

Bless The LORD, O My Soul!

Psalm 103

Intro: Thanksgiving Day has a rich and wonderful heritage. It was in 1863 that President Abraham Lincoln first set aside the third Thursday in November as an annual day of national thanksgiving to God for His goodness to us. It was in the 1940's that Congress changed Thanksgiving day from the third to the fourth Thursday in November. And here we are once again, this is the week where we reflect on and remember all the blessings of God, and give Him joyful thanks for His goodness to us.

Psalm 103 is a powerful Psalm of Thanksgiving. The superscription, which is not a part of the inspired text, but is, nonetheless very ancient, identifies this as a psalm of David. There is no reason to question David's authorship of the composition. Moreover, the tone of the document appears to hint that it was penned in the latter years of the shepherd-king's life, perhaps after he had passed through some great crisis from which he had been delivered. David thanks God for His manifold blessings in his life.

This marvelous psalm contains 22 verses, the same number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Also, the divine covenant Name, LORD or Yahweh, occurs 11 times. The theological motif which dominates the psalm is Yahweh's "loyal love," His lovingkindness, first revealed to Moses in Exodus 34:6. God revealed to Moses that He, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness."

This revelation of Yahweh's *loyal love* became the focal point of every thanksgiving service in Israel ever since. David expounds its significance in the central portion of this psalm, vv. 9-18.

The psalm falls into a threefold division: David commences with his own heartfelt words of praise to the LORD in verses 1-5. He bows low in worship of the LORD, and enumerates a number of things for which he is grateful. In verse 6 he turns to the nation, and gives God praise for His compassion, graciousness and lovingkindness, mercy and protection (vv. 6-18). Then towards the end in verses 19-22 he makes a universal appeal to all created beings to bless the LORD.

Alright, look with me first of all at David's Personal Praise in verses 1-5,

I. David's Personal Praise (vv. 1-5)

David begins and ends with the same expression of praise, v. 1

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

22 Bless the LORD, O my soul!

This Hebrew verb, **Bless**, "*barak*," means "to bow the knee before one's sovereign." It carries the idea of acknowledging the awesome presence of one's God. The psalmist, David, probably worshipping at the temple, is caught up in adoration and thankfulness as he reflects on God's goodness toward him. He pours out his heart in an eruption of praise and adoration as he reflects on all that God had done for him.

Listen to the words of *Charles Spurgeon* on this psalm, particularly the first 5 verses. "Here David begins his list of blessings received in which he rehearses as themes for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the divine love and threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them around the neck of gratitude." End quote

The words of this psalm were written by a grateful man. David was a man whose life had been scared and marred by sin and affliction. David became so depressed at one point in his life that he fled to live in the land of the Philistines. He crossed over to Achish, the king of Gath (1 Sam. 27:1-3). Even though he had known times of testing and adversity, now with stylus in hand, he sits down, and with his heart bowed low in worship before his sovereign God, he records the words of this marvelous psalm.

In verse 2 David vows to never forget all of God's benefits toward him: *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits*. This is really what Thanksgiving is supposed to be about. We are to reflect upon all that God has done for us, and give Him praise and thanksgiving! Take time this Thanksgiving to share with family and friends what great things God has done for you this year. Be specific, write down a few things you are thankful for, and share them after the Thanksgiving meal. Start a new tradition in your family. By the way, joy springs forth from a grateful heart. Gratitude will make you joyful.

Look next with me at what David was thankful for. After acknowledging that he is responsible to bless God, and promising to never forget any of His many

benefits, he now names five (5) specific benefits or blessings in verses 3-5. Each begins with “Who,” referring to our blessed sovereign God. The LORD provides believers *forgiveness, healing (physical and spiritual), redemption, crowning, satisfaction, and renewal*.

First, forgiveness of sin (v. 3).

This LORD, whom my soul blesses has pardoned all your iniquities,

v. 3—Who pardons all your iniquities—

What a marvelous truth. God has forgiven all our iniquities. Think back over the past few months and reflect on the iniquities you have committed. God has forgiven you every one of them. He pardons all your iniquities. God is such a gracious and compassionate God. Let your eyes fall down to verse 10

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

**My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!**

12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

What a marvelous description of God’s mercy.
It’s height, from earth to the heavens above
It’s breadth, infinity—from east to the west
It’s depth, according to Micah 7:19—is the bottomless oceans
So far has He removed our sins from us.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

Second, healing (v. 3b). It is the LORD, Who heals all your diseases.

While God provides us with present physical healing, we all get sick and die. According to Hebrews 9:27 our death is appointed, and then comes judgment.

Many commentators feel this is a reference to our present spiritual afflictions, from which Christ has healed us. When we come to faith in Christ, we are born-again by God's Holy Spirit. As we spend time in God's presence reading His Word and praying to Him, the Spirit transforms us from glory to glory into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). This also has application to our future glorification.

Third, redemption (v. 4a). It is the LORD, Who redeems your life from the pit.

The LORD redeems believers from death; *the pit is a synonym for the grave.*

Fourth, crowned with God's grace (v. 4b).

It is the LORD, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion. God crowns, *blesse*s, believers with His loyal love and compassion.

Fifth, satisfaction and renewal (v. 5). It is the LORD, Who satisfies your years with good things. So that your youth is renewed like the eagle. As Solomon teaches in Ecclesiastes, All good gifts come from God's gracious hand, and apart from Him a person cannot truly enjoy life.

David next reflects on God's covenant loyalty to the sons of Israel, vv. 6-18

II. God's Compassion To The Nation Israel (vv. 6-18)

After a word of praise for the Lord's righteous dealing for all who are oppressed, David recalled how the LORD made Himself known to Moses. God had revealed Himself to Moses and the children of Israel as a compassionate and gracious God, who is always slow to anger and abounding in covenant loyalty = lovingkindness. Verse 8 is based on God's revelation of Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod. 34:6). This is a description of God's very nature.

v. 8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

In spite of the fact that God is so gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in lovingkindness, v. 9

v. 9 He will not always strive with us; Nor will He keep His anger forever.

We already considered God’s mercy in forgiving and removing all our transgressions from us forever (vv. 10-12).

Notice that God’s compassion is displayed toward those who fear Him, v. 13

v. 13—Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

God’s compassion extends to His children. Have you asked God to become your Father? To “fear the LORD” is to acknowledge Him as God, and accept the redemption He has provided for you through His Son Jesus Christ.

David lets us know in verses 14-18 that even though man is transitory—he is made of insignificant dust and his life is brief like the grass and wild flowers; yet God’s lovingkindness is everlasting to those who fear Him, and His righteousness extends to a believer’s children’s children.

David concludes with an appeal for all created beings to praise the LORD, vv. 19-22. He bases his appeal on the fact that God is sovereign and rules over all.

III. Universal Appeal For All Created Beings To Praise The LORD (vv. 19-22)

19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens;

And His sovereignty rules over all.

20 Bless the LORD, you His angels,

Mighty in strength, who perform His word,

Obeys the voice of His word!

21 Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,

You who serve Him, doing His will.

22 Bless the LORD, all you works of His,

In all places of His dominion;

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

The LORD rules over all. While it may not always seem so, the fact is He does. He has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty extends over all. He concludes with a threefold call for God’s created angels, hosts, and works in all places of His dominion to bless His holy name.

David concludes where he had begun: **Bless the LORD, O my soul!**

The Duke of Wellington, the British military leader who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, was not an easy man to serve under. He was brilliant, demanding, and not one to shower his subordinates with compliments. Yet even Wellington realized that his methods left something to be desired. In his old age a young lady asked him what, if anything, he would do differently if he had his life to live over again. Wellington thought for a moment, then replied. "I'd give more praise."

It is my prayer for each of us that we might adopt David's attitude of gratitude. Reflect on all of the iniquities for which God has pardoned you, and Bless His holy name. Remember all the afflictions and adversity through which He has brought you, and bless His holy name. Remember the pit from which He has redeemed you, and bless His holy name. Reflect on how He has crowned you with His lovingkindness and compassion, and bless His holy name.

May we become a truly thankful people from this day forward.

Closing prayer:

Closing song: *Thanksgiving Song*