

Title: **“BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL!”**

Text: Psalm 103:1-22

Subject: *Thanksgiving*

Date: Tuesday Evening — November 24, 2009

Tape # Z-75a

Readings: *Larry Criss and David Burge*

Introduction:

Let’s read Psalm 103 together. On Thursday our nation will celebrate a national day of thanksgiving to our God for his great, wise, good and bountiful providence. It is the one holiday we celebrate as a nation that has no connection with idolatry. It is a day dedicated to the praise of our God, a day to celebrate the goodness of the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

I realize that for most it will be no more than a day off from work, a day of revelry, or a day of family gatherings. Those things are fine. But I hope you and I will, particularly, during this season, turn our hearts to our great God and Savior in thanks giving and praise.

To that end, I have been trying to stir my own heart to celebrate the praise of my God. Three times, in these 22 verses, David uses these words to stir his soul to praise, — **“BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL!”** (vv. 1, 2, 22). As we read these twenty-two verses of Inspiration together, it is my prayer that God the Holy Spirit will stir your heart and mine to celebrate his praise.

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As we gather with our families around our tables Thursday, let us lift up our hearts with gratitude, praise and thanksgiving to the Lord our God for all his blessings of grace and providence so freely, bountifully and relentlessly bestowed upon us in Christ. Perhaps, as you lead your family in worship, you might want to read Psalm 103. Let's look at this blessed, sweet psalm of thanksgiving and praise together. In my opinion, this psalm is without rival in the literature of the world. This is the language of a man who stirs his soul to praise by his contemplation of God's goodness to him and his people.

PROPOSITION: In these twenty-two verses David teaches us to count our many blessings day by day and bless the Lord for all the benefits of his mercy, love and grace that are ours in Christ Jesus.

(Psalms 103) *"A Psalm of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. (2) Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: (3) Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; (4) Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; (5) Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. (6) The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. (7) He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. (8) The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. (9) He*

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will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. (10) He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (11) For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so great* is his mercy toward them that fear him. (12) As far as the east is from the west, *so far* hath he removed our transgressions from us. (13) Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (14) For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust. (15) *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, *so* he flourisheth. (16) For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (17) But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; (18) To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. (19) The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. (20) Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. (21) Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. (22) Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul."

This is a psalm of David. It is David who here stirs his soul to bless the Lord. This is David, who had complained in the previous psalm, — “I am in trouble...For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget

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to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Psalm 102:2-7). It is this man, David, who cries, “Bless the LORD, O my soul!”

This is David, to whom the prophet Nathan said, — “The sword shall never depart from thine house...Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun” (2 Samuel 12:11). It is this man, David, who cries, “Bless the LORD, O my soul!”

This is David, who confessed his sin, prayed and fasted, begging God to spare his son, and then went out to bury his baby boy! It is this man, David, who cries, “Bless the LORD, O my soul!”

This is David, who saw the rebellion of his son, Absalom, as he publicly shamed his father’s wives in incest before all Israel. He watched the son he loved divide the kingdom and take his throne. He prayed for Absalom. He dearly loved him. When Absalom was finally slain, oh how the death of the son broke his father’s heart. It is this man, David, who cries, “Bless the LORD, O my soul!”

This is David, writing (It has been suggested by some.) **in his old age,** in the midst of some illness, as he was possessed with a physical and emotional weakness that caused a

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coldness to steal over his heart. Remembering God’s wondrous works, he chides his soul for its coldness and cries, “Bless the LORD, O my soul!” It is this man, David, who cries, “Bless the LORD, O my soul!”

Truly, this man, David, was a man after God’s own heart, a man of remarkable, exemplary faith, even in his low estate! Here he stirs his heart to celebrate the praises of God for all goodness in creation and redemption, providence and grace.

BLESS JEHOVAH

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name” (v. 1). — The word translated “LORD” here is Jehovah¹. David says to his soul, **“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”** This is where thanksgiving must begin. God’s name represents who he is, his attributes. **Someone said**, “Before we can thank God for his blessings, we must thank him for his Being; and this is what the psalmist commands us to do.” — It is the Lord God himself who is to be adored, praised and blessed. (Ephesians 1:3).

(Ephesians 1:3-6) "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all

¹ The politically correct media, conservative and liberal, are trying their best to convince the world that when some Islamic terrorist goes on a murderous binge, crying “Allhu Akbar! Allhu Akbar! Allhu Akbar!” as murders men, women and children, that he is crying “God is great! God is great! God is great!” That is not the case. He is crying “Alla is greates!” Alla is not another name for Jehovah. All is the name of another God, the pagan God of Islam.

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spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) 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: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

“*His holy name*” embraces every attribute of God’s person and nature. We are to bless God for who he is — the Lord God Almighty, full of grace and truth (Psalms 113:1-6; 115:1, 3; 117:1, 2; 118:1, 136:1-3; 138:1-2; 139:1-24.)

(Psalms 113:1-6) “Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. (2) Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. (3) From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord’s name *is* to be praised. (4) The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens. (5) Who *is* like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, (6) Who humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth!”

(Psalms 115:1) “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth’s sake.”

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(Psalms 117) “O Praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. (2) For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever. Praise ye the LORD.”

(Psalms 118:1) “O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: because his mercy *endureth* for ever.”

(Psalms 136:1-3) “O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. (2) O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. (3) O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.”

(Psalms 138:1-2) “I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. (2) I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”

It is with my soul that I must adore, bless, praise and speak well of the Lord my God. Unless my soul is in my praise, my words are nothing! — “*Bless the Lord, O my Soul!*”

True thanksgiving and praise is a heart work. David stirs up his soul to bless God. Praise arises not from our lips, nor from our brains, but from our souls, our hearts, our inmost beings. — “*God is Spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24).

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RECALL HIS BENEFITS

In order to stir up our souls to bless the Lord, **we should recall all he benefits of his grace which we have personally experienced** (vv. 2-5).

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

One of the evidences of our depravity is our horrible tendency of forgetting blessings experienced. Whether in times of failure or success, we tend to overlook the blessings our God has lavished upon us. Therefore, the psalmist writes, — “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*”

Illustration: *The Remembrance Room* (Isaiah 51:1)

(Isaiah 51:1) “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.”

William Law, in his “*Serious Call To a Devout and Holy Life*” writes, “Would you know who is the greatest saint in

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the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice, but he who is always thankful to God, who wills everything that God willeth, who receives everything as an instance of God’s goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.” — (Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

(Ephesians 5:18-20) “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (20) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) “Rejoice evermore. (17) Pray without ceasing. (18) In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

In verses 3, 4 and 5, David mentions **five blessings** of grace to his own soul, which he had personally experienced. By recalling these benefits he stirs up his soul to bless God.

1. **“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.”**

- Our God is a God of forgiveness. (Psalm 130:4).

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(Psalms 130:1-4) "A Song of degrees. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. (2) Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. (3) If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? (4) But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

- God forgives me of all my sins!
- God's forgiveness of our sins is a continual, perpetual act of grace through the blood of Christ.

Can you say with David, — "*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered! Blessed is the man whom the Lord will not impute sin*" (Romans 4:8). If you can, then you have great reason to bless the Lord this day, "*who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*" — Past! — Present! — Future! — Sins of Thought! — Sins of Heart! — Sins of Deed! — Every Inequity!

2. "*Who healeth all thy diseases.*"

That person who is blessed of God with good health, or who has been healed of sickness, is truly blessed of God; but this text does not refer to physical health. None of us will be healed of all our physical diseases until we enter into our heavenly inheritance.

Here David is talking about spiritual health. Those who are forgiven of all sin are also healed in their souls of all their diseases and restored to spiritual life. (1 John 1:9).

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(1 John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We are forgiven in the court of heaven and cleansed in our souls by the blood of Christ and the grace of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Matthew Henry wrote, “The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul; it is its disorder, and threatens death. This is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed.”

3. **“Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.”**

Our redemption by Christ is the cause of our forgiveness and our regeneration. But redemption is not known until healing grace is experienced. Here it is placed after healing because it is experienced in that order.

- Christ redeemed us at Calvary (Galatians 3:13).
- He obtained eternal redemption for us when he entered once into the holy place with his own blood (Hebrews 9:12).
- This redemption is applied to us by the Holy Spirit in the new birth through faith (Hebrews 9:14).
- And the power of redemption is experienced continually in the soul (Psalm 40:1, 2; Psalm 130:1, 8).

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(Psalms 40:1-2) “I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. (2) He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings.”

(Psalms 130:1) “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.”

(Psalms 130:8) “And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

4. **“Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercy.”**

Christ has made us kings and priests unto God; and he has crowned us as kings with God’s constant favor — Lovingkindness and Tender Mercy! — *“Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life!”* This is the honor God gives to all his saints. This is the crown of glory which we shall wear forever!

5. **“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.”**

Nothing but the gracious favor of God in Christ can satisfy the soul. Only Christ can satisfy the needs of my soul. Only Christ can satisfy the desires of my soul. Christ who satisfies my soul continually promises to renew my youth like the eagle’s.

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This is a promise of long life — Eternal, Heavenly Life! The eagle may live to be more than 100 years old; and the old bird soars gracefully in the heavens where she is at home. Here, we are as babes in the womb. Life for the believer begins at death! When I die — Then I will live!

This is also a promise of constant renewal. As God replenishes the eagle’s feathers, making them new every year at the time of molting, so he recovers his saints from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy (Isaiah 40:31; Job 33:24-28).

(Job 33:24-28) “Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom. (25) His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s: he shall return to the days of his youth: (26) He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. (27) He looketh upon men, and *if any* say, I have sinned, and perverted *that which was* right, and it profited me not; (28) He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.”

(Isaiah 40:31) “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.”

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Even in old age, grace renews! — Caleb!

“My soul, hast thou sinned? God in Christ pardons thy sins. — Art thou diseased in body and soul, by reason of sin? God in Christ healeth all thy diseases. — Art thou ruined and undone in all the circumstances of nature, by reason of the fall? It is God, in Christ, that redeemeth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with all that is needful for thee in grace. — Art thou feeling decays, and is the event of mortality hastening upon thee? God in Christ will renew thee, as the eagle is renewed in old age. — Precious, precious salvation! And all eternally secured, and made certain, from a God in Christ.” — *Robert Hawker*

BLESSINGS UPON OTHERS

As we recall God’s benefits of grace personally experienced, **we ought to extol our God for his works of mercy and grace bestowed upon his church collectively** (vv. 6-18).

(Psalms 103:6-18) “The LORD executeth **righteousness** and **judgment** for all that are oppressed. (7) He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. (8) The LORD is **merciful** and **gracious, slow to anger**, and **plenteous in mercy**. (9) He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* for ever. (10) **He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.**

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(11) For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. (12) **As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.** (13) **Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.** (14) For **he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.** (15) As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. (16) For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (17) But **the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,** and his righteousness unto children’s children; (18) To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”

In thanksgiving and praise God’s saints do not act selfishly. **We are thankful for what the Lord has done for us personally; but we are thankful for God’s blessings upon one another, upon our brothers and sisters in Christ, too.** — “We are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord!” We are all fed at the same table and share the same blessings.

Illustration: The Conversion of Other Sinners
 The Conversion of Another’s Child
 God’s blessings upon Another Church

“Truly, God is good to Israel!” — In verses 6-18, David tells us of God’s goodness to his whole church. This is cause for thanksgiving!

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- God protects and defends all his people. — *“The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed”*(v. 6).
- The Lord has revealed himself to us by his servants. — *“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel”* (v. 7). — The ways of his grace and providence. — The acts (designs) of his purpose.
- Truly, the Lord our God is a God of mercy, love and grace. — *“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy — He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us”* (vv. 8-14).

He is longsuffering and patient. He is great in mercy and full of pity, remembering that we are but dust! Notice **whom he pities** — *“them that fear him”* — Notice **how he pities** — *“As a father pitieth his children.”*

- The ignorant he teaches!
- The weak he strengthens!
- The froward he corrects!
- The sick he comforts!
- The fallen he helps!
- The erring he forgives!
- The wronged he defends!

Notice **why he pities** — *“He knowest our frame. He remembereth that we are dust!”*

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Though we are but sinful, withering flesh, God’s covenant mercy endures forever (vv. 15-18).

(Psalms 103:15-18) *"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. (16) For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (17) But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; (18) To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."*

Illustration: David (2 Samuel 23:5)

(2 Samuel 23:5) *"Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."*

SOVEREIGN PROVIDENCE

We never lack reasons for praise. — **We ought always to bless God for his glorious sovereignty and his universal providence** (v. 19).

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

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The Lord has prepared, or established his throne. His throne is the throne of absolute sovereignty. And his throne is the throne of grace — the Mercy-seat! He has prepared his throne in the heavens — Out of Sight and Out of Reach! — *“His kingdom ruleth over all”* (Daniel 4:35-37)

(Daniel 4:35-37) "And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (36) At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. (37) Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

THANKS-LIVING

If we would truly bless and praise our God, **we must show forth his praise in our lives as well as with our lips** (vv. 20-22). Thanksgiving is really thanks-living.

(Psalms 103:20-22) “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. (21) Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his

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pleasure. (22) Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.”

In these verses, David calls upon the angels of God, those heavenly ministers of his throne, to join him in praise to God. He even calls upon all the works of God to join in the holy, blessed work. In doing so, he shows us how to truly bless and praise God, how to truly give thanks to him.

- Like the angels of God, we must be obedient to his word, doing what he commands (v. 20)
- Like those heavenly ministers, we must yield to and serve his will, doing his pleasure (v. 21; Romans 12:1-2).
- Like all his creation, we must serve the purpose of our spiritual creation, doing his works (v. 22).

This is the essence of Thanksgiving. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:8-10).

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20) "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

(Ephesians 2:8-10) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

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APPLICATION

Thanksgiving is more than the mouthing of words, or even the saying of prayers. It involves...

1. Adoring the Lord our God.
2. Remembering His Grace.
3. Recognizing of His Goodness.
4. Acknowledging of God’s Dominion.
5. Devotion to God’s Will.

If our thanksgiving is genuine, we will cry with David, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul,”* and we will go forth to obey his Word, do his will and perform his work.

Oh, my blessed Redeemer, my glorious God! Truly, you have redeemed our souls from death and forgiven all our iniquities. You have been, are and forever shall be our salvation from all sin and woe. — *“Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood!”* Your love, your mercy, your pity, your compassion are as infinitely higher than the pity of a father for his children, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Help us, O our gracious God, by the sweet constraining influences of your Spirit, to trust you, to praise you, love you and to live unto and upon you forever! Let everything that has being praise the Triune Jehovah, the Lord our God forever! Children of God, sinners saved by his grace, you who are the redeemed of the Lord, declare his praise with thanksgiving! Bless the Lord, O my soul!

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Amen.

And Happy Thanksgiving to You All!