

God Remembers we are Dust

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him, for he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust.

This morning, in Genesis chapter 3, we looked at some aspects of our fall, as it's usually called, aspects of our becoming sinners and something of what's involved in that.

And we saw particularly that we find there in chapter 3 of Genesis, God's declaration that we would return to the dust.

In other words, that we would die in consequence of our sin against him. But we ended this morning on the note that we also have in Genesis 3, on the note of salvation, where God indicated in his words to the serpent that he would put enmity between the serpent's seed, the seed of evil or of sinfulness or of Satan, and the seed of the woman.

And that the seed of the woman, the descendant of the woman, that is especially Jesus Christ himself, of course, would come and crush the serpent's head.

[1 : 23] And that is one of the primary reasons that Jesus came into the world, as we find described in the likes of Hebrews chapter 10, Hebrews 10, chapter 2, verse 10, that by death, Christ might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

So we're picking that theme up this evening as we continue with this series on remembering or the use of the word remember or remembering in the scriptures.

Here we find here in verse 14 that God knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. And if you take with you something of what we saw this morning, or the contents there of chapter 3 of Genesis, in regard to our death, in regard to the consequences of our sin, here we are told that God remembers that we are dust.

Now what's the relation between verses 13 and 14 here? It seems that it's best taken, as we'll take it this evening, that what you find in verse 13 flows from what you find in verse 14.

In other words, it's God's knowledge of us, God taking account of what we are in our fallenness, in our dustiness, if you like, that as he does that, so he pities us, and in his pity and compassion with us, makes provision for us in our need, as dust, as fallen, sinful human beings.

[2 : 55] So we'll first of all deal with God's knowledge of our condition. As you find that in verse 14, he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust. And then secondly, we'll look at God's exercise of compassion, something that accompanies or flows from that knowledge that he has of us.

Where in verse 13, it's as a father shows pity or compassion to his children, so the Lord shows pity to those who fear him. For he knows our frame.

God's knowledge of our condition, he knows our frame. Or you could translate it, he knows how we have been formed, because that's the word that's really used there. Same as the word you find back in Genesis chapter 2, verse 7.

Remember we went through Genesis 1 and something of Genesis 2, looking at our creation, before we look today at our fall in Genesis 3. Two things are so important to keep together.

We were formed by God, not just created by the word of his power. He took of the dust of the ground, and from the dust of the ground, he formed us into what we came to be.

[4 : 01] And then he breathed into us the breath of life, that spiritual side of our being that originates with God's own breath, and God imparting to us what is unique to humanity, to human beings, compared to all other animate life in the creation.

So we are actually made from the dust. He knows our frame. He knows how we came to be formed. And we're not going to go in again into all the implications of forming, of the workmanship, the craftsmanship that went into that.

This is simply tonight just looking at it as a fact. God knows our frame. He knows how we came to be what we are as human beings. But he also knows that now, as dust, we are fallen dust. We are the dust that is sinful. We are the dust that is very different to the way God created us. But he knows that. He recognizes that.

He has perfect knowledge of that. He knows how we have come to be made. And one of the things that that reminds us of as we think of what our constituent parts bodily are, that we were formed from the dust in regard to our bodies, well, that should make us instantly humble in the presence of God, shouldn't it?

[5 : 26] To realize that we have an affinity with the ground, not just in the sense in which we return to the ground in our being buried, in our bodies being buried, but an affinity to the ground in terms of what our body originated from.

We were made from the dust. And you may remember when Abraham, in Genesis chapter 8, pleaded for Sodom, that wicked city of Sodom, where he went through various reasonings with God in his urgency and in his passionate prayer for Sodom, that even if there were a number of few, a very few righteous people there, that the Lord would spare it.

But in one place in verse 27, this is how he put it, where he said to the Lord, Now, Lord, I have taken it upon me, who am but dust and ashes, to plead thus with God.

Supposing we had never sinned, we are still dust and ashes compared to God. And when we come to take account of our sin and our sinfulness, all the more should we appear and be and exercise humility in the presence of God.

We are dust and ashes. We are made and formed from the dust of the ground. And to dust we have to return in our death. Who are we that should be proud in the presence of God?

[6 : 56] Who are we that should make demands of ourselves in the presence of God? Who are we that think we are something in the presence of God? God, although, of course, we have to be careful in saying that.

Because if we weren't significant in God's sight, he would never have sent his son to take of the dust of the earth, our human nature, and take it to himself.

And Psalm 8 that we sang together is not talking about the insignificance of man. It's the very opposite. What is man that you are mindful of him? You placed him above the work of your hand. You gave him such dignity and such stature and such status as you created him. That's the argument of the psalmist. It's not really saying, Lord, we are nothing whatsoever.

We're saying, the psalmist is saying, Lord, you made us significant. You made us significant to yourself. And even though now we are sinful, yet we have such significance in regard to your pity and your compassion that you sent your son to take our nature and to die for us.

[8 : 01] So here he is saying, he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. But that word knowing is important. Because the knowledge of God is a perfect knowledge, a knowledge that takes account of how we were formed, that what our constituent parts are.

I remember as a young boy wondering at my father's knowledge of putting together what turned out to be a large, it looked to me absolutely immense at the time because I was a young boy, a large diesel engine, a marine engine that you would put in a boat.

And he got various parts of that engine from different places. I don't know where he got it. He had the basis of it. He had the block. He had some other parts. But he then kept getting all of these other parts that fitted this engine.

And he kept putting it together until eventually all that was needed was a fuel tank, which he got and stuck on the wall. And with a copper pipe, I remember it so well, attaching that to the engine. And then as he got it going, one day he invited me into the barn.

And I remember it well, the fear of that thing thundering once it started up and throbbing and thundering on the floor of the barn as it came to life.

[9 : 20] And what was really amazing to me is how did my father know how all of these parts fitted together? How did he know how to put them together so that it ended up with this wonderful working engine?

And that's really something of an illustration, if you like, of what the psalmist is saying here about God knowing our frame and remembering that we are dust.

He knows how we were put together. He knows the constituent parts, not just of our body, but also of our souls. He knows how our conscience came to be formed, how our mind came to be formed.

He knows not just our brain, which is a physical organ, but he knows our spiritual heart. He gave us the breath of life. And in the breath of life, you have those spiritual faculties of our soul that the Bible speaks about, our understanding, our intelligence, our conscience, our emotions.

They are all God created. And he knows our frame in the knowledge that he has of how all of that came into being, but also how all of that was fitted together so perfectly to form the first perfect human beings that he created and placed in Eden.

[10:39] It was staggering this week just to hear about what we know as cryogenics, as it's called.

You've probably heard the story, the account of this on the news. A young girl of 14 who very sadly died of cancer just a few months back, and she had applied to the court for the court to bring out an order in regard to her body that her body would be preserved in liquid nitrogen.

And there's a company in America, or maybe more than one country, that does this sort of thing, so that's where her body was sent. She won the court case. She had died herself, but she had applied to the court before she died.

And despite opposition from one of her parents at least, this is what the court decided. And the reason she gave was that she did not want to be buried in the ground.

Who knows, she said, but maybe in 100 or 200 years' time, they might have discovered a cure for this cancer, and I might be brought to life and live for many years.

[11:52] Now, doesn't that tell you the depth of ignorance that has come about in human thinking? Because there's nothing more in that sort of thought and that sort of conclusion and that sort of view of a human being.

There's nothing more to that human being in that sort of understanding but physicalities. There's no word about the fact that death is not just the ending of bodily life, that death is the separation of our soul from our body, that death essentially is separation from God.

And however much you can preserve, as may be a human body for centuries, to bring a body back to life, you need the reconnection of soul and body in the way that only God can do.

How different it is when you understand something of what the psalmist is saying here. He knows our frame. He remembers we are dust.

He knows how I've been put together. He knows the constituent parts of me. And tonight that's a huge comfort to us all, isn't it? We know our failures.

[13:12] We know how our faculties are prone to fail. We know the limitations of our faculties. We know the limitations that apply to our body as well as to our thoughts and to our deliberations and our conclusions.

And we know that whatever imperfections or impairments we may at times be born with, our great consolation is that God remembers all of these himself.

that they are within his remembrance, within his regard, within his compassion, and the reach of his grace.

And you see that in the psalm that we sang, in Psalm 139, where you find in such wonderfully beautiful words, the psalmist describing his creation by God in the womb.

And even prior to that, before he was formed in the womb, that God knew his shape and his frame and his life and his future and all the events of his life. My frame, he says, using this word in verse 15, my frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

[14:38] Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book, they were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

And what does he then say? How precious to me are your thoughts, O Lord. They're not the psalmist's thoughts for God that he's talking about there. What he's saying is essentially the same as Psalm 103.

How precious, O Lord, to me is your remembrance of me. A remembrance that reaches past even to the time before I was born. You had me in mind even then, is what he's saying.

And what a great difference there is between that and evolutionary theories of our development as human beings.

Because if you take this out of the picture altogether and out of the account, if you take God out of it, if you take our being created by him and formed out of it, if you take his remembrance of us out, if you take all of that out of it, what are you left with?

[15 : 46] Where is the purpose of human life? Where is meaningfulness to human life? What gives meaningfulness to your life? What gives purpose to your life? It's not your own ability.

It's not your intellectual capacities. It's not your creativity. Though they are all aspects of our being created in the image of God. What gives meaning to our life is that we are the product of divine creation.

That we have been made by God and for God. That he has had a purpose in forming us. And that follows through into his remembering of us that we are dust.

And in that remembering, he remembers us, as we said, not just as created, but also as fallen. Isn't that very precious to yourself this evening?

As you come to express your fallenness and realize your fallenness and accept the teaching of the word of God in regard to our sinfulness, and all that our sinfulness is described as in the Bible, that you can come to a God who understands, not just knows it in a cold and calculating and distant sort of way, but knows it as we'll see from the point of view of one who wants salvation for you.

[17 : 11] And a return to friendship with himself and companionship with himself. He knows that we are dust, that we are sinful.

What is dust? You see the dust on the ground, summertime especially. The ground is somewhat dry. If it's been a while since it's rained, along comes a breath of wind.

What happens to the dust? It gets blown away. You can see it blowing in the wind. It's that light. It's that small. It's that insignificant compared to the wind that blows it around.

Yet here is God saying, I know that you are dust, but I remember you. I know your dustiness. I appreciate it.

I put it together. And even now as sinful, I still know everything about you. I know how you function. I know what you need. I know what the burden of your heart is.

[18 : 15] I know what causes you anxiety. I know how I can actually meet it. I know how you have done it. Because I have taken the dust to myself. And the he is actually quite emphatic in our text there this evening.

For he knows our frame. And really that brings before us with some power and force the fact that he knows as nobody else knows. Who else can possibly handle our human circumstances, our human needs, our human relationships, relationships, our dustiness, our fallenness, who can actually know that the way he knows it?

There is nothing whatsoever in all existence that can take what you are as a human being and deal with it in a way that is commensurate with your need. He knows. When you look around the universe and ask, where do I find someone or something or some power or some person that can understand me where I really am? He knows. Have you and I made use of that? Have you come to him in such a way as has confessed, Lord, I'm a miserable sinner. I'm a hell-deserving sinner. I've rebelled against you. I'm not worthy that you should consider me. But Lord, I know you remember me.

I know you have regard for me. I know the knowledge you have of my frame because you are my creator. You are the savior of my person. Is that our relationship with God tonight? Have we who are but dust and ashes? Come to take it upon ourselves as God invites us? To speak to God, to pray to God, to ask God's acceptance and forgiveness. God's knowledge of our condition is unrivaled, unparalleled and unexampled. Only he knows and only he can provide. And you remember the words that Jesus asked of the disciples when many of those who had been following him were going away into the distance.

He turned to the twelve disciples and said, do you want to go away also? Are you going to leave me as well? And Peter, as he often did, speaking for the rest, and this time speaking with such meaning and purpose and conviction, said, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. In other words, he was really pretty much saying the same thing essentially as the psalm is, to whom shall we go, Lord? To whom else can we go?

[21 : 18] Who else knows us the way you know us? Who else provides for our needs the way you provide for our needs? God's knowledge of our condition. And secondly, you find God's exercise of compassion or of pity.

As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him, for he knows our free. A compassion that accompanies the knowledge that he has of us, or from the knowledge, this pity, this compassion. And the word actually means more than just

compassion.

It's the compassion that has built into it a wonderful affection. It's the compassion of a father. The compassion that has affection for the child.

The compassion that knows the child, and knows the child's needs, and knows the child's limitations, and out of that knowledge of the child and what that child is, compassion flows towards that child from the father.

It's a compassionate affection, and an affectionate compassion. Now, we're very much aware that, sadly, many children in our society, and throughout the world nowadays regard the word father with dread.

[22 : 40] Abuse of fathers. Fathers are very different to the ideal of fatherhood that the Bible sets before us. We recognize that. It was difficult, even when I was running camps.

At times, if you came sometimes to deal with the way the Bible speaks about God as our father, father, you very soon realized that there were some children there who were from broken homes or abused homes where they would really look at you askance as if to say, you're joking.

Fatherhood isn't a good thing. But, of course, that's the abuse that they experience. That's the breakdown from what proper fatherhood should be and is.

And you take your cue as a father tonight, and I as a father tonight, you take your cue from the fatherhood of God. And as you find described God's care of his people in so many different ways throughout the Scripture, what you're really brought to consider and drawn towards is the sheer quality and perfection of the fatherhood of God, of God's fatherly care of his people.

As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. Because there is no father like God, our Father. There is no fatherhood like God's fatherhood.

[23 : 58] There is no compassion like the compassion of the fatherhood of God. There is nowhere else a father as the Father who exists in heaven for his people. There is no Bible.

There is a great passage in Hosea, chapter 11. And speaks about Israel being a child and God saying through Hosea, when Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son it was I who taught Ephraim to walk I took them up by the arms but they did not know that I healed them I led them with cords of kindness with the bands of love and I bent down to them and fed them. There you see is the fatherhood of God dealing with Israel finding Israel as a child that he was adopting for himself taking Israel out of Egypt in an adopting fashion making that Israel his own special precious child I taught them he says how to walk. I loved them. I drew them to myself. There's a picture of a father bending down over a child that's just beginning to learn how to walk I led them he says. I stretched out my hands to them just as you see a parent when a child begins to toddle and take the first steps the father or the mother encourages them but not only encourages them but has their arms ready so that when they do topple over and collapse they're there to catch them. That's he says how I was to you O Israel and you know that passage is a passage in which he condemns Israel's disobedience and backsliding and Israel being so untrue to their spiritual father it's a point for us to bear in mind that if we are ever untrue to God as sometimes we are we are being untrue to fatherly love we are being untrue to this father to this pity to this compassion and every time you find in your heart and I find in my own heart the strain that we know we're prone to and that we have to confess we have to look at it in those terms we have to put to ourselves how can you do this to your father how can you do this against such grace and love and compassion as he has shown you how can you run away or depart from those outstretched arms that taught you how to walk that took you out of bondage that forgave your sins that gave you a new purpose in life my friends let's look at it in these terms let's look at our straying and our sin and our wonderings and our disobedience let's look at it personally

I as much as anyone else in these terms he knows our frame he remembers we are dust and as our father shows compassion so the Lord shows compassion towards us and there's nothing will melt your heart tonight like knowing the compassion of God like realizing that for the likes of me and for the likes of you God has acted as a father instead of us a rigid judge our father who art in heaven as Jesus taught his disciples to pray hallowed be your name the Lord pities in the exercise of compassion how different that is to the kind of descriptions you find of God commonly sadly in our own day all too often and it seems increasingly that God especially the God you find in the Old Testament is just a cruel tyrant he leaves people in the world that could be rescued why doesn't he rescue them he leaves people to die of hunger why doesn't he give them food all of these sort of arguments and the conclusion all too quickly and without much further study difficult though these

subjects undoubtedly are that if God exists then he doesn't care should break our heart that people think that way about God the God who as a father pities his children shows compassion to those who fear him and that's important those who fear him are mentioned it's to those who fear him particularly that the

Lord shows that pity that compassion because this fatherly care and compassion is to his own family it is to his own children to those who fear him as they're described who are those who fear him what is the fear of God it's not being in the presence of God terrified of him as some children sadly are terrified of an abusive father the word fear here used in the Bible so frequently as the fear of God far from it being terror and being utterly frightened it means respect and honor and a delight in pleasing him and bringing him praise and bringing him glory that's what the fear of God is about and you show it in obedience to his commands as you see verse 18 those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments and that's love responding to love we don't keep the commandments of God just out of a rigid kind of approach to them that says well I must do it so I better do it we keep his commandments because we love him we love his ways and we love his fatherliness and we love his care and we appreciate his care and so we keep his commandments and we seek to apply ourselves obediently to all that he has come to be and come to show us and require of us do you know God tonight as your father do you pray to him as a father do you know his fatherly care and compassion in your life have you come to

[30 : 38] Jesus in such a way that he introduces you to God the father that's what faith in Jesus does when you come to believe and trust in Jesus which is what believing in Jesus essentially is then it's effectively Jesus saying to you come and I'll introduce you to father because then you come to know God in his loving care in his pity in his compassion to those who fear him and you come to appreciate and be thankful and praise him for the knowledge that he has that you are dust God's knowledge of a condition God's exercise of compassion and his pity towards those who fear him but let's finish with this thought what about the future what about eternity if we know him as our father in this life and as he deals with us in care is that going to go on into the future what happens at the end of life in this world what happens when we come to meet with

God in eternity well revelation chapter 21 verse 4 is a wonderful description in a very human way and remember that we can only really appreciate God and God's dealings with us by as the Bible itself does by coming to view them in human language and in human items that we can follow and understand this is what it says I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth that passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for a husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away to what extent does

God remember that we are dust to the extent even of wiping away everything that causes our pain there is a magnificent picture there for you just think of revelation as that great book which has an account of this immense contest between the spiritual powers of darkness and Jesus and his followers the lamb and his followers the immensity of that God who will come as revelation shows to show his dominion over all things including Satan and the forces of darkness the immensity of that God what's he doing he is with his finger as it were just wiping away the tears of his people as he welcomes them into the peace of eternity he most of us have seen and experienced for ourselves as children what it is when we have a nightmare your child wakes up in the middle of the night screaming or crying shaking with fright what does the parent do the father of the mother they come into the room they clasp the child and say it's all right it's just a dream and then what you take your fingers and your thumbs or whatever and you just wipe the tears of their eyes as they settle down and go back to sleep and that's essentially what God is saying he remembers that we are dust he wipes our eyes from tears many times in this life with his comfort but the time is coming when that is going to be our eternal peace and when that final wiping of tears from our eyes will be his welcome into the peace of heaven as a father pities his children so the

Lord pities those who fear him for he remembers that we are dust oh the greatness of our God let's pray Lord our God we find it so difficult to find words that adequately would convey the beauty of your fatherhood the wonder that you deal with us as you do in your compassion and pity that you do not mark our iniquity against us forever that you exercise forbearance and compassion and

steadfast love to your people Lord teach us to fear you teach us to adore you for all that you are and teach us to give you thanks daily and to commend you to our fellow human beings as the God who cares the God whose grace reaches the very depth of our need the God whose provision has taken account of every aspect of it so receive our thanks here this evening and cleanse us from all our sin for Christ's sake

Amen Now we'll sing in conclusion Psalm number 103 these verses that we've been considering this evening Psalm 103 in the Scottish Psalter page 370 the tune this time is Free Church singing verses 13 to 17 Such pity as a father hath unto his children dear like pity shows the Lord to such as worship him in fear that's page 370 Psalm 103 these verses verses 13 to 17 to God's praise such pity as a father hath hath soul to hisken

[37 : 43] For he remembers, sweetheart, us, and the earth will lose.

Brail the skies are like a grass, as the wind field he grows.

For over in the wind doth pass, and yet the wind is gone.

And all the place where once it was, it shall no more be known.

But unto them, unto them fear, cause mercy never ends.

[39 : 11] And to their children's children still, his righteousness extends.

I'll go to the main door after the benediction this evening. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore.

Amen.