

May 30

Scriptures: Read Psalms 103 & 104

Key Verse: “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”
(Psalm 103:1)

Overview

Psalm 103 is one of the most beautiful expressions of praise to the Lord penned by King David. With great sincerity and earnestness, David blesses the Lord with all his being and displays a remarkable depth of insight into spiritual things. The psalmist’s words are pure and joyful, without any hints of sorrow or complaints. He speaks to his soul to remember (continually) God’s many blessings (103:2). He recounts the personal benefits he has received from the Lord, and in enumerating them, he encourages others to whom these same wonderful blessings are available. The greatest blessing is listed first: God “forgives all your iniquities”. He also heals our physical and spiritual diseases; he redeems our souls from destruction by the blood of Jesus; he crowns, satisfies, and renews us to be strong in Him and, like an eagle, soar over life’s problems (103:3-5).

The psalmist also remembers the national blessings of the Lord, which are His righteousness and just judgments for all who are oppressed (103:6). He also mercifully condescended to reveal Himself and His ways to Moses (because of their intimate relationship), and He showed His mighty deeds to the children of Israel. The Lord is to be greatly praised for His abundant mercy, grace, and patience which was evidenced by His lenient punishment for their severe sins (103:8-10). By using many illustrations, the psalmist shows the unimaginable vastness of God’s mercy, forgiveness, and paternal compassion on His weak and frail children (103:11-14).

After hearing of these marvelous benefits, which come as a direct result of God’s mercy, everyone in the world would naturally want them; yet there is a condition to receiving them. The Lord’s mercy and righteousness are granted only to those who fear Him and are faithful in keeping His covenant and putting His commandments into practice (103:17-18). God’s greatness, goodness, and sovereignty demand the universal praise of all His creation, including the angels who obey and serve Him as messengers and agents who perform His will (103:20-22).

Psalm 104 is similar in many respects to Psalm 103. They both begin and conclude with the same words that call for David’s innermost being to bless the Lord; this summarizes the basic purpose of these psalms — to glorify the Lord. Psalm 104 deals poetically with God’s marvelous work of creation. He is the one pictured as not only the maker of the universe and every creature but the coordinator and sustainer of all His creation. He did not just create the world, wind it up, and let it go on its own; no, He watches and providentially cares for everything that happens on the face of the earth.

We read in Genesis 1:3 that on the first day of God’s creative work there was light, and yet the sun and moon were not created until the fourth day. In beautifully poetic terms, the psalmist explains that the light was radiating from God Himself, and then God spread out the firmament “like a curtain” (104:2; Gen. 1:6-8). Graphic descriptions are given concerning the all-important

provision of water that God gave to make the earth fruitful. When God spoke the word, the waters covering the earth obeyed and went to the places that God had founded for them, and thus He created dry land, the boundary of the water (104:6-9; cf. Gen. 1:9-10).

God provided springs and rain “from His upper chambers” to satisfy all living things (man, animals, vegetation), which is a blessing of His grace (Matt.5:45). The psalmist explains how the laws of nature (such as gravity) were ordered by God and nothing happened by chance or accident. With His creation of the sun and moon, God appointed the seasons, as well as night and day (Gen. 1:14), and His creatures live in perfect harmony as God ordained. The wild and nocturnal creatures have their domain at night, and mankind labours during the day (104:20-23).

The psalmist marvels at God’s infinite wisdom in creation. He is awed by the innumerable creatures God made in the sea. Indeed, even today, new aquatic life forms are being discovered all the time. Every creature, whether in the sea or on land, is totally dependent upon God (104:27-30). He holds all things together and sustains life, for “in Him all things consist” (Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:3; John 1:3; Rev. 4:11). After meditating upon God’s greatness (which is something we all should do), it is no wonder the psalmist resolves that as long as he has breath, he will praise the Lord, and concludes by shouting, “Hallelujah!” (the Hebrew is translated as “praise the Lord”, 104:35). As we have seen, if God is in such control and cares for all creatures, how much more does He care for the crown of His creation, mankind, people who are created in His own image and so precious to Him (104:17; Matt. 6:26)?

Prayer

Our hearts are filled with praise, oh Lord, as we recount the many blessings You have graciously given us. It is so marvelous to think that the great Creator of all things is intimately concerned about each one of us. We long to draw closer to You today.