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March 22, 2015

## PSALM 103-104

Psalms – Book IV – Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, it's pretty obvious outside that spring is coming. We had snow this week and challenges of some of the weather, even some of the rain that may come is challenging for us, but we do have this sense that spring is in the air and that it's coming. There's newness about that. Lord, I pray that you would do some new things in our hearts this spring as well. Cause us to see you in some new ways that we haven't seen before. Give us a greater sense of who you are and how we might serve you more effectively in new ways that maybe we haven't been able to do before. I ask for newness to take place in our relationship with you and newness to take place in our relationship with each other and within families as husbands and wives are renewing their relationship together and children are getting to know their parents even better. Lord, I just pray that you would help the folks in this church to experience that newness that comes in the seasons of our life with you, that this might be a time that takes place. We are humbled by your greatness. As we look at these psalms today we just ask that you would be speaking to us, teaching us. We open your word with anticipation knowing that you always speak to us. We're eager to hear what you have to say to us today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please open your Bible to Psalm 103. God speaks to us each week and I would encourage you to ask the Lord what He wants you to know this week and I would divide it into three categories if I were you. In fact you could jot this down every week. You ought to be able to walk away from the Lord's teaching, what the Lord might say to you in three areas. What does He want you to know? What does He want you to feel? And what does He want you to do?

As I'm preparing the message that God is laying on your heart, I start early in the week and I live it during the week because I know God is going to do some things in my life in regards to that. It comes out of my experience in the week, but also out of my study so that I'm thinking what is God saying to me that He might want me to pass onto you, that He would want you to know and to feel and to do. But that's personalized in many ways, so I hope that as we go through today you'll get an experience with God's word that will touch you in some particular ways.

Psalm 103 is an important psalm. You might underline it, circle it, somehow mark it in your Bible. If you have an electronic Bible maybe there's a place in your notes – you know sometimes in an electronic Bible you can mark it. Somehow mark it as a key psalm. It's a go-to psalm. Whenever you're struggling in an area of your life, Psalm 103 is a good one.

Spurgeon, the great theologian said that Psalm 103 is so filled with God's glory that it represents the whole Bible. It's got the whole picture of the Bible in Psalm 103. So it's a great psalm for us to go to to understand a little bit more about who God is.

Notice it says it's a psalm of David. We don't know exactly when it took place during David's life. But studying the life of David is fascinating because there are a lot of ups and downs, a lot of struggles and challenges that he faces.

I want you to see who the audience is in verse 1. Sometimes the audience of the psalms we are reading are a people. It's a call to worship. "Everybody, come on. Let's worship the Lord," is kind of what it's saying. Sometimes the audience is God Himself when we're worshipping God. Neither of those are the case here.

Do you see who the audience is? The audience is *my soul*, he says. *Praise the LORD* (or *bless the LORD*), *my soul*. So he's talking to himself. He's talking to his soul. I would suggest that that would be a good thing for us to do regularly in a positive way.

I think negative self-talk is one of the greatest things that confines us or limits us today. It's one of the things that creates the most anxiety in our lives. Anxiety is often created by negative self-talk. You know when you say, "Oh if this were to happen, that would be bad. And if that happened then this would happen, and oh that would be terrible. And if this happened, that would be catastrophe." We start getting ourselves down this path and really nothing has happened yet. So we need to be careful about the negative self-talk in our lives. It really constrains us and hinders us and we get stuck many times because of the ways that we talk to ourselves.

Here the psalmist is giving us some things to say to ourselves. So if you want to know how to talk to yourself well and you want to curb your negative self-talk, impose these kinds of things on your thinking and God will lead you through in some positive ways.

Now I want to point out some words that you're going to see over and over again that you're going to see in the passage. I want you to understand them. The first word is that word *bless* (or *praise* in some of your translations). Either one is fine. It's the word *baruch*. It's the word that we commonly see in Psalms. It's the word bowing the knee and acknowledging someone else or lifting them up. That's what it is. It's the word *baruch*. It means to praise. We'll see it continually.

The second word you're going to see as we go forward here is the word *rakham*. *Rakham* is the word compassion. It's the word about God's compassion that forms the basis theologically in the Old Testament for what we see in the New Testament of God's mercies. So it's mercy that we understand about God and how He cares for us and He loves us and His compassion. It comes from this Old Testament concept that we're going to see – *rakham*, which is compassion.

We're also going to see the word *chesed*, which we've talked about several times. It's the love of God. It's not just love feeling kind of God. It's this covenant love where God is committed to us and it's really the basis for the New Testament theological concept of grace. The graciousness of God. All these things that we receive freely. Why? Because of who we are in Christ, because of what God has done for us. We're going to see that word continually through this passage, *chesed*.

And then we see the covenant name used for God here. Not Elohim (meaning God), not Adonai (Lord). We see Yahweh, His personal name. The covenant name for God.

Those four words are important.

One more word you might just underline or circle each time you see it in the passage is the word *all*. It's mentioned several times and it just reminds us. If you circle it all the way through, you're going to be struck by the awesomeness of God and how important it is in *all* things, and so on. So the word *all*.

Let's go back. Let me start with verse 1. It says, *Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise (or baruch) his holy name.*

Verse 2: *Praise (baruch) the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

When I start thinking about that, I don't even know all of God's benefits. There's the word *all* again. I don't even know all of God's benefits. I think about how God created us and then He gave us this world to live in. How even when we sin He redeemed us, and how once He redeemed us then we have a personal relationship with Him. I think about all these benefits. I think about having the Holy Spirit in my heart to guide me and comfort me in my life. I think about the blessings that He's given me. And then I think about my personal life, how God allows me to be a pastor here of you folks and what a blessing that is for me. How God has blessed me with a wife and five children and four grandchildren. I think of all the personal, but all the benefits.

It says *forget not all his benefits*. He's given me lots of benefits, but it's easy for me to forget those when I get a flat tire. It's easy for us to forget those benefits if your husband says something unkind to you. Or when something happens that's negative, it's hard to remember the benefits.

So again, it's the self-talk. *LORD, O my soul*, don't forget all those benefits that God has done in my life. I think that when we do that we become grateful people. I think what David is saying is, "Self, get your eyes off self and get your eyes on the Lord."

Now He's going to lead into some things that he does just to remind us of those things that God does for us. Look at verse 3 – *who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases*. That's the fourth time *all* is used, if you're keeping track. He does all kinds of things.

Verse 4 – *who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with two words – chesed*, that's the covenant faithfulness of the love of God, *and rakham*, which is *compassion*. So God's grace and mercy. He's crowned you with those things.

Verse 5 – *who satisfies your mouth (or in this case satisfies your desires, either way) with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Now what the psalmist has done going through the passage so far is taken us on a tour of life. I'm going to take you back through all of the words there and just point out the different places that he stopped to help us see the benefits.

He stopped in the courtroom, first of all (*who forgives all our sins*). He stopped in the hospital (*heals all our diseases*). He stopped in the slave market (*he redeems us*). He stopped in the throne room where He *crowns* us with *compassion and love*. He stops in the banquet hall where He satisfies our desire and He takes us to the sky where *youth is renewed like the eagle's*. Now if you have that kind of self-talk then all kinds of things are going to be better for us.

So he's talking to his soul and saying lift up your heart to the Lord and bless His holy name. Because as you do that and recognize all of His benefits, amazing things come to your life. You start recognizing that you can fly like an eagle. That's powerful, especially when we live in a world with turkeys all around. Turkeys grovel around and eat worms and grubs and all kinds of things. I think that sometimes we view ourselves as turkeys. I just like that picture that God has equipped me to fly like an eagle. That's what he's illustrating in the passage.

Let's go on. Verse 6: *The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.*

Now remember this psalm, as all the psalms from 90-106, this is the fourth book of the Psalms and are really tied into the fourth book of the Pentateuch, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. The fourth book of the Pentateuch is Numbers, and a lot of the Psalms reference right back to what's going on during that time.

Here's another example where Moses is leading the people through the wilderness, and God *made know his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel*, and they complained. I don't know if you remember or you're going to learn that because that's where we're going next after Easter. We're going to start on the book of Numbers. I'm going to take you through and we're going to see how the people complained and God demonstrated His faithfulness.

I think it's going to do something to us, especially when we have a tendency to complain. It's going to help us trust the Lord more. Because the current situations that we're in, wandering around in the wilderness are there to build our faith and trust. That's what was going on in the wilderness experience. We're going to learn more about that as we go through. But do you see, as we continue on after verse 7, *He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.*

Verse 8 – this is what He made known to them. Notice what verse 8 says. We're going to come back to our words that we talked about today. *The LORD is compassionate (rakham) and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love (chesed)*. There's this package of who God is and you experience that as you're wandering around in the wilderness. That's what He's saying that's happened here with Moses. He revealed Himself to them.

Verse 9: *He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever.* I think we need to bless God for what He doesn't do, not just for what He does do. He doesn't accuse us forever. He doesn't harbor anger. Satan's the accuser.

Verse 10 completes the thought. He says *he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.* Why? Because even from the time of the psalmist, God knew that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was coming, that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ would be there to rescue us from all of our sins and to free us from our iniquities. So God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve, as described there. He already knew what Christ would do.

Verse 11: *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love (or chesed) for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

I think it's interesting that he uses the example of *the east from the west* because if he used the example of the north to the south, that's finite. You can only go so far north before you have to start going south again. But when you go east to west, it's infinite. You can go east forever. It never ends. It says that's how far He separates our sin from us. So what he's saying is He doesn't treat us like our sins deserve. God has separated those from us.

If you're walking around with a lot of guilt and regret, you need to know that through forgiveness of God that He's taking care of those. He separates those from you so you don't even have to see them. They're so far away. You can come before the Lord and enjoy His magnificence and that relationship with Him.

These verses that we're looking at right at the moment are about God's greatness and about His infiniteness. We're going to move to the same ideas of compassion and His grace and so on in a personal relationship.

So look at the next verses. Verse 13 takes us into a family relationship about a dad. *As a father has compassion (that's rakhm) on his children, so the LORD (Yahweh) has compassion (rakhm) on those who fear him.*

I've just got to stop here and every time I see this in God's word, I just have to pause because I'm a dad. I don't think I have in my mind a view of a dad as compassionate. I usually think of a dad as tough, authoritative, strict, by the book. Here there's a quality mentioned about a father of compassion. Just reminds me I need to be compassionate as a dad if I want to be godly. I want to be like God. Is compassion just a motherly quality? No. It's mentioned here about a father, so as a dad, I want to have that kind of empathy. I want to be concerned. Yes, it's true our kids need firmness and we often impart that as dads. But it's also important to recognize that our young people and our children need compassion, empathy. They need to be listened to, cared for. Our father does that with us. It's a personal picture here of what a father does.

Verse 14 continues the idea. *For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.* He doesn't treat us like dirt. He knows that we're dirt. He treats us with compassion.

If you're a person who doesn't know the Lord, doesn't have that personal relationship with God, then life is described for you in the next two verses. It's described, if you don't know God, this is what life is like. *The life of mortals (that's all of us) is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field.*

Carrie planted some bulbs outside of my backdoor, series of them. The snowdrops already came out and they're already gone. Next we have the daffodils. Next we're going to have the tulips and the hyacinth. They're all going to come out in my backyard. I'm looking forward to it. All spring those flowers are going to come out.

That's what he's talking about. *They flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.*

If you're not a believer, if you don't have God living in your life, then there's a sense of futility. Yeah, you might have a shining moment in your life for a little bit, but you're missing something very important. We have a tremendous advantage as Christians to recognize that we're tied into this purpose that God has, the meaning.

That's why the word *but* starts verse 17. There's a contrast, notice, between the idea that we're just mere mortals like flowers that bloom and then go away. Verse 17 says, *But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love (that's His chesed love, His covenant faithful love that's not based on our actions, it's based on character) is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children (know that there's a legacy that's being produced)—with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.*

That's why it's so important for us to obey the Lord. I want to serve the Lord. I want the Lord to tell me. "Lord, what do you want me to do today?" I want to do that. I want to obey the Lord because it ties me into this bigger meaning, this bigger purpose in life that is so strategic. There's really a lot of beauty being a believer and it's illustrated in this particular psalm.

Verse 19 continues the thought by saying, *The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*

Now if you remember last week we made that statement "the Lord reigns." We said that several times. You're going to see that same theme throughout the psalms and here that one verse is making that one statement, the Lord reigns. When we start feeling discouraged or despondent or despairing or hopeless, we need to remember the Lord reigns.

I'm going to read the verse again because I want you to see that that's what it's saying here. The Lord reigns. That's a motto that we have in our hearts. We're coming before the Lord regularly. The Lord reigns. We're saying that. Here's verse 19. I'll read it again. *The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*

Verse 20. The target starting in verse 20 or the audience changes from self (*O my soul*) or angels and the messengers of God. *Praise (baruch) the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do*

*his bidding, who obey his word.* So we switched the audience a little bit here. As we're closing the psalm he's drawing attention to those angels. *Bless the LORD.*

He's going to talk about creation next. He continues in verse 21 – *Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.* And now verse 22. *Praise (or baruch) the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion.* So even creation blesses the Lord and praises the Lord.

And therefore we come to the final statement. The way we started the psalm we're going to end the psalm, which is something that I need to be saying to myself. It says, *Praise the LORD, my soul.*

One of the purposes of worship is to remember God's grace. This is a passage that talks about God's compassion for us, His grace for us. It's a beautiful picture of what God has for us. We need to recognize God is big, we are small, and when we trust Him we connect with Him through salvation, we find our place in this bigger meaning of our lives. It's strategic.

Well that's Psalm 103. I would encourage you to mark it, go back and look at it regularly. A psalm of God's compassion.

As we move to Psalm 104, we're going to move to a psalm about God being the designer. He's the one who created the world. It's just amazing. When you start thinking about how God created our world, or whatever sliver of the world you want to start thinking about, it's really amazing.

Last year when I was losing some weight I studied the human body a little bit. That's what helped me just so I could understand some things. I was amazed to find out how the body metabolizes food and how cells use the sugar that's broken down and how all that stuff happens in the body. Sugars going through the bloodstream and insulin kicks in and all these things are going on. I went away from that study just amazed of God's design.

It's that same feeling of amazement of God's design that we're going to see the psalmist telling us about as he looks at creation. I think you'll feel the amazement of the passage as we go through it in Psalm 104.

It starts the same way that the last one started and ended with the same phrase, *Praise the LORD, my soul. LORD my God, you are very great.*

Now I think this is the psalm that becomes the inspiration for Chris Tomlin's song, *How Great is Our God*, which we're going to sing right after we go through this song. *How Great is Our God.* Remember he says in there, how great is our God. He wraps Himself in light. Let's just read on in verse 1 and 2. *LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment.*

It's really interesting to think about light and what it is. Early in the 1700s there was the particle theory of light. Because light's got to get from here to there somehow. It takes eight minutes from the light of the sun to get to us. How does it get here is the question. So there's the particle

theory of light where the particles just [sound effect] and it gets to us. And then there's the wave theory of light that came about that described this light as a wave like sound waves comes out. Its light waves come out to us. Neither of those seemed to fit the bill and now in more modern times we have the quantum theory of light that puts some more things together.

It's fascinating to think about light and what it is and how it works. But it's even interesting to see that in creation when God created the world He created light before He created the sun, moon, and stars. When God created the world first, He's outside of time. He had to create time. This is so immense to think about. He created time and once He created time then He created space within that time. Once He created space then He could create the world. When He created the world He had to do a bunch of things there.

He created light and His glory just represents the light there. When we get to heaven there's not going to be any moon or stars or sun. Because God's glory just lights up all of the new Jerusalem where we will live in heaven. It's a beautiful picture. That's what he's saying here. *The LORD wraps himself in light.* It's like a blanket for Him. Interesting picture.

*He stretches out the heavens like a tent.* Now you're going to see the designer of God here as the psalmist is illustrating this for us. God designed all of the world. It's intricately put together, so the psalmist is drawing attention to that. *He stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters.* So He's like the engineer putting things together there.

*He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind.* In other words, He plays with it. He creates this. All these things we think are so awesome, the oceans, the mountains, the wind, are things God plays with. *He rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved.* So He's the architect. He designs it all and He sets it there in an amazing way. It can't be moved.

*You covered it (now we transferred the audience to the Lord) with the watery depths as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.*

If this is a picture of creation, if God would've created just the land mass first before the waters, scientists tell us today if you took all the land and leveled it all out for the whole world, there would be 6,000 feet of water above it all. That's how much water exists in our world. So now the mountains are going to push up and they're going to put boundaries on the water and so on, as is talked about here.

Verse 7: *But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them.* So God designed the world. He created the water to stay where it is. He designed it that way.

It says in verse 9, *You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth.*

Verse 10: *He makes springs.* Now the psalmist here is really intrigued as we go through. He's intrigued by water. And I am too. It's fascinating as I ponder what he's saying in the passage how water is all over the place. God has designed water to do so many different things. He's going to talk about it here. As I pondered it, I'm thinking it really is amazing. It's a wondrous thing to think about what God has done and is doing in our world today in the earth.

It says (verse 10), *He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains.* So water's flowing all over the place.

Verse 11: *They give water to all the beasts of the field.* So now we're talking about how this water has some benefit to all the animals that are out there. Who provides them with water so they have something to drink? It's God. He designed the world in a way so that the animals would have what they need to drink. *The wild donkeys quench their thirst.*

Verse 12: *The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers* (in other words, it rains on the mountains); *the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.* So this water comes and nourishes the land. So the land itself, the trees and the bushes and the plants and the grass and all these things are nourished because of the way that God designed our world.

Verse 14: *He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate.* So when he talks about the animals, he just talks about grass grow for the cattle – in other words, there's food that's provided as a result of this water that nourishes the plants. So the cattle have something to eat and plants for something to cultivate. In other words, we as people don't just go and eat off the grass that's out there. We actually plant plants and we can cultivate them—*bringing forth food from the earth.*

Notice the description in verse 15. This is delightful. It's not just food. There's some delight in this: *wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.*

In other words, there's some great things about this food. It's delightful. He's talking about wine. It gladdens the heart. And there's some delight in that. There's some oil. You take the oil from the plants and you can put it on your face to make your face oily or shiny I guess. That's what it's saying here. *Oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts.* There's something nice about being satisfied. So God provides all of those things. They're delicious and they're effective.

Verse 16: *The trees of the LORD are well watered* (so now it's these big trees. Let's talk about them, not just the people and the animals), *the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.* These are the big trees of Lebanon. *There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers.* Even the big birds are able to be in those tall junipers and that's where they can nest there.

*The high mountains,* these mountains are also a place where some of these animals live. *The high mountains belong to the wild goats* (they're up there on the mountainside); *the crags are a refuge for the hyrax.*

Do you know what a hyrax is? He's a real cute little animal. That's a hyrax. He's about the size of a squirrel. He's not very big. It says *the crags are a refuge for the hyrax*. The hyrax live in the Middle East and in Africa. We don't have them in the United States. But God has a plan. God takes care of these little furry animals is what he's saying. The psalmist is just drawn to how God has designed this so amazingly well that these animals are cared for, as he's going to describe a little bit further on.

Verse 19: *He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down*. The sun knows when to go down. God designed it. It's just amazing that God did all this and it just goes!

*You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl*. So he's saying here's another amazing thing about our world that God designed. When the sun goes down, a whole other set of animals come out and they're on the prowl to eat.

He gives us the illustration of the lion (verse 21). *The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God*. Now notice the whole emphasis on God being the designer practically applies to our lives so that we will feel dependent on God. We need to recognize we are dependent on God. We all need to feel we are dependent on God. *The lion roar for their prey and seek their food from God*.

But verse 22 says, *The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens*. In other words, when the sun comes up, all of those animals go back and they're going away so that (verse 23) *the people go out to their work, to their labor until evening*.

The psalmist is saying, "God, this is so amazing the way you designed us. At night all these other animals come out and they're prowling around and they go away now and the people come out and go to work. It would not be good for the lions to be out at the same time as the people are. The psalmist is drawn to that and saying this is just really cool.

That's why verse 24 is kind of the conclusion here of his thoughts and how he applies this in his own life. He says, *How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all*. You're the designer. You did all of these things. This is so amazing what you've done. *The earth is full of your creatures*.

Now we're going to go to the ocean. It's not just the earth. Look at verse 25. *There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number*. Even in those days they had no idea the things we're discovering now that are in the ocean. Depths are just amazing. You're drawn to this. Wow, God is so big.

The design of God in our world is so complex. To imagine that this took place through some Big Bang theory or evolution is just unreasonable. You've just got to see the complexity of our world, the designer behind it is being described here in Psalm 104. *Teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there*.

Now the Leviathan was like the sea monster. We don't have it today. I'm not sure whether they had it back then or it was kind of this thing they were afraid of. It's not a whale. It's described as some kind of a dinosaur type thing that lived in the water. The description here in the passage is Lord, you created the water so that the Leviathan could frolic there, so he could play there.

Now verse 27 starts drawing us to this idea of dependence. *All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.* In other words, we're all dependent on the Lord. *When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.*

I think that sometimes we forget our dependence on God. We think, "Well I made enough money for this week so if I made enough money for this week I can sit back and I don't have to rely on the Lord because I've got what I need for this week. I'll be fine this week." So we can come to a place where we don't recognize our dependency or we don't call upon the Lord and we need to be reminded that we are dependent on the Lord every day of our lives, every breath that we take.

Verse 29: *When you hide your face, they are terrified* (speaking of the animals, the creatures, all creatures in verse 27); *when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.*

Verse 30: *When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.* So even when the water comes down and comes over a parched area the ground is renewed and now it looks completely different.

Verse 31: *May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works—he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.*

Verse 33, as we're bringing the psalm to a close, he's making some application. He's saying, *I will sing to the Yahweh all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.*

Verse 34: *May my meditation be pleasing to him.* Meditation is our self-talk. We say to ourselves, "*May my meditation be pleasing to him.*" When my meditation starts going in the wrong direction, whether it's anxieties we already mentioned or it's even something else, a temptation that we have in our lives that we start thinking about, it starts growing in our hearts as something we want and we get in trouble that way. The point is I want my meditation to be pleasing to Him. So the things I think about are honoring to the Lord. Meditating in the psalms is a great way to keep our thinking, our self-talk going in the right direction.

*May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD. But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more.*

Now look at the end of verse 35. It says, *Praise the LORD, my soul. Praise the LORD.* Or in the King James Version it says, *Bless the LORD, my soul. Praise the LORD.* That's probably a little better for us, but still we lose something in English.

I want to draw out for you the understanding in Hebrew because I think there's an application here for us at the end of verse 35. You might jot this down in your Bible because you won't find it in English. There's two Hebrew words used.

The first word (*praise the LORD, O my soul*) is the word *baruch*. The word we've seen over and over again. It's the word that means bow the knee and lift something up.

The word used in the very last phrase (*praise the LORD*), that word *praise* is the word *hallel*. The word *hallel* means to shine. It comes from this idea of shining. It means to lift God up to a shining place in our lives. So we lift Him up. However, it's also used in the Bible to boast. In other words, you make a choice. Are you going to lift yourself up and boast about yourself? Or are you going to lift God up and boast about Him and let Him be the one who's shining? I think we make that choice in our lives regularly. We think about the dependence of God.

I think that's what the psalmist is drawing us to, this conclusion. He's helping us see how dependent we are and how God has designed all these things. We are so dependent on His design and for us to shine ourselves would be foolish. We need to shine God. We need to praise Him.

Now the word *LORD* there is the word Yahweh and when Yahweh is abbreviated, it's *Jah*. This is the very first time in the psalms when we have the word *hallel-Jah* or hallelujah mentioned. It's going to be mentioned ten times between now and the end of the book. Hallelujah. That's what he's saying here. And that's what the last phrase is. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. That kind of hallelujah or lifting up is letting God shine. I want to let Him shine in my life.

I encourage you to make that your prayer. How does God want you to allow Him to shine as opposed to letting yourself shine and be lifting yourself up in some kind of a boasting fashion. I found that to be a very neat application for my life this week as I just think about what God wants to do in my own heart and how He wants to shine in my life. I'm not the one shining. I need to let the Lord shine. Not boast, but I need to praise. All of that is drawn together as we come to the end of this psalm.

These two psalms that we're looking at are soul music. It's the soul talking to our souls. So I would encourage you to meditate on these a little bit and allow God to speak to you. Ask Him what He would like you to say differently in your heart.

The psalmist is saying – David wrote the first one, we don't know who wrote Psalm 104, but Psalm 103 is written by David – he's saying, "Soul, here's what you need to think, here's what you need to meditate, here's what you need to believe. You need to recognize these things about God." I would suggest that is something we would all benefit from in each one of our lives as we move forward. It's a beautiful thing to know God and to know Him personally.

If you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then I want to invite you to do that today. That's the first step. But it's not the last step. It's only the beginning of a pilgrimage we have before the Lord. If we can learn and build patterns of following the Lord and trusting the Lord in our lives and trusting in Him, then amazing things start happening in our hearts as we understand more about who He is. We learn how to fly like eagles, as the passage says.

Let's stand and pray together.

[PRAYER] Lord, I ask that you would take our heavy hearts and you would lighten them by giving us the perspective that you want us to have about who you are. Lord, we do know that you have designed our world in an amazing way. We are just so drawn to worship because we see the design and we're grateful. Sometimes we feel like that design doesn't apply to us or we're not a part of that design and these psalms remind us that you care about us and that you are concerned about the problems that we experience. So right now, Lord, we lift those to you. We turn them over to you, a suitcase that's too heavy for us to carry. We give them to you so that we can experience the joy you want us to have and allow you to take care of some of those details that are so troubling for us at times. So Lord, we allow you to shine. We lift you up. We thank you that you are so great. As we continue to worship you, we ask that you would be honored in our hearts, that our souls would lift up to you the praise that's due your name. In Jesus' name, amen.