

Psalm 93

Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 93 as we continue on in our Psalm series. And as you're turning, I will just tell you a little story about that passage in the Westminster Shorter Catechism that we just read as part of our confession of Truth. The question is, what is God? God is a spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, and his being wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Well, here's the story behind that. It's a little apocryphal, so I probably heard it ten times before I heard a historian of Westminster say, well, it may not have exactly happened that way, but it's still a good story. So I'll tell it to you so you can be you can be literate in Presbyterian mythology. Okay. The story is this. They had been debating these, these pastors and elders have been debating how do you answer this question for the shorter catechism in a concise way? Uh, all morning and finally lunch came around. And, you know, as you can imagine, there were a lot of different opinions on what they should say. What should we highlight about God? And when lunchtime came around, like all good Presbyterians, they decided to break for lunch and have someone pray. They said, someone needs to pray and bless the food before we go. And so a gentleman stood up and he said a prayer. And the prayer went like this Heavenly father, you who are spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in your being and your wisdom, and your power, and your holiness, and your justice, and your goodness and your truth. Please bless this food to our use and us to your service. Amen. And as soon as he was done, they said, that's it. That's the answer. Um, but it did come out of a long debate. And then someone finally just praying. And in the prayer, the debate was synthesized and they came up with a good definition. I'll tell you that partly because it's a good story. Secondly, I would recommend, if you haven't memorized parts of the Catechism like that one. I think that's a great question just to memorize for parents, for children, for young people. Just to think both as when people ask you, what is this God who you believe in, you can kind of keep that in mind as you're explaining it and make sure you cover important the important parts of, of God. But also I think you'll find it's helpful for you as you're reading the Bible. In my years of study, I haven't found anything to add to it that is on the same level as those words. And if you notice, it's it's a matrix. The columns are infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. The rows are in his being wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He's infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in each one of those things. And if you actually take that into your scripture study, you'll be like, oh yeah, this. This actually does describe the God who is presented to us in places like Psalm 93.

So let's take a look now at Psalm 93. It's a shorter Psalm than some of the ones that we've been reading already. If you notice, there's not a superscript here. So this is just offered to us for worship, but we don't have any context in terms of what it's about or who, you know, what was the context out of which it was written? It's just given to us, as many of the Psalms are. So Psalm 93, this is the word of the Lord.

The Lord reigns. He is robed in majesty. The Lord is robed. He has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established. It shall never be moved. Your throne is established from of old. You are from everlasting. The floods have lifted up. O Lord. The floods have lifted up their voice. The floods lift up their roaring. Mightier than the thunders of many

waters. Mightier than the waves of the sea. The Lord on high is mighty. Your decrees are very trustworthy. Holiness befits your house, O Lord, forevermore.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, as we've been going through this series, I hope you've picked up on one of the practical application points that I've tried to sprinkle in throughout the series. And it's this, you know, with the Psalter, we don't just have a mine of theology, though. It is that it is a rich hill that we can mine to get all kinds of good theology out of. But it is also a practical prayer book for us. It helps us keep our prayer life biblical and rich and varied. Okay, so how about that? It's biblical. We want to pray biblically. And here God has said, I will give you an inherent and infallible source and resource for your prayer life so we can read the Psalms and know that when we are praying the Psalms, we're praying as God has called us to pray. Okay. Secondly, it helps us keep our prayers rich and varied. Any of us, yourself, your humble pastor included, can fall into a kind of, um, uh, prayer language. That is just the common way that I pray and it can start to feel stale after a while. Okay. Have you ever noticed that you kind of say the same things and it starts to feel stale because you don't talk that way to your spouse or to your family members. You talk out of, you know, the situation. And so you don't want to get stuck praying the same way all the time. And guess what? God's given us one hundred and fifty other prayers that we could pray. And if you go through the Psalms, I guarantee you will pray ways that you didn't even know you were allowed to pray. So when we talk about the Psalms, we want to pray in a biblical way, and we want to pray in a rich and varied way, in the way that God has showed us how to pray. Um, when a lot of us talk about psalms or praying, rather, we often are talking about asking for things, right? And there's nothing wrong about asking God for things that we desire or things that we need, or things that we would like to see in our families or in our workplace or in our churches or in the ministry of the gospel. There's nothing wrong with that. And that is a way that God has ordained us to pray. If we go into the Psalter, you'll find a lot of prayers about asking the Lord for things. And yet we often forget that there are other prayers that are just as legitimate and as important as asking for things, right? So we call the asking, right? We call it supplication, prayers of supplication that God would provide out of his mercy. He is the God from whom all blessings flow. So we should. We should go to him with our needs. And he loves to hear them. And yet, as we read through this altar, like we did a couple of weeks ago, we come to Psalms like Psalm fifty one and it's, it says this, well, actually, don't just ask the Lord to do things for you that are things you want or desire, but you need to be open about who you are. Okay? It's important for you to go to the Lord with your brokenness, with your failure to be honest about it. Okay, now we could say, well, why am I telling God about that? He knows about all those things. And Paul would tell you, well, he Jesus would tell you as well. Uh, he knows everything that you're going to ask, even your supplication prayers. So go and be honest. There's something glorifying to God. There is something good and right about you going to the Lord and saying, Lord, I tried and I failed or I didn't try. And surprise, surprise, I failed. Okay, you want to be honest and open about who you are. We call this prayers of confession and prayers of repentance. Should I say on the other side too, when God has done things for you or has blessed you in some way, maybe you tried and you succeeded, then you're supposed to tell the Lord about that too. We call that thanksgiving prayers. Lord,

we strove and you gave us the victory. Praise you God. Thanks. Thank you for what you've done. Those are prayers of thanksgiving. Well, the reason why I say that is because there's another kind of prayer that we don't always talk about. We use the language of it. And yet I would argue that we don't do it as much maybe as we might think we ought to. And that's a prayer of praise or a hymn of praise. Okay, now notice praise and thanksgiving are not the same thing, right? Praise and thanksgiving are not the same thing. Thanksgiving is when you are thanking God for something that he has done for you, or for a loved one, or for the world. You're thanking him for a thing that he has done. Praise is where you're just stating and glorifying, celebrating truths about him and his character. Now some people might say, well, I really don't see a difference.

Let me try to help you feel the texture of the difference. Okay. As a pastor, I get to do a lot of marriage counseling. And one thing that we often do in marriage counseling is when you're sitting with a couple, if you want to kind of get the feel for where the relationship is, ask them this. Ask. Ask both spouses. Can you tell me what you love about your spouse? And inevitably, this happens from time to time. And this isn't a this isn't a terrible failure. And yet it tells you something about the marriage, right? Oftentimes you'll have the spouse tell you things that the other spouse does for them that they enjoy and like and celebrate. Right? So the wife might say, I, I love his strength, how he guides us as a family. I love, I love how he loves me and shows his affection to me. I love how he's tender towards me. I love how he's open about what he's struggling with. Right? None of that is bad, by the way. That's all good. Isn't that wonderful? Yeah, the husband might say. I love how she cares for me and our family. I love how she's a she's a powerful presence with our children, you know, and the way that she raises them up, I love maybe I love how she, she, uh, she dinner is ready when when I get home. Okay. You can imagine all the kinds of things that a husband or a wife might say about each other. Those are all good things. Those are comments of Thanksgiving. And yet, if that's all that they say, right? If that's all that they say, then then there's actually something kind of lacking in their communication, right? Because everybody, everybody wants to not just be celebrated by what for what they do, but they want to be celebrated for who they are. Right? I love her because she's a wonderful woman of God, right? I love her because of the way the Lord has gifted her or made her personality this way. Okay? I love her for who she is, not just what she does for me and for others, but for who she is. Right? You felt this too. You want to be loved for who you are and not just to have appreciation. Be a, you know, a report card on whatever you've done most recently. Well guess what? The Lord is the same way. He loves to hear your Thanksgiving. He loves to hear your humility. He loves to hear your repentance and your supplication that you're relying on him. But we see in Psalms like Psalm 93, he also just loves to be celebrated for who he is. As a matter of fact, let me let me even go this far. There is nothing wrong with a prayer that just praises the Lord for who he is, doesn't ask for anything, doesn't confess any sins, doesn't talk about any thanksgiving, just declares how wonderful the Lord is. And yet, I suspect if you heard a prayer like that, like Psalm 93, you might say, well, that's a good beginning, but you haven't gotten to the main part yet. You haven't asked for anything yet. Psalm 93 is here to tell us it is good and worthy just to glorify God in His character, just a state true things about him and celebrate those truths. That's a good and worthwhile prayer. So let's turn and take a look at how the psalmist does this.

Now I want to argue that he does it in three ways. Okay. That first, he celebrates the Lord for how the Lord reigns. And in this way, when he's talking about how the Lord reigns, he really is talking about the extent of divine authority around the world and at all times. Okay, we're going to come back and talk about that. So he talks about how the Lord reigns. That's verses one through two. He then talks about how the Lord rules now with ruling as opposed to reigning. He's talking about how the Lord now has power. So if the first one is about the extent of divine authority, the second one that we get to in verses three through four is about the effect of divine power, the extent of divine authority, the effect of divine power. And then lastly, and somewhat surprisingly, he moves to how God reveals himself. So God reigns, he rules, and he reveals. That's in verses five, verse five, and in verse five, the revelation of God is really how God is present with us. So the embrace of divine presence, we have the extent of divine authority, the effect of divine power, and the embrace of divine presence.

So let's start with authority, okay? Notice what it says in verses one and two. The Lord reigns establishes the fact. What does that look like? He is robed in majesty. The Lord is robed. He is put on a strength. Put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established. It shall never be moved. Your throne is established from old. You are from everlasting. So notice how the Lord is depicted in his authority. He's depicted as being robed in majesty. Notice he's not robed in the emblems of majesty. He's not robed in gold and in lapis lazuli And, uh, that may mean nothing to you. It would have meant a lot to them. Right? A nice, a nice purple stone. He's not robed in red garments. He is robed in majesty. Majesty is his clothing. Now, as humans, we have a lot of ways that we depict or symbolize or represent Majesty. I actually had a chance. There was a period of time in the nineties when I lived in the Middle East, and because of my father's position there, he was the Sopa. Okay. This is a good Navy term, right? They they make an acronym out of everything. He was the senior officer present afloat. Okay. That's how you know it's Navy because they're afloat. Okay. So that meant in the Persian Gulf, he was the highest ranking officer, which meant that when dignitaries wanted to meet with a representative of the United States, they'd usually get the ambassador and my dad. Okay. Which meant that we as a family sometimes got invited to things too, which means being the son of Sopa. Okay, I got to go to the King of Bahrain's house a couple times, right? His name was Sheikh Isa bin Khalifa. So King Jesus, that's what Sheikh Isa is. He was King Jesus, and we got to go visit him at his palace. And let me tell you something. When you come up to a palace, you start to see all kinds of ornaments and emblems of majesty. All right, so first of all, as you start getting close to the palace of the king, you notice that the neighborhoods get kind of cleaned up a little bit. Okay. There's not all the riff raff that's around town as you get closer to the King's palace. And then at some point, you'll usually hit some kind of nature. Okay. I mean, this is a desert island for the most part, but you did have forests of a type. And so you'd get into kind of a wooded area, and there would be lights on the side of the road, and then you'd come up to the gate, right. And the gate would have the, the crest of the family and the designs. And that usually wasn't in cheap plastic. Right? Because what you want to communicate. Majesty. Okay. And at the gate would be guards and they'd be wearing uniforms, right? These are all things signaling to you of the Majesty. As a matter of fact, as you got farther and farther in, you'd start to have more servants around. Interestingly, you know, the servants would have to bow. You could

never have your head be higher than the king. We could because we were. We were not Bahraini, but. But everyone else would have to keep their heads below the level of the king.

Okay. What is that all signifying? It's signifying majesty. Okay. They even have incense and smells and smoke to kind of communicate what they want to communicate. Notice that God in His heavenlies, in his heavenly reign, does not wear the emblems of majesty. He puts on majesty itself. In other words, I think another way that we could say it is you think about all the all the ways that we show majesty. When you see God on His throne, you'll realize all of the things we used to do were just our human attempts, our little carnal signposts, directing ourselves to him because he has actual majesty. Does that make sense? All right. One other picture of it. This will trigger some of you. But just last Wednesday, I was at the roof meeting at the University of Alabama. Okay. Just. Just saying. Okay. And the first meeting, it was the first meeting of the year, and they met in the stadium. Okay. And if you meet in the stadium, you can you have this added benefit that when you leave, you can leave through the locker room and the tunnel that the football team runs into in the morning, you know, before a game. And I just want to tell you, that whole locker room and that whole tunnel is directed towards Majesty, right. They are celebrating what it means to be a part of the University of Alabama football team. And so there are pictures of victories that they've had in the past. You've got a whole mural of the stadium, and the team is cheering in the middle of it. And then you have a tunnel that has lights going up and down it, right as AC DC plays on the soundtrack overhead, all of it to communicate majesty. Okay. So whether it's Royal Majesty or SEC Majesty, whatever it is you want to communicate when you get to heaven, you're going to go, oh, that was all actually about this. You're going to see the Lord and he will be robed in majesty. When you think about strength, you're going to go, oh, the thing that I consider strong is wrapped around his waist. It's his belt. See, the reason why we're pointing he's pointing this out is he's wanting to show you this. There is no other who is majestic like the Lord. This is a clear affront to the polytheistic systems that Israel would have been confronting in their day, because in their day they would say, oh, uh, Baal is king. But everyone knows Baal isn't the only king, he's just king. As long as he's got enough power and jurisdiction to reign over things. But there's other kings out there. There's even other demigods out there who can vie for power and authority from Baal. That's why you can't think of Yahweh as just another god in the pantheon of gods, because he's not vying for authority with anyone, okay? He is authority over all the extent of his authority includes everything. How do we know? Because the idea of majesty itself is tied up in his being. So you think about that if you're not the God of all, then Majesty does not point directly to you. You're just one instantiation of majesty, right? You may have a robe, but somebody else has a robe, too. Not all majesty points to your reign. And yet for the Lord, he is the summa of Majesty, right? He is its highest and its best form. And he puts it on like a cloak.

Now, what's interesting, particularly about the way the psalmist describes this, is he doesn't just say that God, the extent of divine authority is over the whole world. In other words, it's not just spatial, though he does say that the world is established, it cannot be moved. And the assumption there is the Lord has established the world. It cannot be moved. No one can change creation. There's no other creation but the creation made by the creator. It cannot be moved. There is no place where divine authority is not in control, where the Lord is not divinely

authoritative. There is no place you can't go to one of those far off stars that we can only see with telescopes, you know, that are, uh, that have been created in the last five years. You know, there are places like that. God's authority is there too, but his authority is also in the depths of the human heart. There's no place where you can go where the Lord does not reign. Think about the psalm that we read back at the beginning of the summer. Psalm 24. *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all who dwell within it.* Think about it. All of it. Not just the storm clouds, not just Israel, not just the church. All of creation belongs to the Lord. And so he has authority over all of it. He has made all of it. But what's interesting is the psalmist doesn't leave it at the spatial realm.

Okay, just hear me for a moment. Yes. He says, the Lord has established the earth that cannot be moved. But then notice what he goes on to say. You have rained from of old. You are. Of everlasting. Okay. In Hebrew, that's the most philosophical you can get to explain the idea of infinitude. So he's not just saying that the Lord rules spatially, everywhere, but he's also saying the Lord rules temporally, chronologically, everywhere. There's no place where he does not reign, and there's no time when he does not reign. As a matter of fact, God made time. It's not that he is bound by time. He just lives forever in the past and forever in the future. He made time. He exists beyond time. C.S. Lewis used to have that image I know of you talked about it here before. I think it's vivid, as C.S. Lewis's images often are. And he'd take a white paper or, or a, a marker board, and he'd draw a little circle and then have a line and then a circle, and he'd go, here's the beginning of time, here's time, here's the end of time. And he'd they say God's. The paper, God's the whiteboard. He's not bound by time. He makes time and is over and above and against it. And that's how we can say he is unchangeable. He's not unchangeable because he's stubborn. Right. That's not why God is unchangeable. He's unchangeable because he exists beyond time. To change means you have to be bound by time. He's not bound by time. You see, the psalmist is saying here in an ancient Near Eastern Hebrew way, God expands above and beyond and against us spatially. He's not a part of creation. He is over creation, and he's not a part of time. He is above and beyond time. That's how we can say, there's never going to be a time when God doesn't love you because he's loved you outside of time. That's what it means. He's loved you before the foundations of the earth that includes the whole of the earth. Time, space, the whole the whole kit and caboodle. Think about the terms that are applied to the Lord God. He is the beginning and the end. Okay, that's how God reigns above and beyond chronology. He is the Alpha and the Omega. That's an interesting way to say it. I don't think that just means he's the beginning of the end. I think that's saying he is also the beginning and the end of human knowledge using the alphabet. You have to take my word for it, both in Hebrew and in Greek. This idea of the alphabet being the summa or the full collection of human knowledge, because you can't say human knowledge without language. So the alphabet becomes this kind of, um, you know, symbol for all of human knowledge. He is the Alpha and the Omega. There's nothing that humans have ever learned or will ever learn that is apart from God. Okay. All of it concerns him. Look at how Jesus is described in John 1. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, and through him all things were made. Nothing was made that was not made through him, and he sustains all things and holds them together.* So what the psalmist is saying about God in Psalm 93 is true of Jesus. He exists above and beyond and over and against. The extent

of his reign is infinite. It's important for us to know this, because we're going to move on to the next section where we talk about the power. But we need to be clear about this God is not king because he's the most powerful being. This is not a might makes right kind of arrangement that we have here in Christianity. Okay. The biblical faith says this God not only has the power to reign, he has the right to reign. He's the only one who has the claim to reign because he made it, and he exists over and beyond it. No one else does. And fundamentally, there's two kinds of things in the world God and everything that he has made, there's nothing else. Does that make sense? And this is important. It's important for us to declare to God. It's important for us to make that affirmation, partly because he tells us that he loves it. He loves to hear us praising him and saying true things about him. And when we say there is none like you, you are robed in majesty.

Okay, let me encourage you. Go home tonight and say a prayer before you go to bed. Say a prayer where you don't ask for anything. Just praise the Lord. Say there is none like you. You are robed in majesty. Your power extends over the face of the earth. Who can stand before you? No one can pray like that, like a psalmist. Okay, when you do that, you're glorifying God. And that is good unto itself. However, there's also a second good because when you make that affirmation, when you worship God in this way and you glorify him, it reminds you that you are not the center of the world. Okay. By the way, interestingly, even modern psychologists are kind of stumbling upon this truth. You can have a more satisfying life if you realize you're not the center of the world. Okay, so it may be pragmatically helpful as well, but I just want to point this out. Regardless of its pragmatic use, it is good and right for us to recognize that the world is not Scot centered. It's not human centered. It is God centered. And when you acknowledge that that there are a lot of people like me, but there's nobody like him, right? You're rightly orienting yourself to the truth about the world, and you will have a more satisfying life as a result. It's better to be aligned with the truth than to be aligned with the lie. So we want to start there. The extent of divine authority. He's robed in majesty. All majesty is about him. Anybody else who has Majesty is just pointing to him. And he reigns over all through all of the universe. Not only spatially. But temporally. There's not just no place where he does not reign. There is also no time when he does not reign. So let's move on then to the Lord ruling verses three through four or the effect of divine power. Okay, we talked about the extent of divine authority.

Now we're talking about the effect of divine power. You can imagine or imagine with me, if you will. Can you imagine a religion? Let's say we're coming up with a good religion. You want. You want to start a cult here in Birmingham. So you're thinking, okay, what would a good religion be? Imagine a religion where God creates the world. He has a divine right to it, but he actually doesn't have the power to rule it. Okay, he made something too big. It's kind of like all the movies, you know, he's he's like, you know, Doctor Frankenstein, right? He makes the monster, but the monster ends up being more powerful than him. Imagine that. That's what actually happened. I could preach a sermon in that cult about the divine right of God, but say, it's up to us, folks. We got to try hard because he doesn't have enough power unless we. Unless we do it with him. Right. That's not the God of the Bible. God is not God of the Bible is not like Zeus, right? Zeus makes things, but then he has to depend on other gods to help him out. He has to manipulate people. He has to kind of twist situations. Our God is not that way

because not only does he have the authority over every time and place, he has the power to reign over it. The psalmist chooses to describe the power of God by recalling Genesis one. Okay, that's the whole point of the waters here. And he uses this picture of the waters because the waters in the ancient world, and still to some extent today, okay, it's a little different with science and technology. We think of ourselves as better than we are. But in the ancient world, the waters that is the deep ocean was bulletproof evidence. Okay, that there must be a God because someone has to be able to contend with the waters and we know we can't. Okay. I mean, it's really where the logic of it comes from. And by the way, that's still true today. No matter how, uh, you know, far advanced we are in our technology, no matter how big your, um, uh, you know, your tanker is or your aircraft carrier, there are still waters out there. There are storms and there are regions in the ocean, uh, where the context can be in such a way that you can sink just about every ship. All right. And you can see how that is the case if you've ever been out in the ocean during a storm. Right. How it's a wonderful picture for God to use to describe creation when he describes it as a *tohuwabohu*, right, a formlessness and a void. And that formlessness and void is an ocean, right? It is waters. And the waters are depicted as kind of being in a storm. There's no form to them. This isn't an oil slick, you know, uh, windless day. That is the pre creative state in Genesis one. It is an ocean. There is formlessness and void in it. Have you ever been out in the ocean in a storm? You know that that feels like to have formlessness. It even gives you a kind of vertigo, right? There's seasickness, and then there's this thing that happens when you're just surrounded by space that is not conforming to any shape or order. Right? There's a mountain over there. One second. You turn your head, you look back and the mountain's gone because of the way that the waves move, and how even more terrifying it would be not to be on a boat, right? But just to be floating adrift. Now imagine in Genesis one the way that this is depicted. Imagine being out in the ocean. And it's not just that there's no sun, there's no moon, there's no stars. There's no source of light at all. So you can't even see anything. And yet you're in the midst of the waves going up and down, tossing you to and fro. What would be true about that place? Well, one thing that would be true about it is this life is impossible. There. Life requires order and substance. You need something that you can hold on to. You need an anchor line. You need a pole. Okay? You need a horizon, right? That's one of the things that gives you vertigo when you're out there in the waters, when you can't see a clear horizon that does something to your brain, you can't attach to anything. So Genesis one shows God coming to this formlessness, this chaos, and what does he do? He speaks it into existence by first giving it light and then organizing the waters, the waters above the water below, then bringing up land that doesn't toss to and fro like the waters do. And now we start to have the rudiments of life. So the psalmist is referencing that to show the power of God. Because if God has power over the waters, Then that means he has power over everything. If God has power over the waters, it means that he has power over everything you can imagine. Now with that in the backdrop, Psalms like Psalm ninety three. In the backdrop are stories like Jonah, where the Lord brings about a storm and then completely quiets it in the ocean so that no one understands what took place. Or to put it another way, everyone knows that whatever God solves that problem of the storm is the greatest God they've ever met. You have that in the backdrop. Now imagine the disciples out in the Sea of Galilee, a relatively small body of water. They could have seen the

horizon. And there, in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, in a storm. And they say, Lord, Lord, don't you care that we're perishing? And he stands up and doesn't answer them, but he walks to the front of the boat and he says, peace, be still. Kind of like I do when my dog's going nuts because there's someone coming over to visit. And I do this and he runs over and he sits beside my leg. Right? That's how Jesus talks to the sea, right? Peace. Be still. He doesn't say, in the name of God the Creator, peace be still. He doesn't say that because He is God the Creator. He doesn't have to evoke a greater name. He doesn't say, Dear Father, please make this still, I don't have the authority to do it. But. But will you do it, father? No, he has the authority himself. You can see why, when the disciples are in the storm, they are afraid of the storm. And it says that they have phobia. Right? And then what happens after Christ calms the wind and the waves? It says they have phobia, right? They're even more afraid. It's more afraid to be in the presence of creator than it is to be in the presence of creation. You see, like Jesus, the God of Psalm ninety three's power has effect over all of creation. It's a remarkable thing. It's an amazing reality. You see, the pre created world is indeed terrifying. But we find great hope in knowing that in the midst of that pre-created world of chaos and disorder, the Lord has absolute power. Notice there's no struggle or fight with creation in Genesis one. He doesn't have to wrestle creation down to the ground and pin him down. That's how the pagan gods do it. God arrives on the scene and he just speaks. That kind of God has power over all of creation. God makes the sphere of life possible, and that is the effect of his power in the world over which he is perfect. He has rather perfect and complete authority. So the Lord reigns. We see the extent of divine authority. The Lord rules. We see the effect of divine power.

Finally, we come to the Lord, revealing himself. The embrace of divine presence. Now, to be honest, I think I think if you're honest with yourselves, you probably found verse five to be a little jarring because you're used to talking about divine authority and divine power, and then all of a sudden it starts talking about how God reveals himself in his testimonies. It is a bit jarring. All right. We're used to talking about God and his power and his glory and his transcendence. And yet notice, like so often in the Psalms, the psalmist moves fluidly into talking about God's presence, his eminence with us. You see, our God is not just a God who has authority and power, but he's also present. He wants to know us, and he wants to be known by us. He's a God that does not only control the candy wrapper galaxies on the far end of the universe. He also wants to intimately converse with you in your most difficult moments. He wants to hear your joys. When you hear something that makes you laugh and your heart leaps for a moment. Have you ever done you ever turn to the Lord and prayed and just told him about it? Say thank you, Lord. That was a great joke. And we thought about this when we were in Utah a couple of weeks ago. We got to go down to the Arches National Forest. And again, it was. You've heard me. I've said this before about about, um. Oh, Joshua Tree, uh, out in California. They're kind of similar. They're goofy places. You look at these arches, they're goofy. It doesn't make sense. They don't exist anywhere else in the world. They just exist here. It's crazy. It's kind of like, thank you, Lord, for that whimsy. Thanks for putting something in the world that is just like for play. It's just for joy. He wants to know you and feel your your love and your devotion and your appreciation. But he also wants to hear your grievance. He wants to hear what's making you sad, the things that are making you doubt. He wants to be known by you and he wants you to know him. Know him. Derek Kidner, the Old Testament scholar and

his wonderful commentary. I recommend everything Derek Kidner says and writes. Uh, Deuteronomy. This is rather in Psalm. Psalm seventy three to one hundred fifty is the commentary. He says this of this last verse. He goes, here is God's true glory, not of mere strength, but of character, not of mere strength, but of character. He is wholly, W h o l l y so completely. He is holy, reassuring, and he is holy, demanding. He is holy, reassuring, and he is holy. Demanding. We could say this. He is one hundred percent grace and he is one hundred percent justice. You see, our God does not reign just because it's not like he made us, and so he can just do whatever he wants with us. That's not our view of God. It's not that he has the most power, and that's why it's good to follow him, because he's more powerful than every other being. Might makes right and all of that. It's good to follow him because he's holy. Good. He is holy loving. He is holy, merciful, and he's holy. Just. Authority reminds us that God possesses the universe. Power reminds us that he is an unassailable force in the universe, but his character shows us that he is indeed good. Now, I suspect for some of us we wrestle with having believing all three of these things. I suspect that for some of you, because this is true of me too, it's easy for me to handle the first two, but hard for the last one, or it's easy for you to handle the last one, but not the first two. So for instance, some of you have no problem and you're raising the reformed tradition. You've got a big view of God. You have no problem understanding that he has authority and that he has power. Okay. And so you take to the Lord your prayers about the geopolitical conflicts that you see in the world around you. You take to him the concerns about the gospel going forth and the persecuted church, but you have a hard time taking to him your personal struggles. You may have even thought, the Lord doesn't have time for this. This is silly. This is a small thing, my stupid little issues. But but he'll take care of the big stuff. And so you can pray. And by the way, you can get by in church. You can mask and get by in church, and people will not know that. You don't know what it means for God to intimately love you because your prayers will sound righteous. By the way, some of you have the other problem. You have no problem believing that God cares about you. You can talk about him as your Lord and Savior. You can talk about Jesus as your friend. You pray to him about all the things that you're struggling with, but you do have a hard time recognizing that he's also God of the universe, who ordains whatsoever comes to pass and is moving the world inevitably unto his good ends. So interestingly, ironically, with both situations, people end up feeling isolated. If you don't believe that God knows you intimately, then you feel isolated. You feel like God is a great wise king, but he's not the friend and lover of your soul. And so you feel isolated from him. And then, interestingly, for those who feel an obvious closeness to God, but they don't see him as a great and wise king when difficult things happen, it becomes hard to realize or believe that he's present, right? Because your understanding of him is directly tied to your own personal needs and wants and desires. So when those aren't met, it feels like God is absent. Interestingly, when we don't have all three together, we end up feeling isolated from God. But see, this is why it's so crucial for us to believe all three things. He has authority. In other words, he has the right to reign over the world. He has the power, which means he has the ability to ordain whatsoever comes to pass and he has the presence that means he's in your innermost thoughts. He cares about your innermost, most private counsel. He wants to come alongside you and support and care for you. He wants to sanctify you, even the silly little stupid mistakes that you make.

You see, it's crucial that we recognize all three of these things. God has authority over all. So there is nothing outside of the domain of his reign. He is powerful, which means nothing beyond his control. He's not constrained or held back by evil. There is no evil in this world that can vie for his attentions or vie for his, uh, you know, vie for his kingdom. He's not absent either, even in the darkest moments, not only of personal history, but of world history. Okay? God is working even in the darkest moment of all of human history, when humans rose up and took creator incarnate, who came to save them from their sins and drove nails into his wrists and to his hand and stabbed his side. Actually, the one true time that an innocent actually suffered, even though he had done nothing wrong, literally. And God still took that darkest event in human history and turned it into the greatest act of redemption that humanity has ever known. See, God's presence means that he is with us even in our most private and tender moments. He knows our fears. He sympathizes with our plight and Christ. He has experienced every loss, every frustration, every unmet expectation, every confusing turn of events. And he can sympathize with you because he is your high priest. He's walked your life before you. This is, by the way, all three things have to be true for Paul to say something like this to the church in Philippi. I am convinced of this. Paul says that he will bring you to completion, you individually and you collectively as a church. He will bring you to completion in the day of Christ. If he doesn't have authority, then we have no. We have no way of knowing if we can trust what he says. If he doesn't have power, then we don't know if we can trust that he has the ability to do what he says. And if he's not present with us. And how does he know who we are? So that he might bring us to our best, our best version of ourselves in the day of Christ?

All three things have to be true for us to be able to say that and to mean it. Now, before I close, I just want to point out this what I'm laying out for you this morning. I want you to hear, I'm not trying to lay out a set of theological doctrines about God. I want to be very specific. What I mean by this there's nothing wrong with theological doctrines. There's nothing wrong with propositions. As a matter of fact, they're very good and helpful. But if you walk away from this with just these three points of doctrines about God, then you're missing what I think the psalmist is trying to do by using this poetic form to teach us these things. He's not trying to teach us a list of things to say are true about God. Rather, he is telling us a different story than the one that the world is telling us. Okay. Now what's the difference there? Both are important. We need doctrines and propositions, and we need narratives. And we need stories.

Propositions give you right thinking. Narratives give you a lens or a framework out of which you can interpret all the things that you see around you. Right? Propositions are very valuable, and that's important. God has authority. God has power. God has presence. Okay. That's that's wonderful. And you need to know that and keep that in mind. However, I want you to notice how this narrative reframes everything that we know about the world around us. It means this if this is true that God reigns, he has power, and he is present with us, then that means that we should be striving to pursue him in all of the ways that he is at work in the world. For instance, we work and we strive, but we strive with confidence because we know that we work for a God who has all the authority, all of the power, and he's present with us. I'm not working alone. His designs won't be thwarted if I don't do as good of a job as I could. I can work and I can strive because I'm working for God, and yet I can strive with confidence, knowing that he will bring about his just ends. I can grieve, but with hope. It's good to grieve. Our Savior himself grieves

when his good friend dies in an untimely manner. Jesus himself sobs and weeps and can't speak for a moment, and yet he grieves with hope because he knows what's around the corner. Listen, I know that there are times when we grieve and the grief is even. There's a special kind of grief. There's kind of a sickening grief, even in those moments when the grief is sickening, when it's got accompanying it, confusion and a lack of knowledge. And there's an unnaturalness around the grief. You can grieve and yet recognize because God is present and has authority, authority over all of creation. He is powerful to bring about all things unto his good ends. And lastly, he is present and he knows your grief. You can grieve, but as one with hope, you can say, Lord, I don't know what you're doing. And guess what? There may never be a time when you fully understand what the Lord is doing. I mean, even in the new heavens and new earth, he is creator. *We're creatures. When you've been there ten thousand years, bright, shining as the sun. And you've got no less days to sing his praise than when you first begun,* there will be questions that you still have unanswered. Because He's creator and your creator, you'll be okay with the unanswered questions. You'll glorify in them, in his wonderment and in his hidden nature. And yet, you may not fully understand everything, and yet you'll know he's good. He's powerful, and he's right. So we can grieve. But those with hope, we can enjoy life. We can enjoy life in Birmingham. We can enjoy the good life of Birmingham. There's a lot to enjoy. There's a lot of comfort. On one hand around Birmingham. We can enjoy it and yet never let it become. Make us complacent. Right. We want to enjoy and praise with the doxology. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. And yet never let the wealth and the comfort and the ease of life and the slow pace. Never let that make us complacent, but rather enjoy life with caution because of what we just sang a few moments ago. There is a God and we're not him, so I want to be cautious about it. I don't ever want his blessings to become, in my heart, twisted into becoming my new God. Right. I want him to be God and to enjoy his blessings, but with caution. Likewise, I can be content. We're called to be content in all things. Paul tells us in Philippians, I've learned how to become content in all things, even in suffering. We can be content and yet have aspirations to desire to see the Lord doing more work in the world around us, in our own lives. Let me put it this way we can be content with aspirations. We can have aspirations without becoming critical. Right. And that, of course, is a common temptation in the church to desire a thing for the church. And then that makes you critical of the church.

Lastly, I want to say this. You can love the individual and you can love the community. You can love the individual and you can love the community. What do I mean by that? It means that our God loves us as a people. He loves the whole church the same, and yet he also loves you individually. You know that that's true. He loves you as one big true Israel in him. He actually loves you. And as he sees the church, he sees his son. He loves you like he sees like he loves Jesus. And yet he also knows you individually by name, and not one of you will slip through his fingers. If you are in Christ, then you have been known and beloved since before the foundations of the world. You have been known and loved outside of the bounds of time, and he will never stop loving you. He will never slip through your fingers, even in your weakest moment, even in your darkest moment. Let me just be clear, brothers and sisters, he's a just God. And so the fact that he loves you does not mean that your sins are forgiven. Your sins need to be judged. Okay, I know right now I just got everybody's attention, didn't I? Your sins need to be judged. All sins will be judged when you become a Christian. It does not mean that

your sins kind of disappear. God pulls out a divine eraser and erases them. That's not what happens. They have to be judged. They will either be judged on your head or they will be judged on the head of Jesus Christ. But they must be judged. That's the good news that you're being offered, that the judge is offering you a plea deal. He's saying you can either go to jail for eternity, or you can let the punishment be placed on my son. That's good news. That's a great deal. Take it. But that's how God can love you individually because you're like, I'm a mess Lord, how do you love me individually? And you'll say, let me tell you why. Because my son took your sin on his own head, so I can love you now, openly and freely, without giving up my character of justice. I can still be just. And yet I can shower grace upon you. We can love the individual and the community, and we can know that we are loved as individuals and community.

Let me end on this. If you are in Christ, no matter what you are experiencing now, no matter the loss or the confusion about what is happening in the world around you, on the news, or in your neighborhood, or in your family, or in your friend group. You can be confident of this. He has the authority to set all things right, and he will. He has the power to order even the most difficult circumstances unto his glory. And because he is present, he knows exactly what you're experiencing. He loves you and he is walking with you in it. You can be confident. You can be confident, as Paul says to the Philippians, that the Lord will bring you to that place of completion in the day of Jesus Christ. You cannot slip through his fingers. You're not a part of a tragedy. You're a part of the grand, eternal comedy of redemption that God is about to do in the world. Let's pray.