psalm 103, Psalm 104, but that's a key difference.

And it's interesting, you know, as you read Psalm, pick up on how the author has written the words. Even minor differences like that make a difference.

[33 : 52] But bottom line is, the main theme here is the Psalm 103, it's pure praise, right? So fast forward six months from now. Man, if you're just in a dry moment in your life, and you just need time in front of Scripture to preach the gospel to yourself and just praise God, remember today, Psalm 103, right?

Pure praise. All right, let's jump right into the verse by verse. So if you'll look, Psalm 103. So what's the first three words?

Bless the Lord. Bless the Lord. So that phrase in Hebrew, bless the Lord, appears 23 times in the Old Testament.

And of those 23 times in the Old Testament, it's used 18 times just in Psalms. And just in Psalms 103 and 104, it's used seven times.

It's an interesting phrase because I would be used to hearing someone say, praise the Lord, right? Bless the Lord. How do we, how do we, we've talked about this as a church in the past.

[34 : 57] How do you bless the Lord? How do you, how do you give glory to the Lord? The Lord, God is all glorious. He's all blessed. How do we do that? So it is an interesting phrase, but bless the Lord means almost the same thing as praise the Lord, especially when it's us doing the blessing, right?

When we bless the Lord. There's examples in Scripture where, obviously lots, where God is blessing us. And so the Hebrew word bless is pronounced barak, B-A-R-A-K, barak.

And the literal understanding of barak is derived from a word that means kneeling, right? So from that, from the word bless, from the Hebrew, as derived, when you picture a kneeling, what does that mean?

That means adoration, right? That means worship. That means gratitude. That means blessing. So kneeling, blessing. In Genesis 1-28, so in the creation account, this same word is used in Genesis 1-28 that says, And God blessed them, Adam and Eve, right?

And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply. So again, we see an example there where God is blessing. It's a formal act of blessing His creation.

[36 : 33] Later on in Genesis, we see the same word used as God blesses Noah, right? God blessed them, Noah, and told them to go forth, be fruitful, multiply.

God blesses Adam. And so there's examples of where God is blessing others, and that same word is used. In Scripture, when we see God blessing others, it's showing His kindness and His favor, right?

He has said, God has said to bless others. But again, clearly, God blessing others is not the same as us blessing God, right?

God is perfect. How can God benefit more from us blessing Him? He's perfect. How can we make Him more perfect in our blessing Him? How can we increase His happiness any more than He

already is?

And so again, the question before us is, when David writes, Bless the Lord, he's calling himself to worship and praise. What's that look like for us?

[37 : 37] What's that look like for David to bless the Lord? Well, when we see this in context, right? When we see God's creation, humans being called to bless Him, it signifies the deepest, profoundest, most sincere kind of praise and adoration, and especially praise offered with one's voice, right?

So verbal blessings, recitation of God's greatness, expressing His greatness, right? That's how we bless the Lord.

We bless Him by honoring His name, by speaking praises of Him, of speaking words of adoration. So with that in mind, think a moment, what's it look like in your life to bless the Lord?

Very practical here. I'm jumping, I'm not waiting to the end for application, right? So think about that. Just as David is calling himself, Bless the Lord, O my soul, right?

We ought to be calling ourselves, Bless the Lord, O our soul. And what's that look like? Do you have a good understanding? Because if you don't know what it means, what it looks like, then you're probably not going to do it.

[38 : 55] Are your words seasoned with thanksgiving and adoration? Are your words seasoned with giving glory to the one who glory goes to?

When you interact with one another, again, are your words, is your attitude, is your heart seasoned with always being mindful of how God is working in a situation?

How He has blessed you in a situation? Even if the blessing is not the blessing that you would hope for, right? It's a challenging situation. It's a failure. It's a time of grief, right?

It's a time of intense pain or uncertainty. Are you blessing the Lord in those situations, trusting in His goodness and His faithfulness and His sovereign will in your life?

Bless the Lord. Well, verse 1 continues, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. So David is not just saying, bless the Lord, but now He's helping us get some insight into how He blesses the Lord, right?

[40 : 11] So He's summoning His whole self, right? All that is within me. What's that mean to you? We don't have to look up the Hebrew for this one, right?

When David says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is in me, He is summoning His whole self. All of His faculties, all of His passions, all of His memory, His mouth, His hands, His innermost being, all that is within me, all that He is.

That's what David is calling himself to do. And in verses 1 through 5, and that's what we're going over today, we see that this is David looking in the mirror, so to speak, and calling himself to worship.

Now, verses 6 and beyond, he calls others, the saints, to do, to be part of this blessing God. And at the end of the chapter, if you notice when we read it, he's calling the angels and all the hosts, everyone, to bless the Lord.

[41 : 12] But in these first five verses, it's very personal. And again, I think we can learn a lot. David's modeling this for us. Doesn't it sound similar to the answer that Jesus gave to the scribe who asked him which commandment was the most important in Mark 12, right?

How did Jesus respond? You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.

Remember that? Mark 12. The scribe was trying to corner Jesus. And, you know, as they were always doing, the scribes and the Pharisees and Sadducees, and they asked Jesus, what would he consider the greatest commandment?

And he didn't just say, you shall love the Lord your God, right? He was very clear about how we are to love the Lord our God, with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your strength, right?

There isn't a human faculty inside of us. There's nothing inside of us that's exempt from giving worship to the Lord. David writes, all that is within me.

[42 : 24] So I think we can derive from this that true praise, real, authentic worship, cannot be half-hearted or accomplished by going through the motions.

Right? It must be wholehearted. It must be sincere. All that is within me. Not only do Jesus' words in Mark 12 command us to love the Lord our God with all of our being, but his words in Revelation 3,

verses 14 through 16, for the church of Laodicea, reveals to us what Jesus thinks of half-hearted or lukewarm living, and worship, right?

These may be familiar to you, right? The church of Laodicea in Revelation 3. This is what Jesus said, and he was dictating, if you would, to John in this vision what he was to write to the seven churches.

And in verses 14, 15, and 16, the focus is the church of Laodicea. And Jesus says, I know, he says, John, write this for the church of Laodicea. I know your works.

You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

[43 : 53] Now, that's incredible. Jesus is talking about a church, the church of Laodicea. He says, I'm so disgusted with you, you make me want to vomit, if you would, in our terms, right?

I will spit you out of my mouth. And so, when we see that condemnation, if you would, that Jesus is looking at his perspective of lukewarmness, that applies to our worship, right?

And that echoes sort of what David is writing here, with, you know, bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, right? To worship wholeheartedly is a beautiful obedience to God's command.

And to not worship, to not praise him wholeheartedly, well, is that really authentic? Now, to worship wholeheartedly with all that was within you, granted, in our sinful flesh, it's hard at times, right?

We have busy lives. We have lots of distractions. We have things that we want to do, right? We're selfish. You know, we worship what we want. Sometimes we fall into a pattern of going through the motions, of mindlessly, whether it be singing a song, whether it be, you know, sitting, listening to a close friend.

[45 : 13] You know, you're on the phone, but you're really sort of multitasking. You know, you're sort of half-hearted into something. And that spills over into our worship, perhaps.

So let David's words here in this first verse of 103, let these be an example, be an exhortation, be a conviction for you of how we are to worship, how David summons all of himself to praise God.

Well, David goes on. So the last part of verse one, so bless the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me. And then the last part of that phrase is bless His holy name.

All right, so what's God's name? Right, so in Scripture, when we talk about glorifying God's name, making much of God's name, in this case, blessing His holy name, what's that mean? What's that signify?

God's name signifies all that God is. When we talk about God's name, we talk about Him, all that He is, His nature, His attributes, His holiness.

[46 : 17] And when it says holy name, we see there that holiness is really the glory of God's name. You know, if we look across all of Psalm 103, so if we were to have more time to do a more in-depth study of Psalm 103, we would see that David focuses mostly on the goodness of God.

Did you notice that? He forgives all of your iniquity, He heals all your diseases, He redeems your life from the pit, and just goes on and on and on and on, just going crazy about the greatness and the goodness of God.

But notice what David says first, right? Bless His holy name. He's sort of positioning holiness before God's goodness. Now, if you think about that, that makes sense, right?

It's because of God's holiness that we experience God's goodness. That's the gospel, right? Isn't that the gospel? Because of God's holiness, because God cannot look upon sin, cannot look upon you in a sinful state before you are a born-again believer, right?

He had to do something to pay that penalty. A price had to be paid for your sin, right? God's holiness, His perfection, demanded it.

[47 : 40] And so, I think most of us know the gospel, right? We know that God in eternity passed, right? He had a plan to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to live a perfect life, to die a horrible death on the cross, and that He took on our sins, those who He would call, and would save us so that we would be clothed with Christ's righteousness, right?

Isn't 2 Corinthians 5.21, for our sake, He, God, made Him, Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God, right?

So, God made Jesus Christ to be sin who knew no sin, right? That was that great exchange. God's holiness demanded that the price be paid, and God paved a way for that price to be paid so that as saved believers, right, His holiness then led to us experiencing God's goodness, God's greatness, salvation, redemption.

And so, it's interesting that David here focuses in on bless His holy name. Think of this, my fellow believers, my fellow brother and sister in Christ. You may have not known this, but before you were saved, God's holiness, His justice, was a terror to you, right?

Because God's holiness demanded that you die for all of sin and falling short of the glory of God. For the wages of sin is death, right? So, you may have not known that at the time, but God's holiness should have been a terror to you.

[49 : 30] But now, as believers, what is God's holiness? God's holiness, it's the object of our worship. It's what endears us most, or one of the things that endears us the most to God, right?

His holiness, His perfection. He's saved us through His holiness, and now we experience His goodness, and that's going to be what we see in the rest of chapter 103.

It's incredible. Bless His holy name. So, think about that. His holiness, formerly a terror to us, and now it's the object of our worship as we bless His name.

All right, well, I've got to move right along because I'm watching the clock. So, verse 2, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all of His benefits. Right? So, because of God's holiness, we are recipients of His goodness, right, of His benefits.

This is a command to my soul to note every benefit from God. Every benefit. Right? That's what it says. Forget not all His benefits.

[50 : 46] That's what the ESV says. It doesn't say, forget not some of them. It says, forget not all of them. You believe Scripture, right? Is God's word truth? Yes. Yes. So, it says here, forget not all His benefits.

Every grace, every mercy, every act, every provision, every protection, every kindness, every expression of love, every providence from Him.

I may show my age here a little bit, but did anybody remember, if you grew up in church, do you remember singing the song, count your many blessings, name them one by one, count your many, right?

Y'all see, I see some heads nodding. Some of the younger, oh, okay, all right, some of the younger folks are like, Greg, what are you talking about? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, the refrain, the chorus goes, count your blessings, name them one by one, count your blessings, see what God has done, count your blessings, name them one by one, then the last line, count your many blessings, see what God has done, right?

Sort of the upbeat, chipper, well, that's it. This psalm, count your blessings, now that's going to be stuck in your mind, right? The rest of the day, right? You're going to go YouTube it, so you can, it'll sound better on YouTube than my voice.

[52 : 01] But yeah, that's what this is about, remember not, or forget not, all his benefits, count your blessings, count your blessings, we are not to forget, we're such a forgetful people, aren't we?

We're forgetful and distracted people, I know I'm convicted of that, forgetful and distracted. Hold your place in Psalm 103 and go back to Deuteronomy chapter 8, Deuteronomy chapter 8.

I want us to take just a quick look at just how important it is that we not forget in God's eyes. So Deuteronomy chapter 8, so again, context, right?

So Deuteronomy is the second telling of the law. So, so, Moses has led the people out of Egypt through the wandering wilderness, right?

Because of their complaining and just lack of faith, you know, God said, hey, this generation shall not enter my promised land, but the children of that generation would enter the promised land.

[53 : 04] So, in Deuteronomy, they're getting near the end of the wandering and now, Moses is retelling the law because the second generation is now growing up and much of the first generation has passed away, right?

They're not going to the promised land. And so, the context here is, again, God retelling the law. And so, I'll pick it up in verse 11. So, Deuteronomy, verse 11.

Moses is saying this. He says, take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His rules and His statutes, which I command you today.

Lest, now listen closely, lest when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, verse 14.

Then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God. Underline that. Underline that. Verse 14. And you forget the Lord your God who did what?

[54 : 12] Brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end.

Beware, lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand have gotten me all this wealth. You shall remember the Lord your God for it is he who gives you the power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers as it is this day.

And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.

Is it important to God that we not forget him, that his people not forget him and forsake him?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Forgetting, you know, when I read this text, there's two things that I pull out of this text.

[55 : 36] We are to live lives, first one is we are to live lives with a constant cataloging and recitation of the Lord's benefits. Do you do that? We know in scripture it says pray continually, right?

So we sort of know that we ought to be, have a mind of praying without ceasing. Well, part of that, as you're praying, should be a constant recitation of God's benefits and his blessings to you.

The second thing I get out of this is forgetting, and this is, I'm stepping on my own toes here, so don't get mad at me if I step on your toes, but forgetting is less about being absent-minded and more about one's own pride.

Did you hear that in Deuteronomy 8? Lest your own heart be lifted up and your mind be lifted up. I don't think we so much forget as we just don't believe that it's God providing his benefits to us.

How's that for a convicting statement? I think really maybe in our heart of hearts, some things, hey, it's my skill. I did this. I'm pretty smart. I'm pretty athletic.

[56 : 44] I'm pretty savvy. And we forget the Lord. We forget that all things, he grants us all things, right, the abilities to do what we do, the blessings of earthly treasures, the blessings of spiritual treasures.

I don't know. Just reading Deuteronomy 8, I think we ought to be convicted. I think our heart should be pricked that forgetting and getting distracted perhaps is not so much about being absent-minded as it is about our own pride.

Well, let me move on. So, verse 3, sorry if I stepped in. No, I'm sorry, but I'm not sorry. Stepped on your toes on that one. So, that's what Scripture says, Deuteronomy 8. All right, so, verse 3. So, David writes, who forgives all your iniquity and who heals all your diseases.

All right, this is mind-blowing, right? This is mind-blowing. This goes back to the gospel. God forgives all your iniquity. In your personal time of devotion, I think you can just camp out on that half of a verse and just stay there for minutes, hours, days.

It is overwhelming. It's a stunning statement. He forgives all of our iniquity. It also says that he heals all your diseases.

[58 : 07] And I just want to make sure, I just want to make one point about this before I move on, is that this is not referring to physical disease. In the past, if you remember, Jeff has explained when we've had the opportunity to be in Psalms, that there's a very dominant device in Hebrew poetry called parallelism.

And parallelism is basically, in Hebrew, it's when there's two lines that convey the same thought. And so, when we look at this verse, I can see where someone could just maybe breathe through that and, what?

He heals all my diseases? Well, I've got a kidney disease. I'm fighting cancer. I'm fighting ailments of all different types. So, you know, what's God's word saying here about he heals all your diseases?

I mean, hey, we're all dying, right? We're all headed to the grave. Our bodies are breaking down, right, in anticipation of a glorified body, right?

So, this is not meaning that he heals our physical diseases. The parallelism is that the line, who forgives all your iniquity, and again, I'm reading now the ESV, who forgives all your iniquity parallels, or copies, if you would, the next line, who heals all your diseases.

[59 : 29] So, forgives, in the first half of the verse, parallels with heals. It means the same thing. Iniquity parallels with diseases. So, it's clear, the first half of the verse, who forgives all your iniquity, we're talking about sin, we're talking about spiritual disease.

And so, that line is repeated, again, in Hebrew poetry, who heals all your diseases. It's your disease, the soul, right? It's spiritual disease. So, what are the benefits of this verse?

So, again, verse 2 says, forget not all of its benefits. Verse 3, well, that we have forgiveness, and that we have spiritual healing. Well, I'll tell you what, I told you that one of my goals this morning was to use this as a springboard for you and your devotional study.

And so, I have more to share with you, and maybe there'll be another time that I'll be able to share this with you, and maybe we'll hit verses 4 and 5 at a different time. But, but as you read each of these verses, these verses should cause your heart to explode in worship, right?

And so, again, just sort of in conclusion, I just want to run through, again, Psalm 103 that we've already read, but check out verse 10. He does not deal with us according to our sins.

[60 : 51] Again, hallelujah, hallelujah. Verse 11, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

So, how high is that? Again, this is Hebrew poetry, so it's imagery, right? We're not talking about number of miles, but listen, I will share with you, since I'm a science and tech guy, how high are the heavens above the earth?

So, listen, the latest, I do want to share this with you, the latest NASA statistic tells us that they think they know where the edge of the universe is, and this is what they suggest.

If you are traveling 186,000 miles an hour, and that's the speed of light, right? So, if you travel the speed of light, you could reach the end of the known universe, and get this, 225 trillion years, right? Traveling at the speed of light, and this is what NASA knows, right? I don't know if that's true or not, but based on their science, the point is, this is hyperbole, right? As far as the heaven or above the earth, God loves you, folks.

[62 : 02] He has steadfast love for you as far as the high, infinite, it's infinite, His love is infinite for you. And then look at verse 12, right? As far as the east is from the west.

Well, if you go east, you go west, when do they meet? Never, they never meet. As far as you go is east from the west, it's infinite, right?

He is, what's it say here? As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. That is incredible. Again, it's another poetic or imagery way of saying infinite.

Notice that David didn't write as far as the north is from the south, right? Because think about it, if you travel north to the north pole, right, then if you keep going, what direction do you start going? Right, so north and south meet at the equator. East and west, they don't meet. You can go, keep going, you keep going east, keep going east. Right? It's a picture, it's a picture of infinity.

[63 : 04] He separates our transgressions from us, He removes them from us as far as east is from the west. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful words here. Alright, so let me conclude, because my time's up, you've been so gracious.

I do want to read two brief accounts, and then we will sing our closing two songs, but I do want to read two brief accounts, the real accounts, actual true accounts of men who have been impacted by Psalm 103.

The first one, in 1680, a man named Hoekam Neander, a German poet, he had been living a very sinful life.

Well, he decided to go to church to mock the preacher with some of his friends, but in sitting under the preaching of the gospel, he was converted. He eventually became the assistant pastor to the very pastor he had originally come to mock, and under whose preaching he was saved.

Well, when he became the assistant pastor, he was given the regular responsibility of preaching every Sunday morning at, get this, the 5 a.m.

[64 : 13] service. He died at age 30, perhaps because he had to do 5 a.m. services, right? But during his final year, at the young age of 30, he wrote a hymn, Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation.

O my soul, praise him, for he is thy hope and salvation. All ye who hear, now to his temple draw near, join me in glad adoration.

Is that a familiar hymn for some of you? This hymn was written by Neander, based on Psalm 103 and also Psalm 150. We're going to sing that song in just a moment.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation. Second account, it was 1974, so I'm bringing this a little bit more into the current. 1974, and there was a little boy born in England.

This little boy was born into a very dysfunctional family, and his father committed suicide when the little boy was seven years old. He didn't know that his father had taken his own life until he was ten years old, and that certainly left scars on him, mental scars, emotional scars.

[65 : 27] His mother remarried, but to a very abusive stepfather, who eventually ended up in prison for abusing the family. This was a hard life for that little boy in England, but sometime later in his youth, he went to a missions meeting in England, and he heard the gospel, and he was saved.

He was converted to Christ. He was a very good musician, and in wanting to celebrate what Christ had done in his life, he started writing songs, and he came to Psalm 103, and he wrote a song on Psalm 103, and the name of that song is Ten Thousand Reasons, and that little boy was Matt Redmond.

Ten Thousand Reasons was his expression of Psalm 103, and we're going to sing Ten Thousand Reasons as well in just a moment. It's amazing how spending some time in God's word, seeing how God moves in us, how that changes our heart and our lives.

God's word, living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. God is faithful. Let's follow David's example. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

Bless his holy name, bless with all that is within me. So let me pray, and I'll invite Micah to come forward, and we'll close out our service this morning, with singing those two songs.

[66 : 52] So let's pray. So Father, we thank you for your word. Oh Lord, I pray that your truth changes hearts and changes lives this morning. Father, thank you for the privilege of opening your word, to just walking through it, to being in awe of your majesty, of your goodness, of your holiness, of so many benefits that we have, just innumerable.

Father, I pray that we would be convicted to honor you, to love you, to be forever remembering and acknowledging your great benefits.

Oh, Father, help us not to be forgetful, whether it be absent-mindedness, whether it be pride that's within us, Lord. Help us to understand that you are our everything, that you are a great provider, and you're a providential care, Lord, that you take care of us, and that you are indeed faithful to us, even when it doesn't feel like it, Lord.

Thank you for your faithfulness to us, and thank you for your word. In Christ's name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.