

WEEK TWENTY-FIVE
DAY TWO

who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
Psalm 103:3

who forgives

סָלַח *calach*

– to forgive, pardon

all

כֹּל *kol*

– all, the whole, altogether

your iniquity

עָוֹן *`avon*

– perversity, evil, iniquity, sin.

who heals

רָפָא *rapha'*

– to mend, to cure, cause to heal, make whole

all

כֹּל *kol*

– all, the whole, altogether

your diseases

תַּחֲלָוִים *tachaluw'*

– malady, diseases

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This psalm asks nothing of God. It's the overflow of a full heart—blessed, grateful, articulate, expressive. David names several blessings and then elaborates with accolades on each of those later on. The first is here. Forgiveness. Profoundly simple, if you're God's child through faith in Jesus, your sins are forgiven—forever. Sin is the seedbed of all human problems; so forgiveness opens the way for God to ultimately heal completely—if not in this life, then in the next. Based on Christ's finished work on the cross (that David was anticipating and banking on) for the believer, everything will be made right. Even if it's never been "right" by our estimation in "the land of the living," someday will unveil divine perfection. Physical diseases and genetic flaws are obviously included in that package, but so is everything else that's oozing out of diseased broken-by-sin spirits... stupid mistakes infecting further choices, stress, fear, confusion, disillusionment, depression, disappointments, rebellions—ho hum, just your everyday stuff... all readjusted exactly to the glory of His sufficiency.

Note, the order is important; healing proceeds from forgiveness. The saving work of Jesus guarantees believers' salvation, and salvation affords other healing. It's not automatically reversible fabric; no eternally effective healing derives apart from that initial release—freedom from the penalty and then the power of sin. We are saved and healed in that order. Salvation is bedrock worth celebrating.

The proper response to such mind-boggling reality is as Job stated, "I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth" (Job 40:4).

When David gets around to dropping his hand off his mouth, he can't suppress the verbal flow of effusive praise—and he invites us to join the song. Please do, today.

~ Denise Nyberg

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We're going to begin with a grammar lesson. Aren't you excited? Dust off those shelves of high school English in your brain and get ready.

This verse is made up of two dependent clauses—these are groups of words that contain a subject and a verb but cannot stand alone as a sentence. “Who forgives all your iniquity” isn't a complete thought. Why? On its own, this clause doesn't tell us who “who” is.

I think the tendency in examining this verse is to focus on the iniquity and diseases, not the “who.” But it's the “who,” or the Who, that makes this verse so meaningful and sweet. “Who” is the subject of this dependent clause, which describes the main subject in verse two—“Bless the Lord.” The focus here is not, as our selfish minds tend to think, about us and our failures: it's about the God who forgives and heals.

Author and Bible teacher Jen Wilkin says, “The Bible is not a book about us; it's a book about God.” What a comfort it is to know that we are not the subject of this story. And what a crime we've committed in believing that we are.

Iniquity, diseases, problems, aches, pains, fears—these are all the consequences of our sin. But what is greater than sin? Greater than us, than any created thing? The forgiving, healing God who wipes our hearts clean and makes us new, for our good and His glory.

Once we understand who “who” is, we can begin to wrap our heads around the rest.

“Who” is the God who loves you.

“Who” is the God who knows the depths of the darkness of your heart and still forgives.

“Who” is the King of Kings who upholds justice but dispenses mercy.

“Who” is the Creator Father that sacrificed His one and only Son for you, the created one.

“Who” is the Great Physician who sees your broken heart and mends it.

“Who” is the Alpha and Omega, the conqueror of sin and death, for all eternity.

~ Amber Wilson

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To explain the concept of merciful forgiveness toward undeserving sinners, John Piper frequently uses the hypothetical illustration of a judge perched on his bench above a wicked murderer, hearing the case against the man but letting him go free. Is that just? No – the judicial authorities would dismiss that judge swiftly. Yet God’s forgiving us is similarly outrageous. God forgives His own people completely and extravagantly. How can God forgive His people while not compromising His justice? This – not the “problem of evil” – is the central problem in the world. How can a just God forgive sinners?

From eternity past, the Lord has loved and chosen His own, and from creation, the Lord has abundantly forgiven His own. Adam and Eve experienced this forgiveness, as did Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and Moses and David – and the list goes on. The Children’s Catechism, Question 33, asks, “What befell our first parents when they had sinned?” The Answer: “Instead of being holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable.” Equally sinful and broken, each of these men experienced the mercy and grace of God in individual ways.

One of the most dramatic Biblical accounts of man’s sin and God’s forgiveness comes from the life of David. David loved to meditate on and extol the forgiving heart of God, a forgiveness David especially desired and exalted in Psalm 51, written after David had committed adultery and murder. Here David asks not only for forgiveness and cleansing but also for healing and restoration: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice” (v. 7-8).

The answer to “How can a just God forgive sinners?” is, of course, Jesus Christ. All the wrath and curse of God rested on Him, and He drank the cup of the wrath of God. Because Jesus Christ took the penalty sinners deserved, God remains just, and His people stand forgiven.

The miracle of the gospel does not stop at God’s forgiveness, however. God also heals and restores. “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you” (Joel 2:25). “Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.” (Hos. 6:1). While God has completely forgiven His people now and sometimes grants physical healings in this life, we have the promise of full future restoration – “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away’ And he who was seated on

the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true'" (Rev. 21:3-5).

~ Elisabeth Hooker

