

Psalms 103:0 ¶ *A Psalm of David.*

This is yet another one of the compositions of David, the shepherd king of Israel, praising the LORD, YHWH, the self-Existent Eternal God.

Psalms 103:1 ¶ *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

David opens his psalm talking to himself, urging himself to give the LORD the praise He deserves—something with which I identify. It is so easy to get caught up in the demands and distractions of life, that we sometimes have to remind ourselves to praise the LORD. That is one reason I am so looking forward to going home to heaven, no longer will such demands or distractions plague us.

David wants to show how he adores the LORD with his whole being. He realizes that one way we can do that is to adore and praise His pure and irreproachable name.

I fear that is a truth ignored by the culture of our day, to the point that even many that call themselves Christian are guilty of not guarding the respect of that name. “Oh my God,” is used so widely that even its acronym is part of popular lingo and is often used without thinking by many professing Christians.

I like this observation from Gill: “God is to be served with the best we have; as with the best of our substance, so with the best of our persons; and it is the heart, or soul, which he requires to be given him; and such service as is performed with the soul or spirit is most agreeable to him; he being a Spirit, and therefore must be worshipped in spirit and in truth: unless the spirit or soul of a man, is engaged in the service of God, it is of little avail; for bodily exercise profiteth not; preaching, hearing, praying, and praising, should be both with the spirit, and with the understanding....”

I also like the quote Guzik used from Morgan: “The one value of these opening words is that they show us that worship is not involuntary, automatic. It calls for the co-ordination of all our powers....”

**Psalms 103:2 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*
Psalms 103:3 *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;*
Psalms 103:4 *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*
Psalms 103:5 *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.***

David reminds himself to remember all the kindness the LORD showers upon His people. He then begins to list some of those blessings. I like the way Spurgeon expressed it: “David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes and arguments for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude.”

- He forgives our iniquities, our sin. This is the most important benefit God bestows upon us. Without forgiveness of sin, nothing else really matters. Forgiveness based on faith and repentance is what opens the door to an eternal future in the presence of God. The word “forgive” includes the fact that He pardons us and spares us from the judgment we deserve.
- He heals our diseases. Regarding those that are part of His family in particular, I personally believe that every time we recover from an illness His hand is involved in it. I also believe that even when He chooses not to heal us this side of heaven for whatever purpose, that healing is given at death when we step into His presence. Many commentators explain that the reference according to the Hebrew is to sickness of the soul. If that is the primary reference, it doesn’t change the truth of application to the physical; it just adds to that truth. The LORD is the only One that can provide true spiritual and emotional healing.
- He redeems us from destruction. Instead of death resulting in being trapped in the pit of destruction, the one who places his faith in the LORD has been purchased as His own with the precious blood of Jesus. Through the sacrifice of Jesus we can be made righteous and look forward to eternity in His presence.

1 Peter 1:18–19 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot....”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

John 14:2–3 “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

- He crowns us with lovingkindness and tender mercies. The word “crown” makes reference to encircling us with protection. The Hebrew reveals that David is comparing the love God has for those that trust in Him to the way a woman loves and cherishes the baby in her womb.

In David’s day, children were cherished as blessings from God. Sadly, that comparison is not such a good comparison today—especially in America. Many mothers-to-be think nothing of killing their unborn baby and are protected in that choice by the laws of our land and with the use of our tax dollars to support those that provide such services. The time is coming when God will certainly judge America in large part for that sin in particular.

I liked the way the New Bible Commentary explained lovingkindness and tender mercies: "The former is love centered in the will, the love of commitment, unchanging; the latter is the love of the heart, surging and emotional."

- He satisfies our mouths with good things. A simple reading of the text tells us that it is the LORD that provides good things for us to eat to keep us strong and healthy. Other translations are more general than the KJV, such as the ESV: "*Who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*" I think both understandings reflect the truth. Everything that is good in our lives comes from the LORD, and everything He gives is satisfying, leaving nothing wanting. I think David chose the eagle as representing great strength and power.

Spurgeon again makes a beautiful observation: "Thus, is the endless chain of grace complete. Sins forgiven, its power subdued, and its penalty averted, then we are honoured, supplied, and our very nature renovated, till we are as new-born children in the household of God."

Psalms 103:6 ¶ The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

David acknowledged that the LORD works for good and for justice for the oppressed. I think that one of the main ways that He provides for those in need is through those that follow Him as LORD. As with healing, that provision does not always come in the manner or time that we would choose, but it always comes.

Another jewel from Spurgeon: "Man's injustice shall receive retribution at the hand of God. Mercy to his saints demands vengeance on their persecutors, and he will repay it. No blood of martyrs shall be shed in vain; no groans of confessors in prison shall be left without inquisition being made concerning them. *All wrongs shall be righted, all the oppressed shall be avenged. Justice may at times leave the courts of man, but it abides upon the tribunal of God.*"

I think verse 11 provides a qualifier for the truths that David declares in this psalm as pertaining to those that fear Him, those that trust Him as LORD.

Psalms 103:7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

At first, this statement seems unrelated. I think that by making a statement that the LORD first made Himself known to Israel through Moses and affirmed Himself through His many acts and miracles on their behalf, David is basically saying that God is as He always was.

Numbers 14:18 "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty...."

Exodus 15:26 "And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee."

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not...."

Psalms 103:8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

David had personally experienced the LORD's mercy and grace. He continues to praise the LORD for being slow to anger as well as merciful and gracious. His mercy is more than sufficient; it is available in abundance. The prophet Jeremiah echoed this truth.

Lamentations 3:22–23 "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

Psalms 103:9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

Psalms 103:10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

Psalms 103:11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

David knows that though the LORD is longsuffering, there comes a time when judgment is necessary. He has not treated us in the way our sins deserve. Why is He so longsuffering? Why does He continue to plead with us to trust Him? Because of His great mercy—mercy so great that David expresses it as greater than the height of heaven above the earth. That mercy is reserved for those that fear Him—that reverence Him as LORD.

In His great omniscience, He knows each one who will fear Him and accept Him as LORD and has known from before creation.

Romans 8:29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Ephesians 1:4–6 "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

I liked Gill's thoughts regarding verse 9: "He sometimes does chide his children, though never but when they have done a fault; always for their sins, in order to bring them to a sense and acknowledgment of them, and to depart from them; not for chiding sake, as some parents, to gratify their passion and ill humour, who correct for their own pleasure; but the Lord chides and corrects for the profit

of his children, that they may be partakers of his holiness; he ever does it for their good....”

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

A blessed and beautiful truth! When the LORD forgives us, He removes our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west—a distance that cannot be measured.

Psalms 103:13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

Psalms 103:14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

The Hebrew for “pitieth” makes reference to a love revealed with great compassion and mercy that David pictures as how a loving Father feels about his child. That is the love with which the LORD loves those that fear Him, those that reverence Him. As our Creator, He knows that we are but dust.

It is so sad that this is not a truth that is a picture of all fathers. In our world today, there are many fathers that are more focused on self than on their children. There are many fathers that abandon their children, leaving them to be raised by single moms and not even caring enough to provide support for the things they need. Some fathers are even abusive to their children because they are addicted to alcohol, drugs, etc. I think that is why some people have such a hard time with connecting with God as a loving father.

I like Guzik’s comment: “This **pity** and remembrance is only greater in light of the incarnation. God Himself added humanity to His deity and experienced **our frame** and our **dust**-like weakness. What before He knew by observation He submitted to know by *experience*.”

Psalms 103:15 As for man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

Psalms 103:16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

David compares a person’s life to grass and the flowers of the field that grow and flourish for a while before being destroyed and forgotten.

Isaiah expanded on the words of David: *Isaiah 40:6–7 “...All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.”*

Psalms 103:17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children;

Psalms 103:18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Though we are but frail, weak creatures, the LORD is ready to shower those that fear Him with everlasting mercy. Those that fear the LORD and honor Him as their Father may pass from the earthly scene like grass, but they are destined to eternal life in the presence of the Savior. That mercy is also extended to one's children that follow in the footsteps of parents that yield to the LORD and trust in Him as their Father. Such people can be identified by the fact that they try to live according to God's commandments as revealed in His word. They exhibit faith in action as well as word.

Another good quote from Spurgeon: "Jehovah changes not, he has mercy without end as well as without beginning. Never will those who fear him find that either their sins or their needs have exhausted the great deep of his grace."

Psalms 103:19 ¶ The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

The LORD has chosen to establish His throne in the heavens, in what we would referenece at the third heaven (the first being our atmosphere and outer space the second). His kingdom rules over all His creation.

David recognized this truth, even though He (as we) experienced the reality of the existence of evil kings and kingdoms. He knew that one day the Messiah would come to establish the rule of God's kingdom on earth as well as in heaven.

Isaiah 37:16 "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth."

2 Chronicles 20:6 "O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?"

Psalms 103:20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

Psalms 103:21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

Psalms 103:22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

David calls out for the angels to join him in praising the LORD. He specifies that he is calling out to those angels that excel in strength because they obey the commands of the LORD; they listen carefully to all He has to say and respond in obedience. David identifies the angels as God's heavenly army (from Hebrew for "hosts"), servants of the LORD that act in accordance with His will.

David ends the psalm with a call for all of God's creation to join him in praising the LORD as he praises Him from the depth of his being.