

## Psalm 103:1-5

We don't realize how absolutely sinful we are until we study the Bible. O you and I can get upset over some corruption in government, a robbery or a mass murder but even hearing of these things doesn't convey to us how rotten the sinful nature of people really is.

St. Paul in his letter to the Romans speaks of the inner wickedness of the human heart. He says that although people knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him. All people are born with a natural knowledge of God-, which they distort. All around them they see evidence of God's power. They see the wonders of the heavens and the marvels of life on earth. They see His goodness, how He day after day provides for the needs of all living things and still choose to ignore and deny what their senses tell them. You will even hear him or her saying something like, "No reputable scientist disputes that evolution is fact." That isn't so but that is how wicked men talk. The wicked fail to acknowledge that every beat of their heart, every breath of air, every crust of bread is a gift from a gracious God.

People do not take God into consideration as they make plans and live out their lives. They act and speak as if God didn't exist. His will means nothing to them and they are not thankful. They act as if they deserved all the good things that they daily receive. Everyone, you and I included, behave like spoiled children. We receive gift after gift and then complain because we don't get more.

The ingratitude of people leads them to spiral downward into every kind of wickedness, moral depravity, greed, hatred of others and hatred of God

The only way this march to hell could be stopped was by God intervening and that is exactly what He did. Out of amazing love He pitied the human race and sent His dear Son into the world to save sinners. Jesus came to save those who refused to acknowledge Him. He sacrificed Himself for ungrateful men and women- yes, for His very enemies. By His life, suffering and death He appeased the anger of God and earned the forgiveness of all sins for all people. He sent the Holy Spirit into the world to touch people by His Law and Gospel. By the Law He makes them aware of their sins and lost condition and then by His Gospel He causes them to believe and so to receive the forgiveness that Jesus, God's Son earned. Moreover, the Lord gives those who believe an entirely different view of life. He gives them a new heart, which begins to appreciate His goodness. The eyes of believers are opened and they begin to appreciate God's blessings and they begin to thank Him. David who wrote this psalm enjoyed such a change in his attitude. In the words of David we can look into the heart of a believer. A believer will praise God because he sees God's goodness.

David in this psalm is talking to himself. That's not bad. Sometimes we should talk to ourselves. He says to himself, "Praise the Lord my soul. Praise, bless the Lord, my soul." He urges himself to celebrate, to adore and thank His Savior God.

This praise is from David's innermost being. It is born of conviction. We hear of people praising God out of shallow emotionalism. God is not pleased with just the honor of men's lips. He wants the praise of their hearts- hearts that are grateful for His forgiveness. David saw the works of the Lord and he was moved to praise the Lord.

"Praise His holy name." This is an expression that takes some thinking. God's name is holy. It is absolutely good and entirely sinless. God's name is everything that He tells us about Himself in His Word. Think of looking at a beautiful diamond. As you look

at it you turn and each facet reveals another aspect of its beauty. So it is with God as He reveals His name. One sees more and more reason to adore Him.

David lists the blessings of God. If you read about the life of David in the Bible you see how he had reason to be thankful. David was born a nobody in an obscure village. He had been a poor shepherd boy but God took him and made him a great king. When the odds were against David, God gave him victory after victory. God delivered him from the attack of a lion and a bear. He gave David victory over the giant, Goliath. When king Saul attempted to murder him, God kept David safe. The Lord made David rich and powerful, gave him many children, forgave David's sins -and God promised that the Savior of the world would be born from David's descendants.

David reminded himself that the first and foremost of God's blessings was the forgiveness of all his sins. He tells himself, "He forgives all your sins." That means He takes away all your sins, past, present and future. Where does the Lord take them? Later in the Psalm David says He takes them away as far as the east is from the west. When people forgive, they often don't forget. When God forgives, He forgets. Since Jesus took responsibility and suffered for man's sins they are disposed of permanently.

David felt as if a great burden had been lifted from his shoulders. He was free. It was that joyful, grateful feeling that made him urge himself to praise God.

You and I have also been freed from the crushing weight of our sins. We are able to breath the pure, clean air of freedom from all guilt and condemnation.

David, upon counting his blessings remembered how God had healed him from all his diseases. There wouldn't be any diseases such as flu, colds, cancer and heart disease had people not sinned. Ever since our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned, disease and death have been with us. Disease is a punishment for sin. Sometimes people bring a particular disease upon themselves through the abuse of their bodies. Usually diseases come not because of any particular sin but because of the general condition of sin in the world. When David looked back he saw the goodness of the Lord. David had lived a very rugged life. I suspect that he had plenty of cuts and bruises. He had known fever and the other sicknesses that are common to us all. God had healed him time and again. Come to think of it, how often hasn't God healed us from our diseases? Even when the Lord allows a hardship to trouble His people it is not because their sins are not forgiven; rather these diseases serve to discipline God's children and to draw them closer. David knew God would heal him from all his diseases when He took him to heaven. Then with a glorified body David would never again see illness.

David said to his soul, "He redeems your life from the pit." The pit can mean hell. Hell with its terrors is the ultimate punishment for sin. David knew that God had redeemed him from hell. That means that God had paid the price-the ransom so that David would not have to see the pit. We know how God did that. Jesus offered Himself- His holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death or redeem sinners.

"Soul," David said, "He crowns you with love and compassion. There is quite a picture here. Years ago people who won an Olympic event received a crown. It was a glorious day when one was crowned a winner. Crowns are not hidden; they are made to be seen. David saw that he was crowned with the love of God. He was crowned with the mercy of God. This was an honor he had not deserved. It was a gift of God's pure grace.

As he looked at what God had done for him, David was moved to praise the Lord from the bottom of his heart. The Lord had blessed him physically and had blessed him

with mercy, love and forgiveness so that he was constantly cheered and refreshed. “So that his youth was renewed like the eagles.” David noticed how the eagle lost his feathers each year and then the Lord caused them to grow back so that soon the eagle was off again gliding and soaring. In a similar way God had renewed and refreshed David.

Folks talk about being young at heart. Believers are really young at heart. To be young at heart is to keep a positive and joyful attitude, to be filled with faith and hope. God gives such an outlook to His people. Even when their bodies become old, they are inwardly renewed by the message of God’s love and mercy in Jesus Christ. Finally, they know that at the end of their time their Lord will also renew their bodies as well.

Dear friends, our Lord has come to us and has blessed us. See all the things He has done for you; how He has, for Jesus’ sake, loved you, forgiven you. See how richly and daily He cares for you.

Have a talk with yourself. Say, “See what great things the Lord has done for you. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Sing and speak His praises. Dedicate your life to thanking Him. Amen.