

Hey Soul! Praise the LORD!

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[0 : 00] What does it mean to worship God? What does it mean to praise God? Worship and praise are words that we use all the time here in church.

They're words that we sing. They're words that we read in our Bibles. But what exactly are we talking about? This morning we're going to look back to the words of David to be reminded of what worship is all about.

We're in Psalm 103. So if you have your Bible with you, please open it up to Psalm 103. We will have some scriptures on the screen, but here at the beginning it'll be easy to follow along if you have it open in front of you.

We also have those black ones, Bibles, in the seats in front of you if you left yours at home. Psalm 103 is one of the most cherished Psalms in the Bible.

It's right up there with Psalm 23. And for people who memorize Psalms, this is one of the common ones to memorize. Many Christians will tell you that they love this Psalm.

[1 : 02] And we'll see why this morning. Let me read it for us. Of David.

Praise the Lord, my soul. All my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul. And forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

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

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever.

He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

[2 : 30] As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

For he knows how we are formed. He remembers that we are dust. The life of mortals is like grass. They flourish like a flower of the field.

The wind blows over it and it is gone. And its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting, the Lord's love is with those who fear him and his righteousness with their children's children, with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

The Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you, his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works, everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul.

[3 : 48] Now this Psalm of David is a little difficult to divide up into sections because there's a sense in which it's all about one thing from start to finish.

So we're gonna kind of trace out the flow and if you're still looking at your Bible, just kind of follow along here as I touch on a few of these verses. It begins in verse one with David saying, praise the Lord, my soul.

And if you take a quick glance over verses one to five, we see that David is here reflecting on the various ways that God has been good to him personally. Then in verse six, David expands this a little bit and he reflects on how God has been good, not just to him, but to all the oppressed.

Then in verses seven and eight, he expands it again, reflecting on how God has shown his loving kindness to the whole nation, all Israel, the people of Israel, to Moses.

In verses 13 to 18, he reflects on God's father-like compassion and the everlastingness of God's love for his people. Then in verse 19, it's about how God is sovereign, ruling over all.

[5 : 13] And then David ends by calling the angels in all creation to praise God. And finally, he calls his own soul, once again, to praise the Lord.

He ends where he started. So that's the flow of this psalm. Now, let's dig into it a little bit and learn what we can about what it means to worship and praise God. We'll start with the very first verses. David says, Praise the Lord, my soul. All my inmost being praise his holy name. So David begins with an imperative.

The word praise here is a command. He's telling someone to praise the Lord. Who is he telling to praise the Lord?

Now, this might sound strange to us, but David is telling his own soul to praise the Lord. He's commanding his own inmost being to praise his holy name.

[6 : 17] So David is speaking to himself. Now, you might think that you're weird sometimes for talking to yourself, but probably all of us do this from time to time.

David is doing it right here. He's telling himself to praise God. In verse 2, he's telling himself not to forget all the good things that God has given to him and done for him.

And then the rest of this psalm is basically just David telling himself specifically about all the good things that God has done to him, to the oppressed, to Israel, to those who fear God, and remembering all of that brings him back again to praise.

So as we look at these first couple verses here, there's a few things to talk about. Let's hit our main question right on the head, right here early on.

What does it mean to praise the Lord? The word here for praise means to commend. It means to acknowledge something excellent about someone.

[7 : 29] We could praise a child for their good behavior. We know how hard it is for children to sit still for a long time. Where the other day, as I was talking to my dad about the thing with his eye, I was sharing my highest regards for my optometrist.

She's just awesome at what she does. She stands out among doctors. One of the best doctors I've ever been to. And so what I was saying to my dad about her, that was my praise for her.

We could praise a work of art. Isn't that beautiful? Look at the colors. Look at the light. Look at the way the artist did that. And the key thing about praise is that it has to have words.

I looked at praise in the dictionary, the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, the most modern one, and it says this. It says praise is to express approval or admiration of.

And then the second definition given, to glorify God in words. So praise isn't praise without words.

[8 : 43] Now, we might want to fight over this a little bit. Isn't praise a feeling? Can't I praise God without words? Well, there's a sense in which, yes, that's true.

But there is a distinction here. That feeling of admiration, that awe of God, is what leads to praise. It itself isn't praise.

It's the overflow of that admiration, of that awe of God in here that gives rise to praise.

Think of going to a restaurant and you're eating a tasty meal and it was cooked just perfectly. And inside, you just have this appreciation to the cook, knowing that there's somebody back there slaving away in the kitchen and he did it just right.

You feel thankful to the cook for making it so good, but you haven't actually thanked the cook until you have said words to him. That's true when it comes to praising God.

[9 : 53] There has to be words. Now, our praise doesn't have to be said out loud because God, he can hear our thoughts. He knows the very things that we're thinking.

So we can praise God quietly in our own minds, in our own hearts. But praise has to have words. It has to be saying something to God about who he is or what he has done.

The next thing that we notice here is where praise should come from. David says, Praise the Lord my soul, all my inmost being.

Praise his holy name. Have you ever come to church and sang through all the songs, but at the same time, you felt like it was all just coming out of here?

But not here. David is a musician. He's a singer, songwriter, harpist, maybe one of the best in Israel, hired by the king to play for the king.

[11 : 04] I'm going to guess that he knew just how easy it is to let skill and habit carry the performance even when his heart wasn't in it. How easy is it for us to do that?

To pray before the meal because that's what we always do. But are we really thankful to God for the food that he has given us to eat?

And that's where I think this psalm gets real. David doesn't just want to say the right things about God. He doesn't just want to sing another song about God if his heart's not in it.

He wants his praise and worship to come out of that deepest part of him. His soul. His inmost being. I love that phrase. The deepest depths of who he is.

No holding back. All my inmost being. Not just some of it but all of it. No reservations.

[12:07] Full flow. Heartfelt praise. And it's here that we maybe get a sense that worship doesn't always come easily. Sometimes it's a fight to praise God from here and not just here.

Look at verse 2. David says Praise the Lord my soul and forget not all his benefits.

Why does David tell himself not to forget the good things that God has given him or done for him?

Because David has experienced this.

And probably all of us have experienced it as well. We so easily lose sight of God's goodness. to us. We lose sight of his love for us.

We get so focused in on our circumstances and things that are not going well in life and stuff that's happening out there in the world. And we feel the pressures and the stresses and the problems and we have these anxious thoughts that just keep coming back.

[13:22] And suddenly it's like when's the last time I felt joy? When's the last time I just enjoyed that reality that God loves me?

We let all these other things crowd the truth of who he is and how he loves us out. It's like we've forgotten the goodness and the kindness of God.

So this is David probably in the midst of some circumstances shouting at his soul hey soul listen don't forget all the ways God has given to you his benefits the good things that he's done don't forget remember them sometimes we need to do this we need to sit ourselves down and give ourselves a good spiritual talking to this is maybe one of the most neglected spiritual disciplines the one that's least mentioned in all the books and from here on David begins to spell them all out all the benefits of the Lord he acknowledges with words the good things God has done this is his praise and he starts with the things that God has done for him personally let's look at this in verses 3 to 5 praise the Lord my soul and forget not all his benefits who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles what's the first benefit that comes to David's mind he has forgiven all my sins and then from there he has healed all my diseases now we don't even know what

David's talking about here specifically what kind of diseases what kind of sicknesses did he have it's not really mentioned in the narrative about David and neither do I think David is saying that God will heal everybody's diseases all of them whenever or as soon as they ask this part of the song is very personal for David I think what he's saying is God up until now you have healed all my diseases all my sicknesses he's praising God for his good health in verse four David praises God for saving his life you redeemed me from the pit and I think that's poetic that's metaphorical language I was I was in deep trouble and you rescued me out of it and you crowned me with love and compassion I like this if the first half of verse four has David down in the pit here in the second half he is lifted up he's exalted to the status of king it's like he's saying

I went from way down here in the pit to way up here on the throne and for David it's the love and the compassion of God that has done this it's not his cunning or skill or hard work or political maneuvering it's compassion like Lord you look down on me and that lowly and desperate state and your heart went out to me with compassion and you lifted me up out of that you redeemed me from that you put me on the throne you put the crown on my head in verse five David says I praise you for you've been the one to satisfy my desires with good things you've been the one to renew my youth you've strengthened me with that youthful vigor and energy that I once had as David reflects back on how God has treated him it's like he's acknowledging

[18:13] God you haven't been stingy with me you haven't withheld from me all the good things that I have things that I've desired I've gotten as a gift from you from your generous heart from your gracious hands and I love this line about how so that your youth is renewed like the eagles now it's up for debate exactly what the eagle part means apparently eagles go through this process of they call molting where they actually grow new feathers at some point in their life could that be what David means like you're giving me a fresh a refreshing new feathers to fly with or is it that he felt so

heavy so weighed down by the things that had been going on in his life but God graciously renewed his youth making him light and carefree able to soar again like an eagle whatever the meaning it sounds pretty good to me would you like to have your youth renewed

I do God can do that and he did it for David so David first praises God for all these personal things that God has been good to him loving to him with and as I mentioned earlier now David in verse six he widens this to express praise for how God has been good not just to him but to others to all the oppressed the Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed I'm not going to unpack all of that that's that's a whole bunch of stuff in there except to say that probably how he gets to saying this is because he himself has been one of the oppressed think back to his story and how Saul was hunting him down chasing him all over Israel it's a great distress then in verses seven to eight David widens some more and now it's how God has been good to Moses and the people of Israel now we're talking about the whole nation and this piece of his song points back to a moment in Israel's history after wandering a little bit in the wilderness they came to Mount Sinai this was after they had left Egypt and it was there that God revealed himself to Moses and to the people and Moses was up on the mountain and he asked God he said Lord show me your ways show me your glory and in response it says that God made his glory to pass by Moses and as he did he declared his own name to Moses and verse eight the second half of what you see on the screen there is what God said that's the words that he declared to Moses as he passed by the Lord is compassionate and gracious slow to anger abounding in love this is just a little trivial detail from the grammar guy in me but I love the way that the parallelism works here these things that God declared about himself to

Moses they weren't just words these things about the Lord also describe his deeds to the people of Israel it's both he made known his ways to Moses his deeds to the people of Israel the Lord is compassionate and gracious slow to anger abounding in love in other words David is saying yes God spoke of his goodness to Moses but he proved it by how he treated Israel time and time again this is like a precious bit of inspired commentary from David what David is saying is that you can go back you can read the whole story of Israel and all of it shows again and again just how compassionate God is how gracious how slow to anger how abounding in love for those of you who are working your way through the

Bible again this year this is what we should be looking for as we read through the Old Testament it's all over the place the story of God's compassion in fact the whole Bible not just the Old Testament it's a story of God's compassion how he is gracious slow to anger abounding in love David will go on merciful forgiving I mean each one of these qualities of God we could probably do a whole sermon series on them but from verse 8 let's look at just one the Lord is slow to anger let's meditate on this do you know anyone who is quick to get angry do you know anyone how does it feel to be around a person that is quick to get angry maybe like treading on ice in the presence of a ticking time bomb

[23 : 53] God is not like that he is slow to anger and his anger is a righteous anger which means that he loves what is good and right so much that he only ever gets angry when he sees evil sin corruption injustice it's an anger that's fully 100% justified and think about this if God is slow to anger that means that he's what patient with sinners like you and like me sometimes we might get this wonky idea that God is something like the rage monster from Dude Perfect that he's just got this alternate side of him that just comes out of nowhere and gets mad at the most trivial things or maybe we see it more like the

Hulk from the comics once he gets going he's just so angry that he just wants to smash everything in sight and lose control completely and if and he he's not always green like that he usually just looks like an ordinary human but when he gets angry he gets all big and green and starts smashing everything but in his calmer moments when he looks like an ordinary human being in one of the movies somebody asked him so something about how he feels or something and he says you know to tell you the truth I'm always angry but no God is not like this at all he is slow to anger which means that he's not always angry anger is not the default he's not prone to just burst out in a rage now maybe at this point some of you might be thinking of those few moments when

God's anger does seem to flare up quickly in the Bible but if you think about those cases usually it's a very serious sin usually it's done publicly and usually it's done by a person in leadership or someone usurping trying to steal into a person a role of leadership God seems to hold leaders to a higher standard because all the people are watching them they're following their example but think

for a moment of the story of Israel from this time that David is speaking of at Mount Sinai where he warns them about turning away from him and living wicked lives until the time when he finally gives them over to being conquered and sends them away into exile how many years did God bear with them not quite but almost a thousand how many prophets had he sent to warn them and to call them to turn back to repent to be restored to be forgiven so many it's difficult to even count them all they don't even all have their own book of the

Bible God's patience is awesome when you're reading through your Bible and you feel like the Old Testament man this is a long thing when are we going to get to the New Testament think it's long because God's patience is awesome I read a book a while back where a guy just encouraged us to really stop and think about how God is slow to anger and he compared this aspect of God with some of his other attributes like his love is there anywhere in the Bible where it says that God is slow to love in fact it's the opposite it says that God is love nowhere that I know of in the Bible does it say that God's love is provoked his love is like a light that is always on but his anger must be kindled it must be stirred up provoked and even there it's a slow thing

God is patient he has such great compassion and mercy towards sinners he is patient he would far rather see us repent turn to him and be forgiven than give us the punishment that we deserve verse 9 he will not always accuse nor will he harbor his anger forever I love this just glance down now to verse 17 this is quite the contrast in verse 17 he says from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him so his anger temporary he does get angry at times but it doesn't last it goes away but his love never ending everlasting towards those who fear him what a contrast verse 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities for as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his love for those who fear him so David praises

[30 : 11] God for his mercy we've all done things we've all sinned we've all we all have iniquities and we deserve a certain punishment from God for those sins but because God is merciful he doesn't want to give us what our sins deserve and David goes on to describe just how great God's love is verse 11 he says as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is his love for those who fear him now I don't know that David really knew how true his words were how high did he think they were up there in his day but as I said last week scientists still haven't found the edges of the heavens of the universe the number the distance between here and the farthest out there that we even know of is such a big number we can't even comprehend it it's so many miles times ten to the power of a really big number if you remember back to math we can't even comprehend that we can't even fathom it and I think that's the point the greatness of God's love for you is immeasurable it's incomprehensible we can't even begin to understand it now I know that I'm only halfway through the psalm here and my time's almost up so we're going to save the rest of this psalm for you to meditate on this week there is so much more in here and with the last couple minutes

I just want to take some time to help us see how this psalm points us to Jesus where is Jesus in this psalm that might be the wrong question to ask perhaps a better question for us to reflect on is this where is this psalm seen in Jesus my answer is that when we read the gospels in the New Testament the story of Jesus we see this same glorious God here among us in human flesh we see him granting forgiveness of sins to a paralytic healing all Israel's diseases we see him standing up to the oppressors the religious leaders for justice and righteousness on behalf of the oppressed people we see his compassion his grace

John said he's full of grace and truth we see Jesus slow to anger he lived with us sinners for 30 years close proximity and yet he was so patient so patient with his disciples and when Jesus did get angry he was angry about the right things Jesus showed us just how immeasurable God's love really is when he came down from that highest of heavens to this earth to live among us to become one of us to look us in the eye and tell us how much he loves us he showed us how merciful God is how willing God is not to treat us as our sins deserve but to forgive us by going to the cross suffering and dying for us all to remove our transgressions from us so how does

Jesus fulfill Psalm 103 well one of the ways was by being this very God here among us in everything he did and in the love he showed showing us the truth of who God is but then there's this other thing that we might be wondering about several times David states that the benefits here the love of God is for those who fear him verse 11 for those who fear him on those who fear him verse 13 for those who fear him verse 17 his love is with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts now I don't know about you but as soon as I hear those words I start wondering do

I fear God enough to qualify to claim that promise have I been good enough have I been obedient enough here too Jesus makes all the difference he's the only one who kept this old covenant and obeyed God perfectly in the New Testament in the book of Hebrews we're told that he is our great high priest who brokers a new covenant with God a new deal a new arrangement an even better one and what makes it so good is this this is in a nutshell we get all that was promised we get this love this everlasting love mercy forgiveness this stuff that's for those who fear him and keep the covenant we get it all not because we kept the covenant or obeyed but because he did and all we have to do the good news of the new covenant is believe admit that we've sinned acknowledge that to

[36 : 43] God and believe in his son Jesus the one that he sent and we get it all we get this everlasting love we get to be loved today tomorrow and every day forward until the day that we die and we get to be loved every day after that every moment in the presence of Jesus until he returns at the last trumpet and raises us to new life and we get to be loved every day after that and on into eternity forever we enjoy that measureless infinite love so that's the second way that this psalm points to Christ it holds out a love that we fell short of and it teaches us to long for it and hope for it and believe that it can be ours in anticipation of Jesus coming and showing us that yes it is for you I'm making it happen for you so if you believe in

Jesus from the bottom of your heart don't ever doubt that verse 17 is to you is for you and if you ever have doubts about this and we're going to end with this just flip the pages forward to Romans chapter 8 and I'm just going to close by reading this if God is for us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen it is God who justifies who then is the one who condemns no one Christ Jesus who died more than that who was raised to life is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of

Christ shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword no in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us for I am convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord this is the gospel this is the good news and it brings us right back to praise praise the Lord my soul all my inmost being praise his holy name let's pray father in heaven thank you for the reminder that you give us through these words how easily we forget we lose sight but

I pray that you would press this truth so deeply into every one of our hearts that for all of us who believe in you and belong to you we are loved with an everlasting love may we live there this week may we rest in that this week put the joy in our hearts and let it overflow out of us this week we give ourselves to you in Jesus name amen