

## **Psalms wk 3: *Wonder Leads to Praise***

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We're in the last week in our series on the book of Psalms.

Wk 1: Psalm 77 from Asaph. Our response to challenge is thru gratitude

Wk 2: Psalm 3 from David. (Eric McCoy) Dependence leads to God's presence  
When we ask for help, God will be with us.

Ironically we haven't mentioned this yet, but one of the reasons that the Psalms read so differently than other books of the Bible is because they were quite literally songs. Psalms was in essence, the Jewish "hymnal."

And today we're going to look at another Psalm of David's, Psalm 103.

In the first two weeks, the Psalmist started out down, bummed-out, overwhelmed with life--very emotional. Why?

Songs are written by artists. Anyone know any artists?

Are they the most stable, emotional rock-like temperaments that you know?  
(Right now everyone in a relationship with an artist is now elbowing the ever-loving-Hades out of them.)

No! Generally speaking, artists are emotional.  
David was an artist: a musician and a poet (lyricist).  
So lots of Psalms are emotional: low lows and high highs.  
And too, they're emotional because LIFE is emotional.

But David apparently was having a GREAT day when he wrote Psalm 103.

Because there's no emotional roller coaster. He's *not* asking God to once again, pull him out of his dark pit of despair.

Instead, Psalm 103, from start to finish, is about PRAISE--and praise means to celebrate and lift up.

And so this is a Psalm that has a couple purposes for us:

1. It's a reminder that no matter what is going in our life, we can look at all these truths about God and find things to celebrate.

2. It's a very biblical picture of who God is and His attributes.  
And this is important for at least two reasons:

- a) If you're new to or just checking out this faith, you may be coming in having heard "mixed reviews" about God. And maybe everything you've heard isn't accurate.  
So in Psalm 103 we're going to see an accurate illustration of God.
- b) If you're in a challenging place today--challenging situations tempt us to second guess what we know of God.

"Hmm, maybe He isn't at work in all things."  
"Maybe He's not as good as I thought He was."

Tough times tempt us to twist or doubt what we know of God.  
So if you're in a challenging spot today, this will help you re-focus on an accurate image of God.

(Challenge people to be focused on the truth about God in Psalm 103 this week more than to be pulled into and divided in the media storm of the Zimmerman-Martin verdict.)

Let's walk through Psalm 103, couple lines at a time, and see what God has for us.

SELAH

Psalm 103 NLT

*<sup>1</sup> Let all that I am praise the LORD;  
with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.  
<sup>2</sup> Let all that I am praise the LORD;*

Ok, so out of the shoot, David is celebrating God--this Psalm is a party!  
Already it has the word "praise" THREE times in 3 lines--why?

Because it's a song and songs are repetitive...circa 950 B.C. *repetition* was a poetic device.

(continuing...)

*may I never forget the good things he does for me.  
<sup>3</sup> He forgives all my sins  
and heals all my diseases.*

<sup>4</sup> *He redeems me from death  
and crowns me with love and tender mercies.*

<sup>5</sup> *He fills my life with good things.  
My youth is renewed like the eagle's!*

So David starts out with, "I'm going to celebrate God with everything that I am!" And then through the rest of this Psalm, David is going to list-out all the reasons why, God is so worthy to celebrate.

And here he starts the list:

*may I never forget the good things he does for me.*

<sup>3</sup> *He forgives all my sins  
and heals all my diseases.* (if not here on earth, eternally in  
heaven)

<sup>4</sup> *He redeems me from death\**

That\* means SALVATION.

God saves us from a hellish eternity separated from Him.

He is a God that adopts us into His family.

Pays for every sin we'll ever do.

Provides us with His Holy Spirit to be with us and for us all of our days on this earth until we get to a time of no more struggles.

*and crowns me with love and tender mercies.*  
<sup>5</sup> *He fills my life with good things.  
My youth is renewed like the eagle's!*

"Crowns" means God loves us and has compassion for us *as if* we are *royalty*.

And when we see the word "renew" that alludes to God's promise to bring us NEW LIFE.

("Renewed like the Eagles", clearly a prophetic word about the *Hell Freezes Over* reunion of Don Henley, Joe Walsh, Glenn Frey, Timothy B. Schmitt & others. ;-)

And when we see the word "eagle" in the Bible, that's a symbol of vigor and freedom. So God gives us a NEW LIFE that characterized by the strength and freedom that only God can bring.

And so in this first part of Psalm 103 we see that we celebrate God because He's a **SALVATION GOD**. A God who saves us from sin and a life apart from Him.

SELAH

*<sup>6</sup> The LORD gives righteousness  
and justice to all who are treated unfairly.*

“righteousness” means “a right relationship with God.” So David says here,

“We celebrate God, because no matter how unfairly we’re treated in this world-- if this world deals us a raw hand--God will maintain His relationship with us--He promises to be WITH US no matter what the world throws at us--no matter what unfair and unjust things come our way.

And He promises to punish those who wrongly oppress us, in His good timing.

We see this similarly echoed in Jesus words when He said in Matthew 5:10,

*“God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,  
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”  
Matthew 5:10 NLT*

So we celebrate God because he is a **JUST GOD**.

He will overcome the unfairness we may encounter.

### **Salvation God Just God**

SELAH

*<sup>7</sup> He revealed his character to Moses  
and his deeds to the people of Israel.  
<sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and merciful,  
slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.  
<sup>9</sup> He will not constantly accuse us,  
nor remain angry forever.  
<sup>10</sup> He does not punish us for all our sins;  
he does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.*

In this section, David is doing a call-back to Exodus 34:6-7  
This is God speaking to Moses:

*<sup>6</sup> The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out,  
“Yahweh! The LORD!  
The God of compassion and mercy!  
I am slow to anger  
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.  
<sup>7</sup> I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.  
I forgive iniquity (immoral behavior), rebellion, and sin.  
But I do not excuse the guilty...”*

Exodus 34:6-7 NLT

Here we see what I call simply the "goodness of God." That is:

He's compassionate and merciful to us--He cares deeply for us on an emotional level. But He's NOT without anger. God gets mad at us (v 8).

He gets mad at us when we make poor moral choices.  
When we rebel from Him and His ways. When we sin.

Let's stop here a minute:  
How much respect--how much appreciation and love would we have for a parent--or for a god--who never took issue when we made poor choices?

Would we respect an authority figure who always responded to our poor moral choices with,

"Hey now, it's ok--you know I love you, right? I know that you knew better and that was really stupid, but just come on in here for a big ol' hug."

Maybe the first time we might think that was cool.

But if an authority figure never got angry at our poor decisions, how long would it take for us to think,

"Does he really love me? Seems like real love would drive someone to have enough authentic concern to be mad at me."

Parents having appropriate anger towards children making poor choices is healthy. A God that gets mad when we willfully make poor choices is healthy--it's good--it's a good thing.

But look at these verses (Exodus):

*...I am slow to anger  
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.  
I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.*  
Exodus 34:6-7

This passage illustrates a huge truth about God:

***As great as God's wrath can be, His mercy is greater.***

God gets mad. God doesn't like it when we choose poorly. But HOW God rules is characterized by GRACE.

What does that mean?

A Good God is slow to get angry with us when we blow it.

And even though He at times gets mad--more than anything, His actions are marked by love and grace. *That's* a Good God!

So this section, David shows us we celebrate God  
because he's a **Good God**.

**Salvation God**  
**Just God**  
**Good God**

SELAH

*<sup>11</sup> For his unfailing love toward those who fear him  
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.*

This looks like a simple verse but there's a curve ball in here.

There's something important here that we miss about God.

*<sup>11</sup> For his unfailing love toward those who fear him,  
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.*

We tend to think that God doesn't discriminate--we tend to think that God equally loves everyone, no matter what.

And in fact, at this time in our culture, where everything is supposed to be fair:

Everyone should get a trophy.

No one should be left out of anything.

Psalm 103 speaks culture-jarring truth.

There is this phrase all through the Bible, "His people." Or "the people of God."

If we really simplify life, in this world there are two groups:

People who are God's and people who are not.

And the things is, because He is a Salvation God, He crucified His own Son to make a way for EVERYONE to be His people--made a way so that everyone could know and fear God.

But this special level of God's love that is "as great as the height of the heavens above the earth" is reserved for His people--those who fear Him.

Why do we fear Him?

Because we know this all-powerful Creator has the capacity to rule by might, power, manipulation, those He created--we've seen Him wipe out ancient corrupt civilizations--yet He chooses to be characterized by grace and love.

We fear Him because we know that unlike any being that's the "head" of any religion we can name--only this God that can smite, chooses to love His people with a love as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.

If you think all religions are the same, please know that no other religion's deity is known by love.

And to be clear: God loves everyone. Everyone is His creation. The creator loves His created.

But there is a special level to the love He has "for those who fear Him" that is mysteriously deeper.

And it is a love that God works madly and sacrificially to invite everyone into!

So we celebrate and praise God because He is a **LOVING GOD**. We celebrate our God because no other religion has a god known by love.

**Salvation God**  
**Just God**  
**Good God**  
**Loving God**

SELAH

*<sup>12</sup> He has removed our sins as far from us  
as the east is from the west.*

Just for you cynics (like me) who are thinking that if you head east and west you'll eventually meet up somewhere on the other side of the globe--This is a simile written before everyone was really down with the whole "earth is a sphere" thing. ;-)

I love how 1 John 1:8-10 illustrates v12 in *The Message*:

*If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is errant nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean breast of them—he won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. If we claim that we've never sinned, we out-and-out contradict God—make a liar out of him. A claim like that only shows off our ignorance of God.*

1 John 1:8-10 The Message

So this saving, just, good and loving God--  
removes our sin, at the asking--just like *that*.

And again, there is no other religion where the creator makes a way to clean up the sins of the created by simply asking.

No religion has a loving god that freely wipes away the stain of our sin.

As David said in **Psalm 51:7**

*Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

So we celebrate God because He is a **CLEANSING GOD**.

He is a God who washes our blood-red sin as white as snow.

**Salvation God**  
**Just God**  
**Good God**  
**Loving God**  
**Cleansing God**

SELAH

<sup>13</sup> *The LORD is like a father to his children,  
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.*

<sup>14</sup> *For he knows how weak we are;  
he remembers we are only dust.*

<sup>15</sup> *Our days on earth are like grass;  
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.*

<sup>16</sup> *The wind blows, and we are gone—  
as though we had never been here.*

<sup>13</sup> *The LORD is like a father to his children,  
tender and compassionate to those who fear him.*



The Hebrew word *raham*, (RAY-ham) translated as “compassionate” is one of the most emotional words to describe God’s love of *His people*.

It’s related to the word for “womb” which ties it to the strong emotions that only a mother could have for her child.

So David is defining God, not just as a father, not just as the head of a family we’re adopted into.

But David is telling us that when we enter into God’s family--(which is what happens when we accept Christ)--that we’re not just getting a father in name only.

We’re getting a LOVING father--we’re getting blessed with a Father God who is drawn to us and tied to us with incredibly strong emotions as if He were our biological father.

And this image of an emotionally Loving Father defines our relationship with God.

Like we spoke of earlier, fathers get appropriately mad at us, but more than that--love us. And that defines our relationship with God--even though there is mystery to God and things about Him we can never comprehend---He defines His relationship with us in a way we can comprehend--God, the perfect loving Father.

And so as this section defines God as our emotionally loving father, it also defines us:

*<sup>14</sup> For he knows how weak we are;  
he remembers we are only dust.*

*<sup>15</sup> Our days on earth are like grass;  
like wildflowers, we bloom and die.*

*<sup>16</sup> The wind blows, and we are gone—  
as though we had never been here.*

David tells us that while we’re here, we have a Father God, but David reminds us that our life here--is just a little while. We are all living just a sliver of time.

He reminds us that we should not get too worked up over the here & now because this--is all--“like grass.” We think we’re a pretty big deal--but God says “we are only dust.”

And so we celebrate God because He is our **Father God**, who walks with us in this brief time in these earthly bodies and on into eternity.

**Salvation God  
Just God**

**Good God  
Loving God  
Cleansing  
Father God**

SELAH

*<sup>17</sup> But the love of the LORD remains forever with those who fear him.  
His salvation extends to the children's children  
<sup>18</sup> of those who are faithful to his covenant,  
of those who obey his commandments!*

Here we get that \$15 church word: covenant.  
It's not complicated, but it IS important for us to understand.

A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties.  
In this case, God and His people.

And here in v 17,18 we see the essence of the covenant between God and us:

He promises, through a binding agreement, to be forever with those who accept Him as their God.

And our part is to (18) be faithful to his commandments--be faithful to put Him first in our life and obey His laws.

But we kept sinning.  
We'd try to obey His laws, but we'd slip.  
We couldn't keep our end of the deal (covenant).

And so Jesus entered into the covenants:

And God said, because I know you cannot perfectly keep your end of our binding agreement--

I'm sending my sinless Son---

and He will wash away your sins, helping you to keep your end of the bargain--so that you and I can keep our covenant---so that I can continue to be WITH YOU, continue to be your God, and I will use you to redeem this world until I finally put it all right--once and for all!

And so we celebrate that our God is so serious about being with us that He makes binding agreements (covenants) to that end, AND provides a way to wash away our mistakes as we break our end of the deal by sinning.

So we celebrate that He is a **Covenant God!**

**Salvation God**

**Just God  
Good God  
Loving God  
Cleansing  
Father  
Covenant**

SELAH

*<sup>19</sup> The LORD has made the heavens his throne;  
from there he rules over everything.*

*<sup>20</sup> Praise the LORD, you angels,  
you mighty ones who carry out his plans,  
listening for each of his commands.*

*<sup>21</sup> Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels  
who serve him and do his will!*

*<sup>22</sup> Praise the LORD, everything he has created,  
everything in all his kingdom.  
Let all that I am praise the LORD.*

Up to this point, everything David has written has been between us and God--we can pretty much understand and contextualize it.

But here at the end--David crescendos this Psalm by reminding us that this personal loving Father God, is celestial...

is as vast as the universe...

is not just celebrated by mere humans...

He is celebrated by ARMIES OF ANGELS....

He is celebrated by EVERYTHING He has created.

And David throws in too: Let all that *I* am, celebrate all of who God is!

(re-read section, passionately)

We celebrate Him because He is a **UNIVERSAL GOD**--More vast than the universe He created!

And yet somehow:

Emotionally desires to save us.

To be just for us.

To be truly good to us.

To be known by His love for us.

To cleanse us from our sin.

To be a loving father to us.

To covenant with us.

To invite us into His great plan to redeem this world!

>>>> Offer salvation

- Believe that Jesus, sinless son of God died for your sins?
- Want Him to forgive your sin? Ask Him to...
- Ask Him to be the leader of your life...

>>>> Communion

(Invite all, disclaim that it's only for Christ followers...)

Instruction for us from Paul in [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#)

*<sup>23</sup> For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread <sup>24</sup> and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you."<sup>[a]</sup> Do this to remember me."<sup>25</sup> In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this to remember me as often as you drink it."<sup>26</sup> For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.*

(Take it on your own)

Band plays new version of *Amazing Grace*