

When God causes you to find Him

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[0 : 0 0] to Psalm 105. As you're making your way there to Psalm 105, it is a lengthy psalm. We're going to concentrate on the first eight verses, but Psalm 105 is really the retelling of basically most of the Old Testament of how God has dealt with his people, the promises that he has made, and the reason why God does everything that he does. The last verse in Psalm 105 says that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the Lord. Of course, the New Testament of this is that God writes those laws not on tablets of stone, but actually on our hearts, because the problem is always motivation, being motivated to live for God. So we're going to pick it up in verse one. We'll read to the end of verse eight of Psalm 105. Now hear God's word.

I give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wondrous works. Glory in his holy name. Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his presence continually. Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered.

The offspring of Abraham, his servant. The offspring of Abraham, his servant. Children of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the Lord our God. His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever.

The word that he commanded for a thousand generations. Let me pray before we sing and then come back to that word. General rule that if Psalm 105 comes after Psalm 104, that Psalm 105 follows Psalm 104. So if chapter two comes after chapter one, you know that this is a continuation of what's gone before it. Well, over the past few weeks, we've been looking at Psalm 1 three times. And then last week, we looked at Psalm 103. Psalm 104 is a continuation, but Psalm 105 picks up on some of the issues in Psalm 103. And for that reason, we ought to remember this, that when God does something, whatever it is that he does, he does it properly. And in Psalm 103, we learned that when God saves a person, he saves them properly. That when God forgives a person, he forgives the person properly. The wonderful image in Psalm 103, which you should never forget, is that forgiveness and that God chooses to remember our sins no more, and that he separates the sin from us as far as the east is from the west. And we made the point that I can go to the north pole, I can go to the south pole, but I cannot go to the east or west pole, which means that there is an ever-increasing distance. You just keep going and going and going. The point is that when God does it, he does it perfectly, he does it properly. Nothing is brought up. The whole life and relationship with

[3 : 4 6] God is one about moving forward, not about dredging up the past. It's about, right, what's done is done, okay? If some things are still wrong, they have to be sorted out. But God wants us to move forward, and he wants us especially to move forward with him. Psalm 105 is basically a psalm which is telling you why you must seek God, and why you must seek God continually. Now, this is something that not a lot of people do, and even in the church, we can fail to seek God. We think we belong to God, why seek him?

But this is a bit like being married and thinking, well, if my wife wants to speak to me, she'll speak to me. If we're to have a conversation, then it's only to come from her. That's ridiculous.

I mean, conversation involves two people, and if there's to be a conversation, then anyone can start it, and that's important. God treats us like that. He's not just saying, listen when I speak, but he's waiting there for us to speak. God doesn't just seek us, but he is waiting there for us to seek him, and that's an important part of understanding what life and relationship is like with God.

So, here's the theological principle, that God seeks us, and he enables us to seek him. Okay, that's important. I want you to remember that, that God seeks us, and then he enables us to seek him. So, if it feels like that you got there first, you know, that I'm seeking God, and I'm doing this all by

myself. No, you're not. God seeks you first, and he enables you to seek him. So, you may feel, you know, all of a sudden, I find myself seeking God more and more continually, and that's a good thing, but the encouraging thing, the real encouraging thing is, is God has enabled you to do that. So, God seeks us first, enabling us to then seek him. The fact that you're here could be an indication that you are seeking God, or it could simply be an indication that God is seeking you, enabling you to seek him, and you're not quite there yet. Psalm 105 is the call that now that you're here, and now that you understand that God is seeking you, enabling you to seek him, now seek him. Seek his presence, seek him continually. The other thing that the psalmist wants to point out here is that the whole psalm is about God's involvement in this world and in the lives of people within this world, and what that means is this, simply put, that whatever you're dealing with in life, you're always dealing with God, whether you recognize you're dealing with God or not, okay? Whatever you deal with in life, you are always dealing with God. To put this in a slightly different way, this is why David understood that when he had sinned, he had sinned against God, even though he did it towards another person. He says, against you and you only have I sinned. Well, that's not strictly true. He sinned against a whole bunch of people, but what David is pointing out is that if God is involved in everything and whatever you're dealing with in life, including sin, you're dealing with God, then he understands that this sin has to be confessed before God. So, the point of the psalms in many times is to get us to understand that God is involved with us at the deepest level possible, and he is involved with us to get us to seek him. We should also remember that when God deals with us, we should ask the question, why? Why does God do what he does? And the answer, which is a good answer, but not necessarily the one that's going to satisfy you, is because he chooses to. God does what he does for his own plans and purposes, but remember, God is good. God is loving. And therefore, whatever God has got in store, however difficult the situation may be in the present means that it does lead to an ultimate good. Now, I understand that that's not all that satisfying, okay? I understand that it's not satisfying at all. In fact, I struggle with Psalm 105 probably more than any other of the psalms. Psalm 73, I'm like the man in Psalm 73 who goes to God full of complaints, okay? And then when I get to God, I find myself saying, sorry for complaining so much, okay? And then I go away from God and get on with the day, and I find that throughout that day, my life fills up with a whole bucket full of complaints all over again, and I find myself coming back to God saying, yeah, I've only gone and done it again. I'm sorry for complaining so much. But I think that's real, and God understands that type of complexity within the lives that we live. So when God forgives, when God saves, he does it according to his own way, according to his own purposes, and he does it for your benefit. When he forgives you, he makes you right with him. When he forgives you, he doesn't bring it up again. When he forgives you, he gives you eternal life. So this means that when you're brought into relationship with him, it's not to then lose that relationship further down the line, okay? God doesn't work like that, okay? When God makes relationship with you, it is forever. Now that you understand that God does it properly, and it's forever, now seek him. This means that when you wake up in the morning, don't bypass him. When you go through the day, don't bypass, don't pretend like he's not there. Before you go to bed at night, don't go off, and you know, he is there all the time, and he is there for you to seek him. So God saves us for himself. [10:15] God saves us, he saves you, because he wants you. He wants you for himself, and because he wants you, he therefore wants everything that you have in a good relationship. And one of those things is that if he's seeking you, you ought to seek him. So here's the summary then of how the psalm unfolds.

The first thing is this, that the psalm clearly points out that God is involved in everything. All his works, all his activity on earth is very important for understand, for us to understand that God is involved in everything. We're to remember what God does, and we're to remember why he does it. It is for his own purposes. We're also to recognize, as I've already said, that whatever we're dealing with in life, we are always dealing with God. And therefore, there are two challenges that come out of this, two challenges that the psalmist puts forward for us. Those in the past lived by faith. They lived by faith in God. And the interesting thing about the rest of the psalm, as many of the others, is that it portrays a picture of difficulty.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many other people here had difficult lives with God. Now, they could have painted an easy picture that this is what life is like with God by faith and showed you the good times. But none of us really find having faith in God in the good times all that difficult. Okay? When tragedy strikes, we know that we can call out to God for help.

But how many of us feel like calling out to God for help when tragedy strikes? Not many of us. How many of us feel that when things are really bad, whether it be at home or at work, that we have the motivation or the love to turn to God? In fact, we actually do the very opposite.

When things get tough, we don't often turn to God, we often turn away. The reason for showing us these people in this psalm is because these are people who held on to their faith in God in difficult times. Because the psalmist knows, just like we know through experience, that when things get tough, it's easy just to shut down, even to pretend that it's not even happening.

[12:39] Just leave me alone, and time is the great healer. It's not, but we understand that if I don't have to, face it, then I don't have to feel it. So the idea of being able to turn to God in difficult times being easy is not easy at all. It's extremely difficult. The other thing that we're to understand is that God is not only involved with us in the difficult times, he's actually involved in the difficult situations itself. It's not just about getting us through difficult times, but it's that God is actually orchestrating or there in the background, as it were, in those difficult situations. So a lesson to be learned here is a fairly simple one, and that is don't wait for life to become calmer before you seek God. As if you're saying to yourself, let me get it sorted out all by myself. Let me sit down and work through this with my notepad and pen or whatever. And once I'm clear, once I'm calm, once I can see forward, then I'll come to God. Don't do that. That is making something difficult even more difficult. In fact, it's even prolonging the difficulty. Okay? One of the things that, one of the ways that the Bible describes depression, if you suffer with a form of spiritual depression or even a natural depression, it's the, and this is supported by Viktor Frankl, who survived the

Holocaust, who was a psychologist, an Orthodox Jew, who said that when people get depressed, the first thing that happens is they, they, it's not their past that troubles them as much as their lack of hope for the future. They, they just can't see any way forward. And so why do you think the psalmist describes himself as being down in the pit when he's depressed? Because when you're down in a pit, there's nowhere to look. You can't see forward because you're in a pit. So he's been asked to be lifted out to restore his horizon, to restore his focus, to restore the, the idea in his own mind and heart that there is a future.

But when you're in a pit, there is only one way to look up, and there's only one way to look for any kind of light at all, and that is up. And that's, that's the image that we have here. So when life becomes calmer, it'll become calmer when God restores your horizon. Okay, so don't wait for that to happen and then come to God, because it's not likely to, at least in a lasting way. Rather, come to God first and let God do what God can do. Don't try and do what only God can do. You can't do it. And it's the same, the same is true when it comes to salvation or the forgiveness of sins.

Sometimes we think we have to forgive ourselves for these whole bunch of sins before we actually come to Jesus to have our sins forgiven. As if I must forgive all of these first, or else Jesus won't be able to do it. Really?

Isn't the very reason God sent his son to do it all for us. Isn't the very reason that God sent his son is to do for us the very things that we cannot do. Now the other issue here, not just faith, is the issue of collision. What happens when you collide with God's governance over the world?

In other words, I don't like the way you're doing things. See, Abraham here collided with God's governance over the world. Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joseph, they all had plenty of opportunity to collide with God over how God was governing the world. In fact, the man in Psalm 73, that's his chief problem.

[16:34] Okay? He doesn't understand why all the wicked people out in the world have all the good music, so to speak. Okay? He doesn't understand why they have the good times, and here he is trying to keep his heart clean, trying to keep himself pure, and he... What's the point? He doesn't... He is colliding with God's governance of the world, and he's colliding to such an extent that now he's questioning what is the point of being faithful? What is the point of actually seeking God and coming to God?

And the reason why the psalmist here mentions certain people and certain events is because he's trying to explain to us that these people, just like you, collided with me. Okay? And when you collide with God, it is a head-on collision. Okay? And many of us collide with God a whole number of ways. We have things we don't understand, and we tell God we don't understand them, and then he has, we think, the indecency not to tell us. We are just colliding with God, and this, unfortunately, affects our faith.

God also knows that when he saves a person, like you, he then keeps that person in this world that causes us so many troubles. Okay? Surely it would make sense, God, to then save us and put us in a place, okay, not the barrel full of rotten apples. That doesn't make any sense at all, but then I'm not God. God has a way of saving us and then keeping us in the very place that's not even very healthy for us.

Hence, why he calls you to seek him. Hence, because there's much in this world that can take us away from him, but he keeps us here because if he saved us out of the world, and he wants other people to be saved out of the world, then that's why we're here, as an example of what God does. Okay? We are an example of what God does. We are the light on the hill. We are God's workmanship prepared and ready for the type of work that God wants to be done. As I said, God has his plans and purposes, and we think that they should revolve around us, and often we find out, and we're happy to find out later down the line, that it's better if it does actually revolve around him. So, in a world that can take us away from God, full of life problems and depression and everything else, and the fact that we just can't seem to forgive ourselves, don't worry about any of that. Rather, come to God and seek him, and if you're seeking him, then you can have the encouragement that he has first enabled you to seek him. God is already at work in your life. The reason why we're called to seek God, if you notice verse 4, and to understand that

[19:32] God's judgments are in all the earth, verse 7, and that he keeps his promises, verse 8, is so that we can be the very people that God wants us to be, and be in the very place that God wants us to be, and that is, not geographically, but actually belonging. God wants you to belong to him. That's in the middle of his plan and purposes. There you are. God wants you to belong to him. And so, just here, like many other parts of scripture, remember, remember that if you're seeking God, God is first seeking you. God is seeking you to enable you to seek him, so that you would become his people forever. God is at work.

So, here's a few things then to consider. Having faith in God is one of them, as we've briefly mentioned. Having faith in God in difficult times is where we need to measure faith. And then, secondly, colliding with God over his governance of the world. What do you do when that happens? Well, one of the first things that you do is you then find it difficult to have faith in God. The moment you collide with God over how the world is run, or how your life is run, or how your family is run, or even how the church is run, and you're colliding with God over this, it attacks your faith on a whole new level. And the way that it attacks your faith, like this, you sit back and you mentally assume the position of God. And you say to yourself, if I was God, I would do things differently. Then you go one step further and go, well, if I was God, not only would I do things differently, but this is how I would do them. And then you come back to a sense of reality and realize that you're not God. And God is doing things differently than the way you think he should do them. And this causes a crisis of faith. How can I believe in a God who doesn't do things the way I want them done?

Okay? And how many of us have been there? I think we're there all the time. Okay? Crisis of faith are caused by us thinking that we can govern the world better than God can govern it. A crisis of faith is actually nothing more than thinking we know better than God over what should happen to my life, what should happen to my family's life, what should happen to everything. That causes the crisis of faith. So it's not unusual to collide with God's governance of the world. Okay? That's not the unusual thing. Neither is it unusual for your faith to come under a serious battering because you've just had a head-on collision with God. And then you think, I can't figure this out. But what is dangerous here is to forget what God is doing. Okay? The moment Abraham decided to do things all by himself, he temporarily forgot that God had it under control. And then he goes and messes everything up, but not to the point where he messes God's plan up. He then has to live with the consequences of his own actions, but God is able to overcome that because God is not thwarted, his plans and purposes are not thwarted by people. And that's a good thing. I mean, if we could really throw a spanner in the works, then what type of God would we have? Okay? So when we collide with God, remember, we're never going to win. Okay? We're never going to win. But the collision that we have with God is, it may be head-on, but at least he braces us for impact before it happens. Okay? He takes care of us when it happens.

But the issue here is that any collision you have with God over governance attacks your faith. You find it very difficult to seek God at those points because you don't understand why God is doing things the way that he is doing them. Another point of collision may be the way that God saves

people. Many, many people collide with Jesus. Many people collide with the fact that God sent his son to die on the cross, to rise from the grave, in order for our sin to be removed from us so that God wouldn't have to judge us.

[24 : 03] That's the point of collision for a lot of people. They don't feel that their life requires that type of action. And yet here we are again, colliding with God's governance and what's actually needed and what's not needed. If God didn't require his son to die on the cross and rise from the grave, in order for our sins to be forgiven, then it wouldn't have happened. It happened because it was required. It happened because it was needed. It happened because, not just because that's the way God does things, but because that was the only way to do that. In the same way, you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. God can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. Okay? There are some things that cannot be done without other things taking place. Okay? That's order. That's purpose. That's proper things. And yet we, we want to break the laws or at least suspend the laws of how things are done properly, thinking, well, why can't it be done another way? Well, you go home and spend the whole day and try and make an omelet without breaking eggs and see how you get on. Okay? You think about as many ways you think of doing it, and I can guarantee in order to get that egg out its shell, it has to be cracked, but in some way. So we need to understand, okay, there are certain ways of doing things because there is no other way of doing those things. And when you live your life with God and you collide with the governance, that's what you're colliding with. Your lack of understanding that actually it can only be done this way. Okay? What your thing is, there must be another way.

If there was, you can guarantee God would have chosen it. So he chooses the way that he does in order to fulfill his plans and purposes. So Jesus is necessary. Jesus living the perfect life for us, dying the death for us, rising from dead the death for us, okay, was the way God planned it to be because that is what was needed. So don't collide with it, trust in it. Okay? If we collide with it and it causes a lack of faith, don't. It's not meant to be collided with, it's meant to be trusted in.

Difficult, I understand, but nevertheless, it's the very basis of faith in God. If you were to read through the backstories of the people mentioned in this psalm, the likes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joseph in particular.

If any of you know the story of Joseph, then you'll understand that he had plenty to collide with God over. Why would you do it this way? Okay? Why would you do it this way?

There's mass misinterpretation by his brothers, thinking that their brother, through the dreams that he had, was about dominion and dictatorship, and it was nothing of the sort. And God allowed the misinterpretation to happen and all of these things.

[27 : 08] Joseph, if he had any reason to collide with God, he probably had more reason than any of us. But here we have a person in the most difficult of times, okay, rejected by his family, even to the point of wanting to kill him and then selling him off into slavery.

Then he's in prison, then he's accused, and then a whole number of other things follow to the point where, you know, he's all on his own in a foreign country.

He could collide with God on all of those things. And you would think, as we would think, he has good cause for doing so. But there it is, in the end of all things, he ends up saving his family from famine.

And not just his family, but the whole families of the world in that location. God has bigger plans and purposes, and those bigger plans and purposes include you.

They don't exclude you, they include you. And I understand what it feels like to play a part. And that's what the Christian life feels like.

[28 : 15] If you feel, sat here this morning, that you are not the person you ought to be, you're absolutely right. If you're sat here this morning thinking, I'm not the person I really am, you are absolutely right.

It's the equivalent of playing, I'll use myself, but I'll put it in the feminine, one of the ugly sisters. I'm not ugly. Forget any jokes you might want to make at that point, okay?

The point is, it's a fictional story where the person is playing a part. But there'll come a day when you step out onto the red carpet as you're going to the Oscars for the performance you have played, and you don't look anything like your character, you look like you.

Okay? That's what's in store for you when Jesus returns. Okay? The part you played is over. And when Jesus returns, you will step out onto that red carpet.

And the real you, the real you that hasn't had to follow the script of God, you begin to see that God has used you in tremendous ways, but this is who you are.

[29 : 24] That's how God works. You're going to collide with it? Sure you are. Right? Because I want a different part. We all want a different part. Okay? We all want somebody else's part.

We all think that somebody else's life is easier. So the housewife thinks that the husband's life is easier because he can go out to work and escape the house and the children for the best part of the day.

But the husband looks at the children thinking, well, hang on a minute, how easy would it be to be back at school and go to school and just sit there and I can look out the window or pay attention, whatever the case may be. But the child's there thinking, man, school's an absolute bore.

I can't wait to leave it and be just like my mum. So everyone in the family thinks it's better to be like somebody else in their family or even in the church. We're all colliding all the time with God's governance of the world.

The issue is it shouldn't get in the way of having faith and following God. God has plans and purposes that we will collide with.

[30 : 24] We will collide with. Because we think we want to be someone else somewhere else and we want things differently. We want things the way we want them.

But God doesn't follow your plan. He follows his. Difficult? Yes. Perfect? Absolutely.

So as you think about God and his governance of the world, as you think about the way God saved you, the way God has forgiven you, as you think about it, it says in verse 7, that all of God's governance and judgments about everything in the world are true.

All of God's judgments are true. Remember that God sees every right and wrong. God sees every right and wrong. He sees every issue in every person. He sees every intention, every sin.

But God is also patient and forgiving. I thank God that he didn't return before I was saved. And I'm not too worried about whether Jesus returns tomorrow or the year after.

[31 : 31] My selfish self would want it to be today. Just get me out of here. But God has other people in mind that are not even born yet. Okay?

God has plans and purposes even beyond us. So every promise that God makes, then, is kept in Jesus. Abraham understood it, kind of.

Moses definitely understood it in a different kind of way. And the New Testament affirms this, that every promise God makes is yes and no and in Jesus. The promise that God made to Abraham, Abraham didn't even get to see fulfilled.

He didn't even get to experience. But that promise was fulfilled in Jesus. The promise was that Abraham would be a father of a multitude of nations, meaning that God would save different people throughout the world, and you are one of those people.

That's fulfilling the promise made to Abraham. As we conclude, then, here's a few considerations. It would have been hard for the people here to understand how God was going to do things in the future, just like it's hard for us to understand how God will do things in the future from us.

[32 : 44] It's hard for us to understand how it's easy, perhaps, for some of these people not to collide, but the truth is they didn't. They all collided with God in different ways of his governance over the world.

And so when God speaks about future justice, when he speaks about mercy, when he speaks about forgiving, when he speaks about being patient, we look at the world and think, we don't see any of these things.

And then, all over again, we're colliding with God, because we don't get to see any of the things that he promised. Well, Abraham didn't get to see any of the things that he promised.

That's because promises mature. Promises happen in time. We get to see them as we look back on them, but we don't get to see any of the promises that he has made that are going to come after us. But you shouldn't collide with that. You should have faith in a promise-keeping God. When Jesus calls you to turn to him and to have faith in him, he wants you to do it in a world where you don't look back.

[33 : 51] He wants you to do that in a world where you are to understand that God is in control of everything. Jesus, God the Father, wants you to seek him because he knows if you look at the world for too long, it's going to turn you from him.

