

The Remembering Song (Psalm 103)

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we thank you. We praise you for this part of your word. Help us now as we hear from it. Remind us of all of your benefits that you've given to us personally, to your people through history, because of your compassionate love.

And remind us that you rule forever and ever. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Loving can hurt. Loving can hurt sometimes.

But it's the only thing that I know. When it gets hard, you know it can get hard sometimes. It's the only thing that makes us feel alive. We keep this love in a photograph.

We make these memories for ourselves where our eyes are never closing, hearts are never broken, and times forever frozen. The power of remembering.

It's one of the keys to a hit song, isn't it? Ed Sheeran with billions of streams. He knows that. He knows that. His lyrics, I think one of the reasons his song is so successful is that his lyrics are full of his own memories and his own experiences.

[1 : 0 6] He just leaves it all out there, doesn't he? For example, the song I just quoted, Photograph, it describes his own experience, right? Of having a long-distance relationship with his girlfriend. There's another song which I really like.

It's called A Fire Love. It's him describing watching his granddad kind of just wither away with Alzheimer's disease. He puts it all out there. And it doesn't even matter if we're not British, we're not red-headed, we're not average height and build.

Look, as Ed Sheeran remembers, we do too. We kind of join in as he sings. Right? When Ed Sheeran sings, You can keep me inside the pocket of your ripped jeans.

We go, oh man. I get you. I get you. I feel that. When he sings, I don't think I fit in at this party. Everyone's got so much to say.

We go, yep, I've been there. I've been to those parties before. Or even when his heart just breaks and just says, I miss the way you make me feel. Same here.

[2 : 0 6] Okay? It's that connection as he remembers, right? As he remembers. He gets how we feel. And he knows how to bring it up. That's the power of remembering. That's the power of remembering. And this idea of remembering, I want to say, is at the heart of today's psalm as well.

Today's psalm is all about remembering. Did you notice as we read it, what David says? Check out verse 2 in particular. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Remember. Right? Remember. He knows that even as God's people who are singing this psalm, it is easy for us, for them, to forget. I mean, we find it hard enough to remember all kinds of things.

Right? Who knows more than five phone numbers in there? Off by heart. Yeah, it's tricky, isn't it? We struggle to remember phone numbers, appointments.

Who remembers what songs we sang last week at church? Anyone? I don't know. Who remembers the sermon? Who was preaching? Who knows? Look, and particularly when we're stressed, when we're upset, when we're struggling with temptation, it is so easy, isn't it, to forget.

- [3 : 23] To forget the God of the universe. Who he is. What is like. We need help to remember. And that's so, so here we have Psalm 103, which invites us to forget not all his benefits.
- So I want to invite you to join David as he sings through the remembering song. To sing through the remembering song. Today, I just want to share four things that Psalm 103 invites us to remember.
- And we'll do it slightly differently today. The Psalm is meant to be felt, to be responded to. So I'm going to go through each of these four points, but not in too much detail, because each time, after each point, I want to leave some time for us to reflect.
- So after each point, we'll do something slightly different. We'll just pause. Now I invite you to talk to God about what you've just remembered. We're not just here to remember in our heads, but let's remember here too.
- First thing I think David does at the start of the Psalm is to remember God's grace personally. That's the first thing he invites us to do, remember God's grace personally.
- [4 : 25] You notice how he sings, don't forget all his benefits in verse two. And then from verses three to five, he lists a few of them out, doesn't he? Who forgives all your sins, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.
- Note how personal it is, right? Each time it says your sins, your diseases, your life. It's speaking to one person. It's in the singular, in the original.
- So he's speaking to you one by one. It's a personal reminder. And notice what he says. He crowns you with love and compassion. That word love, it deserves an underline.
- It deserves a bit of bolding, okay? Or highlighting because it's not just any kind of love. It's loyal, promise-keeping love. It's a very special word in the Hebrew, *chesed*.
- It's repeated throughout this particular Psalm. Essentially, he's saying this, remember his unstoppable, never-ending, promise-keeping, loyal love that we don't deserve, right?
- [5 : 36] So that's why I say, David wants us to remember his grace to you personally. And if you're here and you're a Christian, we can sing Psalm 103.
- We can sing this list, actually, in even greater colour. Because the Lord has given us all these benefits in Jesus Christ, right?
- Because Jesus Christ died and rose again, we get the full photograph, as it were, of what God's grace to us looks like personally. Because, have a look again.
- Verse 3, who forgives all your sins. Because Jesus took, as we sang, the Father's wrath against our sin, we're forgiven on that rugged cross. All our sins were paid in full.
- He's like a judge who's declared you guilty and then goes to jail for you. Amazing, isn't it? Forgiven of all our sins. He says, He heals all your diseases.
- [6 : 35] We've been healed, right? Jesus, the great physician, the one who can raise the dead, who can heal the sick and wounded. He's mended our souls at the cross. He's sustained our lives. He has healed us in so many different ways.
- And if you're in Him, the Holy Spirit lives in you, right? And this Holy Spirit, God Himself, is slowly, surely healing you from the inside out, weeding out every stain of sin, of spiritual disease in us.
- One day, and one day, the Lord will raise our bodies like He raised Jesus. We'll be fully healed. Heals all your diseases. Redeems your life from the pit.
- Redeems your life from the pit. We need that reminder, don't we? Much of our fears, I think, in this life, we get anxious a lot. We get worried a lot. I think much of our fears really come down to this.

We've forgotten God's grace to us personally. Maybe you're here and you've been so stressed out this week or you've been so worried. Maybe there are challenges in your life and you think, I need to pull myself out of this mess that I dug myself into.

[7 : 45] Remember, God redeems your life from the pit. God's already rescued you from the worst, worst pit through Jesus.

Perhaps you and I have been a bit ungrateful recently to God. We've just assumed His grace. Or maybe we think, God, you're holding something back from me, aren't you?

Then we need to remember, He satisfies us with good things. Everything we have is a gift from God. Maybe you and I are here and we feel tired and worn out.

It's been a hectic week. Then remember, remember, verse 5, that your youth is renewed like the eagles. Okay? God is one who renews your strength each day.

Not you. Not what you drink. God does it. So how about that? But praise God. He reminds us to remember His grace to you personally.

[8 : 46] So shall we do that? I want to invite you to bow your heads and try it with me. I'll leave you some time. Feel free to read verses 3 to 5 again and just pray and then I'll join in.

God, God, God, God, God, God, we want to praise you and we want to remember all your benefits to us.

God, you've forgiven not just all my sins but all my sins. Thank you that in Jesus, God, I have a personal relationship with you.

Thank you. Thank you, God, that you've healed me. You've mended my soul. You've carried me through all the different illnesses in my life. God, would you carry through what I'm facing right now?

My sickness, my depression, my anxiety. And God, thank you for pulling me out of the pit that I dug myself into.

[10 : 18] God, could you please help me not to climb back into those old sinful ways? Remind me. Help me remember I belong to you now. And thank you.

Thank you, God. You satisfy my desires of good things. help me not to look to my spouse, my girlfriend, my job, my achievements to find security or comfort.

God, help me find my satisfaction in you. Help me celebrate you. You are the giver, not your gifts. Thank you. Thank you for all your benefits and your grace to me personally.

Amen. Amen. All right. Psalm 103, verse 7. From verse 7, notice it changes tack a little bit. Okay? David kind of starts mentioning another guy, Moses.

He starts talking about God's deeds to the people of Israel, doesn't he? So David's switching from the present, kind of our world today, to the past. The personal, our own personal benefits to something that's a bit broader, to God's people.

[11 : 29] Through history. He talks about the mighty acts of the Lord during this time. Some of you may have grown up in church, you might have heard some of these Bible stories of how God worked amazing miracles to really preserve and rescue a people for himself.

People who were nobodies in the land of Canaan. He brought them out, called them a people, rescued them from slavery, and then gave them a land. It was God's people and God's place under God's rule for a time, wasn't it?

And it was so good. And so David is essentially saying, here's another way I want you to remember. I want you to remember by looking at your family history. See all the ways that God has worked things out so you could be here today, so that you could inherit the promises of God.

You could imagine the people of Israel singing through this part of the psalm, right? Psalm 103. Israel, remember how compassionate the Lord was. your ancestors, they were slaves in Egypt, but God got them out.

Praise God. Remember that. Israel, remember, you were a bit naughty in the wilderness, weren't you? You rebelled a bit, complained and grumbled. Your hearts were still in chain to that old life.

[12 : 42] You'd rather be slaves again than to walk under God's rule. But praise God, he was not angry with you forever. He did not totally wipe you out. That was God's grace.

And Israel, remember, God did keep his promises. You wandered and wandered and yet God got you into the promised land. You were for a time God's people in God's place under God's rule.

Praise God. Remember him. Some of us have a love-hate attitude with the Old Testament. Like, we try and read it for a while and then we get stuck at Leviticus and then we stop forever.

Right? Or maybe we just read it and we go, oh, that's okay, but I just want to get Jesus. Right? Or maybe we just have this view of them as like, oh, who are these people?

How are they relevant to me? Sometimes we see them as if they're, they're kind of like old childhood photos. You know, the ones that some of your parents might keep in a cupboard that just pull out and kind of point and go, oh, remember when you were like two years old and you look like this and you're trying to run away from them as fast as possible.

[13 : 49] Look, I'm not always proud of my own childhood photos. Right? Sometimes they remind me how young and immature and silly I was. And yeah, they can be helpful. They can help me to see how much God has changed me over time.

Right? Even though I have a long way to go, I can look back and go, wow, wow, I was like that. Thank you, Lord. Thank you that you're changing me. And so look, sometimes looking back in history helps us to see that God is still at work in his people today.

Can't it? Yeah? What David invites the Israelites to do in this part of Psalm 103, we can do too. We can do it too. Verses 10 to 12, I think, really sharpen this idea of remembering God together.

Together. Because you might notice the language actually changes, right? From verse 10 onwards, he says, he does not treat us as our sins deserve. He does not repay us according to our iniquities.

Right? Before it was very personal and now it becomes a bit more of a public praise, a public remembering. Right? Back when the Bible was much thinner, God made his ways known to Moses, right?

[15 : 02] And what is he trying to say here? He does not treat us as our sins deserve nor repay us according to our iniquities. What is verse 10 all about? Here David's referring to a very specific moment in God's history.

Some of you may know this part. There was a certain, certain situation where God revealed himself very clearly to Moses. It was a very specific revealing term.

And you can read about it in Exodus 34. Exodus chapter 34 verse 6 to 7. And let me read to you what the Lord does. Moses is kind of hiding behind a rock. Okay?

Because to see God directly would be too, it would be too brilliant and he would die. And then the Lord kind of passes, passes in front of Moses proclaiming, and he says this, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in, again, loyal love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. This is the Lord himself revealing who he is to people.

[16 : 18] Revealing himself to Moses who then shares it with us. Only the God of the Bible is both anger and love, justice and mercy.

This is what David wants us to remember at this point in the psalm, right? God does not leave the guilty unpunished. He does not. And yet in his loyal love he forgives wickedness and rebellion and sin.

He does not deal with us according to our sins, according to what we deserve. Is that a contradiction? Can God be kind of both at the same time? Well, he can.

He can, and he has in Jesus. In Jesus. Because on the cross, this is the gospel, right? On the cross, when Jesus Christ, he dies on the cross to save sinners.

There you have God's justice. He pays for sin fully. And there you have God's mercy too. He does not give us what we deserve for our sins. His justice and mercy come together.

[17 : 19] That is who God is like. That is his character revealed in Christ and what he did on the cross. Right? One author puts it this way. Only the cross would reveal what it costs God to punish sin without punishing us.

And isn't this psalm a wonderful description of it when we read it clearly? Right? Look at verses 11 and 12. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his loyal love to those who fear him.

And as far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed our transgressions from us. What an amazing description. Right?

Infinite distance, east to west, to picture God's infinite love poured out on his beloved people. In Jesus Christ, God forgives all our sins.

Not most of it. Not half, and then you make up the rest. All of it. That's the gospel. And David reminds us and invites us to remember together, right, God's grace to our fathers, to us yesterday, and to his people yesterday.

[18 : 25] And so then we would trust him and say, this is the same God. I can keep trusting him because he's the same today. Yeah. So not only is it a personal reminder of his grace, now we have a reminder together of God's grace to his people right throughout history.

So why don't we have a look at this and let's reflect on that in prayer together. You want to try that with me? So again, take a moment, reflect on this, then I'll join in.

RYAN Thank you.

Oh God, miracle worker, way maker, light in the darkness, that's who you are and you revealed that to Moses, to your people in history.

And thank you that you have revealed that also to us. Because at the cross we saw your justice and your mercy. Where Jesus hung there, taking the punishment for our sins, we see grace and we see your justice satisfied.

[20 : 04] Thank you. We don't deserve it. Thank you for removing our transgressions from us completely, fully. Thank you, Lord. And Father, we get anxious about our future here as God's people.

We're not very big in the big scheme of things. And yet you've been gracious to your people through history. So, Father, would you help us as PCBC trust that you'll look after us in the years to come?

Father, if you planned our salvation long ago in Christ, then thank you. And then remind us, help me, help us to remember that you will work everything in my life for good, even the hard stuff.

God, if you're slow to anger and quick to forgive, could you help us then to be like this, to imitate your character? I confess, Lord, sometimes I'm not like this with people, with brothers and sisters here at church.

Help us. Help us to imitate your unchanging character through history. Thank you. Thank you, Father. In Jesus' name. Amen. All right.

[21 : 17] Let's have a look at verses 13 to 18. As we look at this, I want to just maybe preface it by just sharing something. There's two kinds of relationships, I think, in the world, right?

Any relationship that you have in your life, it can fall into one of two different categories, right? There are the kind of business or transactional relationships, right? I'll give you a burger because you gave me some money.

That's a transactional business relationship. I'll do work for you because you give me a salary or a fee. Okay? That's a transactional relationship. So there's transactional relationships, and then there are covenant relationships.

Covenant relationship that's built around a promise or an agreement. Sharon and I, we love each other, not because we get paid for it, right? No way.

But because of the wedding promises that we made before God. I love my children, not because they pay me, not because they give me stuff, although they do give lots of lovely smiles and lots of laughs.

[22 : 20] But I love them primarily because I promise to care for them as a dad. We give our time and energy here as members of PCBC, right? Not because we get paid for it.

I don't know anyone here that, you know, serves in lots of different ways and gets paid for it. But because we made a commitment to love and care for each other here as PCBC. We pledged ourselves.

So that's a covenant relationship. And with God, we don't have this kind of relationship, a business one. We have this one, a covenant relationship. Notice how in verses 13 to 18, David just brings in fatherly language.

Did you notice how he just started talking about God as father, right? From verse 13. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him. Did you notice that? God is our father.

He knows we're dust. He knows we're weak. And yet he loves us. That doesn't sound like a business. That sounds like a covenant one. One that is based on a promise he made to love us.

[23 : 20] That's good, isn't it? Psalm 103 reminds us that the God of the Bible is not a distant God who just makes transactions, okay? There's so many gods, right, in other religions.

That's it, right? You sacrifice to me, I'll give you stuff, okay? You do this for me, I'll give you stuff. It can be a cat that's waving at you. It can be a career or money.

These are all idols. These are all other gods that we treat as transactional. Not with the God of the Bible. Not with the God of the Bible. He is a father first who first adopts us into his family through Jesus Christ, right?

And then we have a relationship. Then we love and serve him. That's so different, isn't it? That's so different. The Apostle John puts it this way. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God?

And that is what we are. Remember. Remember. David says, remember God's fatherly love. He's not just a parachute we put on. He's not just insurance cover we buy. He's dad.

[24 : 24] He's dad who runs towards us with open arms and clothes us with his finest robes. Even when we are so rebellious and even when we are so unimportant compared to him.

Verse 15 and 16. What are we? What are we in God's world? We are like flowers that blow away. We are like grass that just withers. And yet our heavenly Father is glad to embrace us.

This is what God is like. In fact, the more weak and needy we realize we are, I think the more our Father can show compassion to us and work in us as children. Verses 17 to 18 tell us this, right?

When we are secure in God's fatherly love, right? Then it frees us to obey him, to grow in his likeness, his righteousness. You see that?

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. So when we remember and know that God loves us, we are secure in that.

[25 : 29] Then we want to obey him. We want to live for him. Real lasting obedience doesn't come by force or by sheer willpower.

Some of us know this. We've grown up in homes where we're just told to do stuff. Why? Because I said so. So we do it. But it's not from the heart. Real lasting obedience, I think, comes when we are so secure and safe in the knowledge that our dad loves us.

And then we'll do whatever for him. This is so powerful, even if you don't have a good example of this fatherly love in your life. In the God of the Bible, we have one.

We have one. Let me share with you an example. There's a man called Henry Light. Henry Light. He was an Anglican pastor and songwriter. Yeah, they dressed like that back in those days.

It's okay. Right? Don't be scared. Henry had a terrible childhood. I wonder if some of you can relate with him. His father left Henry at a young age.

[26 : 31] Just sent him to boarding school. And eventually, his father actually just remarried. And then after that, his father began to write letters to him. And he wouldn't actually sign them as your father. He would sign them as your uncle.

Henry, he literally experienced a rejection of his father. And yet, this is how he processes Psalm 103, 13 to 18.

Because he kind of took this psalm and he turned it into a hymn, a song. And let me read them to you. This is verse 3 of the hymn called Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven. He says this.

This is Henry Light's view of his heavenly dad, right?

It's healthy. It's secure. So warm. That's the power of the gospel. It can even reconstruct what it means to feel loved by a dad. And even if you and I have had disappointing parents, right?

[27 : 39] When you remember God's fatherly love, you can have the same assurance as Henry did, as many others have. All right, so David reminds us here, remember God's fatherly love.

Can we do that together? Again? Yeah? Feel free to reflect. Reflect how you've been led through the psalm. And then I'll join in. Amen. Oh, Father.

Father. Wow. Father, we thank you. Thank you for your compassion on us, your children. Thank you that we can even call you, Father. I pray that you would help us to remember this, that you are our loving dad.

Father, I want to thank you for forgiving many of us loving fathers who have mirrored and reflected some of your care and your compassion. Thank you. Thank you for those glimpses of you.

And Father, I want to pray as well for those with dads that disappointed us or left us or hurt us.

[29 : 09] Maybe they don't understand us or speak our language. And yet, Father, remind us again that you love us. You love us like the father we could never have on earth.

And so, Father, thank you. Thank you for nourishing us, for disciplining us, instructing us, guiding us, shepherding us. Help us to be so secure in your love through the gospel, through Christ, our brother, that we would obey you gladly and make us more like you, please.

Thank you, Father. Amen. Have you guys found this remembering song? Is it good for your soul? I hope so. I hope so. That's the power, isn't it, of memory.

Of memory. We've remembered God's grace to us personally. In our past, we've remembered his fatherly love. And I think it kind of just builds up to the end, doesn't it, right?

In our last snapshot here, David, he's almost tilting the camera upwards now. And he invites us to remember his universal rule. Do we see that? Do we see that? Now we get a glimpse of who is really in charge of this world.

[30 : 18] The Lord has established his throne in heaven, verse 19. And his kingdom rules over all. What a picture. What inspiration to praise God and no one else.

And look, verse 20. We don't do it alone, right? Praise the Lord, you his angels. Wow. Who is joining the choir here? You mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

Verse 21. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts. You his servants to do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere and his dominion. Wow.

Wow. As we remember and progress, as we remind ourselves, as our spiritual amnesia just drops off through the psalm, right? It all culminates in a great chorus and symphony of universal praise.

Surely nothing is better than this. We are joining in when we praise God. And not just with 50, 60 people here. We're joining in with angels, with all of creation, praising God as he rightly should be praised.

[31 : 17] So maybe you are the only Christian in your family. Or maybe at school, you are just one handful out of a sea of people who don't follow Jesus.

Maybe you feel disappointed sometimes when you come here and you think, is it really worth it? It's not many of us. But remember God's universal praise, right? We are just joining in.

We are just joining in a much bigger, much bolder, much more beautiful group praising God together. Just today, thousands have worshipped Jesus the King here in Aotearoa, right?

Just today. Not just in our church, but in hundreds of churches across the land. And as the earth rotates, the Pacific Islands, Australia joins in. The house churches in China too.

Friends and family in Guangzhou, in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Vietnam, elsewhere throughout Asia. Brothers and sisters all over the place. They're joining in this praise, aren't they?

[32 : 18] Praise the Lord. Praise you in the Middle East. Praise you in Africa, in Europe, wherever you wanted to fly after COVID finished. Praise you in South America and America too.

Praise him because he has established his throne in heaven. And his kingdom rules over all. Over all. And for many of us, we may be separate physically now with so many of those praise groups.

And yet the Bible reminds us, right? One day our worship is going to be complete. What we have here is a tiny glimpse of a day coming soon where everyone will remember God's universal rule.

In the final chapters of the Bible, right? Here is a picture, for example. Let me read to you Revelation 5 where the Apostle John gives us a glimpse into the future. And he says this, Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands.

Ten thousand times ten thousand. I think that's a lot. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders in a loud voice. They were saying, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.

[33 : 29] Praise God. Praise God. And once we've reminded ourselves of all of God's benefits to us through the gospel, through Jesus, what else is there left to do but to praise?

To join in with all of creation, saying, Praise the Lord, O my soul. Praise His holy name. That's Psalm 103. That's where it ends. And I think that's where we should stop and pray.

Let's do that. Praise the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

Our Father, thank you for these wonderful stirring words. We are forgetful. Forgive us. But we are rejoicing because you have reminded us.

You have reminded us of your grace to us in Jesus. We are truly ransomed and healed and restored and forgiven. You are truly rich in love, slow to anger, abounding, and loyal, promise-keeping, unshaken love.

[34 : 30] Lord, could you ground us so deeply in this? Could you remind us often and often and often so that we would never forget? And would this shape us in Christ to obey you as your beloved children?

Remind us, Lord, that we do not sing these praises alone. Remind us that we are joining in with the rest of the earth. We pray that we are beautiful. Amen.