Psalm 103

November 23, 2025 · AM · https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/2025/psalm-103-1/

Theme: A personal celebration of God's goodness and mercy to David, to Israel, and to all godly men.

Outline:

1-2 David Stirred Himself Up to Praise

3-5 David Rejoiced in Personal Favors

6-7 God Is Righteous and Revelatory

8-12 God Forgives Repentant Sinners

13-16 God Pitifully Remembers our State

17-18 God Is Eternally Merciful to Godly

19-22 God's Rule Deserves Praise of All

Introduction:

1. You and I were created for God's glory, and we fulfill our purpose by praise (Ps 33:1; 72:18-19; etc.).
2. David exhorted himself to praise, many of the reasons why, and then called on the angels to join him.
3. This Psalm is one of the favorites of those who can get past Psalm 23 and maybe a few other favorites.
4. This Psalm is very simple, and you should be able to understand most every clause with great clarity.
5. While understanding with clarity is a blessing, it is also a burden and responsibility to so bless God.
6. It is the week of America's Thanksgiving Day, which provides opportunity for extra intentional praise.
7. Israel owed joy and gladness for God's benefits (Deut 28:47-48), but we have far more than O.T. Israel.
8. This study is certainly not exhaustive – the goal is not details or complexity but conviction and cause.

David Stirred Himself Up to Praise – Verses 1-2

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

A. David talked to himself, similar to when cast down and other times (Ps 42:5,11; 116:7).

B. The next Psalm begins the same way, though its content is creation, not the things here.

C. This Psalm begins with this self-exhortation twice and ends with another (Ps 103:22).

D. It is David telling himself what he should do, and we can learn this intentional choice.

E. David was not content with a partial effort – so he exhorted his entire being to praise.

F. Every power of internal passion and volition should be ordered to mightily praise God.

G. Men (and women) can get incredibly passionate in games or sports, why not Jehovah?
H. **Bless =** To extol, praise, or adore (God) as holy, worthy of reverence [OED Dictionary].
I. Compare the Bible (Ps 34:1; 66:8; 100:4; 104:1,35; 115:17-18; 134:1-2; 145:1-2,10,21).
J. **Extol =** to raise high with praise; to praise highly; to magnify [OED Dictionary].
K. Compare the Bible uses of extol (Psalm 30:1; 68:4; 145:1; Isaiah 52:13; Daniel 4:37).
L. Why was he the man after God's heart? Here is one reason. There is no higher calling.
M. Compare this verse and the next – this is how much blessing, the next is for what reason.
N. We are to bless (extol, praise, or adore) His holy name, which Jesus taught for prayer.
O. Jesus told the disciples to pray, *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name*.
P. His name is Jehovah, I AM THAT I AM, infinitely unique of others (Ex 3:14-15; 6:3).
Q. For a more detailed exploration of the Hebrew tetragrammaton and His name … A Name Above Every Name.

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

A. See the notes above for the first half of this verse and its self-exhortation to praise.
B. Compare this verse and previous – this is for what reasons, the previous is how much.
C. David here continued to exhort himself to praise and to make it specific with blessings.
D. Many companies offer and employees seek a benefit package along with a good salary.
E. But our glorious God has countless benefits for His children that must be remembered.
F. God expected the amount and number of blessings to produce mirth (Deut 28:47-28).
G. Some of these benefits – advantages by Him being our God – are named in this Psalm.
H. We sing a song, *Count Your Blessings*, that teaches to recall and count them one by one.
I. For Bible preaching about remembering and not forgetting God's many benefits … Never Forget.

David Rejoiced in Personal Favors – Verses 3-5

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

A. Note that these personal benefits were not limited to David but for *thine, thy*, and *thee*.
B. Note that these personal benefits were not limited to past tense but are in present tense.
C. They are personal benefits; they are blessings to individuals, not only divine character.
D. What benefit is greater than the forgiveness of sins by the holy and eternal Judge of all?
E. We ask Him to forgive us often, but how often do we praise and thank for forgiveness?
F. If we think about all our iniquities, of all kinds and of all time, He has forgiven much.
G. The forgiveness of sins must be valued by the consequences if they were not forgiven.
H. How many times were you sick and recovered? Every time so far? Give Him praise!
I. How many times have others been sick and not recovered? Often enough. Praise Him!
J. Connect the two clauses – God heals sinners from chastening illness by forgiving them.

K. For a detailed study of the facts and glory of forgiveness of sins in the Bible … Fabulous Facts of Forgiveness (7 sermons).

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

A. Sometimes life may take us into great dangers various ways, but He saves us from them.
B. Or, either after or instead of a deliverance, He can and does send bountiful blessings.
C. Reversal of fortune in the Bible are many … Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Hannah, David, etc.
D. *Lovingkindness and tender mercies,* expressions we do not use, are abundant goodness.
E. Because of the context, we see His love, kindness, tenderness, and mercies as practical.
F. For more Bible examples of *Reversal of Fortune* by three witnesses for hope … Reversal of Fortune.

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

A. Our inspired David moves down to a blessing we enjoy often – very good things to eat.
B. Sometimes the pleasure is so great in a favorite food item it nearly hurts the taste buds.
C. Not only is there taste from good food, but there is nutrition from it as well for strength.
D. Our young men have many calories and much protein available for energy and power.
E. Our diet in America in 2025 is not one of survival but the opposite – feast of fat things.
F. Therefore, the Bible encourages feasts and Thanksgiving Day is such to taste this verse.
G. The LORD Jehovah required 10% of gross income for favorite foods (Deut 14:22-26).

God Is Righteous and Revelatory – Verses 6-7

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

A. Here we move from personal kindnesses and mercies of all kinds to our God's character.
B. This is why we formally present His great attributes, for His character should be praised.
C. If you isolate this verse a bit and think on it, David's soul blessed God for His character.
D. An oppressed person is under bondage or in trouble of some kind and needs deliverance.
E. In the Bible they are often the poor or weak, as orphans or widows, needing a Redeemer.
F. God's character is what leads to deliverance and vengeance against oppressing enemies.
G. The LORD Jehovah, JAH, is a father of the fatherless and judge of widows (Ps 68:4-6).
H. We can step the examples up to Joseph's several difficult situations in the land of Egypt.
I. Or we can reach as high as rescuing Israel, a nation of slaves, from oppressing Egypt.
J. Or we can reach even higher to God's deliverance of His people from sin, death, hell.

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

A. Let us first continue in the vein of the context before and after – His ways by example.
B. Moses saw more of God and learned more about Him by His dealings than any before.
C. This was a special privilege for Moses that occurred in each of his life's three stages – from birth to rank in

Egypt, meeting I AM THAT I AM in the desert, and friend to friend.

D. We cannot neglect the exceptional privilege of His ways written for us (Ps 147:19-20).
E. After Moses, and less than him, the church of Israel got to see God's acts of deliverance.
F. Think! Saved in Egypt, from 75 to millions, ten plagues, and deliverance with spoil.
G. We should not neglect the fearful but fabulous privilege of Sinai and God's written laws.
H. God's gift of a divine library of truth from creation to eternal heaven reveals His love.

God Forgives Repentant Sinners – Verses 8-12

8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

A. Here begins a precious section of the Psalm highly and repetitively praising His mercy.
B. The history of Israel coming out of Egypt fulfills it well (Psalm 106:44-48; 78:38-39).
C. The things that were written aforetime were written for our learning – learn (Rom 15:4).
D. Yet we may read the present tense throughout this section that allows us to embrace it.
E. How easy and gentle is God toward us? Read *merciful, gracious, slow,* and *plenteous!*
F. We have already seen tender mercies, but here graciousness is added to mercy for praise.
G. He is slow to anger, unlike those that fly off the handle to respond harshly to an offence.
H. The difference between slow and fast to anger, given our faulty character, is very huge.
I. He is not only merciful and gracious, quite a combination, but He has plenty of mercy.

9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

A. **Chide** = To contend; to scold by way of rebuke or reproof; in later use to utter rebuke.
B. Our glorious God and loving Father does not always stay mad, and you should be glad.
C. What a wonderful trait of a Creator and Judge with infinite wisdom and power to punish.
D. It is bad enough to fear a man fast to anger, but then there are men that hold on to anger.
E. We hope and wait for those angry with us to get over it, but God does so by character.
F. Micah – *he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy* (Mic 7:18).

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

A. Adam and Eve sinned lightly (compared to yours) – but the consequences were horrific.
B. To an infinitely holy and righteous God, your least sin is enough for eternal hell for you.
C. Leaving conceptual comparisons, when have you ever suffered severely for your sins?
D. You must think about your number of sins and then the vileness of some worst sins.
E. God knows what we can take and never goes beyond (Is 57:16; 28:23-29; I Cor 10:12).

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

A. How high is the heaven above the earth? It is immeasurable in distance, for comparison.
B. Isaiah made the same comparison when measuring God's abundant pardon (Is 55:6-9).

C. This is the first identification of God's favored ones as fearing Him (Psalm 103:13,17), and it should carry weight doctrinally and practically for us (Rom 3:18; Eccl 12:13-14).

D. What will your favorite word be from this verse? Think of His mercy as *high* or *great*.

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

A. How far is the east from the west? It depends how far you go … it approaches infinity!

B. For the sake of earth, no matter how far you travel east, you will never be going west.

C. Rather than get cute with the wording, think about the heavens rather than little earth.

D. Rather than get cute with the wording, God has *forgotten* our sins (Is 43:25; Heb 10:17).

E. The real fact is an incredible transaction – sins gone – deserving *Hallelujah* for eternity!

God Pitifully Remembers our State – Verses 13-16

13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

A. **Pity** = Conscious and tender regard for the inferior ability or knowledge of another.

B. Compare Bible usage for the word pity (Is 63:9; Jer 13:14; 15:5; Ezek 8:18; Matt 18:33).

C. Good fathers take into account age and ability of children in assignments or chastening.

D. While this comparison makes fathers and God equal, we know better (Matthew 7:11).

E. This is a wonderful character trait of an absolutely holy and sovereign God and Judge.

F. Knowing God is infinitely perfect in all ways, and we the opposite, His pity is glorious.

G. You should bring this trait to God in prayer for holy reasoning for Him to be merciful.

H. This is the second identification of God's favored ones as fearing Him (Ps 103:11,17), and it should carry weight doctrinally and practically for us (Rom 3:18; Eccl 12:13-14).

I. The rest of this section explains what God knows about us to evoke His pity and mercy.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

A. Why does God pity us? – have tender mercy toward us? – He regards our weaknesses.

B. He not only knows our frame as weak creatures, but He remembers it in His dealings.

C. Before man became a living soul he was dust, and he quickly returns to dust at death.

D. Employees want a boss that knows abilities and knowledge for performance reviews.

E. Our holy and righteous God reviews our performance, but He remembers all about us.

F. Compare the statement by David elsewhere of God's pity toward Israel (Ps 78:38-39).

G. Not only do we have God's omniscient knowledge of us, we have Jesus (Heb 4:12-16).

15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

A. Man at his best state is altogether vanity (Ps 39:4-6), but God knows and adjusts for it.

B. Grass and a flower in a field have no protection, but they dry out and soon blow away.

C. Those under 30 or 40 do not grasp how quickly life goes, but those 60 and older know.

D. Why discouraging and negative facts? For God's pity and eternal mercy (Ps 103:13,17)!

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

A. Life is short, full of vanity and vexation, ends quickly, and none are truly remembered.
B. Even if life is so good you are like a large green bay tree, you disappear (Ps 37:35-36).
C. Why these discouraging and negative facts? For pity and eternal mercy (Ps 103:13,17)!
D. Think! Your soul should bless the Lord for His pity and mercy covering your frailty.
E. You are a weak speck on a weak grain of sand, but God takes it all into account for you.

God Is Eternally Merciful to Godly – Verses 17-18

17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

A. The inspired disjunctive starting this section is a contrast to frail and temporary man.
B. The previous four verses describe our existence as dust, grass, and flower that disappear.
C. But … in opposition to man's frailty and temporariness … is God's eternal mercy to us.
D. GOD Jehovah chose mercy before time for us, and it will go beyond time for us as well.
E. Distinct from practical tender mercies earlier, this mercy is eternal phase to final phase.
F. This is the third identification of God's favored ones as fearing Him (Psalm 103:11,13), and it should carry weight doctrinally and practically for us (Rom 3:18; Eccl 12:13-14).
G. What is His righteousness? Not merely intrinsic righteousness, but His obligation to us.
H. God's mercies are not a kind act; they are an assumed obligation (Ps 22:31; Neh 9:8).
I. For example, God forgives us practically due to His faithfulness and justness (I Jn 1:9).
J. God's plan and our realization of eternal mercy is by covenant promise (Heb 6:11-20).
K. God's operations of grace to save us are extended to our posterity by grace (Acts 2:39).

18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

A. Here the description of the elect goes further – keeping His covenant commandments.
B. Three descriptions of fearing God came earlier (Ps 103:11,13,17), but now obedience.
C. God's great and many benefits to men are conditioned on man's obedience to the LORD.
D. Compare Psalm 90, where the fabulous blessings have clear conditions (Ps 91:1,9,14).
E. Posterity to whom God extends mercy and righteousness are obedient to the covenant.
F. These descriptions reject presumption by the wicked and warn the righteous to obey.

God's Rule Deserves Praise of All – Verses 19-22

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

A. This new section begins with identifying our God's sovereign dominion over all things.

B. When we think of blessing God – praising and extolling Him – His rule should cause it.
C. One of God's greatest attributes is His sovereign dominion or independent rule over all.
D. All other beings we know might be merciful, but are not sovereign monarchs like Him.
E. His kingdom rule is glorious by itself, but it also enhances His other traits like mercy.
F. Compare other delightful Psalm verses of His sovereign rule (Psalm 93:1; 97:1; 99:1).
G. His dominion over all is a subject that should provoke praise (Rom 9:19-21; Dan 4:35).
H. For a more detailed exploration of His sovereign dominion over all things … Dominion of God, God, A King, and Politics.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

A. Here our inspired David moves from himself to bless God to call on the angels to do it.
B. When viewing the absolute rule of God (from verse 19), mighty angels obediently serve.
C. When viewing the absolute rule of God (from verse 19), mighty angels should praise.
D. The angels constantly and faithfully obey Him perfectly, which we should do ourselves.
E. If angels should add praise and adoration to their faithful service, then we surely should.
F. For more about the angels of God from a Bible perspective and not by tradition … The Angels of God (4 Sermons).

21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

A. David did not leave the angels yet, but exhorted them to bless by using different names.
B. The angels are the hosts here, for they are angelic armies God rules as LORD of hosts.
C. The angels are the ministers here, for they are the servants that fulfill His every pleasure.
D. The Bible has many references to the angelic hosts of ministers (Dan 7:10; Heb 1:7,14).
E. The Bible has several orders or ranks of the angel hosts (Eph 1:21; Col 1:16; I Pet 3:22).
F. For more about the angels of God from a Bible perspective and not by tradition … The Angels of God (4 Sermons).

22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

A. David broadened praise he desired for God to all creatures under God's sovereign rule.
B. Psalms include praise by rational, irrational, inanimate (Ps 145:10; 148:3-12; 150:6).
C. Recall the three choirs that praise God and the Lamb in Revelation 5 (Rev 5:9,11,13).
D. Our inspired David by the hand of God closed by exhorting himself again to bless God.

Conclusion:

1. This Psalm should provoke you to stir yourself up individually and corporately to intentional praise.
2. You and I were created for God's glory, and we fulfill our purpose by praise (Ps 33:1; 72:18-19; etc.).
3. While understanding the Psalm is a big blessing, it is also a burden and responsibility to so bless God.

4. The divine favor contained in this Psalm is so gloriously and infinitely wonderful to deserve all praise.
5. It is the week of America's Thanksgiving Day, which provides opportunity for extra intentional praise.
6. Should we out-bless Israel? … America in 2025 … Jesus Christ … gospel conversion … this reminder?