

Bad Blood

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[0 : 00] Didn't they do a wonderful job? That's the band that I'm calling the Freestone Trio. I thought you guys did a great job. Let's give them another clap. Yes. Now, the song that they sang is by Taylor Swift.

It's called Bad Blood, and it came out a couple of years ago, and it's all about a relationship breaking down. We've got bad blood.

There is conflict between us. It used to be mad love, which is often how I describe my relationship with my wife, but we've got problems, and I don't think that we can solve them.

You have hit me where I am weak. Now, this is a very common type of song for Taylor Swift, if you've followed her career at all. She has relationships that start and end, and she writes half a dozen songs about them.

She's got whole albums dedicated to her relationships. But this song is all about the pain of a relationship not being where it should be, and the longing for that relationship to be healthy.

[1 : 03] I've felt that pain before, longing to be closer to friends that we've moved away from, longing to be better friends. And the psalm that John read for us, Psalm 103, shares these same pains, these same emotions.

It was written by King David. He lived 1,000 years before Jesus, which is roughly 3,000 years ago, and he experienced similar feelings of pain.

It appears that in this psalm, David is feeling distant from God, and he wants to be closer to him.

And so David rebukes and corrects himself about how he feels, and he brings his whole self to praise God by remembering what he has done and what God continues to do.

Over the next three weeks, in this series called Heart Songs, my desire is that we would get to know the psalms, so that these songs in the Bible, these psalms would become like the cry of our hearts, so that we would become like a water balloon that when it's pricked, water pours out.

But when we experience pain and joy, the psalms would pour out of us. The psalms are really wonderful. It's a really wonderful part of the Old Testament.

[2 : 21] It's a part of the Bible that we, as a staff team, look at every week. We use this devotion on the psalms. It's called My Rock, My Refuge.

And because it is so valuable, spending time in the psalms, I would like someone to have this. Who would like this? It's not a...

If anybody would like this book... Here you go, come and get it. Here you go. Let's give her a clap. Here you go, Hedy. Not a problem.

Now, I have more of those to give away. If you're watching online right now, and you would like a copy of that so you can get into the psalms, send me an email, james.barnett at stpauls.org.au and I will get you a copy.

It is so valuable, the psalms. They're really wonderful. And Jesus, he's a great example for us of someone using the psalms. When he was on the cross, he cried out with the words of Psalm 22 to convey the depths of his anguish.

[3 : 22] Psalm 41 gives him words to express his pain when his friends desert him. He commits his spirit into God's hands with words from Psalm 31 and he drinks the cup of wrath, which is from Psalm 75.

Jesus' whole life is immersed with the psalms and when suffering and pain and grief come, it shows his view of God. My desire is for us as a church to know these psalms, to know these heart songs of the Bible because they beat with the pain of everyday life with guilt and joy and satisfaction and fear and life with God.

So we're going to spend three weeks looking at three emotions, three feelings that these songs resonate with. First of all today, the feeling of being distant from God, the feeling of being tempted, and then finally joy.

And so today, as we learn a new song, Psalm 103, David is going to model what it's like to feel distant from God and then to see how amazing it is to meditate on God and all that he has done for us.

So please pray with me as we jump into Psalm 103. God, thank you that we can talk to you today, that you have done everything possible so that we can have relationship with you.

[4 : 53] Remind us of your goodness today, please, Lord. Amen. Please have your Bibles open, have your St. Paul's app open. You can be taking notes in that and following along in the Bible.

We're in Psalm 103 today. Verse 1. Praise the Lord, my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits. It's as if David is feeling distant, and so he rebukes himself and brings all of who he is before God.

He reminds himself to praise God, to speak words of thanks and to speak words of gratitude. And he's calling his whole self from his very inmost being, his secret thoughts, his hidden motives, his actions, all the way to his fingertips and his choices.

Everything that he is, he brings to God to praise his holy name because God is worth that praise. He is deserving of that praise.

[6 : 00] Rarely will we speak over the top about how great a person is. Maybe we do it at a wedding speech. I'm not sure if you've been to a wedding recently.

Weddings, you know, the groom will get up at the end of the night and, you know, he'll speak effusively. He'll speak over the top about how wonderful his bride is. I'll point to my bride as I do this.

My bride, you know, she's so radiant. She's amazing. She completes me. She makes coffee taste great again. You know, you make the stars shine. When I see you, my heart stops and my breath catches only for it to start again when you say that you love me.

But the object of David's gushing praise in this psalm is one who actually deserves them. One who actually made the stars and can stop hearts and start them again.

Our God is holy and perfect. Everything he does is good. He is wonderful and he chooses to love us. And it is, as David said, really easy to forget to praise God.

[7 : 05] We are much more likely to think that we are deserving of praise, surround ourselves with people who like to praise us. I love praise.

I love hearing how good I am. I noticed the other day how sinful I am in this way because I'd taken the clothes in off the line. You know, it was one of those rare days we've had recently which was really warm and I brought the clothes in off the line and there I am waiting for Elissa to get home so that she could come and pat me on the head and say, oh, well done, getting the clothes off the line. And I realized and went, ah, I'm just waiting for someone to come and tell me how great I am. That is just so vain. What a terrible thing. But this is a God who deserves all praise.

And David rebukes himself and says to himself, don't forget to praise God. When we live as if we are deserving of praise, we can puff ourselves up, make God smaller, and we start to drift from a close relationship of dependence where we move to one where we think that we're great and any problems in our life are God's fault.

God, why have you done this? And so David begins by rebuking himself, going back to Scripture, particularly to Genesis, remembering the God who has made all things to praise God with his inmost being because God deserves it.

[8 : 35] He is holy and so David does not want to forget that. This is the antidote to a distant heart. Meditating on who God is and all that he has done is the antidote to a distant heart.

And so David reminds himself of who this God is and why he should praise him. Verse 3, have a look. This is the God who, verse 3, forgives all your sins, heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit.

He crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. The greatest benefit here is that God forgives because there can be no relationship without him, without him forgiving us because it's our sin that stands between us.

He deals with it. He heals diseases. In the ancient world, they didn't have antibiotics. So even a little cut on the finger, if it got infected, it could spell disaster.

There was a very real need to depend upon God with health. And if anything, you know, COVID has reminded us how easily humans can be killed by diseases.

[9 : 50] And it reminds us how dependent we need to be not on our own selves and our medical capacity, but on the God who makes all things. Living into a long life was seen as a blessing from God and a reason to praise God.

And so it's, in verse 4, it's likely that when David mentions life being redeemed from the pit, he's talking about a physical ailment. God has saved him from death's door.

He's pulled him up from the grave. And so he should be saved. But he doesn't just pull him up from the grave. He doesn't just pull him up from death and despair. But David reflects on God crowning him with life.

Crowning him. And it's such a wonderful picture of God's love and compassion. compassion.

Crowns you with love and compassion. It's this outward sign for all to see.

The crown on the head of love and compassion. It's the wedding ring sign that says, I have love and compassion for my wife. David rejoices in God's love and compassion.

[10 : 58] He is forgiven. He is lifted up. And so David has started to change his experience of feeling distant by reminding himself of who God is.

Of how good he has been to him personally. And he moves from thinking about just himself to meditating on all that God has done for Israel. And so David calls on all of Israel to praise God. Verse 9, David speaks of God's love for Israel. He will not always accuse. He will not harbor his anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve, nor repay us according to our iniquities. He doesn't harbor anger. He forgives. He doesn't hold grudges. And so he doesn't treat his people like they deserve. But, verse 11, his love.

As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the, which way is east?

[12 : 01] That way? Is that east? As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. This is a wonderful piece of poetry, brothers and sisters.

His love is boundless and our sin is gone. And like a father, he has compassion on us.

David goes from these wild, unimaginable things, as high as the heaven is above the earth, so great is his love for us. As far as the east is from the west, he has removed our transgressions.

These big images, David goes from these really grand images of God's love and compassion to something very small and intimate. Verse 13, as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

A dad caring for his kids. My soul, don't forget this God who is so close. He is not just the God who removes our sin.

[13 : 08] He is not just the God who loves us with unimaginable love. He is also close and intimate. I was watching Micah, my youngest son, in the backyard the other day.

He loves to follow bugs. And he'd found a slug that he'd named John John. He names everything John John. But he'd found this slug and he was following it around until he unfortunately squashed it.

Which is the way of three-year-olds. And it made me reflect on how tiny and insignificant we could be to God.

But to God we are significant. He chose us. He chose to make us. He doesn't just follow us around until we're accidentally squashed and then he goes on with the rest of his day and finds a new bug and gives it the same name.

God has chosen us and he loves us and he does watch us but we are also precious to him that he wouldn't just accidentally squash us but instead die on a cross for us.

[14 : 18] David is on a journey of reminding himself of God's goodness to him. He's rebuked his soul for forgetting God's goodness. He's dwelt on his unimaginable his unlikely love and compassion for him and he has been building in his praise to these last verses where he lets out this repetition of praise for all the earth.

Verse 20 Praise the Lord you his angels you mighty ones who do his bidding who obey his words praise the Lord all his heavenly hosts you his servants who do his will praise the Lord all his works everyone in his dominion praise the Lord my soul he calls on the angels who hear God's voice to

praise the Lord all the world everywhere praise God it's like David is on the top of a mountain calling on everything there is in heaven and earth everything should praise God and then finally he closes this psalm with the first line he's gone from the top of a mountain shouting to whispering a prayer in his bedroom praise the Lord my soul he started small he built remembering all of God's goodness to him and to all of Israel throughout history and he is exploded in praise and closes praise the Lord my soul this prayer is worldview shaping David appears to have been feeling distant and he's rebuking himself for forgetting God and so he reminds himself from scripture about God's size and his own smallness God is at the center of the universe he reigns and yet he is also close and loving and compassionate he cares for all his people he forgives because he's the only one that can as the king he knows us intimately because he was there from everlasting to everlasting and he knows us the process of meditating on God's goodness has changed David's experience there'll be a graph that comes up on the screen that can summarize what David has done David we'll start at the bottom it's not the greatest graph I'm sorry about my terrible design skills David started with an experience of feeling distant and so it's driven him to scripture he's meditated particularly in Genesis on God's creation and all his goodness he has reminded himself of who God is and then that has formed his theology David has gotten his view of who God is from scripture and then he has formed his theology his view of God God is compassionate and loving and kind and close like a father and then that will shape his experience the most important thing here for us is that two of these are fallible and one is infallible scripture is infallible it is inerrant it is true our experiences are not always true we can experience something and then remember it incorrectly later we we can form a view of God which isn't 100% accurate all of us have a view of who God is which needs to continually be shaped by scripture because that is how he has revealed himself David has sent him back to scripture to build his theology of a view of who God is and that will shape his future experience David felt distant he has reminded himself that God is close and then later on David can say God I know you love me I know you were close and I know you forgive me can you imagine if David had done this the other way around if we can go to the next slide imagine if he started in this experience of feeling distant and he let his experience shape his theology well I'm feeling distant from God I don't feel that God loves me I haven't seen

[18:57] God loving me lately actually life is really hard for me and for David King David you go and read about King David life was hard for him a lot of the time God I feel distant I don't feel like you are close so from his experience imagine if he shaped his theology therefore God is a distant God God is not a caring God so you must not be a good and compassionate God and then when he reads scripture and reads that God is a compassionate close father who loves his experience which has built his theology doesn't match with scripture and what does he do he could easily push scripture away because it doesn't line up with his view of God imagine if we did this we can fall into this same trap we can feel plagued by our own sin God you haven't satisfied everything in my life God I'm still struggling I'm suffering

God where are you why aren't you helping me and these things can build our view of God it can be true of tradition we can get so used to praising God in particular ways we can substitute the word tradition for experience we can say because this is how I like to praise God this is the way I must do it instead we need to make sure that scripture the only infallible inerrant one is the one that shapes our view of God and then that shapes our experiences that is what builds our view of who God is thanks you can take that one down now we need David's reminder here that we don't view our we don't form our view of God from the world around us we don't form our view of God from our experiences or our preferred way of doing things but as David has said don't forget God and who God is and as David did went back to God's word the scriptures build his theology of him from that this is where we read the Bible where we read who God is where God reveals himself and he reveals himself fully to us in Jesus in Jesus theology takes human form we see what it would cost for God to have forgiveness and grace and to have the closeness that David described in Jesus we see a larger picture of God as father and we see God's compassion even on his enemies that he makes his children for David he meditated on all that he knew that God had done and if we know this psalm and we take this psalm and we meditate on it we have a much bigger picture of who God is because of Jesus Jesus reveals who God our father is and we can know more of who he is and what he is like because of Jesus so when we read this psalm as people who know who Jesus

is it gives it so much more depth and context God let's let's have a look at the first five verses through the lens of Jesus again verse one praise the Lord my soul all my inmost being praise his holy name we now have a picture of what it looks like to be holy in the perfect Jesus who never sinned and who always obeyed his father verse three he forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases God forgives and that's only possible because of Jesus no sacrifice is as great as Jesus on the cross who enables us to be forgiven we don't need to fear disease or illness or even death because

Jesus has defeated it verse four he redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion Jesus himself entered that pit so that we could be raised from it he was crowned with thorns so that we could be crowned with the title child of God verse five he satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles God satisfies us with his love with his forgiveness he brings us into his family he gives us a church family and nothing compares to what God has given us imagine what would happen if we just had these first five verses in our hearts to remember that when we are feeling distant from God like David was that these poured out when we felt distant from pain or suffering struggling with sin or just the busyness of mundane life wondering [24 : 07] God where are you to meditate like David and to call ourselves to praise God Alyssa and I we grew up in Wollongong and so we don't see our oldest friends very often these days but when we do we have such a close connection because of our shared history we often spend time reminiscing old stories old jokes come up and very quickly the friendship is restored relationships can be picked up where they let off God has known us from everlasting to everlasting as David has reminded us we can spend time meditating on all of our shared history with God all of the wonderful blessings that he has given to us in Jesus and when we do it helps us to say God I know you are loving and compassionate help me to see that you have promised to love me you have shown me that

Jesus is the ultimate expression of love remind me of that and help me to see that let's pray heavenly heavenly father you have come close to us in Jesus and you are still with us today in all of the joys and griefs and pains that we experience Lord help those experiences not be the way that we know you because you have revealed yourself to us in your word continue to speak to us through your word father send us back to it particularly the psalms so that these would be the cry of our heart to remember that you are loving and compassionate and close each day amen