

Thanksgiving 2023

Not One Thing Has Failed

October 8th, 2023

Psalm 105

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Introduction: (To be delivered at opening of service)

Good morning and happy Thanksgiving! I want to invite you all to turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 105.

Today, we are going to adopt a slightly different approach in our order of service. I'm actually going to deliver the introduction to today's sermon right now as our call to worship. Because that's what Psalm 105 is: It is an extended call to worship.

As our nation stops today to give thanks, the greatest and the most profound thanksgiving should spring up from the church. Amen? Who has more to be thankful for than the people of God?

We have a roof over our heads and food in our bellies.

We have peace at our borders and order in our nation.

Many of us have dear friends who love us, and family members who support us.

And it is not wrong, therefore, to join our voices with the surrounding culture and to proclaim that we are grateful for all of these things.

But there are two distinctives that mark our gratitude.

First, in contrast to the thanksgiving that is happening out there, there is a clear *direction* in our gratitude. We know Who we're thanking. We know where these gifts come from. Amen? Amen.

The second distinctive in our gratitude is that we can say that even if ALL of the temporary things that we just listed were stripped away, we would STILL be grateful today! We would still have EVERY reason to rejoice! Because behind all of those gifts is the GIVER! And He so loves the world that He sent His Son to save us! The temporary gifts are great, but THAT is the gift that compels us to sing!

We have forgiveness of sins! We have a Father in Heaven who loves us! We have a Saviour in Heaven who intercedes for us! We have the Spirit in our hearts crying “Abba, Father”! We have an inheritance prepared for us that no earthly circumstance can ever threaten!

And so, we join with our country, and we give thanks today but let the gratitude in here run deeper and reach higher. Because He is worthy. Amen? Amen! To that end, I want to read the opening verses of our passage for this morning. Hear now our call to worship from Psalm 105:1-6. Hear now God’s holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today:

Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples!
² Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wondrous works!
³ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!
⁴ Seek the Lord and his strength;
seek his presence continually!
⁵ Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,
⁶ O offspring of Abraham, his servant,
children of Jacob, his chosen ones! (Psalm 105:1-6 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God! Here we are reminded that the right and fitting response to all that God has done is PRAISE! Do you believe that? The Psalmist – this worship leader – is calling out to us! “Give thanks! Sing! Glory in His holy name!”

It is a sad – and all-too-common – reality when we find ourselves in seasons where – while we can still affirm the reality of the historical events of the gospel – it no longer leads our hearts to sing.

Is that you this morning?

By God's grace, my prayer is that He will stir up in you the joy of the Lord this Thanksgiving Sunday! My prayer for us, and for all of the people of God gathering across this city, is that the loudest songs of thanksgiving will spring up from the house of the Lord! But we're not simply going to manufacture a false excitement. We are going to return to the Fount of every blessing. We are going to look afresh at all that God has done. And we are going to remind one another that God IS worthy of our praise. Commentator Derek Kidner gives Psalm 105 the title:

Not One Thing Has Failed¹

Not one thing has failed! I wonder if you believe that this morning. Not one promise has been forgotten! Not for one moment has God taken His tender and loving eye off of His people!

Over the course of this service, through the songs that we will sing, the prayers that we will pray, the Scripture that we will study, and the Lord's Supper that we will share, we are going to remind one another of His wondrous works. To that end, would you stand with me now? I want to open our time together in prayer and then the worship team will lead us in our response. Let's pray.

Amen. Thank you worship team. As I mentioned, our call to worship was really the introduction to this morning's sermon. Please turn with me again in your Bibles to Psalm 105. In the opening verses, the Psalmist invited us into a response of gratitude! "Give thanks! Call upon His name! Make known His deeds! Sing! Tell! Glory in His name! Rejoice! Seek the Lord! Remember!"

But now, in the rest of this passage, he is going to root that *response of gratitude* in the *reality of God's goodness*. Listen: Christian worship is not supposed to be mindless worship. It is not supposed to be empty, contentless worship. It is not an emotion or a feeling that we need to muster up. Christian worship – in fact, all of Christian LIVING – is a RESPONSE to the goodness of God! Meaning – if we lose sight of who God is and what God does – then we will lose the fuel of our worship and obedience. Worship is an overflow of gratitude.

¹ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150 TOTC*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 373.

“Well,” you might interject, “what if I don’t feel particularly grateful today?” There are a number of layers to that onion, but I’ll say this: Sometimes, our gratitude is small because our *memory* is short. We are so quick to forget God’s faithfulness from the past when problems arrive in the present. We forget how He saved us, how He delivered us out of darkness, how He changed us; we forget what He did with that marriage, with that addiction, with that seemingly impossible trial.

We forget. And our love grows cold. And we find ourselves sitting in this gymnasium feeling downcast and hard-done by even though the God of the universe sent His Son to DIE so that we could LIVE!

Sometimes, a series of sleepless nights, or a hard season at work, or a sickness, or a grief can cause us to forget the cross. I suspect that we’ve all been there in varying degrees. But, if we want to be a people who *worship* then we need to increasingly become a people who *remember*.

That’s what this Psalm is for. It is a call to worshipful obedience. It points our attention back to past deliverance and victory and it reminds the people of God that not one thing has failed.

Not One Thing Has Failed

So, look with me now at verses 7-15, where we are reminded that:

1. God’s promises have not failed

- ⁷ He is the Lord our God;
his judgments are in all the earth.
- ⁸ He remembers his covenant forever,
the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,
- ⁹ the covenant that he made with Abraham,
his sworn promise to Isaac,
- ¹⁰ which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute,
to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
- ¹¹ saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan
as your portion for an inheritance.”
- ¹² When they were few in number,
of little account, and sojourners in it,
- ¹³ wandering from nation to nation,

from one kingdom to another people,
¹⁴ he allowed no one to oppress them;
he rebuked kings on their account,
¹⁵ saying, “Touch not my anointed ones,
do my prophets no harm!” (Psalm 105:7-15 ESV)

Last year during advent we made our way through some of the foundational promises that God made to His covenant people. One of the promises that we studied was His promise to Abraham. That is the promise that is being celebrated here.

The Psalmist reminds us that God saw Abraham – a seemingly insignificant, ordinary man with no children and no prospects of which to speak – and God made an astounding promise to him! He promised that an innumerable nation would descend from Abraham’s line. He promised that Abraham’s family would inherit a new land. He promised that through Abraham’s seed, all the nations in the WORLD would be blessed!

This promise would have sounded like *insanity* to Abraham! There were 101 reasons why it was all entirely impossible. Sarah was barren. The surrounding nations were powerful. Abraham was old. The promised land was occupied. Abraham’s family was sinful. In fact, with each passing chapter in the book of Genesis you find yourself wondering when God is going to call an audible and transfer His promise to a more promising family!

And yet, He never does! Instead, God preserves this small, seemingly-insignificant family and protects them from kings and nations. Because God made a promise. And He keeps His promises.

He opened Sarah’s womb. He multiplied their family. He gave them the land. And then, nearly 2,000 years later, one of the descendants of Abraham – Mary – gave birth to a boy named Jesus. And through him – through this descendent of Abraham – God’s blessing was poured out to all the nations in the world!

Not ONE of God’s promises have failed! Not ONE of His promises ever will fail! If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour then you have been adopted into the family of the promise. Paul said exactly that in Galatians 3:

Know then that **it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.** (Galatians 3:7 ESV)

Through faith in Jesus, WE have become the children of the promise. And, in the same way that God kept His promise to our spiritual Father Abraham even in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and impossible adversity, so too will He keep His promises to us! There are so many glorious promises that I could draw your attention to this morning, but there is one that seems fitting in light of our text today. Here, the psalmist is reminding us of how God faithfully preserved Abraham's family though they were few in number and surrounded by powerful forces. It reminds me of a promise that Jesus made to Peter. He said:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, **and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** (Matthew 16:18 ESV)

It can be hard to rejoice when it feels like you're surrounded; when your children are straying, and your workplace is hostile, and your courage is floundering. Sometimes it can feel like the powers of darkness have prevailed and the church is in her final throws.

But God has made a promise! And He KEEPS His promises! Charles Spurgeon reminds us:

The smallness of a church, and the poverty of its members, are not barriers to the divine blessing, if it be sought earnestly by pleading the promise.²

Let's learn what it means to plead the promise! "God, you said that the gates of hell will not prevail! We believe you! Keep Your promise! Help us to stand! Help us to hold fast! More than that, help us to PRAISE!"

God's promise has not failed! Second:

2. God's providence has not failed

I recognize that "providence" is not a common word anymore, but it's an important word so we're not going to lose it from our vocabulary. John Piper defines providence this way:

² Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Treasury of David - Third Ed. Vol. 2 of 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House), 89.

In reference to God, the noun *providence* has come to mean "the act of purposefully providing for, or sustaining and governing, the world."³

When we talk about God’s providence, we are talking about the reality that there is NOTHING that happens in this world that is outside of His control. Not once has God failed in his purposeful, sustaining and governing of the world – even on the occasions when it looked like things were spiraling into chaos. The Psalmist points us to the example of Joseph. Look with me at verses 16-22:

16 When he summoned a famine on the land
and broke all supply of bread,
17 he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
18 His feet were hurt with fetters;
his neck was put in a collar of iron;
19 until what he had said came to pass,
the word of the Lord tested him.
20 The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free;
21 he made him lord of his house
and ruler of all his possessions,
22 to bind his princes at his pleasure
and to teach his elders wisdom. (Psalm 105:16-22 ESV)

If we pass over those verses too quickly, we will miss an important – and a striking – detail. Look again at verse 16:

When **he summoned a famine** on the land
and **broke all supply of bread**, (Psalm 105:16 ESV)

The “he” here is God! God *summoned* a famine on the land. God *broke* all supply of bread. In our theology, we often try to soften this by saying, “Well, certainly God didn’t *cause* the famine – He just *responded* to it and *turned it around* for good!” And that sounds great. But it also sounds like the opposite of what the Bible actually says. “He summoned a famine.”

³ John Piper, *Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), 30.

If that challenges your theology than verse 17 is going to have you writing question marks in the margins of your Bible. Look there again:

he had sent a man ahead of them,
Joseph, **who was sold as a slave.** (Psalm 105:17 ESV)

God *sent* Joseph, and yet, Joseph got to Egypt by way of *slavery*! His brothers sold him! Potiphar's wife falsely accused him! The whole story of Joseph's life up until his appointment as Pharaoh's second in command is a story of tragedy and injustice.

And yet, somehow, ultimately, *God* sent him. God positioned Joseph exactly where he needed to be when he needed to be there. God accomplished that – in some mysterious way – through the sin of the people around Joseph. Now, to be crystal clear, God is not the author of sin. And yet, even the sin that is committed in this world ultimately serves God's providential purposes. Joseph came to understand that. He told his brothers:

As for you, you meant evil against me, **but God meant it for good**, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50:20 ESV)

Now, at first (and even second) glance, this story might seem out of place in a song of praise. Famine? Slavery? Prison? The details of this story are downright depressing!

And yet, the Psalmist sees – and he is inviting us to see – that God's wise and loving hand orchestrated every single one of these seemingly tragic details to work for the good of His people. The Psalmist is delighting in the reality that – even when we feel like we are surrounded by CHAOS – our God is perfectly and providentially working all things for the good of His people. Does that sound familiar? The Apostle Paul says exactly that in Romans 8:

And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 ESV)

And so, this Thanksgiving, think for a moment about the deepest, darkest trials that you have faced in your life. Perhaps you can already see the way that God has used some of those dark hours to sharpen you, and to refine you, and to bless you. I suspect that much of your pain still appears to be meaningless, and some of it will never make sense until the Lord shows us His plan

when we stand with Him in glory. Nevertheless, whether we are able to see all of it, or part of it, or none of it at all right now, we can know for certain that God IS working ALL of it for our good if we are in Christ Jesus! As one old puritan wrote:

Let all God's people expect trials. They will surely come; and in due time deliverance will as surely follow; and deliverance shall be followed by glory and honour.⁴

Let me ask you today: When is the last time that you praised God for His providence? When is the last time that you looked honestly at the story of your life and thanked God for the lessons that He taught you in adversity? Praise Him because His providence has not failed. Third:

3. God's protection has not failed

The Psalmist points us to the ten plagues as a powerful illustration of God's protection. Look with me to verses 23-36:

- ²³ Then Israel came to Egypt;
Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
²⁴ And the Lord made his people very fruitful
and made them stronger than their foes.
²⁵ He turned their hearts to hate his people,
to deal craftily with his servants.
²⁶ He sent Moses, his servant,
and Aaron, whom he had chosen.
²⁷ They performed his signs among them
and miracles in the land of Ham.
²⁸ He sent darkness, and made the land dark;
they did not rebel against his words.
²⁹ He turned their waters into blood
and caused their fish to die.
³⁰ Their land swarmed with frogs,
even in the chambers of their kings.
³¹ He spoke, and there came swarms of flies,
and gnats throughout their country.
³² He gave them hail for rain,
and fiery lightning bolts through their land.
³³ He struck down their vines and fig trees,
and shattered the trees of their country.
³⁴ He spoke, and the locusts came,

⁴ W.S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2016), 939.

young locusts without number,
³⁵ which devoured all the vegetation in their land
and ate up the fruit of their ground.
³⁶ He struck down all the firstborn in their land,
the firstfruits of all their strength. (Psalm 105:23-36 ESV)

The Israelites were subjected to a terrible slavery in Egypt. They were persecuted. They were oppressed. They were overpowered. Their situation seemed all but hopeless.

And yet, the Psalmist reminds us, even when we are surrounded by our enemies – even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of DEATH – God has never allowed our enemies to have the final word! And He never will!

With a stunning display of His authority over creation, God commanded the waters, and the hail, and the darkness, and the angel death, and even the *bugs* to demonstrate His powerful protection of His people. The Israelites had believed the lie that they were outnumbered. Suffice it to say: They were wrong. Charles Spurgeon once wrote:

What armies the Lord can send forth when once His right arm is bared for war! And what scorn He pours on proud nations when He fights them, not with angels, but with lice! ... Surely pride is moral madness.⁵

Pharoah thought that he was untouchable. He mocked God. Yet, God mercifully brought that proud man to his knees and again. Tragically, again, and again, that proud man stood up in defiance against God. Such is the folly of sin. Perhaps there are some in this room who have hearts like Pharoah. I would plead with you this morning: Don't be a fool. While there is breath in your lungs, there is opportunity to repent.

Let the church take comfort from this passage that our God is a God who protects His people! He is a Mighty Fortress! The enemy that we face today seeks to steal from us the joy of our salvation. He seeks to discourage us, and to lure us back into slavery to sin. But, in the same way that the army of Pharoah could not stand against our great God, neither does the devil himself have ANY

⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Treasury of David - Third Ed. Vol. 2 of 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House), 96.

assault that he can muster that will defeat the church. It was this understanding that enabled the Apostle Paul to declare:

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39 ESV)

Consider for a moment the trials that you have faced. Consider the doubts that have assailed you. Consider the lies that have been flung your way. Has God ever failed to protect you? Has He ever failed to bring you through? This is why we sing:

Through many dangers toils and snares I have already come!
Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home!

His protection has not failed.

Fourth and finally:

4. God's plan has not failed

We see this in the final section of this Psalm. Look with me at verses 37-41:

³⁷ Then he brought out Israel with silver and gold,
and there was none among his tribes who stumbled.
³⁸ Egypt was glad when they departed,
for dread of them had fallen upon it.
³⁹ He spread a cloud for a covering,
and fire to give light by night.
⁴⁰ They asked, and he brought quail,
and gave them bread from heaven in abundance.
⁴¹ He opened the rock, and water gushed out;
it flowed through the desert like a river. (Psalm 105:37-41 ESV)

The Israelites were in a situation that seemed all but hopeless. But God had a plan. Pharaoh relented. The Egyptians sent the Israelites out with silver and gold! God led them by day with a pillar of cloud. He led them by night with a pillar of fire. Quail and bread fell from heaven to satisfy their hunger. Water burst forth from the rock to satisfy their thirst. He withheld nothing from them that they would need. As Charles Spurgeon notes here:

When God calls His people to a long journey, He fits him for it; in the pilgrimage of life, our strength shall be equal to our day.⁶

Similarly, some of you this morning might be wondering how God will see you through your present trial. You might be looking at your circumstances and wondering if God is somehow withholding from you. But the Apostle Paul reminds us:

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32 ESV)

Listen: God will not withhold ANYTHING that you need to accomplish the task that He has set before you. He delivered the Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt and, if you are in Christ, so too will He deliver you from this present darkness. God's plan has not and will not fail!

And the END of God's plan – the final goal of the promises, and the providence, and the protection – is found in verses 42-45. Look there with me:

⁴² For he remembered his holy promise,
and Abraham, his servant.
⁴³ So he brought his people out with joy,
his chosen ones with singing.
⁴⁴ And he gave them the lands of the nations,
and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil,
⁴⁵ **that they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws.**
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 105:42-45 ESV)

God delivered the Israelites SO THAT they might become a people set apart to obey and worship Him. We do not worship and obey *in order to receive* salvation. We worship and obey because *we have ALREADY received* salvation! True Christian worship – obedience, and love, and praise, and evangelism – flows out of GRATITUDE!

This is true Old Testament and New. As we've observed in Life Together over the last two weeks, the Ten Commandments were given AFTER the exodus. God didn't deliver the Israelites *because*

⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Treasury of David - Third Ed. Vol. 2 of 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House), 98.

they were obedient. He delivered the Israelites *so that they might become* obedient. Similarly, in the New Covenant, the Apostle Paul explains in Ephesians 1:

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² **so that** we who were the first to hope in Christ **might be to the praise of his glory**. (Ephesians 1:11-12 ESV)

You and I were saved so that we might live to the praise and glory of God! We were saved to sing! Saved to rejoice! Saved to obey! Saved so that – with gratitude – we might point the watching world to the glory and the grandeur and the grace of our great God!

That is the plan! Saved to obey! Did you know that? God didn't save you so that you could continue to wallow in sin. He saved you so that you might live to His glory! God did not save you so that you could sit on your couch and waste away the days with selfish indulgence. He saved you so that you might go out into the world telling of his wondrous works! God did not save you so that you could grumble your way through life. He saved you so that you might rejoice in the Lord and lift high the name of Jesus! As Charles Spurgeon once said:

Election is not a couch for ease, but an argument for seven-fold diligence. If God has set His choice upon us, let us aim to be choice men.⁷

If you have received His grace – if He has broken the chains of sin that once bound you and set you free – if He has opened your eyes to see your need for Him and given you a heart that is soft towards Him – if He has covered over your sin with the blood of His Son and prepared a place for you in heavenly places – then GIVE HIM YOUR LIFE as a response!

Church, this Thanksgiving let's offer up a response to the Lord that is marked by deep gratitude. Let's sing from our hearts of His wondrous works. Let's repent of the sin that is unbecoming of the children of God. And let's go forth in obedience making known to all the world the goodness of God. To that end, let's pray together.

⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Treasury of David - Third Ed. Vol. 2 of 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House), 88.