

The God who is able to show mercy to the Transgressor

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- [0 : 00] We'll resume our public worship of God, singing to his praise from Psalm 89.
- Psalm 89, from the beginning of the psalm. God's mercies I will ever sing, and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all.
- For mercy shall be built, said I, forever to endure, thy faithfulness even in the heavens thou wilt establish sure. I with my chosen one have made a covenant graciously, and to my servant, to my loved, to David sworn have I, that I thy seed establish shall forever to remain, and will to generations all thy throne build and maintain.
- The praises of thy wonders, Lord, the heavens shall express, but in the congregation of saints thy faithfulness. For who in heaven with the Lord may once himself compare, who is like God among the sons of those that mighty are.
- And so on, we'll sing these verses. Psalm 89, from the beginning. God's mercies I will ever sing. God's mercies I will ever sing.
- [1 : 41] And with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness.
- And with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness. Take you to be known to generations all.
- For mercy shall be good, said and forever to endure.
- Thy faithfulness is in the heavens, our word is a pleasure.
- I with my chosen one aminah come and patiently.
- [2 : 48] And to myself, I love to give this for high.
- The time I see established shall forever to remain.
- And will to generations of thy thronged and vision.
- The traces of thy wonders, Lord, the heavens shall express.
- And in the congregation of saints thy faithfulness.
- [4 : 09] For who in heaven with the Lord may once in circumference.
- Who is like all other sons of those that might be are.
- Let us come before God in prayer. Let us pray. Lord, help us to recognize that we are in your presence at all times.
- And that we are in your presence in a significant way when we come to worship. We know that your servants of old declared that they were standing on holy ground.
- As they engaged in an act of worship. As they entered into the courts of your house. As they came individually or collectively to offer their sacrifices.
- [5 : 33] We acknowledge that when we come. That there is a need for us to appreciate.
- That when we call upon your name. That we call upon the name of one who is. Who is high and lifted up one.

Our opening psalm. Our opening psalm is a psalm that speaks of the mercy of God. And it is indeed a mercy that allows us to approach you at the throne of grace.

And we know that your servant. Went on to sing in these words of his acknowledgement.

That your people are greatly blessed. Who have known the joyful sound. And they are persuaded that they shall go on in the brightness of your face.

[6 : 42] And that forever. They are taught from your word. For your word is truth. And they are persuaded that you have promised.

Not only to bring them to yourself. But to ensure that that relationship would continue. You are not going to discard them. Even though there are times when they believe that.

That they are no better than the offshootings of this world. You find so much going on in their lives. That is a shame to them.

And with the knowledge that they believe that you have of them. It would not be a surprise to them. If you were to dismiss them for your presence.

But at the same time they are acquainted with your word. Which tells them that you are a God of grace. And that your mercy is something that is ongoing and permanent.

[7 : 47] And as we speak of that today. We pray that you would encourage us to embrace the truth. That is setting you before us in this way. So remember your people.

Wherever they are fed. We give thanks for them. And that they are all beneficiaries of your mercy. Every single one without exception. There is not one who is named amongst your people.

Who is there by dental right. On the basis of what they have done. But on the basis of what another has done on their behalf.

And they have been brought from the four quarters. From north, south, east and west. And they have come to know.

That salvation is of the Lord. And we pray that you would encourage each and every one today. And to rejoice in the knowledge that they have of that Saviour, Jesus.

[8 : 47] And to delight in sharing his name with others who are still strangers to him. As they were indeed themselves.

Until it was appointed for them. To have their eyes opened and their ears unplugged. And their tongue loosed.

And by reason of your spirit being imparted to them. Effectively enabling them to embrace Jesus Christ. As he has freely offered in the gospel.

We remember before you. Our homes and our families. We pray for our neighbourhoods. We pray for our communities. We pray for our villages.

Our towns. Our cities. We pray for our nation. And remember all the nations of the earth. Remember those who govern us. Think of the.

[9 : 49] Parliament. In Westminster. In Holyrood. We think of local government also. Remember them. Where the. Most wealthy countries.

Are represented. At a meeting. That will discuss. World affairs. And especially. With an eye to.

To. The environmental issues. That they may think. At. The greatest threat. To man. If not that.

Covid. Still. A dark shadow over us. But to our shame. The greatest. Threat. To mankind's existence. Is.

The threat. That the sin. Has brought into our life. And were it not for your grace. Which we acknowledge. That there would be. No possibility of. Of.

[10 : 48] Any. Living soul. Enduring. But you have made. Known to us. That you have elected some. To everlasting life.

From before the world was. Your eye was fixed. Upon. Souls that were yet. To appear. On the scene of time.

And in the fullness of time. They came to embrace. Through the gospel. The salvation. That was wrought. On the behalf. By a redeemer.

Add to the number. We pray. Through the mercy. That is seen through. The gospel. That is preached. Even today. Remember. All who go out with it.

Encourage them. In their labors. We are living. In a day of small things. May Christ be lifted up. Before us. That we might see. Him in a large yes.

[11 : 42] Of his. Of his. Grace. That he summons. All to him. And he encourages them. To. Each and every one.

To. Heal themselves. To him. To bow the knee. For the day will come. When all. Will come before him. And this time.

Not at the throne of grace. But at the throne of judgment. Those who refuse. To acknowledge him now. Will acknowledge him then. And bow the knee to him. And confess. That he has the right.

To bring them to account. We remember before you. All who are suffering. In this world of ours. Not only through the pandemic.

But through the evils. That are done. At the hand of their fellows. We think of those. Who had poverty struck. Who are suffering want. In the places of plenty.

[12 : 41] Those who are. Suffering because of the. Desperate inhumanity. That is in heart. Of man. The viciousness.

And the hatred. That is directed. Against their fellows. In war-torn regions. In war-torn regions. Nation. Against nation. Civil war.

And the denial of truth. Hear our prayers. That you may show mercy. To all who are suffering. Particularly children.

And older people. Who have to. Run for their lives. Death. The cruelty of man. Knows no bounds. Lord.

Show us. Your favour. By. Pouring out your spirit. Upon us. That we might know. The salvation. That is in Christ. We would ask.

[13 : 37] That you would bless. The congregations. Of our. Presbytery. And beyond. Pray for the congregations. Devoid of ministries. At this time. And.

Thankful for the prospect. That is in store. For some. That they might see. These vacancies filled. Throughout our presbyteries. And. The bounds of our congregations.

We ask. That you would pour out. Your spirit. As we said. Accompany with power. That which is wrought in your name. Overlook our shortcomings. The many transgressions.

That are numbered against us. Cleansed from every sin. Through the power of. The risen Lord. Even Jesus Christ. We ask all.

In his name. Amen. We are going to read. From the scriptures. Of the Old Testament. From the book of Psalms. And Psalm. 36.

[14 : 35] The book of Psalms. And Psalm. 36. The transgression of the wicked. Sayeth within my heart. That there is.

No fear of God. Before his eyes. For he fluttereth himself. In his own eyes. Until his iniquity. Be found to be hateful.

The words of his mouth. Are iniquity and deceit. He hath left off. To be wise. And to do good. He deviseth.

Mischief upon his bed. He setteth himself. In a way that is not good. He abhorreth not evil. Thy mercy.

O Lord. Is in the heavens. And thy faithfulness. Reaches unto the clouds. Thy righteousness. Is like the great mountains. Thy judgments.

[15 : 30] At a great deep. O Lord. Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving kindness. O God.

Therefore the children of men. Put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied. With the fatness of thy house. And thou shalt make them drink.

Of the river of thy pleasure. For with thee is the fountain of life. In thy light shall we see that. O continue thy loving kindness.

And to them that know thee. And thy righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come against me. And let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

There are the workers of iniquity fallen. They are cast down. And shall not be able to rise. Amen. Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his word.

[16 : 33] And to his name be the praise. And read again at verse 5. Thy mercy O Lord is in the heavens. And thy faithfulness reaches unto the clouds.

Psalm 36. Psalm 36 is a psalm of David.

We are not certain. And theologians and those who are deeply involved in the searching of the scripture.

are uncertain as to what time frame the psalm was composed in. It could have been written and composed by David at any time during his life.

As we know some of the psalms are easily recognisable as belonging to a time and an incident. Others are more difficult to establish what occasion give rise to them.

[17 : 48] The psalm starts with a description of the wicked. And it is a description that stands the test of time.

Some of the translators had often undecided as to the specific meaning of certain words.

The authorised version has inserted the title Man's Wickedness and God's Perfections as a title for the psalm.

Another translation emphasises the covenant relationship that God has with his people. How precious is your steadfast love, it states.

The fact is there is a contrast made between man in his sin and God in his mercy. And that is what I want us to consider this evening.

[19 : 01] These two things in particular. Beginning as the psalmist does with the picture we have given of man as a sinner. I am not sure if the psalmist means us to think of man as a genetic, non-specific group or if the psalmist is thinking of a particular time and particular enemies.

It is unclear from the authorised version what the psalmist means to understand by what is written.

The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

In the New King James the translation is slightly different An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked there is no fear of God before his eyes.

In the ESV the translation is Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart There is no fear of God before his eyes.

[20 : 20] In another translation A new English translation An evil man is rebellious to the core He does not fear God For he is too proud to recognise and give up his sin.

Clearly the last one there is not just a translation but an interpretation of what we have. We don't disagree with interpretation but as far as translations go there is liberty given to the translator But one thing that each of these translations agree on is that the wicked do not fear God That means more than saying they are not afraid of God although most of the time they are not.

I do believe there is a superstition that permeates the heart of the person who is in denial of God that leaves them with a nagging doubt about the reality of God which comes to the surface when confronted for example by death if it comes unexpectedly I don't mean their own death obviously if man is given time to contemplate death as encroaching then it will affect a person no end whatever they say but when a person is confronted with the death of somebody close to them or if they are caught in a storm or a danger of any description that may suggest that the threat is severe that they may lose their life because of it then they show their true colours as it were the Bible often speaks of men and women in one of two ways believers fear God and believers do not

John Calvin is clear in this regard he states any sense of good or evil has been so suppressed that these men shrink from nothing as if there were no God who is judge of all and when the wicked are no longer restrained by the fear of God their understanding is so blinded that like brute beasts they run headlong to every excess any person who is there are many whose sensitivities are affected by calling any one of their peers brute beasts an offence is caused by the comparison but Calvin qualifies it by saying that they run headlong to excess any person who has tried to handle animals in a state of panic know that they can be a danger to themselves and others as they flee this way and that and man when he is in a when he is cornered man when he is left with no opportunity to turn this way or that then they display characteristics that are just as Calvin described them perhaps there is an element of that in the chaos that seems to govern some lives in the world the psalmist says they flatter themselves too proud to recognise and give up their sins or as

Sing Sam's version records it he views himself with blind conceit his sinfulness denies self flattery is not a pretty thing to flatter somebody else is embarrassing at the very least but when you flatter yourself and you think of what you are doing or when you see somebody flattering themselves it borders on the ridiculous but this is just what happens when a person is in the grip of sin which by its very nature deceives self-flattery is not far away when I was in work for the first time as a young man I remember taking my first holiday to the city of Glasgow where I had relatives and I spent a few years going there and we stayed close to the

[25 : 55] West End and Kelvin Grove Park and I was there I've experienced for the first time the game of bowls and I saw them play lawn bowls and had the opportunity of playing it for the first time and I thought it was just a simple matter of rolling this black ball towards the target which was the white jack I understood that there was something strange about the ball right enough but I didn't realise the way the bias of the ball worked until I tried to roll it straight and because the very the very the makeup of the ball makes a bend in a certain direction and you have to to roll the ball to use the bias to your own advantage but the natural bias of man is towards sin and it affects all men by nature and the bias is towards evil and wrong and there is no corrective to that within man himself

Professor Alan Harmon writes without a true relationship with the Lord the transgressor does not view himself a right and therefore is unable to acknowledge or come to hate his sin pride rules his motives and his self-sufficiency creates the inability to feel any sense of that sin we know that many Christians get accused of hypocrisy by those who see themselves free from the kind of sin that they are convinced the Christian is guilty of at least they say I know what I am but these guys they make out that they don't have sin and they are better than I am and that they do not do what I do at least I acknowledge it however whether their assessment of the

Christian is an accurate one or not too often however the desire to blame others or accuse others is little better and a spookscreen to cover their own shortcomings as if it's better for them to point the finger at others and justify their own sins by highlighting these sins of others and making these sins of others appear worse because these sins are seen in a place where they ought not to be seen however blinkered our eyes may be we cannot blinker the eyes of God surely the psalmist has said enough the picture he has painted is black enough but no he has more to say the sinner does not hate sin not only that he increases his knowledge of it he adds to it and that is the case we are not as sinners content with the sin that is ours frequently that sin leads us into other sins here in the psalm we read that even in their bed they planned some other scheme that is equally wicked and with no sense of such wickedness oblivious to the fact that the eye of the

Lord is upon them and they don't care even if they were aware of God they wouldn't care have we ever met such a person and if you did what did you think of him I remember somebody telling me once the horror that they experienced when they met somebody and they were convinced that that person was amoral that they did not care it was as if there was an evil nature in that person that didn't matter what they did the right the wrong did not come into it I believe that that was a shock to that person to see such unbridled wrong in in the heart of a person but the grace of God is at work in this world of ours keeping many from falling prey to that kind of sinfulness and were it not so and I know that many will not believe this were it not so we would be in a very dire situation maybe you are nothing like this but the fact of the matter is that in the words of one the corrupt heart has produced a defiled conscience a confused mind and a perverted will and that's the picture that psalmist draws of the kind of passion the wicked passion is but now very suddenly the psalmist becomes transfixed as it were with the

God of grace a God of mercy the God of all grace it stands in stark contrast to the first picture we were presented with here we have love loyalty faithfulness justice righteousness this is a God in whom we can trust he is true to his word the terminology as professor Harmon reminds us speaks of the covenant commitment of God when we read of the mercy of God it is not qualified in any way it is capable of reaching even those who have been described in the psalm the gospel tells us the Lord of the gospel tells us Jesus Christ came not to save the righteous but sinners thanks be to God that that is the case

[33 : 11] I often heard those who are foolish say that some converts if not if not if they had not come to faith it would be a surprise to them because they more less understood them to be almost as good as they could be without being converted that was their opinion but they did not know them at all well they did not know them as God knew them they only saw the surface they didn't see the heart the heart which the prophet describes as desperately wicked and that man cannot know when we read the scripture we are reminded that the sinner is sinful from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet there is not a member of the body and soul that is not affected and it is only

God's grace that can remedy that the preacher Jonathan Edwards once spoke of the three hopes of the wicked the first was there is not another world I have never met or seen hell I never met a demon or evil spirits and because I haven't they can't be there the second hope was if salvation is free then it can be gained at any time at my leisure death is far away and in the eyes of many it's always further away than it really is the third hope is that morality will save because I do not steal or suffer from addiction or any vice God is obliged to take me to himself and to greet me like somebody who is worthy of being a recipient of salvation and much better than many that he saves are these thoughts inveigled into your thinking do you have such thoughts in your heart that gives yourself false hope if so think again salvation is wrought at the hand of

God by Christ Jesus and it is an act of his mercy God alone is the source of mercy yes he has ample provision for any and all but be sure that we must avail ourselves of the provision that is made in the gospel if you look on in the psalm the psalm concludes there are the workers of iniquity fallen they are cast down and shall not be able to arise you know the psalmist states God's mercies I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all her opening words of praise what a contrast the appreciation of those who embrace the mercy of God in Christ Jesus and the despair that will overtake those who reject it I can't think of a greater misery than to sit under the gospel for years while all the time rejecting the entreat is presented to you many if they think of eternal realities are happy to think there is a heaven to which loved ones have gone and where they expect to go they conveniently forget that

God who created heaven also prepared a place for the devil and his angels it may be convenient to deny the existence of such a place but it is a denial of the same truth that brings mercy to light in the gospel remember reading in the book written by John Blanchard a long time ago whatever happened to hell he quotes a man by the name of Lord Longford who was in my younger days he was often campaigning on behalf of stricter and better morals in his own generation but although he professed to be a Christian he was very selective as to what he believed for example when he came to

God's word he refused to believe anything that suggested that there was anything other than a heaven he did not want to he would ignore or choose to bypass the words of the New Testament the words of Christ in the New Testament that spoke of hell he said I believe in the infinite mercy of God but I also believe in the purgatory may may the grace of

[40 : 13] God fill your heart with the desire to know something of that mercy as it is in Christ Jesus let us pray oh Lord you are a God of mercy were it not so there would not be a living soul who would turn to you and call upon your name by nature we are wavered forgetful and negligent of the needs of our soul we give thanks for the way that in mercy you have come to us in the gospel of your grace and you have revealed Christ to us and directed us to him we pray that you would speak to others and bring them to put their trust in him that is able to cleanse to the utmost all who come to you by way of that Christ cleanse from every sin we pray and go before us each one and now may grace mercy and peace from

God the Father the Son and Holy all now and always Amen