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Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

Out of the Blues **Pastor Ty Blackburn** **Psalm 103** **November 22, 2015**

Please turn with me in your Bibles actually, to Psalm 103. It is the first time in a while I've not said, "Turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John." We're going to step away for a brief, well actually for a couple of months I think, from the Gospel of John. You'll recall, if you've been with us, that we're just coming to the passion of our Savior, that is His death, burial, and resurrection. As the schedule works out, we're going to have a couple of guest speakers in December, on the 6th, and the 13th. We'll have the blessing of having on December 6th, Ernie Baker, from The Masters College, a professor of biblical counseling, will be here. The 7th, that Monday, is a wonderful conference we're having here that many of you have volunteered to be a part of, and you are all welcome to attend if you'd like to. You need to register on our website if you'd like to come. It is leadership and getting to the heart of conflict, but he is going to be here on the 6th. And then on December 13th, we have the opportunity to have Dr. Wayne Mack's son, Josh Mack, will be here. Josh is a dear brother, and he is going to be preaching to us on the 13th, so there will be two weeks in a row I'm not preaching, and then you've got Christmas the 20th. Then the 27th, Steven Gaines will be preaching. I thought, "I don't want to interrupt the cross and the resurrection with these kinds of breaks," so I wanted to set that back a little ways, and we'll come back to it. In fact, I had mentioned last Sunday, that in January we're going to be talking about church membership, and particularly the responsibilities of the leaders in the church, the Elders, and our shepherding focus, as we're going to be spending a few messages on that as well.

So it felt like it would be a good thing today to take a passage that is one of my favorite passages, and maybe for many of you as well, certainly one of the best loved psalms, I guess, throughout church history. One that people would generally put in their Top 10 anyway, Psalm 103. And the title of the message, I mentioned Wayne Mack, I borrowed his title. He stole all of the good titles. The title of the message is 'Out of the Blues'. He didn't steal them, he created them, but I keep stealing his, so let me get that right, 'Out of the Blues'. And what we're going to be looking at, I think, in Psalm 103, is this issue of dealing with discouragement, overcoming spiritual depression.

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When you are experiencing apathy, burnout, what do you do? We are going to see in this Psalm, there is a number of things that you can do in those times that the Lord has given us as remedies, to help us, to sustain us. That is exactly what we should do is follow the example of David in this passage.

Now I want to be clear, I'm going to have three main points today, and they are going to be verbs, just basically commands. I'm going to tell you what they are right now. I'm telling you this because I want to do some stuff before we get there, but I want you to know where we are going. What do you do to deal with spiritual depression? What do you do to overcome apathy, burnout, and lethargy? When you are worn down, what do you do? Well, we are going to look at the first three things that the psalmist does here in three verbs—*Talk, Remind, and Remember*. Those are the three points we're going to look at today. *Talk, Remind, and Remember*. But before we do that, I want to, after we read the text, I'm going to spend some time introducing us to this passage. It is always important, when you come to a passage of Scripture, to spend some time dealing with context, and issues that help us interpret correctly the passage we are looking at. So we are going to start actually with some W's and an H. We are going to do three W's and an H. Remember the five W's and an H? *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* We're going to use three of them, of the W's, and one H, and that is just by way of introduction. Then we are going to get into the three points of the message—*Talk, Remind, Remember*, because that is what we need to do to overcome spiritual depression. So with that said, now let's read the word of God together, Psalm 103.

Psalm 103:1-22 ~

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;
3 Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;
4 Who redeems your life from the pit,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion;
5 Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.
6 The LORD performs righteous deeds
And judgments for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses,*

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His acts to the sons of Israel.

*8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.*

*9 He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.*

*10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

*11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.*

*12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

*13 Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.*

*14 For He Himself knows our frame;
He is mindful that we are but dust.*

*15 As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

*16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,
And its place acknowledges it no longer.*

*17 But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on
those who fear Him,*

And His righteousness to children's children,

*18 To those who keep His covenant
And remember His precepts to do them.*

*19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens,
And His sovereignty rules over all.*

*20 Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Mighty in strength, who perform His word,
Obeying the voice of His word!*

*21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,
You who serve Him, doing His will.*

*22 Bless the LORD, all you works of His,
In all places of His dominion;
Bless the LORD, O my soul!*

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask that You might now feed us from Your word. We acknowledge that we are completely dependent. We are empty, would You fill us? We are blind,

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would You help us see? We need to see the glory of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we pray in His name, Amen.

Now, we're going to get to *Talk, Remind, Remember*. *What do you do when you're dealing with spiritual depression?* But we're going to start with some preliminary observations that you should always do when you come to the text of Scripture, to understand it rightly. And we want to ask, first of all, the question *Who?* Secondly, *When?* Then, *How?* And then we're going to come to *What?* And *What?* is really the message. *What do you do?* The fourth W is the rest, is the main point, so the message is going to flow from that. That's when we get to *Talk, Remind, and Remember*. But first of all, *Who?*

I) Who?

It is very important to note that Psalm 103, it says '*praise for the Lord's mercies*'. Now one of the things that you are going to see as you read the Scripture, like in the Hebrew, the phrase '*praise for the Lord's mercies*' is not there. That is, the publisher of the Bible put that in as kind of a summary. You know, as you read through the passages of Scriptures you'll have little, sometimes sections will have a little heading over it. You know? Well, those aren't inspired, or they are not in the original text, they are added to it. But that phrase '*A Psalm of David*' is actually in the Hebrew Bible. It is there, most of the headings of the psalms, where there are headings, they are there in the text itself. So we are to understand that this Psalm 103 is a psalm of David. In fact, 75 of the psalms are explicitly credited to David. Some people think a few more probably are his, but that for whatever reason, the superscription wasn't put in. But 75 are attributed directly to David, so half of the psalter. So, *Who? Who is the author?* David. This is a Psalm of David. David is the one we need to be aware is talking, and dealing with in this passage. Now let's think about that for a moment, what we know about David.

We know David was a man at one of the high points of the Old Testament. He was an anointed king when he was probably 13 or 14 years old. Samuel anoints him king. Shortly after he is anointed, he does what most every child that has been to Bible school, or to Sunday school knows about, he slew Goliath. David, as probably an adolescent, 14 years old, he was not a man, he wasn't filled out fully, but he was not a little boy, like a 7-year-old. You remember, when you read the story, he had already killed a lion and a bear, he tells King Saul, so he wasn't scared to go against the nine-and-a-half-foot giant, Goliath. But it wasn't because he was foolhardy, it was because he knew God, and this Philistine was taunting

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God. So David, with great courage, trusting in the Lord, brings about a great victory, and really his kingship is the story of victory, after victory, after victory. It is the glory days of Israel.

His character was such that he was the standard by which every subsequent king is judged in the Scriptures. If you read through the book of Kings, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, you will find this kind of refrain throughout the book. King, whether it is Ahaz, or it is Uzziah, or whoever it is, the measuring bar, what they are compared to, is David. It will say, “He did not follow the Lord like his father, David.” That is the measuring stick because David was such a godly king, and he was a man after God’s heart. Remember? He was chosen to be king because God said, “He is a man after My own heart.” Think about how that is expressed in one of the most beautiful pictures in Scripture when David is worshiping before the Lord by dancing. I mean, that is an uncomfortable one for those of us who are Baptists, and for those of us who don’t have much rhythm like me. But the reality is, when you look at that passage in 2 Samuel 6, where David is dancing before the Lord, he is so caught up in the glory of who God is, they are bringing the ark into Jerusalem, he is so caught up with the glory of who God is, and all that God has done for him, that he cannot contain himself. He worships from the depths of his soul, and in a sense, lays down his dignity. Remember his wife, the daughter of Saul, Michal, despises him in her heart, and insults him when she sees him, basically mocks him and says, “You, the king, made a fool of yourself in front of all those people out there,” and David says basically, “You haven’t seen nothing yet. I will be made much more humble, and lowly, because of the glory of God than that.” That text ends with this somber and solemn reflection. Michal was barren until the day of her death. God never blessed the fruit of her womb again with a child because she had despised the true worship of God.

So David is a model of worship, David is a great king, a great military leader, and yet he was also one who had unparalleled ups, highs, mountaintop experiences, but he also knew what it was to go into the very deepest valley. We know about his sin with Bathsheba, the wickedness of the adultery that then he tried to hide through clandestine plots to get Uriah to spend time with his wife so that it would not be clear that she had become pregnant when he was gone. Then he murders Uriah the Hittite essentially, commanding his general to abandon Uriah. So he is guilty of adultery, and he is guilty of murder. He is told by Nathan though, his sin is forgiven because he repents in broken-heartedness. Psalm 51, what a precious treasure that is for the broken heart before God when we sin. David, when he repented, he repented, but he is told by Nathan, “The sword will not depart from

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your house because you've done this." And the child of Bathsheba, remember, dies. He knew what it was like to lose a child, a baby dies. He knew what it was like to lose a child more than once. One of his sons, Amnon, rapes David's daughter, an incestuous relationship. David doesn't deal with it, and another one of his sons, Absalom, who was a full brother to Tamar, he exacts revenge by killing his half-brother Amnon, so David loses another child because his child is murdered by another one of his children.

And he has perplexing life circumstances. I mean, I mentioned he was anointed probably when he was 13 or 14. You know how long it was before he became king? 2 Samuel 5:4 says he was 30 years old when he became king. Why did God anoint him at 13 or 14 when he wasn't going to be king until he was 30? Was that just a failure of planning on the Lord's part? Of course not. The ways of the Lord are higher than our ways. David is anointed king, he slays Goliath, he is a loyal follower of Saul, but remember Saul's jealousy that is aroused, and Saul becomes, basically he is insane, he is almost like a split-personality kind of situation. Remember David is playing the harp there in 1 Samuel for Saul at the table, and Saul picks up a spear suddenly and hurls it at him to kill him. The best we can tell, all these dates aren't clearly lined out, we know that he became king at 30, he becomes king at 30 after Saul dies, but basically we can tell that for at least 8 years of his life, he was on the run, hiding out from Saul, the king who wanted to kill him. God anointed him king, and yet he is on the run for at least 8 years.

Think about that, 8 years! You are going to be on the run for the next 8 years. It is 2015, 2023 maybe you will be done. Well, the Lord was blessing him all the way. He was learning how God is a faithful shield, and shepherd, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." David knew what it was like to be shepherded. He knew what it was like to walk through the valley of the shadow of death and to know God's rod and His staff comfort him. The reason we have so many psalms from David is because David experienced so much, and the psalms are songs of experience, and the Lord ordained that this dear brother write us these treasures from his own life experience. But David could relate to being in times of great perplexity, not understanding why things were happening the way they were in his life. He could relate to us who are in profound suffering, and I think Psalm 103, when you really step back and look at what is happening, offers us great encouragement. Now that's *Who?* David. Think about *When?* When does he write this?

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II) When?

The text does not explicitly tell us, but I think we can infer with great confidence that it was later in his life. It wasn't one of the early psalms that he wrote, and I say that because of Verse 5, when he is speaking about the benefits of the Lord he says:

Psalm 103:5 ~

***Who satisfies your years with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.***

I don't know, when I was 25 I didn't feel like I needed my youth to be renewed like the eagle. But now that I am 51, I feel that. So I think here is an older man, and I think it is also an older man who writes verses 15 and 16.

Psalm 104:15-16 ~

***As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more,
And its place acknowledges it no longer.***

Isn't it funny how the older you get, the more you reflect on things like that? When you are young, you feel like you are invincible, death seems so far away. But the older you get, the more frail you realize life is. And so I think we have here a situation where David is an older man, and then I think, when we look at the content of what he says in Verses 1 and 2, I think we can infer that he is dealing with a time of discouragement, a time which he is spiritually numb, emotionally lethargic, sluggish. The commentators that I read, one said, "He appears to be in a time of apathy and gloom." Another wrote, "He appears to be in a time of spiritual sluggishness." Now where do they get that? Because when you look at Verse 1 and Verse 2, these really are extraordinary verses.

Psalm 103:1~

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul,

He says it again in Verse 2.

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Psalm 103:2 ~

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,

It is like he issues a command to himself. He is basically saying, “Worship God, self.” And then he says it again, remember we read from Philippians 4, where Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice!” Do you hear the emphasis there? It is like, “Listen, don’t miss this! I’m telling you rejoice!” I think David is talking like that to himself. In fact, he says it three times, ***Bless the LORD, O my soul***, Verse 1. The beginning of Verse 2, ***Bless the LORD, O my soul***,... And he ends this psalm with the same phrase, ***Bless the LORD, O my soul***,...

Now, that is *Who?* and *When?* David, in a time of discouragement spiritually, maybe fatigued, burned out, he is worn down. Do you feel like that today? Are you worn down? Discouraged? Does God feel distant to you? Do you long for those days when He seemed so much nearer? Then this psalm is for you. If you are not in days like that, you will be some time. So *Who?* and *When?* and I want to ask a third question, *How?* Now we are going to get to *What? What does David do?* Right? But I want us to stop before we ask *What does he do?* I want to look at *How well does what he does work?* So the H, we said *Who?* David. *When?* A time of discouragement, depression. We’re asking *How? How does what he does work?*

III) How?

And I think we can see, as we look at the text, that what he does works really well because he, in the beginning, is having to basically cheer himself on out of apathy and lethargy. “Listen, soul, bless the Lord. Listen, soul, bless the Lord.” Okay, that is what he has to say to himself, but as the psalm moves on, he seems to pick up steam. Let me show you this. One of the commentators I looked at, John Stott, pointed out how there are really three concentric circles in, you can think of the movement of the psalm, there are three concentric circles. You know, circles that are concentric, they are inside of each other. The inside circle is Verses 1-5, and what you see there is David is talking to himself, and the only focus is on himself. In fact, you see this when you look at the pronouns, the possessive pronouns, and the other pronouns used here. ***Bless the LORD, O my soul***,... You see here, that first person singular possessive pronoun ‘*my*’. ***And all that is within me***,... And then when he says again, ***Bless the LORD, O my soul***,..., Verse 2. But then when he says in Verse 3:

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Psalm 103:3-4 ~

***Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;
4 Who redeems your life from the pit,***

This is where, in the Hebrew, you see something you can't see in English. 'Your', can be a possessive singular in English, which belongs to you as an individual, or it can mean a possessive plural, right? "Your lunch today, choir, is provided. Not just for one of you, for all of you." The plural 'your', right? But in Hebrew, it is clear, this is singular. When he says, ***Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits;...*** he keeps talking to himself, but he turns it around, and does the second person. In fact, it is interesting, in the actual Hebrew, there is a movement back and forth from the second person to the first person, which none of the translations actually follow because it is a little awkward, but literally what it says is this: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits, who pardons all my iniquities, who heals all my diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns me with lovingkindness and compassion, who satisfies your years with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle." Now I don't mean to confuse you, but to say that basically what David is doing is he is saying, "Bless the Lord who pardons all my iniquities, who heals all my diseases," and then he is like, "Who redeems your life." He is talking to himself, but he turns it around to second person.

So it is showing how the focus is in the intensity there. The NIV translates all of those pronouns with the first person. They go through and say, "My, my, my, me," all the way through. All the other translations basically, except for the New Living Translation, it does the same thing, all the others go with, "You, your, your, your," because it just seems to flow better. But basically, the focus is, he is talking to his own soul. He is holding court with himself. That is Verses 1-5, that is the first concentric circle. We are talking about *How well does what he does work?* He is trying to get out of this spiritual depression so he is talking to himself here, and then, in Verses 6-19, the pronouns change, and then the focus is no longer his own soul, and God's benefits for his own soul, the focus is the Lord's ways with His people. And look at how the pronouns change in Verse 9.

Psalm 103:9 ~ He will not always strive with us,...

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Verse 10:

Psalm 103:10 ~ He has not dealt with us...

You see, first person plural, not ‘me’. It’s not, “He has not dealt with me,” “He’s not dealt with us.”

Psalm 103:10 ~

***...according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.***

That is what you see going all the way through that next section of Scripture. So he is now thinking about, he started with himself, and the benefits to God to himself because he is so discouraged. He can’t function like he needs to, and so he deals with himself, and now he starts thinking about God’s goodness to all of His people. And then in Verses 20-22, he becomes a worship leader that is intent on getting everybody all over to worship.

Psalm 103:20 ~ Bless the LORD, you His angels,...

This guy who was having to talk to himself because he didn’t feel like doing anything is now saying, “Listen, I want to tell you something. Angels, you guys need to be worshipping Him.” I think that is pretty amazing, they are always worshipping Him, but David is so caught up in the goodness of God Himself, so overwhelmed by the splendor of God’s kindness to Him. Have you ever felt like that? You see God in such a wonderful way, blessing you, that you can’t contain it, and you actually wish the animals, and everything could praise Him? That’s what he does, Verses 20-22.

Psalm 103:21 ~ Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,...

Psalm 103:22 ~ Bless the LORD, all you works of His,...

He basically says, “Everything in Heaven and on earth, you need to worship Him. I’ve been looking at Him and you need to worship Him.” So this is how well it works, what he does. He moves from spiritual apathy to being on fire. We see something about how we can maintain a zealous heart for obedience, and a zealous heart for evangelism. Where does that come from? Where does an evangelistic

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heart come from? It comes from being satisfied in God, and being so overwhelmed with who He is that you have to share it. You have to see other people come to experience the joy that you experience, and you have to see the God who is so worthy not be denied the right response of worship. So those are the first W's and an H, *Who? When? How?*

IV) What?

Now we come to *What? What does he do?* Now we are to the main points. We are going to look at the first three today, and consider the rest next week. Now I said the three things he does can be summarized in three basically imperatives, verbs, actions—*Talk, Remind, Remember.*

1) Talk:

The first thing David does is talk. The first thing David does, which I've already said, is he talks to himself, and so when you are depressed, when you are apathetic, when you are spiritually numb and dull, what should you do? What should I do? You need to talk to yourself. I thought that is what people who are crazy do. No, that is what the psalmist does. In fact, Psalm 42 you see the same kind of thing. The psalmist says, "Why are you in despair, oh my soul, and why are you downcast within me?" He is talking again to his soul, "Why are you in despair? I mean it's like you see a conversation between two people when they are emphatic, but he is emphatic to himself. This is what David is doing, he is saying, he is commanding his soul to worship God.

I love what Martyn Lloyd-Jones says in that book that is right over there. All right, exit stage left, and his wonderful book, Spiritual Depression: It's Causes and Cure. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a pastor in the last century in England. He ministered in London at Westminster Chapel from 1939-1969. A tremendous ministry, expository preaching, and anyway, he talks about this issue in this book, and from his own experience he had dealt with a time of profound depression. And he says, basically, he takes Psalm 42, which I mentioned a moment ago, "Why are you in despair, oh my soul, and why are you downcast within me?" when the psalmist is talking to himself. He takes that particular passage, you'll hear it as I read through it, he is talking about that particular passage where the same thing is happening in Psalm 103. So that is why I am borrowing what he says here. He says, now listen to this:

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Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning, you have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday. Somebody is talking, who is talking to you? Yourself is talking to you. Now this man's treatment.

He's talking about the psalmist in Psalm 42 when he says, "Why are you in despair my soul."

This man's treatment was this: Instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself, and the main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul, "Why art thou cast down? What business have you to be disquieted?" You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself, "Hope thou in God." Instead of muttering in this depressed unhappy way, and then you must go on to remind yourself of God, who God is, and what God is, and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. The essence of this matter is to understand that this self of ours, this other man within us, has got to be handled. Do not listen to him, turn on him, speak to him, condemn him, upbraid him, exhort him, encourage him, remind him of what you know instead of listening placidly to him, and allowing him to drag you down and depress you. For that is what he will always do if you allow him to be in control.

He's talking about the issue that we have as Christians. We have a new nature and we have a sin nature, and we have a brain that's filled with all kinds of lies, because that brain is part of this fallen world. That's why we need a new body. So he's saying, "Don't listen to yourself. Talk to yourself." I think that's what the psalmist is doing here. He's saying, "You're discouraged. You don't feel like doing anything. You just want to lie around and moan, and bemoan your circumstances." What does the psalmist do? David talks to himself, and we need to talk to ourselves. I think this is actually what Jesus is doing in John 12 about Verse 27 or so. Remember after the Greeks come to Him? Philip brings some people to Him that wanted to see Him, and they're actually Gentiles, and Jesus knows when the Gentiles come to Him, the Father has told him this means the cross is at hand. So Philip says, "There are some Greeks seeking You," and Jesus says, "Now is the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified." He realizes this is the time for the Son of Man to be glorified, that is, to be crucified. And as He continues on, after He talks

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about the nature of His death, then He says, “What shall I say to this hour? Shall I say, ‘Father, save me from this hour?’” He says, “What shall I say?” He’s talking to Himself, in a sense. “What shall I say?” Then He talks to God too. So you don’t just keep talking to yourself. You don’t just keep on talking to yourself. You talk to yourself and it makes you say, “Look at God.” But that’s what Jesus did too.

So the first thing we need to do is we need to talk to our self. We need to upbraid our self to say, “Self, I’m not going to listen to you. I’m going to tell you what the truth is.” Now, that’s the first thing we do. That’s what David did.

Psalm 103:1 ~ Bless the Lord, O my soul,...

And then he repeats it. After he says:

Psalm 103:1 ~ ...And all that is within me, bless His holy name.

Then he says:

***Psalm 103:2
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;***

2) Remind:

The second thing he does is we need to remind. Not just talk to yourself. That’s the first point. The second point is remind yourself of two things. The first thing is what I’m called to do, and the second thing is how I’m called to do it. It’s funny how we forget the most important things, don’t we? Have you had that experience? I don’t know, maybe it’s just some of us are a little more forgetful than others. I think that’s definitely true. I know my wife definitely thinks that I’m more forgetful of things than she is, and she’s right. I can go to the store and get everything but the one thing I was supposed to get. Have you ever had that experience? Driving home, I’ve actually turned around halfway home realizing, “Oh, I forgot the one thing,” and then other times I’ve gotten all the way home. “Did you get it?” “No, but I got all these other nice things here.” We forget the one thing that matters.

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He says, “Remind yourself of what really matters. Remind yourself what you’re called to do.” He’s basically saying, “David, soul, what you are called to do, what I’m called to do, my primary calling in life, your primary calling in life as a human being, is to worship God. That’s what you’re called to do.” At every moment of every day, the first thing that you are called to do is to worship God. That’s what you’re created to do. Now, the world doesn’t think that, but the reality is you are. You are created to worship God.

This is why people worship other people. Why do people act so crazy about music stars or entertainers, where they just go nuts and they follow everything about them all the time? They’ve got to find out what’s going on with them all the time. What is that? They’re worshipping. Why do people become workaholics? Why do people go so nuts over football season and just go crazy? I mean, people with dignity that you would see acting a certain way, any time other than at the ballgame. I have to say, I’ve gone to meddling with myself a little bit here. I find myself in a ballgame or something, and Patti will say, “Ty, not only are you a Christian, but you’re a pastor. Come on.” The Lord is helping me in that. You pray for me, but I’ve definitely come a long way. A pastor I heard said one time said, “If you think I’m bad now, you should have seen me ten years ago.” That’s really the Christian life. God’s making us into His image day after day. But what are you called to do? You’re called to worship. And if you don’t worship God, you’ll worship something. That’s why our hearts are idol factories. We’ll worship something. We must worship. But the only truly satisfying thing is to worship God, and it’s good to remember, “When I’m depressed, and when I’m downcast, and when I am apathetic and feel like I have no energy, the one thing that I’m called to do that I need to be reminded of, and I need to remind myself is you are created to worship God.” That’s what David says. “Bless the Lord. BLESS the Lord.”

Now, it’s not just what you’re called to do, but it’s also how you’re called to do it. Remind yourself of both these things. Remind yourself that what you’re called to do is worship God, and remind yourself how you’re called to do it. Look what he says in Verse 1:

Psalm 103:1 ~

***Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And all that is within me, bless His holy name.***

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It is wholehearted worship that we're called to do. It's not just going through the motions. It's not through checking off a box. It is that we are called to worship Him, to bless Him, with everything that is within us. That's the standard. When Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" remember when they ask Him that? They were always trying to trip Him up, the Pharisees, the Scribes. "What is the greatest commandment?" They were expecting Him to pick one of the ten, I think. He didn't pick one of the Ten Commandments. He picked another commandment that is the greatest commandment, from Deuteronomy 6:5. He said, "The greatest commandment is that you shall love the Lord your God," how? "...with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." It is to be an all-consuming love. God is not interested in half-hearted worship. God is not interested in kind of a bartering system. And listen, this is the way natural men are, unbelievers. I was reading a commentary by Calvin the other day and he was talking about this, that man knows he's created to worship, and most people will have some sense of acknowledgment of God, and they feel the obligation in some way, that I must be about religion. So they do things and they go through formal exercises and rituals to assuage that burden, that guilt. This is why people are very religious, but they don't really know God, and that religion itself is aimed at keeping God away. But true worship is not something that is done outwardly. It comes from the heart.

Remember what Jesus said in John 4? Basically He's telling the woman at the well, "I've come to seek worshipers who will worship in Spirit and in truth." True worship comes from inside the heart, a heart made new by God, which is poured out in worship. And so that's what he's saying here. The psalmist is saying, "I'm called to worship, and I'm called to worship God with all of my heart. I'm called to bless Him with everything that I have, poured out before Him." It's good to know what we're called to do, to be reminded of that. But it's one thing to know what to do, and it's another to know how to do it. How do you engage your heart when you feel apathetic? It starts with talking. It starts with reminding. Talk to yourself. Remind yourself, but he gives us another key step that shows us how the heart really is engaged. That comes to our third point: Remember.

3) Remember:

We aren't just to talk to our self. We aren't just to remind our self that we're called to worship and to worship wholeheartedly. But what the psalmist does next is he encourages himself to remember. Now actually the text says it in the negative. He

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says basically *forget none*, or *forget not*, or *don't forget*. Look what he says in Verse 2:

Psalm 103:2

***Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget none of His benefits;***

Don't forget. If you're going to worship God from your heart with all that is within you to bless His holy Name, you've got to not forget His benefits. Forget none of His benefits is a most emphatic way to say remember all. Call these to mind. Don't let these realities escape your notice and your reflection, your thoughts, all His benefits. Look at that emphasis on *all*.

Psalm 103:3

***Who pardons all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases;***

He's saying, "Remember," and what he does here in this next section is he basically says to remember five things. So our third point, we've gone over *talk* and *remind yourself*. There were two sub-points, and now there is: *Remember*—Remember five things, and that's really what we see in Verses 3 to 5. He gives us five things. With the successive clause beginning with the pronoun *who*. ***Who pardons... Who heals... Who redeems... Who crowns... Who satisfies...*** You see five things that the Lord does. These are five benefits the psalmist says that, "Are mine." He's still looking at himself. He's saying, "Self, you are called to worship God. You're called to worship God with all your heart, and the way that you do that is you reflect on His benefits. You remember them. You don't forget them." He calls his soul to do that.

Who pardons all your iniquities,... That's the first benefit. Pardons is a word which means forgives. It can be translated as forgives. He forgives all your iniquities. He doesn't use the word *sin*. He uses the word *iniquities*. There are many different words used in the Old Testament for *sin*, for failures to obey God. The word iniquity itself is one of the more ugly words to describe sin. The main word to describe sin, in the Old Testament, is a word which means *to miss the mark*. It's to be aiming at something and to miss, to come up short. The verb that the noun *iniquities* comes from is a verb which means to bend, to twist, to distort,

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to pervert. It means to take something and to twist it from its rightful purpose and form, and to ruin it out of some selfish desire. So iniquities basically pictures how we have taken what belongs to God, and we've distorted it, and perverted it, and ruined it, and our sins are basically us doing that, every time we sin.

If you sin in anger and you yell at someone, if you say something unkind, what are you doing? You're taking the tongue God gave you to bless, and you're twisting it, the gift of speech, and you are distorting it, and you're using it to do the opposite of what you're created to do. Every sin is that way. And he says, "Listen, the amazing thing, soul, is that the Lord pardons all," and this actually says, "...my iniquities." He pardons all of them.

Think about that—all my iniquities forgiven. It's amazing that the psalmist, this is before the cross. He knows as he's read the Bible from the beginning and understood the law, that God is a God who His heart is to forgive. Now, the world misunderstands that and presumes upon that, because our God is also a holy God. He just said, "Bless His *holy* name." He's not a God like the world thinks, where they say, "To err is human, to forgive divine." There's a grain of truth in that, but they totally misuse it. They basically presume on the fact that God forgives everybody. But God is holy and He must punish sin, and He's determined to punish sin. For Him to forgive our sins is a huge thing. The passage that Ted read earlier at the beginning of the service, from Genesis 22, that was one of the ways God taught what it's going to be like, what has to happen for you to come into a relationship with Me. He was teaching this throughout the Old Testament. How hard is it for God, a holy God, to bring ugly, wicked sinners into His presence? Because that's what we are. We don't feel that way. The world doesn't say that, but the reality is the Bible says that. We deserve wrath. How hard is it for a holy God to bring filthy, dirty sinners into His presence? He's teaching that in so many ways in the Old Testament.

One of the ways He does that is in Genesis 22, where He tells Abraham, "Listen, I've called you into a covenant relationship with Myself. I'm teaching you what it means to know Me, and I'm teaching everybody else that I'm going to record this in Scripture. And the way that I deal with you is going to teach them how you come to know God. Abraham, how do you come to know Me? It's going to cost everything. It's going to cost you everything and it's going to cost ultimately Me everything." He tells him to offer his son as a sacrifice. What an unspeakable thing. If you step back for a minute, what's going on? How Abraham must have just been baffled by this. "How can this be? Especially knowing that I waited so long to have

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this son in the first place.” Remember it was 25 years after the promise of being a father of a great multitude, being a blessing to everyone, it was 25 years before he got a son Isaac. He had Ishmael through nefarious means. It wasn’t God’s child of promise, but Isaac he waited 25 years for. And the Lord one day says, “Abraham, go to the mountain that I will show you, and offer your son there as a burnt offering.” And it says Abraham got up, saddled his donkey, took Isaac and two of his servants, and he took off.

Now, the author of Romans in Chapter 4, and Hebrews in Chapter 11, gives us insight into what was going on in Abraham’s heart. Basically Abraham was convinced that if God told him to sacrifice his son, God was going to raise his son from the dead, because God had promised him that, “Through Isaac, your descendants will be named,” and Abraham knew that God was able to raise a person from the dead. So his heart is broken. He is in unspeakable grief, and then as we read earlier, when Isaac says, “Dad, where’s the lamb? We have the knife. We have the fire. We’re ready for everything, but we have no offering.” Can you imagine how the heart of Abraham must have been breaking? He doesn’t lie. He’s expressing hope in faith. “The Lord will provide. God’s going to do something, because I know He’s good.” But he goes up there and the Lord hasn’t done anything yet. He prepares the wood. He lays Isaac on the wood, and then he prepares to kill him. He raises the knife and gets this far, and God says, “No. Stop, Abraham. Abraham, Abraham, don’t harm your son. The fact that you’ve not withheld your son, your only son whom you love, from Me.” That phrase, “Your son, your only son, whom you love,” is repeated in the passage.

When I first read that and really thought about that passage, I was thinking how it seems like God is sort of twisting the knife in Abraham’s heart when He says that, because He says that in the very beginning. “Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and go and offer him.” Couldn’t he have just have said, “Take Isaac”? He said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love.” And then He says, “Since you’ve not withheld your son, your only son, whom you love, I am going to bless you. This is the way to have a relationship with Me.” And then in the mountain that the Lord has provided, there’s the ram. Suddenly it’s there. He offers the ram. Isaac and Abraham leaves thrilled. They called the place Yahweh-Yireh, Jehovah-Jireh—The Lord will provide. Moses writing about 600 years later says, “It is still said by all of the Hebrews to this day, ‘In the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.’” Fourteen hundred years later in that same area where they were 2,000 years before Christ, 2,000 years later that mountain that was out in the wilderness that he was offering a sacrifice on is actually in Jerusalem, and is where

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Jesus is the true offering of God that brings us to God. “Your son, your only son, whom you love... Abraham, I’m sparing your son, your only son, whom you love. I’m offering My Son, My only Son, whom I love. That’s what has to happen for you a sinner to be made right with me. It will cost Me everything.” So He pardons all your iniquities. He pardons you. He forgives these wicked distortions, these wicked perversions. He forgives all of them, because of the sufficiency of the offering of His Son.

Secondly, He heals all your diseases. There’s a sense in which this is the hope of the future. He heals all your diseases. But I think there’s also a spiritual element going on. Let me first of all say physically one of the things I think we take for granted is how well we tend to be. When you start coughing and you get sick, you’re like, “I can’t believe I’m sick again. Man, I was just sick six months ago or two years ago. I can’t believe I’m sick again.”

The more you learn about germs and the more you learn about stuff in the environment and how much is actually on our skin, I’m not going to go there for very long, because it’s just too discouraging, but I mean, we’ve got stuff all over us, inside us, that could kill us, but it doesn’t, because He’s healing you. He’s Jehovah-Rapha, The Lord who heals you. In fact, that name is given in Exodus 15. I think there’s a spiritual meaning even behind this, because in Exodus 15 after they come out of bondage in Egypt, the Lord tells them, “Listen, if you will be faithful to Me, then the diseases that came upon Egypt will not come upon you.” I think He’s saying basically not just about physical diseases, but He’s talking about the spiritual consequences of sin. “Everything related to the curse of sin, I’m healing. Everything that is ugly in this life, I am healing that.”

Now, ultimately that’s in Heaven, and so this makes us look forward to that. But He’s going to heal everything. How beautiful that is for the parent of a child with a severe, life-threatening disease, or a disease that alters their ability to function, to know that He is the Lord who will heal us. This is temporary. He heals all your diseases.

Thirdly, He redeems your life from the pit. Remember that He pardons your iniquities. Remember He heals your diseases. He heals all your iniquities, all your diseases, and thirdly: ***Who redeems your life from the pit...*** He redeems your life from destruction. This is a picture of salvation again, the redemption price. In fact, the word *redeem* here is an important word in the Old Testament, and in the formation of the doctrine of salvation. It’s the word *gaal*, גָּאַל and it is a verb

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which means to redeem, to ransom, to play the part of a redeemer, to play the part of a near kinsman. We have a noun that comes from that, *goel*, גֹּאֵל and that's a key word in the book of Ruth, coming from passages in Leviticus, which talk about the redeemer.

One of the things that God did, again, in picturing, "What has to happen for you to dwell with Me in Heaven?" all these different threads in the Old Testament that come together beautifully in the Person and work of Jesus, all pointing to Him. Here's another one. As would happen in a fallen world, there would be times where people would get into financial hardship. Maybe their crops failed, and so Jews would have to sell their ancestral land that they were to keep in their family. Sometimes they would have to even sell themselves into slavery to pay debts. And so a Hebrew, a Jew, would be a slave to another Jew. Well, that was temporary. They were supposed to be released at some point in time, but they also could be redeemed. They were to be released, but their land would sometimes be held longer until the Day of Jubilee, but they could be redeemed. That was when a near-kinsman, a family member, could come and pay a price and redeem the land, pay the redemption price. It had to be a near-kinsman, someone in your family to redeem you. How is it that you're delivered? How is it that we're delivered, redeemed? How are we delivered from the pit? How are we delivered from hell? God had to send to us a near-kinsman to pay the redemption price. We were bound for hell. We were bound for destruction. We were enslaved, remember? Everyone who sins is the slave of sin. We were the slaves of Satan. How can we be delivered from that? We need a near-kinsman. Jesus is our near-kinsman. God would send His Son who would be bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, and He would pay for our sins at Calvary. He would pay the price. What was the price? It was to be made sin. It was to have the sins of everyone who would ever believe. It was to have the iniquities of everyone who would ever believe, put to His account, and He was to be treated as if He had done all of those vile and wicked things. That's what was happening at Calvary. God made Him who knew no sin, to be sin. On the cross, He becomes sin. He's abandoned by the Father, and He hanging there in a sense alone, bearing the wrath of a holy God, He pays the redemption price, and then He says, "It is Finished!" right before He dies. "It is Finished!" and then He says, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit. It is Finished!" In the language Jesus spoke, those words that are there in our text, would be stamped on legal documents. "It is finished," is basically the way we would say, "Paid in full." The price is paid, every bit of it.

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So the psalmist says, “How can you not be worshiping God when you realize He redeems your life from the pit? He crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion.” The words lovingkindness and compassion are such precious words. David reminds himself that these are attributes of God. Each word occurs four times in the Psalm. Lovingkindness occurs four times, Verse 4, Verse 8, Verse 11, and Verse 17. Compassion occurs four times, Verse 4, Verse 8, and twice in Verse 13. God is a God of lovingkindness. This is the word *chesed*, **חֶסֶד** in Hebrew. It’s basically love and mercy wrapped up together. To say that God is a God of lovingkindness is the Old Testament way of saying what the New Testament says when it says God is love. His *chesed* is that kind of statement. It’s love and mercy. It’s freely given from a greater to a lesser. It’s from someone who has the power to alleviate suffering, who when they look at the suffering, they see the need. Their heart is disposed to help. Their heart is disposed to enter into the situation. That is what the God of the Bible is. He is a God of lovingkindness.

People look around at the world and say, “How can He be a God of lovingkindness? Look at the misery.” The God of the Bible is a God of lovingkindness. The reason we don’t see it is because of all of the effects of sin, and He’s also a God who’s holy. But it’s His disposition to come into your misery, into your darkness, and be with you and help you. He’s a God of compassion. This is the deep love that comes from a natural bond. In Isaiah 49:15, the Lord says, “Shall a nursing mother forget the child nursing at her breast? Shall she have no compassion on the child nursing? Though she forget, I’ll not forget you.” The compassion of a mother to the child is the same word. God has that kind of compassion, and of course He uses it here in this passage again in Verse 13.

Psalm 103:13

***Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.***

It’s the nature of God to feel this kind of bond, a natural bond. We’re created in His image. His heart reaches out to us. This is who God is. This is something to be encouraged about. How can you be in despair, O my soul, when you look at who God is? He crowns you with that. This is what He puts on your head, and He crowns us. It’s amazing. He crowns us. God wills that we rule. If you’re a Christian, you are going to reign with Christ Jesus. You are going to judge the angels. Why? I don’t know, but God has made you and destined you to rule. He crowns you. He satisfies your years with good things so that your youth is renewed

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like the eagle. He gives you every good thing. Just think about all the good things in life. He satisfies you with a morning like today. I mean, it was a little cool walking in the cold air. I was like, “Wow, I’m not ready for winter,” and yet there’s something about the beauty of fall, isn’t it? That coolness, and the color still in the trees, and your heart is gladdened by that. This is a token of God’s kindness. Why do the leaves turn like they do? It’s because God thought of that and He wanted to bless you and satisfy your years with good things to give you strength, just looking at the beauty around you, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle. The eagle is a picture of power and majestic endurance, soaring above the heavens with great strength. God makes you like that.

The psalmist says, “How can you be in despair? How can you be sitting here fretting and doing nothing? Worship God! Bless the Lord, O my soul.” And the more you look at who God is and what He’s done, the more you have to worship Him, and the more you want to help other people see He’s worthy of worship. So the way we get out of the blues is we first of all take our self by the scruff of the neck, and we have a serious heart-to-heart talk with yourself. I think that’s something we need to do more of. Haven’t you had that thought before? “I know I’m not right, right now, what I’m saying. I’m fretting.” I’m in a conversation with a friend or with Patti, and, “This is not good. I need to stop and just talk to myself, and then I need to remind myself what I’m here for. I’m here to glorify God. I’m not my own. And how do I do that? How do I get my heart involved? I’ve got to think about who God is. The Lord is worthy of joyful people who are excited about what He’s doing in their lives. May God help us be those kind of people.

Let’s go to Him in prayer...

Father, we thank You for this time to reflect on our own hearts and our need of grace. We confess that we are people who are forgetful and we need to remember. Help us, Lord. Help us not to be deceived, and to not go along with the flow of the natural thought processes that come into our lives. Help us to take Your word and battle in our own hearts in a way this week that would be more victorious. And as we come into the period of Thanksgiving, Lord, when the world talks about being thankful and they don’t really understand, may Your people be a thankful people. May we be filled with joy. Even as we gather together with family and friends around the holidays, may we shine the light of joy in Christ. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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