

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON PRAISE

LESSON SEVENTEEN: PRAISE AND BLESSING

by Sandy Harber

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Psalm 103:1

Psalm 103 is one of the greatest of the praise psalms. It begins and ends with the phrase "Bless the Lord, O my soul." The Hebrew word "barac," which is translated "bless," means "to kneel." In conjunction with God it indicates kneeling as an act of adoration. To "bless the Lord" means to express love and thanksgiving for Who He is and what He has done. Blessing is a form of praise.

David opened the psalm with an admonition to himself to engage his whole being - intellect, emotion, and will - into his praise and adoration to God. Further, he glorified the name of God. God's many names, as revealed in Scripture, describes His characteristics, attributes, and activities. He is Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord our Provider, Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness, El-Shaddai (God Almighty), Jehovah (the Self-existent One), and much more.

David exhorted himself to keep on remembering all of the benefits (i.e. blessings) that God had bestowed upon him. The Hebrew word translated "benefits" in verse 2 indicates prosperity. God has dealt bountifully with all of mankind (James 1:17). But, all too often we forget all of the good things God has provided when something bad happens. So, David was determined to keep God's blessing in mind always.

David proceeded to list some of the blessing that God has bestowed upon us. These gifts are both spiritual and physical. David mentioned the forgiveness of sins first (v. 1). In fact, he stated that God removed our sins from us "as far as the east is from the west" (v. 12). It has been pointed out that he did not reference north and south because there is a point where the two meet. A man traveling north will reach a place where he is no longer heading north, but south. However, east and west never meet. A man traveling eastward could continue around in the world, arriving at his starting point, all the while always moving east, never west.

Second, God heals our diseases (v. 3). There are many examples of physical healing in Scripture. Beyond that, you probably know personally the healing touch of God on yourself or someone you have prayed for. The same Hebrew word translated "healeth" in this verse is translated "healed" in Isaiah 53:5. The word means "to mend" or "thoroughly make whole." From Isaiah we learn that Jesus endured scourging and crucifixion in order to mend, or heal, us spiritually. Third, God had redeemed David's life from destruction (v. 4). The Hebrew word translated "destruction" means "a pit," that is, a grave. God saved David from physical death on more than one occasion. He has done the same for many of us and our loved ones. Further, He has redeemed (bought back; that is, paid the price) us from the penalty and power of sin by shedding His precious blood (Eph. 1:7).

Fourth, God surrounded David with loving kindness and mercy (v. 4). The Hebrew word translated "crown" means "to encircle." God's love is all around us. He does not treat us like the sinner we are (v. 10) but has bestowed mercy and grace upon us (v. 8). He is a loving Father Who has compassion for His children (vv. 13-17). Fifth, God satisfied David with good things (v. 5). He satisfies us, as well. There is no lack. We have enough. More, we are filled with the good things God provides (James 1:17). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pointed out that human fathers give good things to their children so we can expect even more from our heavenly Father (Mt. 7:11). God's children are never left wanting (Psalm 37:25). He blesses us abundantly (John 10:10). Sixth, God renewed David daily (v. 5), like the eagles. Isaiah agrees, referencing the eagles' soaring abilities (Is. 40:31). Eagles are amazing birds that can soar 10,000 feet above the earth. They symbolize power, freedom, and courage. God blesses His children with renewable strength and endurance, like the eagles.

David moved from individual praise (vv. 1-5) to national praise (vv. 6-19) and ended with universal praise (vv. 20-22). He invited angels, God's servants, and all of creation to bless Him. When we bless the Lord we delight His heart. We give back a portion of the love that He has showered upon us. Do not neglect this act of praise.

*"Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul."
Psalm 103:22*