

Praise to God who Heals the Broken-hearted

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[0 : 00] Again, you'll find that on page 525 of Church Bibles. And in verse 3 we read these words. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Maybe I'm stating the obvious, but the past few, well, the past few months on my own particular experience really have brought home to me, brought home to me many truths about the love of God and the sovereign purposes of God in the lives of each one of his children.

It's been a very testing time, I don't try to say that. But it's been a very rewarding journey thus far. It's C.S. Lewis who said that life with God is not immunity from difficulties, but peace in difficulties. Now, I don't want this morning's sermon to be a rehash of my own particular experiences. But nevertheless, what I have under God's care, under God's provision, what I have learned in these, obviously these last six weeks has taught me so much about the God of love, our loving God who does all things well.

And certainly, I hope you excuse me when I say this, but I do want to share with you lessons that I have learned and I'm continuing to learn so that truly that you will see, that you'll see that in all things, God does work for the good of those who love him, undeservedly we are of his love for us.

[1 : 42] And certainly one of the blessings that I've received in the last six weeks, that we might say or I might say is, is there a new depreciation of the Psalms. And I know that in your midweek meeting, John Angus has gone through some of the Psalms with you.

And certainly in my own case, they've been very much very present help in times of trouble. I remember one morning, I think I was lying in my hospital bed, I had a little Gideon's Bible beside me.

And that in itself, of course, was a great comfort at that time. And it was a talking point. It was a talking point to at least one member of staff who commented that she read, or so she said, but she said she read Psalm 23 every morning.

Well, the Psalms, of course, have been a great comfort, a great encouragement to God's people in so many circumstances of life. And yes, often under God's sovereign permission during times of real affliction.

And they continue to be of that comfort. Why? Because they're sourced in the God of all comfort. The Psalms, of course, have divine origin. They've come from the heart of God, from the heart that truly cares, that truly by his Spirit makes effective his word, and makes effective that word in the heart of those whose trust is in him.

[3 : 05] And the Psalms assure us of God's ever-present help. We've mentioned the children, the Lord who doesn't change, and surely we see that in his word.

And the Psalms bring forth that truth, that yes, he is the God of all comfort who doesn't change. Now, of course, there are many, many Psalms we could turn to for our edification at this time, particularly at times of affliction.

And again, I have to say that there have been particular Psalm portions that have been so helpful in this last little while. Psalm 119, verse 67, for example, Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Certainly the truth of these words has come so strongly to me in recent days. God redirecting, not just my own life, but I know the lives of so many of you even here.

Unexpected twists and turns, unexpected turns. But yes, to bring us the more to trust in his grace and to trust in his sovereign purposes. This morning I want to turn to a little Psalm portion here in Psalm 147.

[4 : 17] In these four verses that point to the loving kindness of God. God in his healing love. God in his sovereign love. God in his great love. That great love that reaches to undeserving sinners

who depend totally and utterly on the God of love.

So let's look at verses 3 to 6. Remember these are words from the hand of God, words from the heart of God, words that every believer can find true comfort to direct his heart away from self and to call upon the God of all comfort.

Because notice verse 3, verse 6 even. Well, we'll look at, obviously we'll look at verse 1, 2 in context as well. But even looking at verses 3 to 6, notice how the emphasis is on God.

Read the words again. He heals the brokenhearted. He binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars. He gives to all of them their names.

Great is our Lord, abundant in power. His understanding is beyond measure. Notice the focus is on God the Lord. And surely that has to be our focus.

[5 : 35] God has to be our focus this morning. Many of you I know are going through, many of you are currently going through, we'd have to say difficult providences.

And the reasons might well appear to be difficult to understand fully. But you know, turn your eyes to Jesus. Turn to him. Remember he knows.

He cares. Remember that God has a purpose in your life, in every aspect of your life, whether it's in the mountaintop, or whether it's in the valley. Yes, you will and are having times of testing.

But don't look to self. Look to him. Look to God. See God the Father. See God in his fatherly love. That fatherly love that reaches out you at all times. See God the Son, the one who bore for you in his suffering on the cross.

And he bore your sins that brought about your healing from your spiritual sickness of sin.

Remember, of course, by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, you're enabled to worship God and to give God the glory for his great love and for his great care.

[6 : 45] So worship him. Praise him. Worship him for that great salvation that's yours so that your sins are truly forgiven, so that they truly are healed of your infirmities that once separated you from God.

Well, let's focus in then on, on this psalm that brings out these truths so wonderfully. And let's begin with the healing love of God.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Well, as you can see there, we don't know who wrote this psalm. It's an anonymous psalm writer. But notice, as we read through the whole psalm, notice, he's full of praise to God.

Notice, at the beginning, at the middle, verse 12, at the end, verse 20, the psalm is just so full of praise to God. The words, praise the Lord, hallelujah.

He's offering up his hallelujahs and he's calling on others to praise God, to offer up their hallelujahs to God. And notice, praise is being encouraged.

[7 : 53] Praise the Lord's being encouraged for good reason, for sound reason. And you can list them even in the first few verses. Notice, as we begin there at the psalm, it's a good thing.

It's a good thing to praise God. Why? Well, because God is good. And of course, it's good because it's beneficial to your soul to praise God. When you focus on Him and in focusing on God, you're responding in praise.

And notice what else the psalmist tells us. It's pleasant. It's a fitting. It's an appropriate thing to do.

Why? Because praise energizes you as a believer. When you praise God, you're taking, you're directing your thoughts, your heart to Him away from yourself, away from any self-pride.

You're fixing your heart on God the Lord, the God of all grace. And of course, it's appropriate. Very appropriate because God doesn't forget His people.

Verse 2 suggests, well, the psalmist, the wording of the psalm would suggest that the psalmist is calling on those who've returned from exile, calling them to praise God because God has ended their exile.

[9 : 05] Jerusalem's been rebuilt. The exiles have been brought home. And so, falling on from these reasons for praising God, the Lord, the psalmist goes into more detail.

And he goes into, as it were, he's getting really into detail now about the reasons for giving God the praise. Verse 3, He heals the brokenhearted and binds their wounds.

Now, sometimes think that one of, perhaps, the less focused aspect of God's love to undeserving sinners is this aspect of healing, God's act of healing.

But yet, you know, when you go through Scripture, so often we see God expressed as God the healer. We see that expressed in God's works of salvation in the Lord Jesus.

We see that expressed in the ongoing forgiveness of sins and the repentant sinner. Think of the famous passage in Isaiah, when Isaiah the prophet spoke prophetically of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross and he spoke of that in terms of healing.

[10:14] Isaiah 53, verse 5, with the stripes we are healed. And later, Peter would, Peter the disciple, the apostle, would echo these words in his first letter.

He wrote of Jesus in his act of healing on the cross. By his wounds, you are healed, as Peter wrote. Then we read the healing miracles of Jesus, these miracles prior to Jesus' death on the cross. Again, you see these healing miracles pointing to the greater act of healing, the spiritual healing that only Jesus gives through his death on the cross. And, you know, without just taking all of that in, surely, you know, just pause for a moment and reflect, you know the Lord Jesus as your saviour, reflect on your salvation in terms of healing.

Now, of course, healing points to sickness being healed. Healing points to sickness being dealt with. Healing then points to restoration. It points to transformation from a condition of illness to one of health.

Because each one of us, you and me, we have a sickness that requires healing. A healing that only the Lord Jesus can give, can bring for the glory of God and for your eternal good.

[11:37] Only Jesus can give that spiritual healing. The Apostle Peter, as we said, Peter, Peter knew that spiritual healing. He knew that in his experience. And he so rejoiced under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he so rejoiced in that healing that he wrote of that healing.

And he wrote in terms, as one who had been healed of his spiritual sickness, his sin. And writing to those who had known the same healing.

Healing, as Peter said, healing through the wounds of Christ. By his wounds you were healed. And Peter could testify to the love of God that had rescued him.

Peter could testify to that health of the soul that he had through the healing effected by the Lord Jesus. But you know, when we think of God the healer, think of his works of compassion.

Think of his works of forgiveness. Think of, you know, the sinner coming before God, pleading God's mercy, and coming in brokenness of heart.

[12:49] You know, when you know that you've sinned before God and your heart is broken because you know you've sinned against him. And you humbly come before him. And you plead his forgiveness. And we're told that he heals the brokenhearted.

Having confessed your sin before God, you know that he's the one who changes not. His word is sure. You know that you're coming before the one who cleanses the repentant sinner.

And you know then that you're healed through the tender care and love of God through his work of healing. And these words of Psalm 147, these words that tell of God healing the brokenhearted and God binding up their wounds.

I mean, surely, these words written in Psalm 147 many, many centuries before the Lord Jesus, surely they point forward to the Lord Jesus in his work of salvation on the cross.

We keep going back to Peter. Remember, Peter wrote that by his wounds, by Jesus' wounds, you are healed. Think of Christ's wounds. Think of his scourging.

[13:54] The scourging that led to being put to death for us. Think of these stripes that tell us his suffering for us and is bearing our sins in his body. Think of his wounds that ensure that your wounds of sin, that your wounded hearts, hearts wounded by sins, that your wounds are bound up with the bandages of his grace, his saving grace.

That's such a beautiful picture of saving grace. the wounds of Christ given for you so that you are healed of the wounds of your sin.

That's quite remarkable, remarkable truth. Well, that truth certainly in many ways came home to me when I was lying in that hospital bed and I certainly saw the wounds in my body, the wounds that pointed to the process of physical healing.

I know that these wounds were given for my physical good. Well, how much more the wounds of the Lord Jesus given for your eternal spiritual good?

That good that been united to Christ eternally, united because of his wounds, because of his cross bearing. You've been set free, free from the power of sin, free in Christ, free to live your lives in him eternally.

[15:18] And so it's that healing love of God that surely then causes you, causes us to praise God. Praise the Lord, we're told here. Think of the healing love of God.

That surely should elicit within you that rejoicing and that praise within your heart. So I have to ask you, I have to ask myself, did you come this morning into this building to church to praise the Lord, to praise God?

When you worshipped him in song, when you worshipped him even in prayer, did you do so through praise? You were singing from the psalms, did you sing them from the heart?

Were you praising God? Because it's a good thing to do, because it's fitting in the context, yes, of our congregational services, as well as in the context of your own life. Can you call, we're going to sing from this psalm at the end of this service, praise the Lord.

We're calling one another to praise the Lord. Or are these just words from a page to sing on a Sunday just out of mere respectability?

[16:28] I pray that we have these hearts that truly praise God in all circumstances, on all occasions. Well, because he is the great physician.

So we praise him, give him the glory. You who know him, he's bound up your wounds with the balm, with the ointment of saving grace. You know that by his stripes you're healed.

And by his stripes he is healed and strengthened to serve and to live and to live for him. Many of you have had the blessing of physical healing and that blessing from medical staff and you'll know how much you appreciate their skill.

You know that without their skill and care that, well, in many ways you'd still be in your illness. And I'm sure you who have known the blessing of physical care, you've thanked those who healed you, who helped you.

Well, how much more the thanking God, the praising God for what he alone has done for you in your healing. How much more to praise the Lord and his giving of himself for you so that you might be healed.

[17:44] He who suffered for you, who bore wounds for you so that you might be healed of your spiritual sickness and live for him.

The healing love of God. But secondly, it all connects. The sovereign love of God. He determines the number of the stars he gives to all of them their names.

Now, remember the context of this psalm in all likelihood is the returning exiles, the exiles coming back to Jerusalem. Remember, those who are exiled from Judea because of their sin, because of their idolatry, God exiled them to Babylon.

These exiles are now returning home or have returned home. And what's the psalm writer doing? He's pointing to the sovereign love of God towards his people. This is the same sovereign Lord who healed their broken hearts.

The same sovereign Lord who knows them each one. He's the God of the universe. He's God, the creator, God who made heaven and earth. God who's formed every aspect of his creation, even from the very stars in heaven to the creation and earth.

[18:58] Think of this. God who made the heavens and the earth, God who created the universe, God who's above the heavens and the earth. He knows you individually and knows you intimately.

I'm told that there are over a hundred billion stars in the observable universe, many more beyond. That tells me surely of the Lord of heaven and earth, the Lord who formed these stars, the Lord who counts them, each one of us were told, the Lord who names them all, the Lord who counts each of these inanimate objects, and names them all, billions and billions, knows you, knows you.

He's concerned for your life. He's so concerned that he sent the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to earth to save you.

Think of that. You know, it's just, we're lost in wonder, love and praise surely when we think of the great love of God, the sovereign love of God, that everyone who knows that salvation is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

And surely that in itself should give you great comfort when you're undergoing your various afflictions and trials and testings and sufferings, that the God who counts the billions of stars and gives each one of them a separate name, loves you, has a special love for you in his care, in his keeping, in his compassion.

[20:36] Again, just pause and reflect on that wonderful truth. I mean, we're each one of us utterly undeserving of that love, but it's the wonder of that love to undeserving sinners, undeserving individuals such as ourselves.

Well, it captures David's heart. David in Psalm 8, remember what David wrote, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you've set in place. What is man? You're mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him. You who are going through particular times of testing, well, yes, your faith has been tested and there are trying times, yes, but be reminded through the psalm, that God knows you, he loves you, he cares for you, and if he numbers each one of the billions and billions of stars, these inanimate objects, how much more does he know you and show his love for you and his sovereign purposes in every area of your life. So just think, yes, the God who heals and then think of the God who's sovereign and his sovereign love, that sovereignty of God is such a great comfort. God, you know, particularly when you do face times of unexpected affliction, you know, when your plans are derailed, unexpected courses of events, continue to trust in God and his sovereign purposes. Trust him, yes, trust him in the valleys as well as the heights. So accede to his purposes for you in all things. And certainly again, scripture has come very much to the fore in the last few weeks, even Proverbs 19, 21, many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand, that will prevail.

[22 : 28] Times will come, times will come. God's purposes for you will take unexpected turns, but remember that all under the sovereign control of God, the Lord of the star fields, the Lord of your life.

You who know him as Lord and Saviour, you're never outside of his care and his keeping. Surely that's cause enough to praise him this morning. So we've been thinking of the healing love of God, we've been thinking of the sovereign love of God, and finally, this really captures everything, the great love of God.

Verse 5, great is our Lord and abundant in power, his understanding is beyond measure. Then verse 6, the Lord lifts up the humble, he casts the wicked to the ground.

The Lord who heals, the Lord who's sovereign, the Lord is our great God, great in who he is, great in his love to you.

But it's not a greatness that's, you know, some kind of distant monarch or some kind of indifferent ruler. No, God is great in himself, in and of himself.

[23 : 43] As we've said, he's the eternal God, he's maker of heaven and earth. And his greatness is seen, not just in his lordship over creation, but his greatness is seen, as we're told here, even in reaching down to the humble.

And you'll notice those of you who have footnotes in your Bible, the word humble there can also mean afflicted. And God reaches down to the humble, the afflicted, the poor, the needy.

The great love of God extends to seek and to save and to rescue the afflicted. You know, when you look at verse 5 again, just meditate on, we might say, this triple emphasis of his love and power.

He's abundant in power and understanding and it's beyond measure. This triple emphasis of God's greatness. Again, just meditate, just focus on these words.

And as you do so, praise him, give him the glory. I know that at all times, even in times of difficulty, that our great God is not remote, he's with us, he's with you.

[24 : 50] He's not distant from you. He's not indifferent to your needs. But one of those who reject the authority, of God, well, as verse 6 tells us, in fact, if you look at verse 6, notice there's action going on here, there's motion.

The Lord lifts up the humble, he casts the wicked to the ground. Lifting up the humble, casting down the wicked. What are we seeing here?

We're seeing, yes, we're seeing the active love of God towards those who are his. We're seeing the righteous anger of God against those who are opposed to his reign. As we say in verse 6, the original word for humble can also be used for the afflicted.

Now, I think that's appropriate because in the case of those who'd returned from exile, they'd been afflicted in exile, they'd been taken from their homeland, they'd been taken from Jerusalem, the temple had been destroyed, ruined.

Now, they're returning as those whom God had lifted up, lifted up out of their affliction to return to Jerusalem. But at the same time, those who are opposed to God and his rule, God would punish.

[26 : 04] And you see this metaphor here of casting down, it's indicative of God's active punishment against those who are faithless, who show no faith in the living God. So, to close this morning, I ask you, do you know this God?

Do you know the God who's willing to raise you up and give you new life in Christ? Well, you think of the Lord Jesus, he was lifted up. He was lifted up for you on the cross, so that you might be lifted up to newness of life, life in him.

To the one who is lifted up for you. Or are you going to reject him? Are you going to reject the God who heals? Are you going to reject the God of love?

Are you going to reject the sovereign Lord of the universe? Will you reject him and you forfeit that healing that you truly need for your eternal welfare, the welfare of your soul?

When a person needs physical healing, he seeks relief through those who can heal and doesn't hesitate. So why is there anyone here this morning who's still refusing to come to the great physician who truly can and promises to heal you of all your sickness and disease, your spiritual sickness and disease?

[27 : 29] You turn to him and you know that healing of your soul. You'll know that love that never lets you go. You'll know that God is good.

You'll know that he's the eternal God, the great God who bids you come to him to know him as Lord and Saviour. And you come to him in faith. He's not going to turn you away.

So you can truly with God's people praise the Lord, praise him who heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds.

Amen. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God, what wonder we see in these words of truth. You heal the broken hearted, that you bind up their wounds.

Lord, may that healing act of grace continue, even in this congregation. May there be a binding up of wounds even this day. May there be rejoicing in heaven for one sinner who repents.

[28 : 32] Lord, hear us as we continue to worship you now. Forgive anything that's been said amiss from this pulpit. Forgive our sins, we pray, even in holy things.

We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we've read from the psalm, now let's sing from it.

It was the original intention of the writing of the psalm. So Psalm 147 on page 192, and we're going to sing from the beginning down to verse 6, the tune is credited.

Oh, praise the Lord, how good it is to sing him songs of praise, how pleasant to give thanks to him for all his gracious ways. 1 to 6, Psalm 147, to God's praise.

Amen. quze for going – Amen.

[30 : 40] Amen. Amen.