

Psalm 103: Bless the LORD, O my soul

I. See Overview of Psalm Genres (not a perfect list!)

II. Definition of Hymns (the psalm kind)

"The so-called hymn praises God for his actions and being as a whole"

- Claus Westermann, *Praise and Laments in the Psalms*, 31

"Hymns are easily recognized by their exuberant praise of the Lord. The psalmist pulls out all the stops in his rejoicing in God's goodness."

- Tremper Longman, III, *How to Read the Psalms*, 24

III. Psalm 103 and Discussion

Of David.

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!*

² *Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,*

³ *who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,*

⁴ *who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,*

⁵ *who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

⁶ *The LORD works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.*

⁷ *He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.*

⁸ *The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

⁹ *He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.*

¹⁰ *He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

¹¹ *For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear
him;*

¹² *as far as the east is from the west,*

so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

¹³ *As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear
him.*

¹⁴ *For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.*

¹⁵ *As for man, his days are like grass;
he flourishes like a flower of the field;*

¹⁶ *for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.*

¹⁷ *But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting
to everlasting on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,*

¹⁸ *to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.*

¹⁹ *The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,
and his kingdom rules over all.*

²⁰ *Bless the LORD, O you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his word,
obeying the voice of his word!*

²¹ *Bless the LORD, all his hosts,
his ministers, who do his will!*

²² *Bless the LORD, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.*

Bless the LORD, O my soul! (Ps 103:1-22)

1. How are David's words in vv. 1-2 both a commentary on our natural (fallen) inclinations? How are David's words a corrective to this propensity?

"The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand... You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: 'Hope thou in God'—instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with [the Psalmist] 'I shall yet praise Him...'"

D. M. Lloyd Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 23

2. How are we to handle the blessing that God "heals all your diseases" (v. 3)? Was God nice in the Old Testament and mean in the New Testament?

"But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God... The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed." (Deut 28:15, 27)

"Paul conflicts w/ the popular idea that God was more unyielding under the Old Covenant.... Only this point must be noted: that there is a different kind of punishment today, because, as God rewarded the faithful of long ago more w/ material blessings, in order to make His fatherly love plain to them, so He demonstrated His wrath more by physical punishments. On the other hand, in the fuller revelation which we now enjoy, He does not inflict outward punishments so often, and He does not so frequently make use of physical punishments in dealing w/ the wicked. You will find more about this subject in my Institutes [2:10:3] " - Calvin 1 Corinthians 13:7



3. When had just happened when God spoke vv. 7-8 to Moses? How are these aspects of God's dealings with us worked out in vv. 9-10?

"For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. ⁸ In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the LORD, your Redeemer." (Is 54:7-8)

4. How do you respond to the contrast in vv. 15-17? Do you ever think about this? How are we supposed to be continuing instruments of God's enduring faithfulness (vv. 17-18)

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him." (Eph 1:3-4)

5. How does David end the Psalm? How far has he come from verse 1?