*Path of Life*

Psalm 103

**Stay on the Path** ~

All that believers are, in response, to all that God is—this constitutes the essence, expression, and experience in worship, as God intended it to be. Becoming occupied with God is the aim; it is body, soul, mind, and spirit actively engaged in adoration of the Creator, and such is the substance of Psalm 103. One of the reasons Christians love the book of Psalms so much is that the songs, artfully and majestically, verbalize what we often feel inside but cannot find the words to express. Nowhere is this more visible than in Psalm 103, for within its cadences of praise and thanksgiving, we find our own deepest emotions and gratitude mirrored.

At the time this psalm was written, David had come through a perilous trial that brought him physically and emotionally to the brink of death (Psalm 102), but the Lord had intervened. David responded in Psalm 103 by using all his capacities to bless the Lord’s holy name, and all His benevolent benefits. David’s use of the phrase, “all that is within me” actually means “all my inward parts.” The result was a renewal of body, soul, mind, and spirit that brought a rejuvenated experience to David’s life. What this psalmist discovered, at a time of great crisis and blessing, discloses a power that can bring about the same renewed exuberance to our spiritual lives as well.

*Did you know ~*

The Hebrew poetry of Psalm 103 is replete with the use of comparisons, similes, and parallelism. Verses 3 through 5 each have statements that are first presented and then repeated, or amplified, by illustration for emphasis. The second statement in these verses amplifies the blessings of forgiveness, redemption, and satisfaction or fulfillment. The end result of these divine blessings is that there are no petitions or supplications in this prayerful psalm—only gratitude and praise!

**Psalm 103**

A Psalm of David

“*Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!”*

1. Who is David speaking to in this verse?
2. When is it a good idea to exhort yourself to right behavior?
3. How has God blessed you?

**Discussion question**

What are some ways we can bless the Lord?

**Psalm 103:2-5**

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:*

*Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,*

*Who redeems your life from destruction,*

*Who crowns you with lovingkindness, and tender mercies,*

*Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”*

1. Carefully read through these verses and list all the benefits.
2. David lists six important blessings from the Lord in verses 3–5, which are also given to you. Look up the corresponding verses that accompany each blessing and note what you learn about it.
   1. ***He forgives me:*** Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13–14; 1 John 1:7, 9
   2. **He heals me:** Malachi 4:2; Isaiah 53:4–5; Luke 4:18
   3. **He redeems me**: Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18–19; Psalm 107:1–2a
   4. **He crowns me**: Psalm 92:2; 1 Corinthians 9:24–25; Titus 3:4–7; Hebrews 4:16
   5. **He satisfies me**: Isaiah 55:1–3a; Psalm 107:8–9; Psalm 90:14; Psalm 17:15
   6. **He renews me**: Psalm 51:10: Isaiah 40:31; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:20–24
3. What are the benefits of having your sins forgiven?
4. Compare the end of 103:5 with Isaiah 40:3. What do we learn about renewing our strength?
5. Since we have a promise of healing, take a few moments to pray for yourself and others who may be ill.

**Discussion question**

What do you think it means to be crowned with lovingkindness and mercy?

**Psalm 103:6**

*“The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.”*

1. How does this verse comfort you in your current situations?
2. Take a few moments to pray for those who are oppressed.

**Psalm 103:7-10**

*“He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.*

*The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

*He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever.*

*He has not dealt with us according to our sins,*

*Nor punished us according to our iniquities.”*

1. God made His ways known to Moses, as he followed Him. How does God make His ways known to us?
2. Make a list of the characteristics of God, found in 103:8 and define them.

**Discussion question**

It is because of the cross that God does not deal with us according to sins.

**Psalm 103:11-12**

*“For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;*

*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*

Take a few moments to research the size of the universe and record your findings.

How far is east from west?

**Discussion question**

How does knowing His mercies are infinite and our sins have been removed from us, help you to walk with the Lord today?

**Psalm 103:13-18**

*“As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.*

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

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

*For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.*

*But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children, to such as keep His covenant,*

*And to those who remember His commandments to do them.”*

1. Who does the Lord pity?
2. What does he know about us?
3. What does the illustration of man being like *“grass of the field”* teach us about life?
4. How enduring is the mercy of the Lord?

**Discussion questions**

Look up Proverbs 8:13. What does it teach about fearing the Lord?

How can we show evidence that we truly fear the Lord?

How can we do a better job of remembering the commandments of the Lord?

**Psalm 103:19**

*“The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.”*

**Discussion Questions**

Think of the miracles Jesus performed. What do they teach us about God's rule over nature?

How do we show that we have allowed God to rule over us?

**Psalm 103:20-22**

*“Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word,*

*Heeding the voice of His word.*

*Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure.*

*Bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion.”*

1. This Psalm closes as it began, with a call to bless the Lord. How can we fulfill its command?

From the East to the West

**Psalm 103:11-13**

*“For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.*”

It is a common advertising ploy to attempt to sell an item by comparing it to something else. We might see a car commercial with a cheetah running, to convince us of the speed of the vehicle; or a flowing river, to reveal the thirst quenching power of a soft drink. David is, in a sense, attempting to sell us on the greatness of God. He knows the Lord and wants everyone to taste and see for themselves, that the Lord is good. To do this, he makes a series of comparisons, to convince us to trust in God.

First, he compares the mercy of God to the heavens. He says, if we could measure the universe, we could also measure God’s compassion. Astronomers speak of the size of the universe in terms of light years; which is, the distance light travels in the course of 365.25 days. They estimate the universe to be over 14 billion light years across. The mercy of God is so vast it could never be exhausted. If you are willing to come to Him, He is willing to forgive you.

Second, he compares the removal of our sin to the distance between East and West. Since we live on a ball with a most northern and southern point, it is possible to travel north until you run out of north. Once you arrive at the North Pole, you must either stay there or go south. The opposite is true of east and west. If you decide to travel east, you can go east indefinitely, without ever getting to the west. David is describing the complete removal of sin for those who receive the mercy, and thus the forgiveness, of God. Sin will never be brought up again, for all who trust in the cross of Christ.

Finally, David compares God to a father who has compassion on a child. This is a somewhat limited illustration, because we have already seen the vastness of His mercy, but David wants us to understand that God’s mercy is like that of a loving father. When my youngest son was two, and he broke his leg, I recall wishing I could take his pain and wear his cast. It was not a fleeting feeling, but a deep compassion. I truly pitied his condition and wanted to help. It is wonderful to know that God feels that way about us, and does not lack the ability to come to our aid.

Won’t you buy into David’s God. Take the step to trust Him with all your heart and life.

Pastor Jim