

BLESS THE LORD, O MY SOUL

Psalm 103

Praise for the Lord's Mercies A Psalm of David.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.

The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure. Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

This Psalm of David begins with "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" and ends with "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" Imagine with me if you will, all of the host of heaven gathered together before the throne of God. There is a great shout from the midst of the people with a "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" The great assembly of saints erupt in unison with a great

shout of praise. The last paragraph of that Psalm, I suppose, is what leads me to that visual-where it speaks of God's throne in heaven, and speaking of all the host of heaven, including all of the angels- and the great climax of that setting is the victorious proclamation of "Bless the Lord, o my soul!" What a day, indeed, that will be!

I often meditate on that type of event. I don't care if I am but one of millions that is gathered before His throne. I just want to be there, with my Lord God, with my precious Savior, and with all of God's people, who have been forever perfected in Christ. There will no longer be any hinderances to our faith, no pain or sorrow, suffering, or death. There will no longer be that longing within us to be with our Lord and God. We will be there-with Him! Bless the Lord, o my soul!

This Psalm does give the reader hope, toward that blessed event. But King David, who had struggles and sin, sorrow and pain just as we do, he was reminded of what makes this worth the fight. David begins saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and **forget not all His benefits**: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Does that remind you of another passage of Scripture? From Isaiah? "{But} those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (**Isaiah 40:31**)

David was looking at not only his present day situations but also beyond the temporal, the things that of this world that can just weigh down one's own soul. He was recognizing as the Apostle John mentioned, that "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us." (**1 John 4:18-19**) The opposite of fear then is love, which gives us the freedom to rejoice in our salvation that comes from God. Yet we are to understand that there is a distinct difference between having a fear of the Lord and a fear of the circumstances that may come upon us and of what the future holds.

I am going to read another Psalm, **Psalm 130**, it is a short Psalm. There is a key element of wisdom that ties perfectly with this message. I'll start at verse 3, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities [our sins against God], O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning-yes, more than those who

watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." (**Psalm 130:3-8**) Did you notice the progression of faith in that Psalm? We are first offered forgiveness, shown the love of God, we then recognize the need and develop a willingness to honor and revere (aka fear) the Lord. Then, we as we are actively waiting on the Lord, we are looking (and praying) for His mercies, and then continuing in our faith as we look for His redemption. We are redeemed in Christ Jesus, yet we are being redeemed. What a glorious day that will be! Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Understanding the fear of the Lord also manifests towards us when we come to the realization that this is all God's plan and purpose and that He IS in control of all things. There is a great freeing of the soul in that. **Psalm 24:1**, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." David wrote that too. **Colossians 1:16**, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." Then in our Psalm for today, Psalm 103, "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all." GOD IS IN CONTROL OF ALL THINGS! Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

The Apostle John continued by saying, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (**1 John 5:9-12**) There truly is no testimony that is given to us that is greater and most imperative for us to receive than the testimony that comes from the Word of God, of the Word that became flesh and dwells among us!

Notice I used the phrase, "He dwells among us". John tells us in **John 10-14**, "He [Jesus, the Son of God] was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John testified to the Word of God, being Jesus, who came and dwelt among them, some two thousand years ago. Yet He is still dwelling among us. He is dwelling within each of us who have believed on Jesus being the

Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Savior, as we have received Him into their hearts.

That is, as John says in **John 14:17**, the "Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." His spirit then testifies with our spirit that we are His children! (**Romans 8:16**) Jesus testified saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (**John 14:6**) That being said, for all who have received Christ, we have the Way, the Truth, and the Life working in us! Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

David knew of where His salvation was coming from. He stated as much in many of his psalms such as in **Psalms 27**. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident. One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." (**Psalms 27:1-4**)

David not only knew of whom to rely on in his battles and struggles, he also knew to whom he must humble himself before and confess his shortcomings and sins. He also could see the goal of his faith in the Lord, as being his God and Savior and to eventually be eternally before the Lord and in the glory of God. David also knew that, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities." Yes, the Lord our God is full of mercy and grace. We can be assured that if we humble ourselves before God, He will lift us up. (**James 4:10**) "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (**1 Peter 5:6**) To those who endure with Him, with Christ, we will reign with Him. (**2 Timothy 2:12**) We ARE presently reigning with Him, yet at the present, we ARE still living by faith.

Great and many promises of God are before us. Jesus has already won the victory. We are just to continue in our faith in Christ, by walking in that victory! One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is Romans 8. Paul speaks to those in Christ, who have the Spirit of Christ, as already being a child of God, and that we already have the victory in Christ Jesus, over the works of evil and of death. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also **freely give us all things?**

[We will be joint-heirs with Jesus, who is inheriting all things] Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31-39) Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Consider this: all of the greatest men and women of faith, that we have testimonies of, in the Bible, had to endure much in trials, sufferings, and tribulations (thlipsis: immense pressure, afflictions, distress). "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**)

"As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from **everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him**, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them." God's grace is described as being unmerited favor from God. Receiving favor from God even though we don't deserve it. God's mercy is described as being the not receiving of what we deserve. David spoke of both. "The Lord is merciful and gracious." God understands us way more than we understand ourselves. He knows our frailties, our weaknesses, and our need for His mercies and grace.

Remember how God said to Abram, "'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'" God also said to the Israelite priests that He was their inheritance. (**Numbers 18:20**) We know that Jesus is also is OUR REWARD!. "But you are a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, **His own special people**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

"The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure. Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion." Before God even began His creation, through His Son, He was already "Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (**Revelation 1:8**) We are being called by God Almighty into His eternal kingdom, through His Son, Christ Jesus. We are being called by God to believe on His Son Jesus, for dying on the cross, taking our sins upon Himself, shedding His blood for the remission of our sins, and then raising from the dead on the third day, conquering death, so that we too will overcome the sting of death, and live forever, in His eternal kingdom, in Christ. Living in that faith means letting Him work in us His Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and His Redemption. (**1 Corinthians 1:30**) It means "do[ing] His word, [and] heeding the voice of His word." Letting God work in us "to will and to do for His good pleasure." (**Philippians 2:13**) As Paul stated, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (**Philippians 2:12-13**) Similarly Jesus warned, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." (**Luke 13:24**) As God is working in us, we have to respond by walking in His work. Paul described that by saying, "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." (**Colossians 1:29**)

Paul also made it a point to make sure we have the right perspective though. We are not working for salvation but because WE ARE SAVED. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that **we should walk in them.**" (**Ephesians 2:8-10**) What are we then walking in? Christ working in us, making us into His image and in sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ-as we are His representatives, His ambassadors, His light and love that is His testimony of His redeeming grace and of His great mercy-to all who will humble themselves and believe on Him and receive Him. Jesus is calling, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (**Matthew 11:28-30**)

When you receive Jesus, you can rejoice with all that have also received the wonderful gift of salvation and life in Christ Jesus, saying, Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!