

**Introduction:**

- A. Ever talk to yourself? I know; for some of you it is the only time you can have an intelligent conversation. How about this: do you ever talk to your soul? Your soul is that enduring inner core of your being, your heart, where all the arteries and veins of our intellect, emotions, will and values come together. The soul is the part of us that bears the image of God; the part of us that connects with God. The most important thing about our souls is that they are made to know and love God.
- B. Most people don't know their own souls. We give little thought to how our inner person relates to God. **John Bunyan**, the pastor who taught us how pilgrims progress, wrote, *"The soul is such a thing, so rich and valuable in its nature, that scarce one in twenty thousand counts of it as they should."* Christians need to talk to their souls.
- C. According to the psalms, David talked to his soul. He said things like, *"Why are you downcast, O my soul?"* And, *"Awake, my soul!"* And *"Find rest, O my soul, in God alone."* But do you know what he said to his soul most often? *"Praise the Lord, O my soul!"* That's how he begins our passage today, **Ps. 103**, *"Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being [another way of describing your soul]... all my inmost being, praise his holy name."*
- D. We have all done a real number on our souls because of our sin. Our sin evicted God from his place within us. The wrong things we have thought and done left our souls guilty, diseased, condemned, orphaned, and as addicted to destructive desires as a skid row addict. **John Steinbeck** wrote once, *"A sad soul can kill you quicker, far quicker, than a germ."* And our souls were desperately sad till we cried out to God and he saved us. **Jesus Christ saved our souls. When he did, he remedied all the tangled problems of our souls, so we must not forget any of his benefits.**

- E. Psalm 103 is David talking—preaching—to his own soul. I'm going to preach it for you, but you will need to get your soul to sit up and pay attention. **Ps. 103:1-5... What a great text for Thanksgiving!** Above all our other blessings, here are the greatest, for this is a cornucopia of God's grace for our souls, five benefits for our souls to praise God for.

I. **PRAISE THE LORD THAT HE FORGIVES ALL YOUR SINS**

- A. Our sins have condemned our souls. Contrary to our insistence that we are good people we are actually **pathological sinners**; sinners who can't stop, sinners whose sin is killing us and others. We try to ignore our sinfulness but our souls cannot. Sin shames us within. Sin sends us into hiding, puts us on the run from God. We take on aliases and disguises, and resort to lies at every turn.
- B. The only remedy for sin so deep and deadly is God's forgiveness. When we repent and ask for his forgiveness, God thoroughly forgives us. Jesus pays for it all, past, present and future. He buries our sin in the deepest sea. He separates us from our sin as far as the east is from the west. God himself remembers it no more.
- C. Praise the Lord that when our souls are forgiven by God the crushing weight of guilt is gone. Illus.: In John Bunyan's book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he writes about this

Now I saw in my dream, that the highway up which Christian was to go was fenced on either side with a wall; and that wall was called "Salvation". Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run; but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back. He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a Cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up to the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble; and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said, with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death."

Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder; for it was very surprising to him, that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks.

Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him, and saluted him with, "Peace be to thee!" so the first said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"...

**Benefit #1:** Your soul is no longer guilty. God doesn't consider you guilty because Jesus died in your place. Your soul is guiltless. **Tell your soul not to forget that benefit!**

Illus.: There is a scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* where the king is speaking to his wife's doctor. Lady Macbeth, is sick with guilt because she has blood on her hands.

**Macbeth:** How does your patient, doctor?

**Doctor:** Not so sick, my lord,

As she is troubled with thick coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.

**Macbeth:** Cure her of that.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?

**Doctor:** Therein the patient

Must minister to himself.

That's the problem: a patient with a sin-sick soul cannot minister to himself. That's why we...

## II. PRAISE THE LORD THAT HE HEALS ALL OUR SOUL'S DISEASES

- A. Our sin makes us soul-sick. Sin so dis-integrates us, pulls at us so powerfully, that our bodies start to break down. Our minds and emotions are poisoned. But the deepest

sickness sets in our souls because we are dying from the inside out. Sin eats people alive; it rots our souls.

- B. Other's people's sin and the conditions in this dark world make us soul-sick, too. Jesus saw people as "*harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*" The Bible speaks often of the brokenhearted. **There are all those conditions which we know are inconsistent with our faith but which we cannot shake**—loneliness, fear, self-loathing, a victim's unmanageable anger or shame, grief that never heals. This verse gives us great hope that these diseases of our souls need not dominate us; need not kill us.
- C. Praise the Lord that he heals our souls' diseases. This verse isn't about the body's sicknesses, but the soul's. Sometimes these deep afflictions of the heart are gone instantly when someone becomes a Christian. Other diseases take time to heal. Illus.: After I preached this the first time, I got to wondering what diseases of my soul still afflicted me. About that time a personal letter came to me in the mail and I realized I was afraid to open it lest someone tell me how angry they were with me. That's not what the letter was about and I realized I had found a disease of my soul—the fear of other people's disfavor or criticism. I claimed this verse and began to pray that God would heal that. He gave me the idea to catalog all the verses in the Bible that tell us not to be afraid, and I found that reading those 120-some passages was like strong medicine for my fear. That's why we have this little booklet, "*Whistling in the Dark.*" It is simply a catalog of all the verses I found. It is medicine for the soul-disease of fear. **Whether slowly or quickly, God heals sick souls.**

**Tell your soul not to forget that benefit!**

### III. PRAISE THE LORD THAT HE REDEEMS OUR LIVES FROM THE PIT

- A. The pit is the dungeon of death row. Our sin got us thrown into death's prison. We were "dead men walking." You've

seen those pictures of gaunt men arms chained to damp, underground dungeon walls. That was your soul.

Whatever people saw on the outside, that was you on the inside. No one ever escapes that pit.

- B. The only way out was to be redeemed—bought out of the everlasting slavery to death. That is what Jesus has done for us. Paid off our death sentence with his blood. He took the keys of sin and death, and he opened to door. You are free to go. No need to run, looking frantically over your shoulder to see if the hounds are catching up. No one is coming after you. Your debt is paid. You are free! Illus.: Do you know why I use the phrase, “Be ye glad!”? It isn’t actually a Bible phrase. It’s from a song, and I love the song because I’m inclined to *not* be glad, and to feel my great unworthiness to serve Christ. But...

*Be ye glad, O be ye glad!*

*Every debt that you ever had*

*Is paid up in full by the grace of the Lord*

*Be ye glad! Be ye glad! Be ye glad!*

Your soul’s sin has been forgiven. Your sou’ls diseases are healed. Your soul’s slavery is redeemed. **Tell your soul not to forget those benefits!**

Tell your soul to praise God for what he’s saved us *from*, but also what he’s saved us *for*.

#### **IV. PRAISE THE LORD THAT HE CROWNS US WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION**

- A. For a lot of people, it is easier to believe that God forgives you than that he loves you. Having been orphans and rebels for so we take on a sense of inward loneliness and worthlessness that makes it hard to grasp the tenderness of the Father’s affection, let alone the passion of our Bridegroom’s love.
- B. So our souls need to be reminded of this great benefit or our souls will not be healthy. **Of all the stories I know, the one I tell most is the story of the prodigal son.** I told it to

Sue at the Mobil station 10 years ago and she wept to hear it. I told it to a young man angry and broken because his father wanted nothing to do with him. I even led him out in the hallway to show him the print of Rembrandt's painting that hangs there, and told him about his heavenly Father's love. I told it recently to a 90-year-old man who knows something is crucial is missing from his life, and time is short. **Luke 15:20** says of that proud, rebellious, broken son, *"So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with **compassion** for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."* That was more than any such son dared hope for yet it wasn't enough for his father. *"Quick,"* he told his servants, *"Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'* So they began to celebrate." Like I told Sue all those years ago, *"That is how God feels about you."* God's compassion and welcome would be grace beyond our wildest expectations, but then he *crowns* his compassion by restoring us and celebrating our homecoming like a resurrection.

**Tell your soul not to forget that benefit!**

**V. PRAISE THE LORD THAT HE SATISFIES OUR DESIRES WITH GOOD THINGS SO THAT YOUR YOUTH IS RENEWED LIKE THE EAGLE'S**

- A. Souls, like children who have lost their parents, spend the rest of their lives trying to find what they're missing. Security, the comforting love of mealtimes and bedtimes, knowing who you are—what your name is. **There are no desires more heartbreaking or desperate than the desires of an orphaned soul.** Orphaned souls age too quickly.
- B. But Jesus said, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened... and you will find rest for your souls"* [Matt 11:28-30]

**Ps. 107:9** says that God *“satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.”* There is an old song that says, *“Only Jesus can satisfy your soul.”*

- C. See the expression, *“so your youth is renewed like the eagle’s”*? When the ancient Jews saw an eagle molt—shed its feathers and take on new ones—it seemed to them like the eagle was young again. When Jesus meets the desires of our hearts for love and safety, for meaning here and a home with him forever, when he gives us a family in the church and help in our prayers—when he satisfies all these desires we are renewed inwardly. It is as if we drink from a fountain of youth. **Ps 92:14** says that the righteous *“will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, ‘The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’”* One of the treasures of our church is our older saints who prove that verse true. People who have lived a long time and yet whose youth is renewed like the eagle’s because they have had their desires satisfied by the Lord. It is one of the benefits of our salvation. **So tell your soul not to forget that benefit!**

## Conclusion

Sometimes we just need to have a good talk with our souls because we forget the wonderful benefits God has given us in our salvation through Christ. Jesus is our Advocate in God’s **High Court**: *“He forgives all your sins.”* Jesus is the **physician of our souls**: *“He heals all your diseases.”* Jesus has paid our way out of bondage: *“He redeems your life from the pit.”* Jesus has taken us to the **throne room**: *“He crowns you with love and compassion.”* And to the **banquet hall** where he *“satisfies your desires with good things.”* Is there anything—anything at all—that your soul could want or need that God has not given? Is there any way your soul could be richer? Any way that your soul could be safer? No? Then *“Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”*