

Bless The Lord, O My Soul!

Joe Slater

Psalm 103 begins and ends with the words of this article's title. Oftentimes we pray that God will bless us; but David exhorted himself to bless (praise, speak well of) the Lord. *"And all that is within me, bless His holy name!"* (v. 1b). No doubt he wanted others to join him in praise; He even called upon the heavenly host of angels to bless the Lord (vv. 20-22). What motivated David to write this?

As all of us should, David felt a keen awareness of God's grace. *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits"* (v. 2). What specific benefits?

"Who forgives all your iniquities" (v. 3a). David knew all too well the ravages of sin. Both adultery and murder made him liable to the death penalty! Yet God forgave him when he repented.

"Who heals all your diseases" (v. 3b). Some of David's psalms indicate he was no stranger to life-threatening disease. But the Lord restored his health.

"Who redeems your life from destruction" (v. 4a). From his experience as a shepherd boy, to his conflict with Goliath, to Saul's attempts on his life, to his battles as a warrior, David lived in constant danger. He survived only by God's gracious protection.

"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" (vv. 4b-5). Despite the turbulence in his life, David praised the Lord for taking such marvelous care of him.

Read the rest of this psalm! Think not only how it relates to David, but to you. You may find yourself echoing David's words *"Bless the Lord, O my soul!"*

KILLED AND EATEN

"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Galatians 5:13-15).

In this passage, we are encouraged to use the freedom that is found in Christ, for good rather than bad. This is the same liberty that has freed us from the old law of sin and death, the Old Testament (Romans 8:2). We are to "serve one another" with love and when we do, we fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; James 2:8). However, following these encouraging and uplifting words comes a strong warning. So what does it mean not to "bite and devour", otherwise we'll be "consumed" by each other?

Imagine for a moment a predator who has captured its prey. Fangs and claws, biting, tearing the victims flesh bringing death and dismemberment. The prey is slowly eaten, consumed until only a few bones and skin remain. It's a bloody scene, one that would make most folks a bit uncomfortable. Now think of the destructive results that hate, fighting, jealousy, harsh criticism, arguments, or nasty gossip can have on a collective group of people. The devastating effects of such behavior will certainly destroy a congregation of God's people, leaving only skin and bones.

Of all the places in the world, the church should be the place one can come to be loved, cared for and comforted. Let us love each other, just as God has loved us (1 John 4:11).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

You Can't Have It Both Ways

"Give me understanding, that I may keep Your law and observe it with my whole heart" (Psalm 119:34, ESV).

A Bible class teacher told his class the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). He highlighted the plight of Lazarus and the blatant neglect of the rich man. One was privileged in this world while the other found peace in Heaven. After sharing these truths, the teacher posed this question to his class: "Which would you rather be – the rich man or Lazarus?" One boy raised his hand and replied, "I'd like to be the rich man while I'm living and Lazarus when I die."

The young boy expressed what many feel about this life and eternal life. We have to decide in which kingdom we will serve because God has not given us the option of serving in both kingdoms simultaneously. Commitment involves choosing to be faithful to one while forsaking the other.

The Psalmist encourages us to choose the path of light. He cries out, *"Teach me, O Lord . . . Give me understanding . . . Turn my eyes . . . Establish Your word to Your servant."*

We must long for the teachings of God. They are the path that leads to His eternal blessings.

--Eddie Lewis (via *Power for Today*)

Six Important Guidelines

1. When you are alone, mind your thoughts.
2. When you are with friends, mind your tongue.
3. When you are angry, mind your temper.
4. When you are with a group, mind your behavior.
5. When you are in trouble, mind your emotions.
6. When God blesses you, mind your ego.