

John Knox told the story of a woman who was dying in the hospital. Her body was wracked with pain. She apparently had come to faith in Jesus Christ by the study of Psalm 103 and she wanted it read to her before she died. She said it was the sweetest thing she had ever heard.

Psalm 103 is one of the great Psalms in the Bible. As the superscription says, it is a Psalm of David. It is a Psalm that truly exalts God and it truly ministers to people. This is a Psalm in which David challenges his own soul to bless the Lord because of all of the blessings God has given. The idea being “Bless the LORD” is praising, thanking, exalting and worshipping God. The main point of the Psalm is very clear:

GOD’S PEOPLE SHOULD PRAISE AND EXALT GOD FROM THEIR SOULS FOR WHO HE IS AND FOR ALL OF THE BLESSINGS HE HAS GIVEN.

This entire Psalm is a Psalm that gives us reasons why we should praise and exalt God from within.

We may notice from **verse 1** that the challenge is “bless the LORD” from one’s soul and from all that is within a person. So this certainly is a whole-hearted praise that needs to be offered to God. The soul of a person (nephesh) is the immaterial part of a person that includes the intellect, the emotion and the will.

In Isaiah 29:13 we read: “Then the Lord said because this people draw near Me with their words and honor Me with their lip service; **But they remove their hearts far from Me and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote..**”. It is clear from this verse that it is possible to go to a worship service and just go through motions, but your heart is not in it. That is dangerous because God monitors the heart. Never do you want to leave your heart out of worship and that is why this Psalm begins by challenging one to worship God from all that is within a person. God is not interested in half-hearted praise and worship.

Now there are three simple reasons why one should worship God and bless the LORD.

REASON #1 – Because God is Holy. **103:1**

God is totally set apart from any other Being in holiness. Here is the reason why we should always praise God; the majestic God is a Holy God.

REASON #2 – Because God has given many blessed benefits. **103:2-18**

In **verse 2**, David challenges his own soul to not forget about any of God’s benefits. Here is a huge challenge “forget none of His benefits.” This has always been a real danger to the people of God (Deut. 6:12; 8:11, 14). God has to remind his own people not to forget about all of His blessings and benefits. This can be a tendency with God’s people. Obviously ingratitude is one of the most shameful titles a person could have before God. Where would we learn about all of the benefits of God? Obviously we learn from His Word.

God gives His people life, skills, abilities, jobs, relationships, and all kinds of things and then His people forget about God. Years ago there was a lady in church who asked us to pray that she get a job and finally God gave her a good job and she forgot church.

David never wanted that happening to him. There are at least nine major benefits for which we may praise God:

Benefit #1 - The pardon benefit. **103:3a**

Notice the pardon is from “all your iniquities.” God pardons people from every sin and violation of His law.

Benefit #2 - The healing benefit. **103:3b**

We know that sometimes people are not healed. In fact, we know that sickness is one means God uses to take His people home. However, any healing from anything has come from God. This is true physically and this is true emotionally and spiritually. The problem is God does not get the credit.

Benefit #3 - The redemptive benefit. **103:4a**

The Septuagint uses the Greek verb “lutroo” for redemption. This is the word that means God pays the price and then sets the person free.

Benefit #4 - The royal benefit. **103:4b**

Notice when you have a relationship with God, you are “crowned” with the highest level of royalty one could ever have.

Benefit #5 - The satisfaction benefit. **103:5a**

God allows His people to have so many good things in life that they are satisfied. Just think for a moment about all of the good things God has permitted you to enjoy.

Benefit #6 - The renewed benefit. **103:5b**

God renews His people time and time again. Think of the times when you have been low, perhaps by your own sinful choice, and you go to God and get it resolved and you are revived and renewed.

Benefit #7 - The protective benefit. **103:6**

God protects His family and He does righteous things and even judgmental things on behalf of His people when they are being oppressed.

Benefit #8 - The revelatory benefit. **103:7**

It is clear that God made known His ways to Moses and His acts to the sons of Israel.

Benefit #9 - The grace benefit. **103:8-14**

There are thirteen amazing aspects to the grace benefit. As we look down through these benefits, it is clear that God grants this to those of His children who “fear Him” (**103:11, 13**):

Grace Aspect #1 - God is compassionate. **103:8a** rachum

This word means to cherish something to the point that you treat it in a gentle and tender way (*Ibid.*, p. 765).

Grace Aspect #2 - God is gracious. **103:8b** channun

This word emphasizes that God is favorable to someone when they do not deserve it. He graciously gives and bestows His blessings without cause (*Ibid.*, p. 292).

Grace Aspect #3 - God is slow to anger. **103:8c**

The word “slow” is one that means God extends and stretches out to a very long way before He gets angry with His people (*Ibid.*, p. 79). God cuts His people a lot of slack before they anger Him.

Grace Aspect #4 - God abounds in mercy. **103:8d**

The word “lovingkindness” is one that speaks of the great mercy of God.

Grace Aspect #5 - God will not always strive. **103:9a**

Remember this is a Holy God, so naturally our relationship with God will be one at times that is at odds with God. But God does not continually or constantly accuse us or antagonize us.

Grace Aspect #6 - God is not angry with us forever. **103:9b**

This is so wonderful to know. Even when God is angry with His people, it is not forever.

Grace Aspect #7 - God has not dealt with us on the basis of what we deserve. **103:10**

Every single one of us can testify that God has never punished us for our sins immediately or completely. He has never given to us what we truly deserve. He has not dealt with us according to our sins and He has not rewarded us according to our iniquities because if He did, we would be gone.

Grace Aspect #8 - God has demonstrated incalculable amounts of lovingkindness to us. **103:11**

The word “lovingkindness” (chesed) is a word that means to have pity and mercy on someone who is helpless in a very favorable and loving way (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 293-294). This word is used in **verses 8, 11, 17**. This is one of the wonderful benefits of having a relationship with God—His mercy is given to us. In fact, if God is not merciful, He cannot have any relationship with any of us.

Grace Aspect #9 - God has removed our transgressions from us. **103:12**

Dr. McGee said that when you go north you eventually reach a place where you go south. You eventually arrive at the north pole and from that point you head toward the south pole. But when you go west, you never reach such a place. You can always go west. West is infinity. That is the point. God forgives our sins infinitely. They are gone.

Grace Aspect #10 - God has compassion on His fearing children. **103:13**

God’s compassion is father-like.

Grace Aspect #11 - God knows how frail we are. **103:14-16**

Someone has wisely said God remembers we are dust but His people tend to forget it. We are sinful, finite human beings whose time here is like grass. We are here for a while and then we are gone and just like **verse 16** says most aren’t even acknowledged. They are just forgotten.

Grace Aspect #12 - God’s lovingkindness is everlasting. **103:17a**

Man’s life is temporal; God’s grace and mercy are not temporal. Finite humans end their existence on earth, but the mercy of God does not end any time.

Grace Aspect #13 - God’s righteousness will be passed on to children’s children. **103:17b-18**

All of these benefits are given to sinful, finite people who fear God and love God and desire to remember and keep His Word.

I have been forming some deeper conclusions about God promising that He will repay things to future generations. For example, when God says He will punish future generations for the sins of the fathers, one way to look at this is that He does not always pay back the sins immediately to the group who did them, but He will pay them back over time if they do not turn from it and turn to Him.

Now what these verses teach is that God will continually pour out His merciful blessings and grant His righteousness to generation after generation who fear Him and love His Word.

REASON #3 – Because God is Sovereign. **103:19**

This verse is as plain as it gets—God’s sovereignty rules over everything. We cannot possibly praise God and bless God until we recognize the sovereignty of God. God is sovereign over everything and everyone.

Now in **verses 20-22** David challenges four existences to bless the Lord and praise the Lord:

Existence #1 - The angels should bless the Lord. **103:20**

Existence #2 - The hosts should bless the Lord. **103:21**

Existence #3 - The works of God should bless the Lord. **103:22a**

Existence #4 - The soul of man should bless the Lord. **103:22b**

God is the source of all blessings and all should praise Him.