
By David.

PSALM 103: 1 Praise the LORD, my soul! All that is within me, praise his holy name!

God is praised for his benefits to his people, Psa 103:1, Psa 103:2; he forgives their iniquities, and heals their diseases, Psa 103:3; redeems their lives, crowns them with loving-kindness, Psa 103:4; satisfies them with good things, renews their youth, Psa 103:5; he helps the oppressed, makes his ways known, is merciful and gracious, and keeps not his anger for ever, Psa 103:6-9; his forbearance, and pardoning mercy, Psa 103:10-12; he is a tender and considerate Father, Psa 103:13, Psa 103:14; the frail state of man, Psa 103:15, Psa 103:16; God's everlasting mercy, and universal dominion, Psa 103:17-19; all his angels, his hosts, and his works, are invited to praise him, Psa 103:20-22.

The inscription in the Hebrew, and in all the Versions, gives this Psalm to David; and yet many of the ancients believed it to refer to the times of the captivity, or rather to its conclusion, in which the redeemed Jews give thanks to God for their restoration. It is a Psalm of inimitable sweetness and excellence; contains the most affectionate sentiments of gratitude to God for his mercies; and the most consoling motives to continue to trust in God, and be obedient to him.

Verse 1

Bless the Lord - He calls on his soul, and all its faculties and powers, to magnify God for his mercies. Under such a weight of obligation the lips can do little; the soul and all its powers must be engaged.

PSALM 103: 2 Praise the LORD, my soul, and don't forget all his benefits;

Verse 2

Forget not all his benefits - Call them into recollection; particularize the chief of them; and here record them for an everlasting memorial.

PSALM 103: 3 who forgives all your sins; who heals all your diseases;

Verse 3

Who forgiveth - The benefits are the following,

1. Forgiveness of sin.
 2. Restoration of health: "Who healeth all thy diseases."
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PSALM 103: 4 who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies;

Verse 4

Who redeemeth -

3. Preservation from destruction. הגואל haggoel, properly, redemption of life by the kinsman; possibly looking forward, in the spirit of prophecy, to him who became partaker of our flesh and blood, that he might have the right to redeem our souls from death by dying in our stead.

4. Changing and ennobling his state; weaving a crown for him out of loving-kindness and tender mercies.

PSALM 103: 5 who satisfies your desire with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Verse 5

Who satisfieth thy mouth -

5. For continual communications of spiritual and temporal good; so that the vigor of his mind was constantly supported and increased.

Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's - There is such a vast variety of the eagle, or genus Falco, that it is not easy to determine which is meant here.

The Hebrew נשר neser is a general name for such as were known in the land of Judea; which were probably such as belong to the genus Aquila, comprehending forty-one species and seven varieties.

There are as many legends of the eagle among the ancient writers, as there are of some saints in the calendar; and all equally true. Even among modern divines, Bible Dictionary men, and such like, the most ridiculous tales concerning this bird continue to be propagated; and no small portion of them have been crowded into comments on this very verse. One specimen my old Psalter affords, which, for its curiosity, I shall lay before the reader: -

Trans. Newed sal be als of aeren thi youthed.

Par - The arne when he is greved with grete elde, his neb waxis so gretely, that he may nogt open his mouth and take mete: bot then he smytes his neb to the stane, and has away the solgh, and than he gaes til mete, and be commes yong a gayne. Swa Criste duse a way fra us oure elde of syn and mortalite, that settes us to ete oure brede in hevене, and newes us in hym.

The plain English of all this is: - "When the arne [eagle, from the Anglo-Saxon a word which Dr. Jamieson has not entered in his dictionary] is oppressed with old age, his bill grows so much that he cannot open his mouth in order to take meat. He then smites his bill against a stone, and breaks off the slough - the excrescence that prevented him from eating; and then he goes to his ordinary food, and becomes young again. So Christ takes away from us our old age of sin and death, and gives us to eat of that bread which comes down from heaven: and thus gives us a new life in himself."

I believe the meaning of the psalmist is much more simple: he refers to the moulting of birds, which, in most, takes place annually, in which they cast their old feathers and get a new plumage. To express this, he might as well have chosen any bird, as this is common to all the feathered race; but he chose the king of the birds, because of his bulk, his strength, and vivacity.

The long life of the eagle might have induced the psalmist to give it the preference. An eagle was nine years in the possession of Owen Holland, Esq., of Conway, in Wales, and had lived thirty-two years in the possession of the gentleman who made it a present to him: but of its previous age, for it came from Ireland, we are not informed. Keysler relates that an eagle died at Vienna, after a confinement of one hundred and four years!

The eagle can subsist a long time without food. That first mentioned above, through the neglect of a servant, was twenty-one days without food, and yet survived this long fast.

The meaning and moral of the psalmist are not difficult of comprehension. The Israelites, when redeemed from their captivity, should be so blessed by their God that they should reacquire their political strength and vigor; and should be so quickened by the Divine Spirit, that old things should be passed away, and all things become new.

PSALM 103: 6 The LORD executes righteous acts, and justice for all who are oppressed.

Verse 6

The Lord executeth - This shall be done because the Lord will avenge his elect who have cried unto him day and night for his deliverance: "He is slow to anger;" but he will punish. "He is plenteous in mercy," and he will save. The persevering sinner shall be destroyed; the humble penitent shall be saved.

PSALM 103: 7 He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the children of Israel.

Verse 7

He made known his ways unto Moses - From the earliest part of our history he has been our protector and defense. His wonderful acts in behalf of the children of Israel are so many proofs of his mercy, power, and goodness; and so many reasons why we should now trust in him.

PSALM 103: 8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness.

Verse 8

The Lord is merciful - See the note on Psa 86:15.

PSALM 103: 9 He will not always accuse; neither will he stay angry forever.

Verse 9

He will not always chide - He will not contend with us continually. He has often reproved, often punished us; but his mercy ever rejoiced over judgment.

PSALM 103: 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us for our iniquities.

Verse 10

He has not dealt with us after our sins - He has never apportioned our punishment to our sins, nor has he regulated the exercise of his mercy by our merits.

PSALM 103: 11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his loving kindness toward those who fear him.

Verse 11

For as the heaven is high above the earth - Great and provoking as our crimes may have been, yet his mercies have, in their magnitude and number, surpassed these, as far as the heavens are elevated beyond the earth.

PSALM 103: 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Verse 12

As far as the east is from the west - As the east and the west can never meet in one point, but be for ever at the same distance from each other, so our sins and their decreed punishment are removed to an eternal distance by his mercy.

PSALM 103: 13 Like a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.

Verse 13

Like as a father pitieth his children - This is a very emphatic verse, and may be thus translated: "As the tender compassions of a father towards his children; so the tender compassions of Jehovah towards them that fear him." Nothing can place the tenderness and concern of God for his creatures in a stronger light than this. What yearnings of bowels does a father feel toward the disobedient child, who, sensible of his ingratitude and disobedience, falls at his parent's feet, covered with confusion and melted into tears, with, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son!" The same in kind, but infinitely more exquisite, does God feel when the penitent falls at his feet, and implores his mercy through Christ crucified.

PSALM 103: 14 For he knows how we are made. He remembers that we are dust.

Verse 14

For he knoweth our frame - יצִרְנוּ yitsrenu, "our formation;" the manner in which we are constructed, and the materials of which we are made. He knows we cannot contend with him, and if he uses his power against us, we must be crushed to destruction. In all his conduct towards us he considers the frailty of our nature, the untowardness of our circumstances, the strength and subtlety of temptation, and the sure party (till the heart is renewed) that the tempter has within us. Though all these things are against us, yet it must ever be said, whatever use we make of it, "the grace of God is sufficient for us." But alas! alas! who makes use of that sufficient grace? Here, then, is cause for condemnation. But, O amazing mercy! if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And 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 but dust. The man who can say, in the face of these Scriptures, Let us sin that grace may abound, is a brute and demon, who has neither lot nor part in this thing.

PSALM 103: 15 As for man, his days are like grass. As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

Verse 15

His days are as grass - See the note on Psa 90:5.

PSALM 103: 16 For the wind passes over it, and it is gone. Its place remembers it no more.

Verse 16

The wind passeth over it - Referring perhaps to some blasting pestilential wind.

PSALM 103: 17 But the LORD's loving kindness is from everlasting to everlasting with those who fear him, his righteousness to children's children;

Verse 17

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting - $\tau\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$ chesed signifies more particularly the exuberant goodness of God. This is an attribute of his nature, and must be from everlasting to everlasting; and hence, his righteousness (צִדְקָת tsidketh) - his merciful mode of justifying the ungodly, is extended from one generation to another.

Unto children's children - It is still in force, and the doctrine of reconciliation through Christ shall continue to be preached till the conclusion of time.

PSALM 103: 18 to those who keep his covenant, to those who remember to obey his precepts.

Verse 18

To such as keep his covenant - The spirit of which was, I will be your God; We will be thy People. From the covenant came the commandments, and their obligation to remember and do them; and on such keepers of the covenant, and doers of the commandments, God promises to pour out his mercy through all generations.

PSALM 103: 19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens. His kingdom rules over all.

Verse 19

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens - There he is Sovereign, but his dominion extends equally over all the earth; for his kingdom - regal government, influence, and sway, ruleth over all.

PSALM 103: 20 Praise the LORD, you angels of his, who are mighty in strength, who fulfil his word, obeying the voice of his word.

Verse 20

Bless the Lord, ye his angels - Every person who has a sense of God's goodness to his soul feels his own powers inadequate to the praise which he ought to offer; and therefore naturally calls upon the holiest of men, and the supreme angels, to assist him in this work.

That excel in strength - Some take גברי כה gibborey coach the mighty in strength, for another class of the hierarchy, - they that do his commandments, hearkening to his words; and consider them to be that order of beings who are particularly employed in operations among and for the children of men; probably such as are called powers in the New Testament.

PSALM 103: 21 Praise the LORD, all you armies of his, you servants of his, who do his pleasure.

Verse 21

All ye his hosts; ye ministers of his - We know almost nothing of the economy of the heavenly host; and, therefore, cannot tell what is the difference between angels, mighty powers, hosts, and ministers who do his pleasure. All owe their being and all its blessings to God; all depend upon his bounty; and without him they can do nothing; therefore, all should praise him.

PSALM 103: 22 Praise the LORD, all you works of his, in all places of his dominion. Praise the LORD, my soul!

Verse 22

Bless the Lord, all his works - Let every thing he has done be so considered as to show forth his praise.

Bless the Lord, O my soul - Let me never forget my obligation to his mercy; for with tender mercies and loving-kindness has he crowned me. I will therefore be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name.