Psalm 103 (ESV): Forget Not God’s Benefits

Main point: Bless the Lord for his goodness and forgiveness.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: A psalm of David.

Focus of the study:
1 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,
3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
5 who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

... 8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
9 The Lord will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.
10 The Lord does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is the Lord’s steadfast love toward those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does the Lord remove our transgressions from us.
13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.
14 For the Lord knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

Questions:
1. v. 1: What is the writer David’s first instruction to himself and his readers?
   a. “Bless the Lord” – I wonder what it means to “bless” God?
      i. Be grateful, approve, praise, give thanks
2. What is David’s second instruction?
   a. v. 2: and forget not all the Lord’s benefits.
3. What benefits does David list?
   a. v. 3: forgives all your iniquity. What is iniquity?
      i. Sin, wrongdoing, faults, failures
b. v. 3: heals all your diseases. I wonder what it means that God is a healer?
c. v. 4: redeems your life from the pit. I wonder what that means? What is a pit like?
   i. Dark, scary, seems impossible to get out
d. v. 4: crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. Let’s think a bit more about those phrases: “crowns you,” “steadfast love and mercy.” I wonder how that would feel? Who usually gets crowned?
   i. Royalty, winners (like the Olympics), someone honored
   ii. How is this kind of “crown” (a crown of steadfast love and mercy) different than crowns that people have in this world?
   1. Unlike worldly crowns, this is a lasting crown! Steadfast
e. v. 5: satisfies you with good, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle. How does it feel to be satisfied?
   i. Content, happy, not needing anything

4. What is the opposite of all these benefits – that is, what state would we be in without God?
   a. Stuck in iniquity/sin; not healed; in a deep dark place/pit; without love and mercy; unsatisfied, tired, weighed down

5. And what does David say is the result of all of God’s benefits?
   a. v. 5: so that (i.e., the result is) your youth is renewed like the eagle’s. What can an eagle do? How do you think that would feel?
   i. They can fly! Free!

6. David goes on, in v. 8-10, to detail specifics of God’s character and goodness: “The Lord is…” (Ask questions to expand on what each of these mean)
   a. merciful
   b. gracious
   c. slow to anger
   d. abounding in steadfast love
   e. does not deal with us according to our sins. What is sin?
   f. doesn’t repay us for iniquity (does not take “an eye for an eye”)

7. What do all of those qualities tell you about God’s concern for you? What is the conclusion to the problem of our failures and wrongdoings??
   a. v. 11: steadfast love
   b. v. 12: removes transgressions – how completely?
   c. v. 13: shows compassion

8. For whom do the Lord’s benefits apply?
   a. v. 11 “Those who fear him” – what does that mean?
   i. When we turn to God, trust in God, and remember God, instead of focusing on the world and our problems, God’s benefits are ever present and everlasting.

• Ask for prayer requests for today.
• Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
• End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace
Psalm 103

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