

Steadfast Love

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- [0 : 0 0] My name's Nathan, and if you're new amongst us, let me add my welcome. It's great to have you amongst us. We're going to be reading from Psalm 33.
- Now, so turn there in your Bibles. Let's read from Psalm 33. Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright.
- Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre. Make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. Sing to him a new song. Play skillfully on the strings with loud shouts.
- For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.
- By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap. He puts the deeps in storehouses.
- [1 : 0 1] Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it came to be. He commanded, and it stood firm.
- The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing. He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever.
- The plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. The people whom he has chosen as his heritage.
- The Lord looks down from heaven. He sees all the children of man. From where he sits enthroned, he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth. He who fashions the heart of them all and observes all their deeds.
- The king is not saved by his great army. A warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation. And by its great might, it cannot rescue.
- [2 : 0 3] Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him. On those who hope in his steadfast love. That he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.
- Our soul waits for the Lord. He is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him. Because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us.
- Even as we hope in you. Well friends, we're continuing this morning in the book of Psalms. And today we come to Psalm 33, which we just read.
- But I want to start by going back to last week. And to Psalm 32. And the reason why is because of those last two verses in Psalm 32.
- You'll see there verses 10 and 11. And even though we've had, only just had a quick read through of Psalm 33. I'm sure you'll notice how neatly Psalm 32 dovetails into 33.
- [3 : 0 7] Many are the sorrows of the wicked. But steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord. And rejoice, O righteous.
- And shout for joy, all you upright in heart. Be glad, rejoice, and shout for joy because of God's steadfast love. And in particular, as you'll remember from last week, the steadfast love that is seen in God's forgiveness.

That when David hid his sin, it consumed him. It dried him up, as it says in 32 verse 4. But as soon as he uncovered his sin and confessed it before God, God covered it up.

God's overflowing forgiveness. Out of God's love for his people, he forgives those that seek it. And that is a reason to rejoice.

A reason to be glad and shout. But that's Psalm 32. What about Psalm 33? Well, listen to the careful arrangement of these Psalms here. And how they work together and flow into each other.

[4 : 14] From verse 10 of 32. Many are the sorrows of the wicked. But steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord. And rejoice, O righteous.

And shout for joy, all you upright in heart. Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright. And then in verse 5. The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

Verse 18. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him. On those who hope in his steadfast love. 22. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us.

Even as we hope in you. It's all about God's steadfast love. In Psalm 32, God's steadfast love is seen in forgiving the sinful. And then that continues into Psalm 33.

As we see God's love both in creation and in salvation. His love that feels everything that he created. As well as being seen in how he powerfully saves his people.

[5 : 19] That's the two halves that this Psalm roughly falls into. Which we'll work through this morning. And which you should be able to see there in your outline. We'll see God's steadfast love.

Firstly seen in creation. And then salvation. So, from verse 1. Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright.

Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre. Make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. Sing to him a new song. Play skillfully on the strings with loud shouts.

Do you see what this is saying? This is what it looks like to be righteous. It's not a picture of reservation or half-heartedness.

No, no. Shout for joy. Give thanks with the lyre. Sing a new song. Play skillfully and with loud shouts. This is appropriate behavior for godly people.

[6 : 16] Like a comfy jacket. It is fitting for God's people to praise him. Without it, we're underdressed. Praise, singing, thanksgiving.

These are not optional extras. These are the fundamentals of righteous living. To be shouting and singing out of joy. And in response to what the Lord has done.

And particularly, as we see here, to music. Music has a way of capturing our affections. Yes, as we see in Colossians 3, singing is a great way of teaching one another.

And we mustn't lose that aspect of it. But more than that, music helps articulate the deep thoughts of our hearts. It helps express our joys and desires much more fully than just speaking can do.

It helps convey our inner oomph. And perhaps I should have sung this sermon. Perhaps that would be more fitting. But we can say we love you, God.

[7 : 20] But when we sing it, it helps us not just to know it, but to joyfully feel it. Like we were singing just before, Jesus strong and kind. We can always run to Jesus. Jesus strong and kind. But when we...

To say that is one thing. But when we sing it, we feel it. And it's so much more powerful and true, isn't it? Because we have sung it. And given how God has loved us, shouldn't this be our default?

Constantly overflowing in thanksgiving and praise. In response to the truly amazing things that God has done. Unfortunately, we are much too quick to forget, aren't we?

I know that I am. Too easily I overlook the daily mercies of our great God. Too quickly does the horror of our sin and the beauty of God's forgiveness fade.

Till we get to the point where we let sin slide. Because we can always come back later for forgiveness, can't we? But as we cheapen forgiveness, our thankfulness and our joy in the Lord also shrinks.

[8 : 26] We forget how blessed it is to be the one whose transgressions are covered and whose sin is forgiven. However, God's love extends to much more than just forgiveness.

It isn't just because of forgiveness that we're to shout for joy. No. God's steadfast love is seen not only in forgiveness, but also in creation. For the word of the Lord is upright and all his work is done in faithfulness.

He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap. He puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

For he spoke, and it came to be. He commanded, and it stood firm. Why praise God? Well, firstly, because he is worthy of it.

[9 : 33] He is worthy because he created all things. And what he has created is not evil or chaotic, but upright and just and righteous.

He is worthy because the earth is full of his steadfast love. You can't turn around without bumping into God's love.

And we'll come back to how we see God's love filling the earth in a second. But first we need to spend some time thinking about his steadfast love. Because that's key throughout this passage, isn't it?

I'm sure you've probably picked up those two key phrases in these verses. All his work is done in faithfulness, and the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

Steadfast love and faithfulness. These are the heart of God himself, aren't they? This is how time and time again throughout the Old Testament, God chooses to describe himself as a God of steadfast love and faithfulness.

[10 : 34] And a key passage to look at this is Exodus 34. You might want to make a note. But another helpful one which I think we'll go to is Deuteronomy chapter 7.

But before we turn there, I just want to think for a second about these two characteristics. Faithfulness is all about commitment and trustworthiness. Reliability. Where you can be trusted to do what you have said you will do.

God isn't like a spouse that says they will commit for life and then walk out after five years saying that with you it's felt like a lifetime. No, much more than any of us, God is faithful to his word.

Faithful to act in the manner he said he would. And then significantly, steadfast love. An unchanging love. A committed love.

Covenantal love. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 7. Standing on the edge of the promised land, Moses reminds the Israelites of what God has done and how they are to live in the land.

[11 : 40] They're to teach God's commandments to their children and remind them of what God has done. They're to take care, not to be distracted by luxury and forget about God. And they're to completely destroy the surrounding nations and not to intermarry with them.

Otherwise, they would turn from the Lord and be led off to serve other gods. And picking up in verse 6, the reason for this is, For you are a people, holy to the Lord your God.

The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession. Out of all of the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you.

For you were the fewest of all peoples. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath he swore to your fathers. That the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery.

From the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God's covenant to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, choosing them to be his special people.

[12 : 47] And promising to tenderly love them and to make them into a great nation. This is why God delivered Israel out of Egypt. But keep going. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God.

The faithful God who keeps his covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments. To a thousand generations. And repays to their face those who hate him by destroying them.

He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.

God's love towards those who love him is abundantly generous. Repaying them to the thousandth generation. As we see here with Israel. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, they're since long dead in the grave.

But God is loving them to the thousandth generation. Safely delivering their descendants out of slavery. And delivering them to the land that he promised to them centuries beforehand.

[13 : 53] But there is a warning here, isn't there? To those who love God and keep his commandments. He will steadfastly love them to the thousandth generations. But to those that hate him, they will be repaid to their face and destroyed.

Cut off from his covenantal love. A love that, as we come back to Psalm 33, fills creation. A creation lovingly crafted by the word of God.

By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. And by the breath of his mouth, all their host. For he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. Now it shouldn't come as any surprise to see God creating through his word here.

That comes straight out of Genesis 1, doesn't it? But notice in verse 6 how the breath of his mouth is also involved. That's the same word translated spirit in the Old Testament.

Which of course is also from Genesis 1, isn't it? Where we see the spirit of God hovering over the face of the water. Poised to do his will. And as soon as he speaks, creation.

[15 : 01] The waters are separated and the seas are gathered into a heap. God's spirit carrying along his word to accomplish his will. He commands creation and it comes into existence.

As he speaks, he forms the world. And as he creates, he fills it with his steadfast love. God's gracious love towards us is not only seen in forgiveness, but in the very world we inhabit.

In creation around us. In the beauty of nature. The complexity of life. The vastness of the universe. We see it in the rain that he sends to nourish us.

The intricacy of the ecosystems that we live in. The vivid colors and the luscious smells and the vibrant sounds that are around us.

In food that isn't only sustaining, but delicious. The fact that we inhabit a tiny blue dot, but we can look up at night and see the light from stars and galaxies millions of miles away.

[16 : 05] A world that can be explored and discovered, only for us to time and time again be blown away by its complexity. This is all God's steadfast love towards us.

This is what he has created for us. Not a world of chaos or unruliness, but a world of order and beauty.

This is what he has given us, so that we might praise him. That we might stand in awe of him. And I think that the hymn, How Great Thou Art, captures this perfectly.

I'll just read out a few verses from it. O Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder Consider all the works thy hand have made.

I see the stars. I hear the rolling thunder. Thy power throughout the universe displayed. When through the woods and forest glades I wander And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees.

[17 : 09] When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze. Then sings my soul, My Saviour God to thee.

How great thou art. How great thou art. That nails it, doesn't it? God's love for us is seen in the beauty And the magnificence of the world around us.

To which the only response is to stand in awe and fear of him. And to say how great he is. And as great as the world around us is, The God who made it is greater still.

He was able to bring all of this about Simply by speaking. He is a powerful God And we are only human. It is right for us to fear him.

To recognise that we are creatures And that he is the creator. Not fear because he is vicious or vindictive. But because he is God.

[18 : 11] And we are not. Which makes the next words of this psalm That much more stunning. The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing.

He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.

The people whom he has chosen as his heritage. This God that spoke the universe into existence. This is the God that has worked throughout history In order to live amongst his chosen people.

His heritage, which is like his allotted portion. Something that he has set apart particularly for himself. It's not the heavens or any other location. It's a people.

A chosen nation. Not all people everywhere. No, there are nations whose counsel he overturns And whose plans he frustrates. Similar to what we see in Psalm 2 With the rulers taking counsel together Against God Which ultimately God brings to nothing.

[19 : 21] And in contrast to these rulers And their fretting and their conniving God's counsel and plan stand forever. No, not all the nations are the chosen nation.

God has a chosen, a special nation Out of all of the nations To be his own. A living house for him to dwell amongst. God has a chosen nation.

Which is what we saw in Deuteronomy chapter 7, isn't it? The Israelites were chosen Not because of any special attribute But because of his steadfast love and faithfulness. Which of course, after Jesus' death and resurrection Is especially seen not to be a national Israel But the true Israel.

Those that love the Lord and keep his commandments. One that we have been grafted into. How awesome is it that we have been chosen by God.

That the God who created the universe By his word would choose us. That he would choose us to be the people On whom he would set his steadfast love.

[20 : 22] To the thousandth generation. That's something to sing and shout about. And so, having established the world by his word Having it chosen a people to be his heritage We see the Lord sitting enthroned above it And looking down.

Looking down on creation To see in what people trust For their salvation. From verse 13 The Lord looks down from heaven He sees all the children of man From where he sits enthroned He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth He who fashions the hearts of them all And observes all their deeds The king is not saved by his great army A warrior is not delivered by his great strength The war horse is a false hope for salvation And by its great might it cannot rescue Behold, the eye of the Lord Is on those who fear him On those who hope in his steadfast love That he may deliver their soul from death And keep them alive in famine As he sits as ruler above creation God watches his creatures and all that they do Observing them for what they trust in To deliver them from death There's the king trusting in his great army

The warrior in his great strength Or trusting in the might of horses for salvation But all of these are only a false hope Strength fades Allegiances change And ultimately everything will fail None of these things can assure salvation Because all of these are creatures And not the creator It is only the Lord that can truly bring deliverance And his eye is on his people To rescue them from death and famine That's the level of care that God has for his children While the Lord observes Observes all the inhabitants of the earth His eye, his close attention Is for those who fear him To be able to quickly reach out and save them And yes, while God can save through strength And armies and horses The issue here is where your heart is

In what you are trusting Are you trusting in earthly created things Oblivious to the God who fashioned each and every heart Or are you hoping in the one who sits above all And works all things to deliver those who fear him He is the only one that can bring about salvation And he is sure to deliver those that hope In his steadfast love Just as in forgiveness and creation God's love is seen in the salvation of his people Delivering on his promise To make them his people and himself their God To deliver them from death Which the depth of is seen most clearly at the cross Where out of his love God sent his one and only son To die in our place So that by believing in him We might not die But instead have life It is through the cross

That once and for all Christ won deliverance for all of his people It is through the death and resurrection Of his beloved son That God has saved us from death The Christ who left behind his glorious throne Who bore our sin and our shame on the cross The once for all sacrifice for sin So that we might be delivered Not through a great army Or through the strength of a warrior Or horses But through a servant king The death of God's son in our place That is the steadfast love of God That is God's glorious love towards us I mean what can compare to that That is the love for which we sing and shout God's deliverance won for us And it has been won Death has been defeated But as we live in these last days Like the psalmist We wait Our soul waits for the Lord

[24 : 46] He is our help and our shield For our heart is glad in him Because we trust in his holy name Let your steadfast love, O Lord Be upon us Even as we hope in you The godly life is one characterized by waiting And we can confidently wait Because what we are waiting for Is of surpassing value To anything in this world What we gain is so much greater Than what we might lose out now By waiting And we can also be confident Because what we are waiting for Is certain to come about It has been promised By our faithful God He has promised to deliver us In line with his covenantal Steadfast love He is faithful to keep his promises And powerful to bring it about Now waiting might seem A bit placid and plain There's nothing really fancy to it But while we wait It's not as if we're meant to be

Not meant to be doing anything For one At the very least We're to be thanking and praising God Aren't we And there are many other things That will fill a godly life But as we live We're living lives characterized by waiting Not hoping in creatures or created things Not running around trying to get our fill Of this life But instead waiting for our creator Creator Awaiting the certain hope That God will deliver us Into his heavenly kingdom Where we will dwell with him As his people And as we wait And hope in the Lord He continues to shower us In his steadfast love As he sustains us Until our hope becomes reality And he will finally deliver us Out of death Now it's about time to wrap up And to do so I want to finish with two final points That in response to the steadfast love of God

We are to praise him And we are to wait We are the blessed nation of verse 12 We are the ones whom he has chosen To be his heritage The God that spoke creation into being The one who sits enthroned over all the earth That's our God The God who is so defined by love That he would send his only son to die So that we could be saved How glorious is it That we get to be his people And how proper is it That we sing and shout for joy For the Sorry, shout for joy That we have in him That we give thanks to the one Who is full of righteousness and justice Steadfast love and faithfulness And that we do so While waiting Waiting for his deliverance Confident Because we have already seen His love and deliverance In his son Jesus And we know that in his return

Our deliverance will be final And that we will dwell with the Lord As his people forever I think it's in the gospel of Luke That we see this most clearly So turn to chapter 2 And we'll finish with this And here we get two clear examples Of people waiting Waiting for God's salvation A waiting characterized by praise Which incidentally Because these are the songs That the Israelites would sing This very psalm And others like it This very psalm Is one that they would be singing While waiting for God's salvation So from verse 22 And when the time came For the purification According to the law of Moses They brought him That's Jesus Up to Jerusalem To present him to the Lord As it is written In the law of the Lord Every male who first opens the womb Shall be called holy To the Lord And to offer a sacrifice According to what is said In the law of the Lord

A pair of turtle doves Or two young pigeons Now there was a man in Jerusalem Whose name was Simeon And this man was righteous And devout Waiting for the consolation Of Israel And the Holy Spirit Was upon him And it had been revealed To him by the Holy Spirit That he would not see death Before he had seen The Lord's Christ And he came in the Spirit Into the temple And when the parents Brought in the child Jesus To do for him According to the custom Of the law He took him up in his arms And blessed God And said Lord Now you are letting Your servant depart In peace According to your word For my eyes Have seen your salvation That you have prepared In the presence Of all peoples A light for revelation To the Gentiles And for glory To your people Israel And his father And his mother marvelled at what was said About him And Simeon blessed them And said to Mary His mother

[29 : 52] Behold this child Is appointed For the fall And rising Of many in Israel And for a sign That is opposed And a sword Will pierce Through your soul Also So that thoughts From many hearts May be revealed And there was a prophetess Anna The daughter of Phanuel Of the tribe Of Asher She was advanced In years Having lived With her husband Seven years From when she was a virgin And then as a widow Until she was 84 She did not depart From the temple Worshipping With fasting And prayer Night and day And coming up At that very hour She began To give thanks To God And to speak Of him To all who were waiting For the redemption Of Jerusalem Simeon and Anna Are examples For us Aren't they Simply waiting For God's salvation Satisfied To wait For his timing Confident In his ability To bring it about Praising God And waiting For him Our God

Has shown His incredible Steadfast love To us In both creation And salvation He is worthy Of all honour And praise As we wait For him Let's sing And shout for joy In what he has done Let's pray Dear loving Father Time and time again You have shown Your steadfast love Towards us As we hope In you Please continue To shower us In your love Remind us daily Of your goodness And love Towards us And thank you For your deliverance Through Jesus Help us To joyfully Praise you Until the day Where we will be able To do it In your presence Amen Amen