

Psalm 103

“What are the Benefits?”

CIT: David is motivated to bless the Lord because of the benefits of knowing the LORD personally.

Main Point: Remember the benefits of the Lord as you live your life to bless Him.

Introduction:

I remember just a few years ago when Anna and I got married. I was working as the interim here at FBC hoping to get a call from the search committee about becoming the Student Minister. Anna was still in school working to get her BA in Nursing and we weren't sure at the time where God would place us long term. We waited patiently on the Lord's timing and I can remember both of our parents guiding us through the process of applying for jobs. Both sets had different perspectives, however, each set wondered and even advised us to ask those who would hire us “What are the benefits?” Many of you have been in interviews and asked that question. Some of you have been on the other end of the desk and received that question. It is an important question to know and answer because it is a motivation to move forward with that particular job. All of us want to know the answer to that question “what are the benefits?” Because all of us know that good benefits equals good work. Good benefits motivates us to work harder. Good benefits allow us to work from a place of joy rather than a place of misery. We all like good benefits. Well, in the chapter tonight we are going to focus on the benefits of knowing God. If you are in Christ then you have already received these benefits. If you are a believer then David is calling upon you to remember the benefits and bless the LORD. However, if you are not a believer, then for you this Psalm is simply answering the question for you “what are the benefits?” No, this is not an interview and neither is it a pitch for salvation. So whether you are a believer or an unbeliever the call from David to bless the LORD remains the same. In this chapter David calls all creation, both believers and unbelievers to bless the LORD because of the benefit of knowing Him as King of all.

This chapter is split into two callings: A personal call to bless the LORD and a Universal call to bless the LORD. The first portion of this chapter is the personal call to bless the LORD by remembering His benefits.

A call to personally bless the LORD by remembering the benefits of the LORD. (v.1-2)

David opens up the psalm with an imperative to himself. He demands that ALL of who he is should bless the LORD. The word “bless” in the Hebrew means “to adore with a bended knee.”¹ You can see though that David is speaking metaphorically when he says, “All that is within me.” He is not simply telling himself to bow down before God, although that might be what he is doing in this moment, but rather David believes that this ought to be the posture of his life. David believed that the benefits he had received from the LORD were worth a life time of humble service to Him. Therefore, what we learn from David is that as believers our lives should be spent in such a way that blesses the Lord.

The motivation to bless the LORD does not come from a sense of obligation. It doesn’t come from trying to get off the naughty list. He isn’t motivated by his personal accolades and position. David, according to verses 3-19 is motivated by the many mercies he has received from God. However, this call to bless the LORD is not only for David but its also for us. Like David, our motivation to bless the LORD should flow from the mercies we have received from Him. Paul makes an appeal to Christians like us in Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

David’s motivation does not come out of the blue. He doesn’t wake up and read positive quotes or watch the latest motivating video to success. He doesn’t read the latest book by the most popular christian authors. David simply remembers the works of the LORD and from his recollection of God’s faithfulness he is in many ways compelled by God’s mercy to bless the LORD with his life.

¹ Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary: Psalms by James M. Hamilton Jr.

In this passage we see three different areas that David remembers the benefits from the LORD: He remembers the LORD's work in him. He remembers his attributes revealed to Israel, and he remembers his own mortality. So as we look at this passage I want us to reflect and remember God's work in us, God's character shown to us, and how brief our life is compared to God who is eternal.

A. We bless the LORD by remembering His work in us. (v.3-5)

If you are a believer in Christ then you have a testimony. A testimony is a testament of what God has done in you. So when we share our testimony of Christ we are proclaiming the truth of what God has done in us. It's a reflection of who we were before Christ, who we have become because of Christ, and who we will become in Christ.

That is exactly what David is doing in this Psalm. He is reflecting and testifying to himself about the experiences that he has had from his time of knowing and worshiping God. Each of these directly apply to David in a different way then they may apply to us. Nonetheless, they are all truths that we have experienced in salvation whether physically or spiritually. As we go through them remember that David is listing these things out as a reminder of God's faithfulness and as motivation to bless the LORD with his life.

- **Forgiven (v.3)**— The first blessing he reminds himself of is God's forgiveness. He says to his soul that God has forgiven ALL his iniquity. As I read this I think of 2 Samuel 11 when David slept with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. Not only did he commit adultery but he later committed murder as he directed Uriah to be on the front line of the next battle Israel fought. And David tells himself with confidence that those sins are forgiven too. God does not simply forgive our little sins. No! When we hope and trust in Jesus he forgives us of all our sins.

I'm not sure exactly what sins you have dealt with in the past or what sins you are currently dealing with but if you have trusted in Jesus with your life then you can say with confidence the words "I am forgiven." David was speaking of forgiveness trusting the LORD that the Messiah

would come. We now can look back and say with confidence that the Messiah has completed his work and we are forgiven. We can rest because we are forgiven.

- **Healed (v.3)**— The second blessing he says to himself is that, “God heals all [his] diseases.” And for David this may be true, up to this point God may have healed him from multiple diseases in his past and he reflects on those moments and reminds his soul that one benefit of knowing God is that he ALWAYS heals His people.

I read in some commentaries that the second part of verse three only applies to David and not to us today. I disagree. For the ones who believe in Christ he will always heal. For every sickness you have had and gotten better; that is a gift from the LORD. Whether it be the stomach virus, the cold, or cancer if you are here today after conquering those battles it is from the LORD. But even some will say, “Austin, what about the believer who loses their fight to covid or cancer? What about my mother? My child? My best friend? God did not heal them” To that I reply, “Absolutely he did. For the believer who has passed away do to sickness on earth he is now sick free for all of eternity with Christ. They no longer face the agony and the trials of battling their disease. They have Christ and in Him they have been healed.” This is yet another reason to trust in the work of Jesus because we have a promise that each of us who believe will be delivered from the temporary sicknesses of this age and we will dwell forever healthy in Christ.

So if you or a loved one is currently battling sickness and you know Christ as LORD and Savior then rest assured either on earth or in heaven you or your loved one will be healed.

- **Redeemed (v.4)**— The third blessing we focus on in this passage is the word redeemed. Andrew taught us last Sunday morning that the word redeemed is an economic term that essentially means that the debts one owed has been paid in full by another. Here David says that his life is redeemed from the pit. The word “pit” in other translations like the KJV or ASV is translated as “destruction” and looser translations use the word “death” So when you hear “pit” it is appropriate for you to understand this as “grave.” From David’s perspective he believes in his redemption because he trust in the covenants of God.

Our perspective now slightly changes. Whereas David saw the covenant of God as something to anticipate we get to see the covenant of redemption as something that has been fulfilled in Christ.

Brother or sister in Christ as you reflect on the benefits of knowing God remember that you are redeemed. You have been bought, not by the symbolic blood of the Passover, not by the OT sacrifices, not by your own merits—no! You have been bought and redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Christ in His perfect righteousness is enough to purchase you from your sin debt and carry you into life everlasting.

- **Crowned (v.4)**— The fourth blessing is symbolically beautiful. David says he has been crowned with the steadfast love and mercy of the LORD. The word steadfast simply means “not wavering.” When David thinks of the steadfast love of God he trusts that God’s love towards him will not waiver. It will not fade. The words steadfast love in the Hebrew has at times been translated as goodness, kindness, and faithfulness.² Indeed I think these words define well what the steadfast love of the LORD looks like and David has been crowned with it; meaning that he has been bestowed with God’s love and mercy. I love what Matthew Henry said in his commentary: “He has given him true honor and great honor, no less than a crown... and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of than to be advanced into the love and mercy of God? What is the crown of glory but God’s favor?”³

As you reflect on God’s steadfast love and mercy towards you remember that a crown’s purpose is to be displayed. For a king a crown on his head displays authority and power but for us, if we believe that we have been crowned with love and mercy then our lives ought to reflect those truths. As we wear our crowns let us wear them with God’s steadfast love and mercy on full display.

²Blue Letter Bible: Outline of Biblical Usage

³ Matthew Henry OT Commentary

How do we do that? How do we reflect God's love and mercy? We can do it by sharing in and having unconditional love. A quote that I think best illustrates this is one I heard recently when another man in our church said to me, "A marriage is not about giving in order to receive. It's not about compromise and simply doing your part. Marriage is about both spouses pouring all of themselves into one another and never expecting anything in return." I believe that quote transcends through all of our relationships. If we are ever going to display God's love and mercy then we need to pour ourselves out to one another without any expectation of gain or payment in return.

- **Satisfied and Renewed (v.5)**—The fifth and final blessing is an accumulation of the first four combined. God used forgiveness, healing, redemption, love, and mercy as the ingredient for David's satisfaction and renewing. What I mean by that is this: God uses the outpouring of Himself to give us contentment and rest. As John Piper says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." So when God uses these attributes to work in us he is in many ways displaying Himself in all His glory to us; and when all of God's glory is on display in us we will find it easy to be satisfied in Him. He concludes this personal reflection by declaring to his heart that God satisfies him with good so that he would be renewed. Did you catch that? God is using the blessings we receive as a means to satisfy our souls.

If we ever want to bless the LORD then we must remember that being satisfied and renewed in God is what blesses God.

Application:

How do we then go about being satisfied? We must follow David's example and preach to ourselves the truths that God used to save us. We must remind ourselves of the good news of Jesus Christ each day and tell our souls "these truths are enough."

When I am working out there will come a point in the exercise that and I feel like I can't go on anymore. I'm tired and I'm winded. When I am just about to give up I start speaking to myself "Keep going. Don't stop. You're almost there. Don't stop." These words motivate me to push on and finish. They remind me that my current fatigue will not last and that there is rest at the finish line. In the same way when we preach the truths of God's blessings to ourselves and we believe them; then we will be motivated to bless the LORD by giving to others what he has given to us.

You can remind yourselves of these truths by putting them on sticky notes and strategically placing them somewhere you will see them often. You can write a journal entry about all the ways God blessed you in a day. You can tell the gospel to yourself or write out your personal testimony. And once you believe these truths allow them to motivate you to share it with someone close to you who may know Christ or may not. When we bless others with what God has blessed us with then we will bless the Lord.

B. Next we need to bless the LORD by remembering His Character (v.6-14)

If we are ever going to be people who bless the LORD with our souls then we need to remember and believe in the works He has done in times past. When I say the "past" it can mean remembering the works of God in your past from day to day, it could mean remembering the work of God in the past of someone you know, you could look at times in the past of Spiritual revival in the church. You could remember the testimonies of other Christians who have since past away. Simply reading the Bible is a wonderful way to see all the works and testimonies of the LORD by His people. Most importantly we can remember the work of Christ on the cross. That he laid down His life for our sins, was buried, and then conquered the grave through His resurrection. When we are able to reflect on God's work in us as well as His work in others then we can lay aside today's lies for God's eternal truth. This is what we see David doing in verses 6-14 as he is reflecting and remembering God's character revealed to Israel.

- **First, we see David speaks to God's attributes of righteousness and justice (v.6-10)**

Verses 6-7 David list two attributes of God that he uses to bless the saints. He uses his righteousness and justice as attributes to display his love and mercy towards those who are

oppressed. No one knows these attributes more than Israel. They have first hand experience to the righteousness and justice of God. They have seen his righteous acts towards them and they have witnessed God's justice poured out on their enemies and David is making the point that from these two attributes God made Himself known to Moses and His works visible to Israel.

In verse 7 David is referencing Exodus 33:13 when Moses prayed, "Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight." He then pleads on behalf of Israel and says, "Consider too this nation is your people."

God responded to Moses saying, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." This promise of the LORD was fulfilled one chapter later in Exodus 34:6-7 when God met Moses on the top of Mt. Sinai. It says, "The LORD passed before him (Moses) and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..."

As David is referencing this passage he is keeping in mind that God has revealed himself through His attributes. To Moses God revealed Himself by unveiling His glory; but to Israel, David, and even us today God has revealed Himself by His word and through the application of His attributes. In verses 8-14 David list the attributes God displayed through His works: He says that God is merciful and gracious, he is slow to anger and His steadfast love is abounding, meaning that His love is plentiful, its more than enough. He is compassionate to those who trust him.

Then once you get into verse 9 we get to see David's perspective on the justice and mercy of God. It says, "He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever." It is very plausible that David has in mind that one day God's justice will eventually prevail as his wrath is poured out on all those who turn away. However, I think a better interpretation of the text is to look at verse 9 through the lens of an Israelite. From time to time God would discipline Israel for their sin against him and twice he Exiled them . Both the discipline and the exiles were an act of God

justice. But His anger would not remain. Because of His mercy God would always bring His people back into the blessings and promises of His covenant.

From David's perspective this is how he would reconcile the beauty between God's justice and mercy working in tandem with one another.

However, we have a much different perspective. We now see God's justice and mercy displayed simultaneously through the cross where all the attributes of God were displayed. David Platt once put it this way:

“The beauty of the cross is that when Jesus went to Calvary, He did not just pay the price for our lust, our lying, our cheating, or whatever sin that we do—He stood in our place. He took the holy hatred, holy judgment, and holy wrath of God that was not just due our sin but due us. Jesus stood in our place and He took it upon Himself. Do not lean on comfortable clichés that sound good to us and rob the cross of its power. Jesus endured the penalty of sin and took the place of sinners. The essence of sin is that man substitutes himself for God. But the essence of salvation is that God substitutes Himself for man. Rather than condemning us, Jesus was condemned.”⁴

What Platt is saying is something that is essential for our understanding of the cross. The justice and mercy of God are on full display because God is justly pouring out His wrath on Christ who took our guilt and sin upon Himself and yet he showers us with mercy in that, as verse 10 says, “He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”

Secondly, He speaks of God's immeasurable love in (v.11-12) and again as we look at the depths of God's love there is no clearer display than the cross. David says God's love for His people stretches as high as the heavens and as far as the East is from the West.

⁴ <https://radical.net/article/does-god-hate-sin-but-love-the-sinner/>

This is the point, God's love for you is great. It is deeper than the deepest depths and wider than the longest lengths. He loves you tremendously and he displayed His love for you by sacrificing His Son , Jesus who willingly stood as a substitute for us: John 15:13 says,

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends...

No one else in the country knows more about sacrifice than our law enforcement and military. Each day they get dressed say goodbye to their families not truly knowing if that day would be the last time they see their families. They sacrifice their lives and well being to protect us. I can remember when I attended PDS each year during Veterans Day the 5th and 6th Grade class would have a mini concert for any military veteran that would show up. We sang songs of each military branch, songs on patriotism, but there is one song I'll never forget. It is a song about a son who was drafted and he would write letters to his mother everyday. He wrote about the weather, his friends, the memories of his dad, etc. Then at the end of the letter he would always say, "You are what I'm fighting for." One day the letters stopped coming until late December and she received a letter that said,

"I was up on a hill
I was out there alone
When the shots all rang out
And bombs were exploding
And that's when I saw him
He came back for me
Though he was captured
A man set me free
That man was your son⁵

This man, this son had a whole life in front of him. He had the opportunity to be a father and husband. He could have been a CEO or Americas next best chef but instead he laid down his life in order to save another. Why? Because the woman's son in this story loved his friend and laid down his life so that his friend could live.

⁵ Letters from War by Mark Shultz
<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/markschultz/lettersfromwar.html>

Application:

If we want to bless the Lord with our lives then we must remember His attributes displayed towards us in Christ. Remember that he is gracious because he sustains you and provides for you. Remember that he is loving; that while we were yet sinners He sent Christ to die for us. Remember he is just. Because of Christ his wrath was satisfied on the cross for all who believe in Him. Remember his mercy. Remember the depths and lengths of His love for you. He loves you.

Know:

I would encourage you to take a dive into the attributes of God and soak up who He is in your heart. I encourage you to do a bible word study on each of the characteristics of God listed in this chapter and truly learn what it means for God to be all these things. You can also read books by authors who wrote on the this topic. Books like, *Attributes of God* by A.W. Tozer.

Experience:

I'd also encourage you to seek out the opportunity to experience His attributes at work in your life. One way you can begin seeing God's attributes displayed is by keeping a prayer journal. As you pray write down your request and put a date beside them. Pray for these things daily and when God answers your prayers write that date down. Then beside the answered date write down what attribute or characteristic you saw from God in that request as a reminder of His faithfulness and love towards you.

C. The third section of this passages teaches us that we need to Bless the LORD by remembering our time on earth is fading. (v.15-19)

As David shifts to verses 15-19 he turns the focus from God to man. Verses 15-16 says, "As for man, His days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more."

As David is remembering the works of God he is met with his own mortality. He has all these wonderful memories of the attributes and blessings of God and He sees God's never changing nature and he reflects on himself and sees that he (David) is ever changing. He has grown in maturity, God is the most mature in every way. He has grown in authority, yet God's authority

has always remained. He has grown in patience and love, yet God has always been the best at displaying patience and his love is steadfast. For every reflection David has about God he also looks at the mortality of his life and realizes that his life, just like ours, is short.

This is all the more reason to bless the LORD! Man fades, God does not. Man dies, God does not. Man's kingdoms fall, God's will not. As for man, we are here today and gone tomorrow but God reigns forever ! And in verses 17-19 David latches himself to God who loves him from everlasting to everlasting. In other words, God's love is an eternal love. It is a forever love.

Church, this life is short. Each of our lives from the moment we took our first breath have been in a constant state of moving closer to death. Trust this: God's love runs deep, it runs wide, and it runs forever for those who fear him—for those who are reverent towards Him. He gives righteousness to His people throughout each generation. These things we have received because of Christ!

Application:

It's okay to think about your mortality. It's okay to consider that your life is short and you may not live to see 100, 60, 30, or 25. But this does not need to be a sad thing. It doesn't have to be something that paralyzes you with fear. Rather, when you consider that this life is quickly fading I would encourage you to shift your eyes to Jesus. If you have trusted and believed in Christ then His promise to you is that you will have eternal life. The point I believe that David is making for us to obey is this: Let whatever time you have on this earth be poured out as a blessing to the LORD knowing that when you cross the threshold of this life you will enter into eternity with Him.

You can live the rest of your life investing in and expanding the kingdom of God by:

1. Spending your time serving and pursuing your one. You can invest time in prayer for them.

You can invite them into your home. You can teach them what you believe and share with them the hope of Jesus. You can spend your life imploring those who are close to you but far from God to trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

2. You can plug into the New Orleans Ministry and feed and cloth those in need. You can share with them the hope of Christ and partner with Hollis to help introduce them to a better life on earth and in heaven.
3. You can invest in Zoe Ministries caring for Orphans and Widows in the Village with Taylor. You can help provide clean water for them to drink as well as provide them with the living water of Christ.
4. Maybe some of you would spend whatever time you have left on earth in the Ukraine or other parts of the world that are suffering and hurting and in need of the hope that only Jesus brings.
5. You may not be in a place where you can go to these places but you can devote your time on this earth praying for those who go or financially giving in order that the Kingdom of God would go forth through those we send.

Church, God's kingdom will not fade. He will not move. Verse 19 says, "The LORD has established his throne in the heavens and His kingdom rules over all." So we can do these works knowing that God will remain and His work in us will remain on this earth long after we are gone.

The kingdom of God is filled with opportunities to be fully devoted disciples of Christ. If we are going to live our lives without knowing the time of our departure then let's give it up for the sake of ourselves and others experiencing the everlasting love and righteousness of the LORD through our service on earth. To this end we will bless the LORD.

From verse 19 David shifts his focus from personal imperative to a universal imperative.

He gives a call to creation bless the Lord (v.20-22)

In this last portion of the chapter David shifts from calling on himself to bless the LORD and calls on all of creation to bless the LORD. He calls on the angels, the ministers, all who do his will, and he calls on himself to bless the Lord for all his works in all the earth. The apostle John

sees the fulfillment of this call to worship in Revelation 5:11-12 when he says, “Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing”

What we can take away from David in these last two verses is this: If you have trusted in the LORD these verses are not suggestions but imperatives. David is calling all of creation to recognize God as King and worship Him. We have that same calling in Christ today. We have been called to go to every tribe, tongue, and nation to call people to be disciples who bless the LORD with their lives. We bless the LORD when we call others to come and bless the Him.

You don’t need a fancy stage, a hill, or mountain top to call others to bless the LORD. You need a table in your home, a desk in your office, a car with an extra seat, a gym to workout at, or a walking trail. You need a tractor in a field, coffee at Zoe, or assistance at the store. You need a pool to swim in, a grill to cook on, or tickets to a game. The call to call others to bless the Lord is not from the biggest platforms its from your everyday rhythms and paths you take. Its from desiring your one to know and bless Jesus with you in Revelation 5. It’s from looking for opportunities to share the story of Christ with those we come in contact with. The call to bless the LORD is for all creation to partake in. Lastly, let’s remember the calling to bless the LORD is for you too. Be wise like David. Call people around to bless the LORD but in the process remember your soul needs to rest in Jesus and bless the LORD too. Bless the LORD oh my soul. Bless the LORD First Baptist Church. Bless the LORD. Bless the LORD.

[Pray]