

PRAISE THE LORD, O MY SOUL

Psalms 103:1-22

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

While some Psalms are addressed to God, the righteous, sinners, Israel, Gentile nations and others; Psalms 103 was written by David to himself.¹ Unlike others, this Psalm was not written due to harassment of his enemies or private guilt² but to remind him to always remember the blessings God has lavished upon him. David knew it was easy to praise God in the good times but not so much during times of trials and tribulations and certainly not during times in which he was the recipient of God's punishments. To keep from complaining, feeling depressed or having anger towards God, David reminds himself of the benefits that God has lavished upon him such as forgiveness, redemption, renewal, compassion and unending love. These benefits of course can only be received by obeying God's commands and His will. With all these benefits in mind, with His innermost being David cries out for himself and all creation to praise the Lord!

A Complaining Heart

During difficult times the children of Israel often gave prayers to God riddled with an attitude of complaint! What would it have been like to witness the Ten Plagues of Egypt? Due to their fear that Israel's numbers had grown too large and would inevitably end up joining their enemies and fighting against them (Exodus 1:6-10), Pharaoh forced Israel into slave labour and worked them ruthlessly (1:11-12). To see Moses approach Pharaoh and say the infamous words "let my people go" (9:1) would have been one not easily forgotten. Nor how could one ever forget the plagues of the turning of water into blood, frogs, lice, flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts, three days of total darkness or the death of the firstborn? We are told God delivered the children of Israel with these mighty acts of judgment (7:4) and when they left Egypt



Israel received so many gifts from the Egyptians that it was like they plundered the nation (12:36)! You would think Israel would be eternally grateful and yet at the Red Sea (14:10-12),

¹ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 831.

² Derek Kidner, [*Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 397.

at the waters of Marah and Elim (15:22-27), and at the Desert of Sin (16:1-3) the children of Israel complained and told God that they wished they had remained slaves in Egypt!

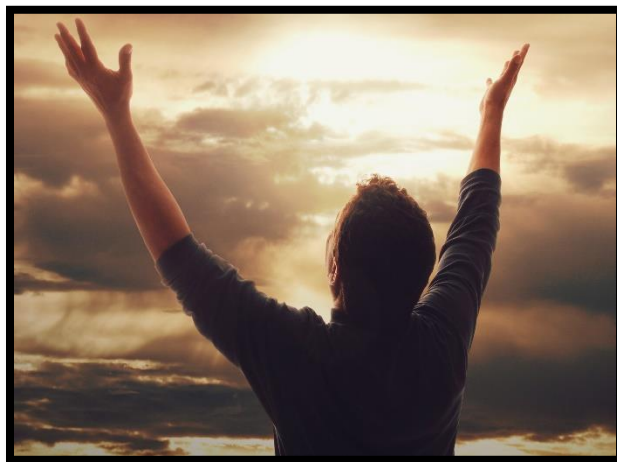
Lest we think less of the Israelite people than we ought, do we not complain to God every time we face difficult times or His punishments? When our health fails, our debts overwhelm us, marital relations break down, appliances break or enemies threaten us; are we not



the first to complain to God with hearts filled with depression or maybe even anger? We either sink into a depression so deep that it feels like our souls will be forever crushed or we become enraged at God for allowing these tragedies to occur in the first place! And what about those times in which God punishes us? Even though it goes against Scripture, are we not the first to accuse God of not doing good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28) or giving us more than we can handle (1 Corinthians 10:13)? Are not our complaints a subtle

attempt to force God to rewrite our story and take out all the bad things in our lives? And if God did choose to rewrite our story without any difficult times then how could one ever mature in the faith (James 1:2-4)? To keep from complaining or being angry at God, we need to be like David and choose to combat these sinful attitudes with one of praise for all the benefits God has already given us!

Benefits God Gave Us



¹ Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all his benefits

In the opening of this Psalms David is rousing himself to shake off apathy or gloom of his circumstances³ by remembering the benefits that he has already

³ Derek Kidner, [*Psalms 73–150: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 16, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 397.

received from God.⁴ “We often falsely assume that praise, to be genuine, must be spontaneous. But here we learn that self can be commanded to exercise itself to confess God’s mercy.”⁵ For David this intensely personal question of how he was to praise God properly⁶ must encompass his entire inner being, the totality of his human essence.⁷ Nothing else but loving God with all his heart, soul and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5)⁸ would suffice if it were to be proper thanksgiving. By remembering what the “Lord has done throughout the history of redemption, for creation at large, for the community, and for oneself;”⁹ David knows that he can thwart a critical and carping spirit¹⁰ to embrace one of reverence of the One who was the rock of His salvation (Psalms 62:2). The following section will explain the four major benefits that David focusses on and in turn will invite you to count your blessings as well.

Benefit #1: Forgiveness of Sins

³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases ... ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 833.

⁵ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, “[Foreword,](#)” in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 395.

⁶ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 832.

⁷ D. A. Carson, ed., [*NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1120.

⁸ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 833.

⁹ Willem A. VanGemeren, “[Psalms,](#)” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 651.

¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expositional Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 833.

The first thing David is thankful for is the forgiveness of sins. While David was called a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22) he was not without sin in his life.



Could David ever forget that he was the one who committed adultery with Bethsaida and had her husband killed? David had much to rejoice in for God heard David’s appeal to His mercy, and as a result blotted out his iniquity and made him whiter than snow (Psalms 51)! While we are to thank God for our homes, jobs, wealth, family and health (Deuteronomy 8:10-14);¹¹ it is the forgiveness of sins that we should be most thankful for because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Having a close personal relationship with God is not possible for those who cherish sin in their hearts because their prayers will not be heard (Psalms 66:18). Like David, we should be forever

thankful that once we confess and repent God promises to not only forgive (1 John 1:9) but also to remove the power and often the consequences of our sins¹² an infinite, unmeasurable distance from us ... as far as the east is from the west!¹³

Benefit #2: God’s Compassion and Mercy

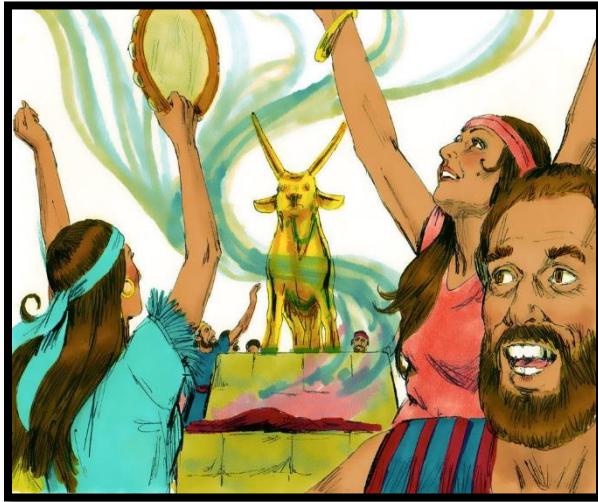
⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 834.

¹² Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reyburn, [*A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 874.

¹³ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 834.

While celebrating God's mercy, David does not ignore the reality of His wrath but at the same time remembers its delay (v. 8), temporality (v. 9), and sparing application (v. 10).¹⁴ David remembered the time in which the Israelite people made the golden calf. In response to



their sin God was so angry with Israel that He wanted to destroy them (Exodus 32:9-10). Even though God struck the people with a plague (Exodus 32:35), He showed them great mercy by forgiving and promising to be present with them as they went into the promised land (Exodus 33). To seal this promise God made Himself known unto Moses at Mount Horeb (Exodus 34:6-7). In writing this passage David might have also reflected upon his sin with Bethsaida. Due to the sins of adultery and murder, God's anger burned against David and he was punished by the death of their first child (2 Samuel 12:14). God's anger eventually subsided and He blessed David and Bethsaida with he who

would be the wisest, human king¹⁵ ever to live (12:24), Solomon. What David is trying to tell us is that though God is right to be angry with us when we sin, He does not always keep on accusing us (Isaiah 57:16) or holding a grudge¹⁶ or being angry towards us (Isaiah 3:13; Jeremiah 2:9; Micah 6:2).¹⁷

¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

¹⁴ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, "[Foreword](#)," in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 396.

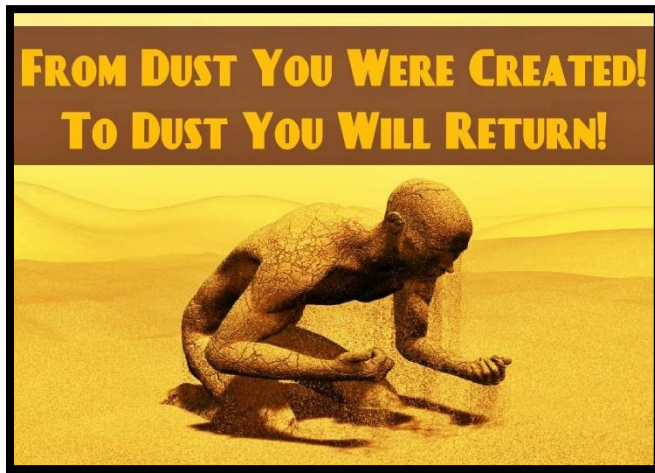
¹⁵ Of course, not wiser than Jesus Christ!

¹⁶ Robert G. Bratcher and William David Reburn, [A Translator's Handbook on the Book of Psalms](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 873.

¹⁷ Willem A. VanGemeren, "[Psalms](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 653.

Benefit #3: Not Punishing Us Beyond what we can Bear

The basis of this compassion is not to be traced to the golden calf incident alone but also



to the creation narrative.¹⁸ He who knit us in our mother's womb (Psalms 139), knows that we are made from the dust of earth (Genesis 2:7), fragile and easily broken are these jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7)! God shows compassion on us for He knows we are but mere dust not just by constitution but also by sentence.¹⁹ Because we are like the flowers that are here today and gone tomorrow, God tempers His wrath. His discipline will only leave us in pain and terror²⁰ for a short period of time, lest our head drops and we return to the ground

hence we came.²¹ When God considers our frailty He pities and shows mercy to us.²² He gives us a far greater chance than we deserve to repent and be forgiven so that we might once again be blessed by His glorious riches!

¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. ²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.

¹⁸ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, "[Foreword](#)," in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 396.

¹⁹ Matthew Henry, [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 891.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid..

²² Ibid..

Benefit #4: Privilege of Obedience



Compassion from God is contingent upon our response to Him. While the “greatest performances of man’s duty cannot demand the least tokens of God’s favor as a debt,”²³ those who fear God by obeying His commands and desires for their lives will receive His compassion. Fear is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1) for God does not promise to show His mercy on those who trifle with Him and are spiritually dead inside. To break free from our spiritual lukewarmness,²⁴ like David we must learn to respond to God’s wrath not with indifference or anger towards Him but with a

broken heart willing to submit to His authority over our lives! He has established His throne in heaven, but His kingdom rules over all (Verse 19). To be able to submit to His authority means that we must come to no longer perceive God’s commands as a burden to us (1 John 5:2) but instead food to keep us alive in His kingdom. And even when His will is difficult to follow may we be like Jesus and say, “may your will be done” (Luke 22:42). This is the kind of submission that when given to God results in receiving not only His mercy but His blessings as well!

Conclusion

²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. ²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. ²² Praise the LORD, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the LORD, my soul.

David concludes this psalm but imploring all in heaven (11:42; 93:2) and all of creation (93:1; 96:10; 99:1) to praise the Lord!²⁵ To praise Him properly means to imitate the heavenly

²³ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 891.

²⁴ James Montgomery Boice, [*Psalms 42–106: An Expository Commentary*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 837.

²⁵ Willem A. VanGemeren, [*“Psalms,”*](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 654.

heroes²⁶ who always do His bidding and obey His word and will.²⁷ While the angels occasionally serve God on earth by doing errands (Daniel 9:21, fighting battles (2 Kings 6:17) and ministering good to His people (Hebrews 1:14), they spend most of their time in heaven continually worshipping and praising God's holy name. May all of God's works in which He has dominion over them all praise His holy name. At his point in the passage, David is overwhelmed with joy that God's compassion has shined upon Him. With thanksgiving in his heart for having been forgiven and yet not received what his sins deserved, David cries out with all his inner being to praise God properly. While I don't think it is possible for a human being to praise God even close to what He deserves we certainly can spend an eternity trying to do so!

²⁶ Robert L. Jr. Hubbard and Robert K. Johnston, "[Foreword](#)," in *Psalms*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 396.

²⁷ Willem A. VanGemeren, "[Psalms](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 655.