**First Things First**

**ABC’s of The Christian Life**

When I am not (all that) thankful. . . Or, Learning the Spiritual Art of Talking to Yourself

**Psalm 103**

**The Problem:** Gratitude does not come easy to fallen beings due to our sense of entitlement. What to do? David recommends talking to yourself.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul. . .”

 Between the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading (listening to God) and prayer (talking to God) lies the uncharted vastness of meditation. Biblical meditation is the opposite of that practiced by Eastern religions. Whereas they invite you to empty the mind, God desires you to fill your mind with thoughts of Him and His countless blessings. That takes practice and a learned self-discipline. Rather than listening to ourselves and those “voices,” meditation reclaims the control of your mind you were meant to have as one made in God’s image. (See also Joshua 1; Judges 5; Psalms 1; 5; 19; 63; 77; 42; 43; 104; 116; 14; Philippians 4:4-11.)

**The Gracious Meditation of a(n increasingly) Grateful Heart:**

 David does much more than count his blessings. He revels in them, and links them to the history of God’s revelation to His people. His meditation is to remind himself of what we so often forget. It is not that some supersaints are always in tune with God this way, but rather this is how they get in tune with God and get back in tune when things have come undone. Notice that David’s greatest blessing is the for-giveness of sins. And if you have that, it will be your greatest blessing as well. For no relationship with God is possible if He holds our sins against us. This psalm gives us assurance that God does not forgive begrudgingly, but out of His merciful nature.

 **First, remember that the Lord has blessed me with the keys to life. vv. 1-5**

Forgiveness for all sins and healing from sin’s effects

 Redemption from an empty (sinful) lifestyle through continual mercy

 Satisfaction with good things to the very end of life

 **Second, recall that God’s mercy comes from His nature. vv. 6-14**

 He is just, but merciful, as He revealed through Moses to Israel. (vv. 6-9)

 Because He knows our nature and weakness, He graciously and infinitely separates us from our sins and their penalty. (vv. 10-14)

 **Third, while our own existence is frail and fleeting, God’s love for us who obey Him is eternal, just like His kingdom.** **vv. 15-19**

So, God shows mercy because He is merciful and whatever He is today He will be forever, since His nature does not change and no one can overcome His power!

 **All of this calls for all creation’s praise, angels included! vv. 20-22**

 *If you can imagine a person believing these truths, and making them his meditation for hours or days on end, to the point that they form the backdrop for his mind, you may be able to imagine how joy-filled this person would be.*

 *But just such a person is who we are called to be. This is not about being optimistic or extroverted. It is about our character, not our personality. It is about believing God.*

 *Our perennial unhappiness comes from choosing to think about (meditate upon) other things from our time-bound, sin-stained, weakened perspective, which grasps at happiness in what is fading, fleeting, and false. Little wonder we become cynical and hopeless. We become what we think about. If we think about God’s covenant blessings in Jesus, we will become thankful. It is gloriously inevitable. You can do this. Now, will you? Rom. 12:1, 2*

***When God’s grace and mercy in redemption (the Gospel) is the subject of our meditation, we have reason to rejoice with all creation and enjoy all of His blessings, which are but a foretaste of His coming Kingdom.***