

River Community Church

Daily Devotionals Sept 25 - Sept 30 2016

Knowing and Loving God and Making God's
Love Known to Others

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Day 1 Psalm 103 Devotional

Pray:

Ask God to orient or reorient you to Himself. Confess any known sin. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Be still and reflect on Jesus and His sacrifice for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to God's Word. Pray for others in your life that they, too, would know and love God today.

Read:

Psalm 103:1-5

“A Psalm of David. Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.”

Understand:

This Psalm is specifically a psalm of praise to God. It comes out of David's deepest emotions of gratitude for the forgiveness he finds in God.

David is known as a “man after God's own heart,” but he is also known as a man who sinned in some terrible ways: he committed adultery, had a man murdered, and then tried to cover it up. He was a man who never forgot his guilt before the Lord. But, despite his sin, he always loved God and sought to repent of those sins. His life is a picture of success and failure. David's life was far from perfect; he suffered for his rebellion, his sin, and he paid a heavy price. David felt at many times the weight of his guilt before the Lord.

Our guilt before the Lord can cause us to do one of two things: it can drive us to want to “hide and slide” away from God, or it can lead us to confess our failures to God and draw close to him. The latter is what we find David doing in these first five verses. David's response to forgiveness leads him to express his love and desire to follow God. Instead of being overwhelmed by his sin and guilt, David is amazed and overcome by the majesty of God.

David reminds himself of the following: the need to remember what God has done, to be thankful for forgiveness, that the Lord heals, that God redeems and delivers us from the pit, that He crowns you with love (“Hesed”-His unfailing kindness and devotion; a love that is based on a prior relationship), and that God renews our strength.

Apply:

Read verses 1-5 again, reflect on your life and about the times you've fallen. Think about how God has restored you, how He has never left you alone nor forsaken you.

How has He taken away your guilt?

How has He healed you?

What pit has He pulled you out of?

What has His "Hesed" love (His faithfulness, kindness, and grace) meant to you?

Read the following hymn...

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure

Read John 3:16-17 and personalize it, reading it in first person...

"16 For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him."

Spend the next few minutes praising God.

Live:

(Personalize this prayer today; make it specific to the circumstances that face you.) Ask God to lead you through His Spirit as you go through your day. Ask Him to bring to mind the truth of the gospel and its implications for what you will encounter today. Tell Him "Yes" to His will and ask Him for His power and protection to live this "yes." Ask God to create and reveal opportunities to proclaim the good news today. **KEEP PRAYING THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY.**

Day 2 Psalm 103 Devotional

Pray:

Ask God to orient or reorient you to Himself. Confess any known sin. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Be still and reflect on Jesus and His sacrifice for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to God's Word. Pray for others in your life that they, too, would know and love God today.

Read:

Psalm 103:6-8

“The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the people of Israel: the LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.”

Understand:

Here David focuses on the attributes of the Lord's character:

Righteousness: The state of being just or morally pure. It's the very nature of God by virtue of His being; He does that which is right or in accordance with His nature, will, and law. God makes everything come out right or just.

Justice: A term used for what is right or “as it should be.” Justice flows out of His holiness. Justice and righteousness are often used synonymously in the Bible.

Compassionate & Gracious: The Lord is merciful, favorable; not punishing as is often deserved, implying a forgiving relationship. God is sheer mercy and grace.

Slow to anger: Patient, long-suffering before getting angry; not easily angered.

Abounding in Love: Rich in love; overflowing.

David recalls these attributes by thinking back to how God moved in the lives of Moses and the Israelites; how He graciously opened up His plan to them.

David praised God for His Kingship over Israel. He remembers what God has done by reflecting on His attributes. David reminds himself that God's rule is characterized by righteousness; the Lord alone is the one who rights wrongs. God has done this by providing salvation and justice; David knows that it is the Lord who delivers us from evil and oppression.

Apply:

Guilt and shame can sometimes keep us from calling out to God. We can move away from guilt by

moving towards God-that's what we see David doing as he reflects on the attributes of God. Instead of focusing on his failures, David is moved to focus on God's greatness.

Take a moment and reflect on God's attributes listed above; think about how they are manifested in your life by Christ.

Personalize it by picking one attribute and reflect on how you've seen it play out in your life.

Is guilt from your past sins keeping you from fully embracing Christ's work in your life? Why?

Consider the following: As a follower of Jesus, these same attributes that David speaks of have been graciously poured out into your life! God has delivered you from the guilt and shame of sin. The righteousness of God has been given to you through your faith in Jesus, and you are now justified freely by His grace. (Rom. 3:22-24)

Guilt, shame, sin... no longer have a hold of you; you've been set free!

Therefore, we should confess our sins to Him. We are all sinners by nature and practice.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

This kind of confession is not offered to gain God's acceptance, but to remove barriers to fellowship that sin has put between you and God.

If sin is between you and God, will you confess it right now? Know that He will not push you away, but instead He will draw you close.

Thank God for the Gospel of Jesus.

Live:

(Personalize this prayer today; make it specific to the circumstances that face you.) Ask God to lead you through His Spirit as you go through your day. Ask Him to bring to mind the truth of the gospel and its implications for what you will encounter today. Tell Him "Yes" to His will and ask Him for His power and protection to live this "yes." Ask God to create and reveal opportunities to proclaim the good news today. **KEEP PRAYING THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY.**

Day 3 Psalm 103 Devotional

Pray:

Ask God to orient or reorient you to Himself. Confess any known sin. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Be still and reflect on Jesus and His sacrifice for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to God's Word. Pray for others in your life that they, too, would know and love God today.

Read:

Psalm 103:9-12

“He will not always accuse, nor will He harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Understand:

Sin angers God. Hebrews 12:6, “For the LORD disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child.” There are consequences to our actions. David experienced the Lord's discipline personally. When we experience the Lord's discipline, we shouldn't run from Him. Instead, we should run back towards Him.

Because of His great love (“hesed”-His loving kindness), He completely separates sin from the sinner by forgiving it. David understood the power of God's forgiveness. God cleanses, and then He moves on. He does not hold our sins over us. Instead, He frees us from the slavery of sin and sets us free to experience a new life.

God chooses not to treat us as our sins deserve, but instead forgives our sin! He pours out His mercy on us; He doesn't give us what we deserve. Think about it...if we received what we deserved, we would be in hell separated from God forever.

God completely separates sin from the sinner by loving them, pouring His mercy and grace out on them, and forgiving them “as high as the heaven above the earth...as far as the east from the west.”

Apply:

How far is the east from the west? Head west...drive it, walk it, get in a rocket ship and go...and no matter how far you travel, you'll never reach the east! It's impossible. This is how far God has removed our sin from us.

There is great joy for us, because as followers of Jesus, the penalty of our sins has been paid on the cross.

We have been rescued! We, like Paul, when reflecting on our sin, can say “What a wretched man I am!

Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!...Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

Romans 7:24-8:2

Sin, guilt, and shame...the tools the enemy uses against us, have no standing with God; we are fully accepted and declared righteous in Jesus. We have become a new creation; the old is gone and the new has come. God does not remember our sins in the way He treats us; in fact, He treats us as an heir of God and co-heir with Christ.

Remember: “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Take a moment and ponder the forgiveness you have in Christ; think about what it means to be an “Heir of God”.

Offer your praise to Him now.

Live:

(Personalize this prayer today; make it specific to the circumstances that face you.) Ask God to lead you through His Spirit as you go through your day. Ask Him to bring to mind the truth of the gospel and its implications for what you will encounter today. Tell Him "Yes" to His will and ask Him for His power and protection to live this "yes." Ask God to create and reveal opportunities to proclaim the good news today. **KEEP PRAYING THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY.**

Day 4 Psalm 103 Devotional

Pray:

Ask God to orient or reorient you to Himself. Confess any known sin. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Be still and reflect on Jesus and His sacrifice for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to God's Word. Pray for others in your life that they, too, would know and love God today.

Read:

Psalm 103:13-18

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear Him, and His righteousness with their children's children- with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts.”

Understand:

Compassion is mentioned twice here. It means “to feel passion with someone” or “to enter sympathetically into sorrow and pain”. Think about that...God feels passion for you; He enters sympathetically into your sorrow and pain. God knows we're weak; He understands our frailty.

We're made from dust. Our lives are like the grass and flowers of the fields. We're here today and gone tomorrow. God knows who we are, for He is the one who made us. He alone knows just how helpless we really are. In fact, the verse says “the wind blows over the grass and flowers (which is like our lives) and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.”

Look at the contrast of us in our weakness and God in all His greatness. We're here today and gone tomorrow; we are frail and whither quickly. Yet, God pours out forgiveness towards us and His mercy towards us will endure forever. In its duration, it has no end; and in its volume, it's unlimited. He shows us His love, goodness, loving kindness, and faithfulness. There is such great comfort in knowing this.

Apply:

When you think about the contrast, it's a pretty sobering thought! Yet, far too many times we forget that we're dust and this forgetfulness leads us into pride, self-confidence, independence, and eventually breakdowns. We can't forget to remember our frailty and His greatness.

When I think about verses 13-18, my mind goes to Romans 8. Paul tells us what it is to live by the Spirit of God. This fits with our psalm. We are nothing; we're hopeless. But, because of God's great love for us, we have hope. Therefore, it doesn't matter what we're going through because those circumstances don't define us. What DOES define us is the love God has for us; His “hesed” love for us!

“His grace is more than sufficient for us; in fact, it’s in our weakness that His power is made perfect.” 2 Corinthians 12:9

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” Romans 8:31-32

Are you letting guilt and shame keep you from God? Will you let go of it today? Confess it to God and walk in the freedom that forgiveness brings?

What would you have to do to fully rest in God’s care and provision? Will you do that today?

Thank God for His greatness and for His compassion He’s shown you.

Live:

(Personalize this prayer today; make it specific to the circumstances that face you.) Ask God to lead you through His Spirit as you go through your day. Ask Him to bring to mind the truth of the gospel and its implications for what you will encounter today. Tell Him "Yes" to His will and ask Him for His power and protection to live this "yes." Ask God to create and reveal opportunities to proclaim the good news today. **KEEP PRAYING THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY.**

Day 5 Psalm 103 Devotional

Pray:

Ask God to orient or reorient you to Himself. Confess any known sin. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Be still and reflect on Jesus and His sacrifice for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to God's Word. Pray for others in your life that they, too, would know and love God today.

Read:

Psalm 103:19-22

“The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. Praise the LORD, you His angels, you mighty ones who do His bidding, who obey His word. Praise the LORD, all His heavenly hosts, you His servants who do His will. Praise the LORD, all His works everywhere in His dominion. Praise the LORD, O my soul.”

Understand:

The Lord has established His reign; His royal power and dominion. The LORD is King over ALL; His throne is in heaven and His authority is universal! His rule is unchanging and eternal.

Now David is calling to the angels in heaven to praise and worship the Lord! David is making a universal call to worship the LORD.

Apply:

Take some time and worship the King!

Know that you don't have to live up to a certain standard before God accepts you; He wants you just as you are. Remember that God's righteousness is available to all who put their faith in Christ—a righteousness given through Jesus Christ to all who believe. It is Christ alone who makes us right with God.

Is there anything that is keeping you from laying down your guilt, your shame, your sin, at the feet of Jesus? Would you give it to Jesus today? Stop trying to make things right on your own.

Experience the freedom that David and countless other believers have experienced through the forgiveness of God. Would you rest in Him?

Join in David's call to praise the Lord! Lift your voice in praise to “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, and to Him be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Live:

(Personalize this prayer today; make it specific to the circumstances that face you.) Ask God to lead you through His Spirit as you go through your day. Ask Him to bring to mind the truth of the gospel and its implications for what you will encounter today. Tell Him "Yes" to His will and ask Him for His power and protection to live this "yes." Ask God to create and reveal opportunities to proclaim the good news today. **KEEP PRAYING THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY.**

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