

A Summons to praise the LORD

Reading and reflecting upon Psalm 103

Right away there is a surprise. Notice to whom the psalmist begins talking.

The Psalmist summoning himself v.1-5

The Call v.1-2

We see this first in the summons to praise the LORD as seen in v.1-2. This summons is in a form of a chiasm. “Praise the LORD” corresponds to “Praise His holy Name”. And between the call to praise we find a parallel idea. “O my soul” corresponds to “all that is within me”. His point is singular. *The utterly unique God is to be utterly valued by the soul to where the mouth will utter praises to Him.*

The Basis v.3-5

We see the psalmist talking to himself not just in calling himself to praise but in reminding himself of the reasons for praise. *“Forget not all his benefits”.*

What a catalog of reasons this is! This list makes the point that God overcomes everything that would contribute to the soul’s disorientation and disobedience.

- Who forgives all sin
- Who heals all diseases
- Who redeems from the pit
- Who crowns with steadfast love and mercy
- Who satisfies with good

The Psalmist summoning the community

v.6-19

The change in pronouns tells the reader that the call to praise the Lord has broadened. The Psalmist now is summoning the covenant community to do what he has called himself to do; namely *bless the LORD...with all that is within*.

By an example

As the psalmist recited the benefits of the LORD for himself (v.3-5) his mind went to the event / person that fleshed out clearly these characteristics of the LORD. Now he presents Moses' experience and theology to the congregation. This was/is to motivate all of God's people to praise the LORD.

Moses' life

v.6-7

God working justice for all the oppressed is illustrated in the liberation of Moses and his people (v.6-7).

Moses' theology

v.8-19

Notice Exodus 34:6-7 quoted in v.8. This summary theology highlights the LORD's characteristics and activities recited in v.3-5. It then unpacks in v.9-13 to disclose the LORD's beauty and ways. The example of the Exodus and its theology functions as fodder for faith necessary to *bless the LORD*.

- ◆ Summing up v.8
 - A concise statement of core theology (see Ex.34:6,7; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2)
- ◆ Fleshing out v.9-18
 - Two negatives ("He will not...He does not" v.9-10)
 - Two lines introducing the basis for the argument (see "for" at the start of v.11,14)
 - Two lines between the basis introducing a contrast (see "as" at the start of v.12,13)
 - Four verses completing the contrast between fleeting and fickle man and faithful and forever God (v.15-19)
- ◆ Sizing up: Bless the LORD all you who fear Him/keep covenant; for He does not treat us as we might expect.

The Psalmist summoning the creation

v.20-22a

The Psalmist concludes his call to praise the LORD in an unrestrained way. He calls for ALL creation; earthly and heavenly, to bless the LORD. This universal participation in praise is the only fitting response to the sketch of Yahweh made clear in this psalm. All creation praising the Creator!

The Psalmist summoning himself

v.22b

As the psalmist concludes his all out summons to praise the LORD, he ends at the place where he began. O my soul bless the LORD!

Observations

1. His Kingdom rules over all. (19b)
2. In all places of his dominion the summons goes out to *bless the LORD*. (22)
3. The angels in heaven obey perfectly. (20-21)
4. Man due to his union with Adam disobeys completely. (14)
5. The LORD treats man not as he might think. (10) Why?

Applications

1. Reflect on Christ.
 - a. As our righteousness (Rom. 5:19)
 - b. As the propitiation for our sins (1Jn. 4:10)
 - c. As the bearer and remover of all our sins (John 1:29)
 - d. As the winner of all god's benefits for us (Rom. 8:32)
2. Relish this position in Christ.
3. Remember all His benefits.
4. Renew your participation in kingdom living.
 - a. Bless the LORD – personally and corporately.