

Psalm 103: The God of All Grace

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[0 : 0 0] Well if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of Psalms, Psalm 103, and if we just read again at verse 1, where David says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless his holy name.

And I'd like us just to jump straight into this psalm this evening, because as you can see it's a psalm that is so full. And I just want us to walk through this psalm, because David is reminding us in Psalm 103 that there are three areas in our lives in which the God of all grace works.

Three areas in our lives in which the God of all grace works. And David reminds us that the God of all grace, he works in the life of the Christian, he works in the life of the church, and he works in the life of the community.

So there are the three areas that I'd like us to walk through this evening. He reminds us that, David reminds us that the God of all grace works in the life of the Christian, the life of the church, and the life of the community.

so look firstly at we'll look firstly at the god of all grace working in the life of the christian so we'll look at verses one to five but he says bless the lord oh my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name bless the lord oh 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 and you know in these opening verses david he reveals to us the anatomy of his soul and and he exhorts it's like it's as if he's exhorting his soul to bless the lord bless the lord oh my soul and this word bless we've come across it before many times and we know that it's a significant word not only because it's repeated throughout the psalm but also because it's a it's a royal term and it means to kneel the word bless means to kneel in the sense of kneeling before a king in reverence and humility and honor and as we've said before the the image which the word bless seeks to portray to us is the image of a king standing up from his throne and there are those who are standing in the king's presence and then they kneel down before the king they bow their heads and they have their hand outstretched towards the king knowing that they're going to receive something from the hand of the king which they don't deserve they're going to receive something from the gracious hand of the king and what they're receiving and what we receive you could say what we receive from the hand of the king is something that we don't deserve and yet the king jesus is graciously and freely giving to us what we don't deserve he's blessing us because blessing only comes from the gracious and merciful hand of the king and so god blesses us when he gives to us something we don't deserve and we bless god when we humbly acknowledge that what we are receiving from the gracious hand of the king is what we don't deserve god blesses us and we bless god and that's what David is doing in the psalm as he as he acknowledges the god of all grace he's humbly acknowledging god's gracious acts towards him personally he's kneeling before the king in submission and reverence and he's thanking and praising the lord from the depths of his soul he says bless the lord oh my soul and all it is within me bless his holy name and what we have to see is that the reason David is kneeling before the lord he's kneeling in reverence and humble submission but the reason he's doing it is because of all the benefits which he has received he says in verse 2 bless the lord oh my soul and forget not all his benefits David is kneeling before his covenant king who is jesus his head is bowed his hand is outstretched and he's praising and thanking the lord that the lord that the lord is graciously giving to him something that he doesn't deserve and my friend this is what we ought to be like because David is describing the life of the christian and as he describes the life of the christian he's describing god's gracious character towards us because god is you could say the benefactor and we are the beneficiaries of his grace and here David in psalm 103 he's describing all

the benefits which the christian receives because he says bless the lord oh my soul and [5 : 27] 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 and what David is saying here is that this is what the lord does for the christian this is what the lord does for the christian who bows their knee before jesus and submits their life under his authority and follows after him these are the benefits which the benefactor bestows upon his beneficiaries and what we have to notice is that each and every one of these benefits they are given to the christian personally later on in the psalm we'll see that david speaks about god's gracious acts towards the life of the church and he does he explains that in the plural but here david speaks in the singular and he's speaking personally specifically individually to the christian and he says this is the only king who gives to us what we do not deserve but you know i love the language which david is using here because each of these verbs that he uses they emphasize the benefits which the lord bestows upon the christian but the the way that it's written in the original language it highlights that they're not a one-off event they're not just for the moment these benefits are not just for today but they carry with them this promise of continual blessing they emphasize that the blessing of the king it comes to us not only today but every single day in the life of the christian where the lord he says continually forgives all your iniquity the lord continually heals all your diseases the lord continually redeems you from the pit the lord continually crowns you with his covenant love and mercy and the lord continually satisfies you with good and you know this continual blessing which the lord graciously pours upon us he's saying this is what you receive throughout your christian life and this is the testimony of scripture because when david says that the lord continually forgives all your iniquities when we go to the new testament john affirms to us there that he says that if we confess our sin he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and he says because the blood of jesus christ it continues to cleanse us from all our sin it's not a one-off act but it's every single day and so when david says the lord continually heals all our diseases scripture affirms this to us because isaiah reminds us of the work of the suffering savior that he would be wounded for our transgressions bruised for our iniquities the chastisement of our peace was put upon him and by his stripes we would be healed when david says that the lord continually redeems us from the pit of death paul emphasizes in the new testament that in our salvation we are saved past tense we are being saved present tense and we will be saved future tense we are saved being saved and will be saved it's continual we're being redeemed every single day not with corruptible things such as silver and gold by the by the precious blood of christ when david says that we're that the lord continually crowns us with steadfast love and mercy we have the promise that because of his steadfast love because of his covenant love and faithfulness towards us

the lord's mercies are new every morning every day they are new to us and when he says in verse 5 that the lord continually satisfies us with good so that our youth is renewed like the eagles you know all you can hear is the lord speaking through isaiah and he's saying they that wait upon the lord they shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint and i love that illustration in verse 5 that david uses of being renewed like the eagle because it's said that eagles can live for up to a hundred years which is longer than any or most birds and longer than most people and an eagle it's said not that i've ever met one but it can also it can often look old and past it but when the eagle it molts and it renews its feathers it plucks them all out when it does that it looks young again and it's often said that it's described as its youth has been renewed and the eagle is you could say it's given this new lease of life this renewal this revitalization in which it's able to stretch out its its mighty wings and rise up high on the winds and soar and you know when you think about it he's describing the life of the christian and you know there are there are times no doubt in the christian life when we feel weak and tired and worn out we're tired of fighting with sin tired of feeling so guilty all the time tired of fighting with the devil tired of divisions within the church tired of the opposition of the world tired just in our own weakness and our own flesh there are times where we become worn out and we just want to wind down and ease off and let others just take over and yet that's not what the christian life is about because we don't bow our knee before king jesus and receive blessing upon blessing each and every day of our lives blessings that we don't deserve we don't bow down before king jesus just to bow out no we focus our minds as we're doing this evening upon the god of all grace and we remind ourselves of what we are in christ and what we have in christ and that the lord continually

forgives all our iniquities he heals all our diseases he redeems us from the pit every day he crowns us with his covenant love every moment and he satisfies us with his good that the lord continually pours his blessings upon us not so that we will bow out but so that we will be renewed and revitalized and re-energized like the eagle so that we will rise up again with fresh wings and this renewed strength and sore like the eagle to serve the lord with more passion and more purpose and don't you just love those words at the end of isaiah 40 where it talks about the eagle and but just before that point it asks the question have you not known have you not heard the everlasting god the lord the creator of the ends of the earth neither faints nor is weary his understanding is unsearchable he gives power to the weak and to those who have no might give strength then he says even the youth shall grow faint and weary and the young men shall utterly fall but those who wait upon the lord those who dig into the scripture those who seek the lord with all their heart they shall renew their strength they shall mount up with wings as eagles they shall run and not be weary they shall walk and not faint my friend that's how the god of all grace works in the life of the christian he blesses us with all these benefits but secondly we see how the god of all grace works in the life of the church so we see how he works in the life of the church look at verse 6 he says the lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed he made known his ways to mooses his acts to the people of israel the lord is merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love now in the previous section we saw that david spoke about the continual blessings and the benefits that are bestowed upon the christian personally and we know it was a personal blessing as we said because he uses the singular he speaks in the singular but now we see that as david speaks about how the god of all grace works in the life of the church he uses the plural because he says down in verse 10 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 towards 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 and so david is now describing the that the god of all grace he works in the life of the church and that's actually what he says in verse 6 the lord works that's what he's saying the lord is working in his church meaning the lord is not idle the lord hasn't abandoned his church he never left them in bondage and slavery he hasn't left them to themselves in fact the opposite is true because david says the lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed and the oppression the end of verse 6 that refers to the bondage and slavery of the children of israel in egypt when they were under the tyranny of pharaoh and as you know the bondage and slavery of the children of israel in egypt it's well it's the greatest illustration of our spiritual condition prior to coming to know jesus as our savior that we were dead in trespasses and sins walking according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air like the children of israel in egypt we were in bondage and slavery to sin but what david makes clear here is that the god of all grace he didn't leave us he didn't neglect us he didn't abandon us he didn't leave his own people to die in bondage and slavery in egypt no he says in verse 7 he made known his ways to mooses his acts to the people of israel the lord the covenant king he revealed himself to mooses he made known his ways to mooses he did that at the burning bush you remember that the lord called mooses to be the redeemer and lead the children of israel out of bondage and slavery in egypt the lord made himself known to mooses he revealed himself in the bush that was not consumed but what david is emphasizing is that the lord's act of of self-revelation it was all of grace the revelation of god to mooses at the burning bush it was all of grace because the lord didn't need to reveal himself to his people the lord wasn't obligated in any way to help them in their slavery and in their bondage there was nothing in the children of israel that merited the lord's salvation and the lord's redemption and yet the god of all grace made himself known according to his covenant of grace he made himself known because he is the god of all grace he revealed himself because of his unfailing steadfast love towards his people you know this is something we should never forget we didn't merit salvation we don't deserve the lord's mercy we have no claim to the covenant of grace because the lord has acted alone he has revealed himself to us personally and he has made his his way known to us personally and you know i love the way in which david describes the lord in verse 8 he says the lord is merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and that verse in verse 8 it's actually a quote from from exodus 34 because in exodus 34 that's when mooses was leading the children of israel out of egypt towards the promised land and in that account of exodus 34 you'll you remember that mooses he was called to go up

mount sinai the second time to receive the ten commandments the reason he had to go up the second time for the ten commandments was because you'll remember that the first set of commandments they were destroyed during the golden calf episode but in exodus 34 moses was called up the mountain for the second time to receive the ten commandments and i love what the lord says to him because at the beginning of chapter 34 the lord says to moses be ready in the morning and come up the mountain and present yourself to me there on the top of the mountain and every time i read those words i always think well that's how we should come to church be ready in the morning and come up the mountain be prepared in the morning to come up and meet the lord but in that chapter in exodus 34 moses ascends mount sinai and the lord descends to meet with moses on the top of of mount sinai and we're told there that the lord proclaimed his name the lord revealed himself the lord made himself known the lord preached a sermon about himself and we're told that the lord passed by before moses and proclaimed the lord the lord god merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness and that's the description that david is using here to describe the god of all grace the lord is merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and because of the character of the lord and and who the lord is and what the lord is like david is he's emphasizing to us just how gracious and how loving and how merciful the lord is by saying to us he says to us in verses 9 and 10 he emphasizes what the lord does not do to his people just in order to stress stress he says he will not always chide nor will he keep his anger forever he does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities and what david is saying is that the lord doesn't deal

with us according to what we deserve he deals with us according to his grace he deals with us because he is gracious because he is gracious and as we all know from ephesians chapter 2 that's what paul drew attention to the gracious character of god because after emphasizing the state of our lostness paul says but god who is rich and mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins he has quickened us together with christ by grace you are saved and he says he has raised us up together he made us to sit in the heavenly places in christ jesus that in the ages to come he might show us the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through christ he says by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of god not of works lest any man should boast my friend this is the wonder of our salvation that the lord doesn't deal with us according to our sins or repay us according to our iniquities he deals with us in christ according to his covenant love that's something we have to remember our salvation is secure tonight not because of us but all because of him and what david highlights to us is that the lord's covenant love he says it's inexhaustible it's immeasurable and it's even incomprehensible david is saying that the lord's covenant love towards us it's so great that you cannot escape it so great he says in verse 11 for as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him as far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our transgressions from us and you know david's words there they always remind me of that children's hymn you know jesus love is very wonderful i'm sure you all know it and it talks about the love of jesus and it says that it's so high you can't get over it so low you can't get under it so wide you can't get round of it the wonderful love of jesus that's what he's saying the lord's covenant love it's inexhaustible it's immeasurable it's incomprehensible and if we were to carry on reading paul must have been looking at psalm 103 because if you carried on reading in ephesians chapter 3 after what he talks about in chapter 2 into chapter 3 paul says according to the riches of his glory may he grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being so that christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth to know the love of christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with the fullness of god oh my friend it's wonderful to know that in the life of the church the church of jesus christ the god of all grace he acts towards

[25 : 48] sinners in love but what david says in verses 13 and 14 is that the lord's love towards his church is not only unfathomable but it's also unconditional he says 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 the illustration that david uses of the unconditional love that a father has towards his own children he says that it's a similar love that the lord has but much much deeper far deeper far deeper than the love that a father shows towards his children and you know in a measure david himself knew about the unconditional love that of a father towards his children if you

remember david david's son absalom he wanted to kill david he wanted to take the throne of israel and absalom caused david many years of grief and heartache and yet when absalom died david mourned his son because he loved him so deeply david even wished that he had died instead of his son because his love towards his own son was unconditional and david says here that's what the god of all grace is like towards his church he loves his church unconditionally he loves the church sacrificially because the god of all grace as paul says he loved the church and gave himself for it he demonstrated his love towards the church that while we were yet sinners christ died for us while we were still in the first adam the last adam died for us while we were still in adam the last adam died for us and that's what david is drawing attention to in verse 14 because he says he knows our frame he remembers that we are dust the covenant king he says the god of all grace he remembers who we are and he knows what we are like he remembers that we are dust he knows our frame and these words remember and know they're covenantal words they they refer to the covenant of works which adam failed to uphold in the garden of eden and what they highlight to us is that the lord is always conscious of the fact that adam failed to uphold the covenant of works and by his failure we live in light of that curse and because of that curse from the dust we came and to the dust we shall return our adam's failure to uphold the covenant of grace has left us with a weak and feeble frame that will one day return to the dust but our hope our hope as the church of jesus christ is not in the covenant of works but in the covenant of grace which the god of all grace has demonstrated towards us in the person of jesus christ and this brings us on to focus about how the god of all grace works in our community we've considered already how the god of all grace works in the life of the christian how the god of all grace works in the life of the church but lastly we see how the god of all grace works in the life of the community how he works in the life of the community because it says in verse 15

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 and you know there's something so solemn about these words because they remind us that everything we have everything we know everything we cling to in life it's only temporary it's all temporary you know sometimes we need to be reminded that our life is temporary we've become too comfortable here we need to be reminded that our life is temporary because we get so caught up in the world but as David brings this psalm towards its conclusion having considered how the god of all grace works in the life of the christian personally and the life of the church collectively

David now turns his focus towards the lives of those within his community he looks beyond the church he looks beyond the church outside the church walls and he's looking towards those who are still under the curse of the broken covenant of works and he says 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 David considers the life of his community and he knows that without the god of all grace in their lives their life is meaningless and their days he says they're just like the grass it grows out of the dust for a little while but it soon withers and returns to the dust as we know Moses he used the same imagery in Psalm 90 when he's speaking about the shortness of time and the length of eternity and Moses says he says that our life is like new grass that rises up with the morning sun it springs up in the morning full of youth and full of strength and vitality but he says it doesn't take long it doesn't take long until the evening comes round and it begins to wither and fade and die and Moses even says there are days and years they're numbered they're 70 if by reason of more strength they will be 80 but whatever length of time we're given he says it's short it's temporal it passes all too quickly and David says that the life of the community it's like the flower of the field that when the wind blows over it it just goes those who are gone become a memory in the hearts and lives of those who are still living but then when one generation goes and another generation comes they're forgotten life goes on and those who are gone they're remembered no more they're remembered no more and the Puritan Matthew Henry he makes this interesting comparison between a flower sitting in the garden and a flower in the field that's what David is describing here Matthew Henry he says the flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable and though in its own nature withering it will last longer for its being sheltered by the garden wall and the gardener's care but the flower of the field he says it is not only withering in itself but it's exposed to the cold blasts and liable to be cropped and trodden on by the beasts of the field meaning that there

are a number of ways in which the lives of our community may tragically be cut short and so we must remind them of their frailty and their feeble condition before they're too late that's our responsibility and this is what Isaiah told us in Isaiah chapter 40 he's been told to preach and in Isaiah 40 it says a voice says cry and I said what shall I cry and this is what Isaiah is told to preach to his people all flesh is grass and all its beauty is like the flower of the field the grass withers the flower fades but the word of our God will stand forever and so our responsibility as Christians our responsibility as the church our responsibility is to our community our responsibility is to call the lives of our community to worship the God of all grace our responsibility is to remind our community that the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him and that his righteousness is to children's children to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments my friend our responsibility as Christians and as the church is to tell those in our community that the God of all grace loves them and wants to bless them our responsibility is to remind those whose lives are like the grass that the Lord has established his throne in the heavens and his kingdom rules over all our responsibility is to remind those around us of a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned but you know then David he concludes the psalm about the God of all grace with his fourfold invitation to bless the Lord he calls all of creation the angels the heavenly hosts his servants his people and all of humanity and David he calls all of creation to bow their knee before the Lord in praise and adoration of King Jesus he says in verse 20 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 and what we see in these last few words is that David ends the psalm just the way he began it he began it on his knees and he ended it on his knees he began it on his own on his knees by the end of it he calls everyone to bow their knee and worship the Lord with him and you know it only emphasizes to us that we are to continually praise the God of all grace for what he has done and what he continues to do in the life of the Christian the life of the church and the life of the community so may each and every one of us leave here this evening saying with David bless the Lord

[37 : 34] O my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for all the benefits that we receive from thine hand day after day that they are poured out upon us not because we deserve it but because thou art gracious and Lord remember us we pray continue to bless us we ask thee and Lord that that blessing would extend into our homes and into our families that those Lord in our community would know the blessing of the Lord in their own lives that they too would be brought from darkness unto thine own marvelous light remember husbands tonight Lord that are out of Christ remember wives that are still strangers to thee children Lord whom we long for the covenant promises of righteousness to extend to them and Lord even to children's children

Lord we plead with thee for thou alone thou alone not the one who is able to do it and Lord we we ask that thou would speak to them and enable us Lord we pray to to be bold and to be strong and to stand up for the Lord to speak a word in season to encourage where encouragement is needed and Lord to challenge where a challenge is needed Lord help us to be faithful help us to be faithful witnesses for thee that the kingdom of Christ may be extended that Christ would have the preeminence that God would have all the glory and that we would receive the blessing from thine hand all go before us we pray hear us and do us good for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake Amen we shall conclude by singing in that psalm Psalm 103 page 369 we're singing from verse 8 down to the verse marked 13

Psalm 103 from verse 8 the Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious long suffering and slow to wrath in mercy plenteous he will not chide continually nor keep his anger still with us he dealt not as we sinned nor did requite our ill down to the verse marked 13 of Psalm 103 to God's praise praise and he is gracious long suffering and so to wrath in mercy he is he will not chide continually nor keep his anger still with us he dealt not thus we sinned nor did we quite our ill for us the heaven in its height the earth surmounted fire so great to those that do him hear his tender mercy sour as far as he steps distant from the west so far hath he from us removed good that a hum the Hai to do Niz thing é had to ha ut have preparing Yet he chose the Lord to such as worship him in fear.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.