

PSALM 103:1-5
PRAISE OUR GLORIOUS GOD!

*Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!*

*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.*

Years ago in days of mighty kings, there was a sharp distinction between the king and the average man. The king was approached with humility. A subject would humbly bow, or bend the knee and kneel. If a heartfelt plea for the king's help was involved, or a plea for mercy for a wrong committed, the subject would even lie prostrate before him. ("Prostrate" is not to be confused with "prostate." Prostrate means flat on one's face. Prostate means a gland in the male body.) If in the help or mercy was granted, likely the subject would return, bending the knee, even lying "prostrate," to express humble and deepest gratitude.

That picture is the same, although at first it may not seem so, in the verses of our text written by David. He says, *Bless the LORD, O my soul. and all that is within me, bless His holy name!* We first consider the word "bless." Ordinarily "to bless" means that a person in a higher position does something nice for someone in a lower position. "The boss blessed me with two extra days off." "God blessed us with needed rain." "Lord Jesus, bless this food." But in this text David says that he—or we—should bless God! *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* How can we bless God? Actually the word "to bless" not only means "to say" nice things. "Dale blessed the banker for not charging a penalty against his account." We "bless" God—we praise God, we thank God—for all the good He has done for us! At the end of our Communion service in the hymnal, the pastor says, "Bless we the Lord," and the congregation sings, "Thanks be to God!" (TLH, page 31). Finally to tie all this together, the Hebrew word "bless," has as its root meaning "to bend." God "bends" down to shower us with gifts. We "bend" down in humble thanks and praise! Genuine thanks and praise are always accompanied with humility. That's why it's hard to say "Thank You." It's so humbling! The other guy gets the credit.

Bless the LORD. The name LORD, all in capital letters, means "JEHOVAH," or "HE IS." The LORD, the great HE IS, is subject to none, has no limitations, is always true—both honest and steadfast, does not alter or waver, makes a promise because He wants to, not because He has to, helps and rescues in love and mercy, forgives the sins and disobedience of foolish, weak people through the dear sacrifice of His Son. "Bless the LORD, O my soul!" Indeed, thank God, *all that is within me!* "May the inward part of me, the non-physical, non-visible part of me, which is here with my body when I'm alive, and gone from my body when I'm dead, may especially this inward part of me praise the LORD"! Whether it is called the soul, the life principle, the heart (as in "Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind"), whether it's called "*all that is within me,*" may all the non-physical aspects of my—your/our—being, BLESS GOD, fall before Him, and thank Him! When was the last time you knelt—bent the knee—to pray to God, to thank Him, and bless Him? Likely it's been a while. (I'm not talking about now when you are physically unable to kneel.) Fall before Him. Bless and praise His Name!

His "Name." It's what He is and what He stands for. His Name is His "reputation." His reputation is "holy"—different from yours or mine. *Holy* means perfect and separate. He is like no one else and nothing else. He is flawless, without one little error in the fabric of His being or in the record of His conduct. He is not just a rock or a fish that never sins because it has no moral sense of right or wrong. The LORD is a non-physical, personal, morally responsible being who NEVER sins. He is Truth. He is Life. He is totally separate from everything else. He has saved you in love. *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits!*

His "benefits" are His "dealings," His "actions," with you. God's "dealings" and actions are always good. There is no deceit in Him, no double-dealing, no hidden ulterior purpose by which He will do you harm just to benefit

Himself. Do you ever double-deal with people, deceive them for your own welfare? That is Satan's style. God's dealings are for your benefit—not necessarily physical benefit, ease, and luxury on this earth, but for the spiritual benefit of forgiveness and eternity at His side.

Dear Christian, *Forget not all His benefits.* Do you forge—to get out the meat to thaw, to get the mail, to return a phone call, to put gas in the pick-up, to close the gate, to put away the hammer after hanging it on the fence? Do you forget your sweetheart's birthday, to keep someone in your prayers, to keep an appointment? Do you forget the Lord's blessings?? Do you label them as every day ho-hum items and forget these are the LORD's blessings? Consider that you can breathe, that you can walk, that you can eat, that you can think, that the car runs, that the electricity is on, that your children are healthy, that you are not a street bum? Do you forget that you are not a slave of Satan, but are a baptized, forgiven child of God in Christ, with the greatest inheritance ahead? Do you forget that?! Each day is a great day in Him! *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:31-32).* Go forward with confidence and peace in the Lord. When Satan tempts you to feel that God has forgotten you, or has been unfair to you, or that you are such a loser, remember the Lord's spectacular dealings with you in Christ! You are His child each day and forever!

David gives us an outstanding list of examples of God's tender care, for which we bless and praise His Name of holiness! Let's not forget them. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Your guilt for crossing His line, your shameful crooked ways, your missing the target, are all erased from your scorecard and report card. Instead 100%, A+, are written there for you as a gift through Jesus, for which there is not one thing to pay. Thank God! Bless His Name!

Who heals all your diseases. Whatever diseases or distress you have in life, whether sickness due to virus or bacteria, whether a broken heart in searching for a spouse, whether a lost pet, whether a ruined auto, whether a set-back in business, whether poor choices on your part—He heals all your “diseases.” The word for “heal” can also be translated “mends.” Whatever has ripped apart in your life, He mends it for you with love for your ultimate welfare in heaven, just as a mother mends her child's shirt.

Who redeems your life from destruction. Do you remember the meaning of the word “redeem”? Jesus is our “Redeemer.” To redeem means to save, but to redeem in the fullest sense means “to buy back” or “to rescue at a price!” Like redeeming your ring or your phone from the pawn shop by paying an extra price, Jesus came to this earth to pay the extra price to set you free. He went the extra mile, at the cross and intervened for you. He still pleads for you, with the Father every day. As one redeemed at a precious price, He has rescued your life from destruction—from the pit, from the grave, from the fire of hell! Thank God! Bless His Name!

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies. To have a crown placed on one's head is a special honor. When I was very young we would make paper crowns for Mom on Mother's Day and Dad on Father's Day. We honored them and loved them. Jesus, in love and as a gift of honor for you and for me—of all people—crowns us as His special princes and princesses. He doesn't crown you with sparkling jewels on a gleaming gold band, padded with soft purple velvet, but He crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercy! The word translated “lovingkindness” is a kindness that you can count on, like a citizen who counts on his devoted king for every help. Jesus crowns you with His lovingkindness and steadfast love. You can count on Him. In addition He also crowns you with “mercy”—it's more than “pity” as in “that poor chap.” “Mercy” is warm, tender, compassion, and affection, as a heart that reaches out to a little kitten, puppy, calf, or colt in distress. “Mercy” is the word Jacob used when he sent his nine sons back to Egypt with tenth son Benjamin. They were leaving to get more grain and to rescue Simeon—11th son—who had been kept in prison by the stern-acting ruler, who was Joseph—12th son—unbeknownst to them. With sadness in his heart, Jacob sent them off, *May God Almighty give you mercy before the man* (Genesis 43:14)—tenderhearted compassion. This is also God's mercy for you. Bless the LORD!

Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's! The word is not really “mouth,” but something like “decorated and ornamented aspects of life.” The Lord satisfies your most exquisite needs. He does not just partially meet or fill them, but *satisfies* them with good things. “Ahh! that is good—just what I needed!” He meets your deepest need for glory, the glory of eternal life, the glory with which He created Adam and Eve, but lost by sin. You have the peace of God which passes all understanding—peace each day and forever—in Christ. *Your youth is renewed like the eagle's!* In Jesus you have—already now in spirit, and hereafter in body and spirit—the glory, strength, and beauty as in Eden, the most supremely decorated and ornaments blessings. Like an eagle with its might and flight, you are at the top—with God. Fear not! Go forward today, all week, and every week. Thank God for His blessings. Bless the LORD!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach--