Psalm 103

103:1-2. David told himself (O my soul) to praise the Lord with all his being, that is, to put his whole heart in his praise of God’s holy name (cf. 33:21). This was certainly warranted in view of the Lord’s many benefits.

103:3-5. David praised the Lord for His many mercies, including forgiveness of sins (v. 3a), healing of sicknesses (v. 3b), deliverance from death (v. 4a; pit is a synonym for the grave), enrichment of his life with loyal love (cf. vv. 8, 11, 17) and tender compassion (cf. vv. 8, 13; 116:5; 119:156), satisfaction (with good things; cf. 104:28; 107:9), and renewal. Crowning suggests bestowing blessing (as in 8:5). Like an eagle that remains strong throughout its long life, the psalmist was spiritually vigorous under God’s hand (cf. Isa. 40:31).

B. The compassion of God (103:6-18)

Alluding to certain facts in Israel’s history, David meditated on the covenant loyalty the Lord maintained with frail sinners.

103:6-8. First, David recalled the Lord’s covenant with Moses. After a word of praise for the Lord’s righteousness, David said that God revealed Himself to Moses and Moses’ people as a compassionate (cf. vv. 4, 13; 86:15; 111:4; 145:8) and gracious God, who is therefore slow to anger and abounds in covenant loyalty (love, hesed; cf. 103:4, 11, 17). Verse 8 is based on God’s words to Moses on Mount Sinai (Ex. 34:6; cf. Neh. 9:17; Pss. 86:15; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). Because of these attributes God is faithful to His people and will deliver them from oppression.

103:9-12. David then explained that the Lord mercifullyforgives sins. Because God is slow to anger (cf. v. 8) He does not always accuse (riḥ, “bring a court case against”) a man of sin nor deal with him according to his sins. And because of His great love (cf. vv. 4, 8, 17) He completely separates sins from the sinners by forgiving them.

103:13-18. In these verses David wrote that though man’s life is transitory, he is established by the Lord’s covenant. The Lord has compassion (cf. vv. 4, 8) on His frail people (v. 13) for He knows how frail the nature of man is (vv. 14-16). Man is made of insignificant dust (cf. Gen. 2:7) and his life is brief like the grass (cf. Pss. 37:2; 90:5; 102:4, 11; Isa. 40:6-8) and wild flowers. Nevertheless from everlasting to everlasting the Lord’s covenant love (cf. Ps. 103:4, 8, 11) is with those who obey Him. Here again (cf. 102:24-27) the eternality of the Lord is seen as a comfort for frail human beings. Man’s hope is not in other fragile creatures, but in the eternal God.

C. The praise of God (103:19-22)

103:19-22. David declared that the Lord’s dominion is over all the earth. Therefore all angels, God’s heavenly hosts, who are His servants, and all His Creation (His works) everywhere should praise the Lord. David closed his psalm in the way he began: by exhorting himself (O my soul) to praise the Lord.1

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Chapter 103

An exhortation to bless God for his mercy 1–5

And to the church and to all men 6–14

For the constancy of his mercy 15–18

For the government of the world 19–22

Verses 1–5

By the pardon of sin, that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favor of God, who bestows good things on us. Think of the provocation; it was sin, and yet pardoned: how many the provocations, yet all pardoned! God is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting. The body finds the melancholy consequences of Adam's offence, it is subject to many infirmities, and the soul also. Christ alone forgives all our sins; it is he alone who heals all our infirmities. And the person who finds his sin cured, has a well-grounded assurance that it is forgiven. When God, by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, they may then be said to return to the days of their youth, Job 33:25.

Verses 6–14

Truly God is good to all: he is in a special manner good to Israel. He has revealed himself and his grace to them. By his ways we may understand his precepts, the ways he requires us to walk in; and his promises and purposes. He always has been full of compassion. How unlike are those to God, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to cease! What would become of us, if God should deal so with us? The Scripture says a great deal of the mercy of God, and we all have experienced it. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and teaches them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; pities them when they are fallen, and helps them to rise; pities them when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them; pities them when wronged, and rights them: thus the Lord pities those that fear him. See why he pities. He considers the frailty of our bodies, and the folly of our souls, how little we can do, how little we can bear; in all which his compassion appears.

Verses 15–18

How short is man's life, and uncertain! The flower of the garden is commonly more choice, and will last the longer, for being sheltered by the garden-wall, and the gardener's care; but the flower of the field, to which life is here compared, is not only withering in itself, but exposed to
the cold blasts, and liable to be cropt and trod on by the beasts of the field. Such is man. God considers this, and pities him; let him consider it himself. God’s mercy is better than life, for it will outlive it. His righteousness, the truth of his promise, shall be unto children’s children, who tread in the footsteps of their forefathers’ piety. Then shall mercy be preserved to them.

**Verses 19–22**

He who made all, rules all, and both by a word of power. He disposes all persons and things to his own glory. There is a world of holy angels who are ever praising him. Let all his works praise him. Such would have been our constant delight, if we had not been fallen creatures. Such it will in a measure become, if we are born of God. Such it will be for ever in heaven; nor can we be perfectly happy till we can take unwearied pleasure in perfect obedience to the will of our God. And let the feeling of each redeemed heart be, Bless the Lord, O my soul.

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Prayer from the Place of Blessing – Psalm 103

September 20, 2012 by bro_travis

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Psalm 103 aims to help us deal well with God’s goodness and our gratitude. This is a prayerful song of the Redeemed thanking and praising God for His unfathomable blessing. The Psalm has three tiers to it.

1. Psalm 103:1-9 speak of *unlimited blessings* from the Lord to the believer
2. Psalm 103:10-15 emphasize the *unmerited blessings* of God’s forgiveness and provision
3. Psalm 103:16-22 summarize the *unending blessing and praise* due the Lord throughout eternity

The major themes of this psalm are: grace, forgiveness, salvation, mercy, worship and praise! Those are certainly gifts for which we should not only pray and which deserve our praise to God.

There is a decided bent in Psalm 103 to fathers. Notice verses 13-14: “Like as a father pitieth [his] children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”

For a father to “pity” his children is for him to show his children compassion, but when we read this verse it does not mean that the Lord learns how to be God by watching human fathers. It does not mean that God wonders whether He should be compassionate and then notices that good fathers are compassionate and so decides to act that way too.

No, what it means is this: When we see a good father, we are seeing a picture of God. To put it another way: God designed human fatherhood to be a portrait of Himself. God had a Son before He created Adam. He was God the Father before He was God the Creator. He knew what He wanted to portray before He created the portrayal.

Therefore, the clear implication for all fathers is that we were designed to display the fatherhood of God; especially (but not only) to our children. That further implies that we learn to be fathers by watching God father His children, and that children learn what God’s fatherhood is like largely by watching us. The chain of influence moves from God as the infinitely perfect Father of His imperfect children, who shows us what good fatherhood is like so that we can show our children and others what God’s fatherhood is like. In verse 13 David
clarifies the calling of all fathers; namely that God created fatherhood in His own image, and good fathering points to God.
David follows that statement with a reflection on the shortness of human life and the never-beginning, never-ending life of God, and how that relates to our children. Verses 14-18:
“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”

Fathers (and all humanity) are as “dust” and as such we need to realize that we will not always be around. Our children will not always be around. The question a father should ask is: How can my children benefit forever from the love of God? How can they become the beneficiaries of God’s righteousness rather than condemned by it?
Verses 17-18 give three answers to that question. Look for them as we read it again:
“17But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; 18To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”

The steadfast love of God and the righteousness of God will bless generation to generation if three things happen:
1. if they fear him (v. 17);
2. if they keep his covenant (v. 18); and
3. if they do his commandments (v. 18).

**Keeping His Covenant**

Let’s focus first on that second requirement: “his righteousness to children’s children, to such as keep his covenant.” What does keeping the covenant of God mean today? Things have changed since the Messiah has come. At the Last Supper, Jesus lifted up the cup representing His own blood and said, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). Thus began a new covenant between God and His people; just as binding as the old one was. What the new covenant provides from God’s side is the blood of Christ to cover our sins and the power of the Spirit to enable us to walk in newness of life. What the new covenant requires from us is that we be united to Christ by the new birth and that we receive Christ as our Savior and Lord and the Treasure of our lives; in that way Christ’s blood and righteousness count for us.

When verses 17 and 18 say that the love of God and the righteousness of God bless our children if they keep God’s covenant, what it implies for today is that our children must be taught to receive Christ as the supremely valuable Savior and Lord of their lives.

**Fearing God**

Verse 17: “The mercy of the Lord [is] from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear him.” Fearing God means that God is so powerful and so holy and so awesome to us that we would not dare to run away from Him, but only run to Him for all that He is and all that He promises to be for us. Fearing God is not different from coming to Jesus. It is the way we come.
We reverently come. We humbly come. We come without presuming that God owes us anything. As Psalm 51:17 makes clear, we come broken and contrite.

### Doing His Commandments
The third requirement David mentions for our children – and for anyone – to experience God’s righteousness as saving instead of condemning is in verse 18: “...to those that remember his commandments to do them.” What this means is that faith in the Redeemer must be real. Real trust in Christ, real submission to His rule, real treasuring of His worth changes our lives. The requirement of obedience in verse 18 is simply the requirement that our fear of God and our trust in Christ be real, effective, and fruitful. It is Christ, His blood and righteousness that forgives and justifies us, but our obedience, our righteousness, imperfect as it is, shows that God has saved us, that our faith is real. We are truly covenant keepers. We hold fast to our treasured substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are all like dust. We are like grass. We flourish like the flower of the field. The wind passes over it and it is gone, and its place knows it no more (Psalm 103 15-16). After us come our children and their children, and the question for us is: Will they fear God, keep His covenant, and do His commandments? If they do, the steadfast love of God and the righteousness of God will bless them forever.

What then is the one thing that this psalm stresses more than anything else, the one main thing that this psalm calls us to do for our children? For our wives? For our husbands? For our churches? For our city? For our own souls?

The answer is: Bless the Lord, O my soul!

The psalm begins and ends with the psalmist preaching to his soul to bless the Lord; preaching to the angels and the hosts of heaven and the works of God’s hands. The psalm is overwhelmingly focused on blessing the Lord.

- **Verses 1-2:** “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:”
- **Then he starts listing the benefits.** At the end, **verses 20-22**, “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.”

### What Does it Mean to Bless the Lord?
What does it mean to bless the Lord? It means to speak well of His greatness and goodness. It is synonymous with praise. Psalm 34:1 puts them together like this: “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” And notice the word mouth. “His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Blessing the Lord means to speak or sing about the goodness and greatness of the Lord, and to live in light of and in accordance with that goodness and greatness.

What David is doing in the first and last verses of this psalm, when he says, “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” is saying that speaking about God’s goodness and greatness must come from within, from the heart, from the soul. Blessing God with the mouth without the soul would be hypocrisy. Jesus said, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). David knows that danger, and he is preaching to himself so that it might not happen: “Come, soul, look at the greatness and goodness of God. Join my mouth, and let us bless the Lord with our whole being.”
There is perhaps nothing that we can do for our children, grandchildren, neighborhood kids, to help them fear God, keep covenant with God, and obey God that will be more effective than our own blessing the Lord continually in their presence. This means at church, at home, everywhere else and in every situation.

**Reasons for Blessing the Lord**

We could take weeks unpacking all the reasons that David assembles for why his soul should bless the Lord. It may be the most gospel-rich of the 150 psalms. But we will only mention three categories of reasons for blessing the Lord. We each can work out the rest of the details on our own.

1. **GOD IS SOVEREIGN.**

First, let others hear you bless the Lord for His sovereignty. The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. (Psalm 103:19) We must let our children hear us say, “I bless you, Lord, that your kingdom rules over all.” All people. All death. All life. All governments. All weather systems. All animals. All molecules. All galaxies. All churches. God rules and overrules them all.

David knew that God exercised His sovereign rule through angels and heavenly beings, and so he called them to join him in his blessing. Come, angels, bless the Lord as you do his word. Come, hosts of heaven, bless the Lord as you do his will. Come, all you works of his hands everywhere in his dominion, bless the Lord (Psalm 103:20-22).

May others hear us bless the Lord for His great and good and sovereign power and authority over all things.

2. **GOD IS RIGHTEOUS.**

Others should hear us bless the Lord for His justice and righteousness. Verse 6: “The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.” Let them hear us exult in the righteous advocacy of God for the oppressed. Say at the dinner table, in devotion, in conversations, in your reactions to the news: “We bless you, O God, for your justice and your righteousness. We bless you that though the wrong seem oft so strong, you are the ruler yet. We bless you that justice will be done in this age or the next. Bless the Lord.”

3. **GOD IS MERCIFUL.**

May others hear us bless the Lord for His mercy and His forgiveness. If this psalm celebrates anything clearly, it is the immeasurable mercy of God not to hold our sins against us. This is the gospel. We know that it is all owing to Christ. Sweeter words have hardly been penned than these.

- **V. 3** – “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases”  
- **Vv 10-12** – Bless the Lord for “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, [so] great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, [so] far hath he removed our transgressions from us.”

May others hear us bless the Lord for the Gospel. Let them hear our souls exult in Christ. Let them hear our humble hearts leap up with gratitude. Let them hear our affections for the Savior. Let them hear our love for Christ and His great love for them. Let them hear us say, “O how I bless your name that my sins are forgiven.”
Then may we love others the way Jesus has, does, and will always love us.

**HE KNOWS**

In today’s world, it’s scary. Today as I write this lesson, marks the 9 year anniversary of the bombings of the twin towers in New York City, and at the Pentagon as well as the plan that went down due to the brave men and women who fought to save the lives of many others. Earth is a scary place. There are wars, earthquakes, diseases, violence, and turmoil on every hand. As weak human beings we can become so fearful and worried that we cannot enjoy life or fully be in obedience to God in our walks with Him if we let the cares of this life overtake us. However, we find comfort in God’s word that He will never leave us or forsake us but He will go with us even to the end. In today’s lesson, I hope that you are blessed, encouraged, and strengthened as we look at some truths about our Father and learn to focus on Him! God Bless you all!

**Handout:** HE KNOWS

**Teacher’s Guide:** HE KNOWS

What if I lose my job? How are we going to pay these bills? What if someone in my family dies? What if we get sick? What if the economy never heals? What if I lose my spouse? What if my house burns down? What if my best isn’t good enough? What if they don’t like me? What if I can’t send my kids to college? What if I can’t pay my doctor bills? What if this pain never goes away? What if there is another attack on America? What if I work so hard for years and still lose everything I’m working for? What if my children never do what they are supposed to do? What if I get in God’s way and mess everything up?

All these questions that most of us have, all of these fears bring us to our first point in this lesson.

1. **GOD KNOWS its SCARY BEING US!!**

HE KNOWS! HE wants us to ask for help...HE UNDERSTANDS HOW SCARY LIFE IS TO HUMAN BEINGS! I don’t know about you...but when I heard that sentence, “God knows its scary being us.” I heard Beth Moore teaching about insecurity and she said that she and her daughter was at the doctor’s office and there was pamphlets about every cancer known to man, and her daughter was reading them and suddenly she looked at her mother and said, that profound sentence, “God knows it’s scary being us.” I was floored! It hit me like a ton of bricks...I knew God understands but those words just made it even more personal to me. I began to just sob and think about every thing over the past year that I have been battling and all the fears and stressful thoughts and I felt relief...I was blessed, and I just praised the LORD as HE loved on me. God knows my fears and my worries...and even though He is busy dealing with the pain in
the world, the floods, the famine, the wars, the hunger...but He cares about my pain too...and He cares about yours! He is not limited to only a large number of people’s pain...He goes to the individual! He understands how fragile we are more than we do! He knows, and He cares! HE cares about the things we worry about, those things we feel bad for worrying about them! He understands! Talk to HIM! TALK TO HIM!

As human beings, there are times when we will be afraid. Lately, I’ve been battling fear and worry about things I cannot control. Also, I’ve been feeling guilty for feeling that fear. All fear comes from distrust. If you and I are truly trusting God with all our hearts, then why are we fearful sometimes? Why do we worry about some things? I believe it is the unknown. We are fearful when we are not in control. I always think of the story I told in another lesson called fear not, about a little girl in a swimming pool with her dad. He was holding her and she was having so much fun in the water. The depth of the water reached to about her waist and she splashed and was having the best time. Suddenly her father began to go deeper into the water while playfully saying, “deeper and deeper and deeper.” The little girl began to see the water was rising higher and higher and she began to be afraid and she wrapped her arms around her dad’s neck and held on for dear life. Her little heart pounding she was terrified.

What the little girl could not see is that anywhere in the pool that she was, it was well over her head. When her father was holding her above it she felt in control and fine, but when she began to realize, she stopped focusing on the fact that her dad was holding her and that no where in the pool was he not able to touch bottom, it was NEVER over his head!

When things are going well, our jobs are secure and going well, we are able to pay our bills on time, there’s plenty of food in our pantries, plenty of gas in our vehicles, we and our family are well, life seems so good and we laugh and we enjoy life to the fullest. However, as soon as something goes awry, like the little girl, we forget that we are held by our Father who is in control AT ALL TIMES! In HIS Word, God was always telling HIS servants, “Don’t be afraid.” In the Bible, the phrase, “fear not” occurs 144 times. God knows when we are afraid. He said it to Abraham, to Isaac, to Joshua, to the children of Israel many times. God knows how fragile we are, how sinful and weak we are.

Isaiah 41:14 “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

Fear not thou worm, wow. God was not insulting humans when he called us worm. He was showing us our state. Worms are dirty, through and through, they are small, and unable to defend themselves for the most part.

Psalms 103:8-17 “The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. 9He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. 10He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13Like as a father pitieth His children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him. 14For He
knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. 15As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisbeth. 16For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. 17But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children:

The LORD cares for us and He knows at times we will fear and worry so what does He say about this?

1 Peter 5:7 “Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you.”
The word “Care” here in the Greek Transliteration is merimna. It means anxiety. That is our fears, our worries, and our concerns. Cast them all on Him. In other words, place all your worries and fears on Him, tell Him about it. Ask for help. He cares and He wants to help His children. Praise YOU LORD! YOU ARE WORTHY!
Moving on to the second point of this lesson and that is:

2. It’s Not About Us...It’s All About JESUS!
The very moment that we begin to focus more on the cares of this life, than upon Jesus, that is when we start to fear. We start to worry, who will take care of us? What is going to happen to us? How will we get through this? Remember Peter, when he began walking on the water to Jesus? He was ok until he stopped focusing on The LORD and placed his eyes on his surroundings, he began to be fearful.

In the ark, when God was giving Noah the instructions to build it. He told him to place only one window, and it was to be in the very top of the ark. It was so Noah would be looking up instead of around him. God knew those were going to be tough days. He wanted Noah’s focus to be on Him. That was where his strength would come from.

Storms are going to come. That’s life, but the secret to whether or not you survive and stay on fire for the LORD through them, is determined by where you place your focus. Last Sunday, as I was teaching at the church where I attend, The LORD brought my attention to two lovely older sisters who were sitting side by side on the second pew from the front. These two sisters have been through some storms. They have served the LORD their whole lives. They lost their dad suddenly several years ago, with no warning whatsoever. They both know what it is like to lose a child, one lost her son to Cancer, and the other lost her son to suicide. A few years passed and both of these sisters lost their husbands. Then just a few months ago, their dear mother went home to be with the LORD. She was one of the most wonderful saints of God that I have even known. There these two sisters sit, listening to me teach and I was most humbled because they have been through so much, they know and have experienced loss, and fears, and storms and yet they remain faithful! They move forward to finish the race that God has set before them, they go ahead clearing the path for their children after them, and it’s hard, and long, and I’m sure they are weary at times as the devil is fighting but still they move forward by the help, by His mercy, and the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST! What a blessing that is. God has held these dear ladies and He will not let go and dear child of God, He is holding You and I as well! In life,
bad things happen. We live in a sinful world. However, we do not have to fear because we are held. If we keep our focus on that fact that we are held by Almighty God who is ALWAYS in control, we will not be afraid! Lord help us to remember that!

My husband and I for the past 8 months have had custody of my husband’s 6 year old nephew. It has been a very hard situation regarding his mother, my husband’s sister. This little boy’s birth father was in prison and this child has come from a background of physical abuse, neglect and drug abuse in the home. I have never cried or prayed so much or worried so much in my life. But it has been the most rewarding experience of my life as well. When that little boy quotes scripture that we have taught him, when he sings about the LORD, and at night prayer time when I am holding him and I hear his whispered prayers my heart is blessed and I know that God has placed him with us for a time and even if someday he has to leave us, this time is so precious and God will take care of all of us. God is teaching me that when I take my focus off HIM, and begin to look at the situation, begin to fear that this little boy, who has become the son of our hearts, when I fear he will be taken from us and placed back into that environment, I start to fear. I worry and I’m stressed. When I start to focus on the anger and the resentment that is thrown at us from others involved, I start to be stressed. However, when I keep my focus on Jesus and know that He has a plan and that we get to be part of that plan, I am blessed and strengthened and encouraged!

Some of you know hunger, you know pain, you know suffering, and you know what it’s like to see your children cry because they are hungry. You know what it’s like to lose the person you loved the most. Some of you cry as your heart breaks because you have to watch your children making bad decisions and you know that you raised them better when they were young. You are going through a very hard storm right now and you may feel as if you are going to drown. On the authority of God’s word right now, I say to you. YOU ARE HELD. You are not going to go down as long as you keep Your eyes on JESUS. You keep praying, You keep meditating on His word and You trust and obey Him. He is going to carry you through this and You will come out the victor! He will not leave You and He will not forsake You, but He will go with You always, even to the end! He knows its scary being us, but He says fear not, I am with You! I Love You All!