

PSALM 103

THE "MONTE ROSA" PSALM

Our attempt at exposition on this precious masterpiece of a Psalm is commenced under an impressive sense of the utter impossibility of doing justice to such a sublime composition! We call upon our soul and all that is within us to aid in the pleasurable task, but alas! Our soul is finite, and the entirety of our mental capabilities are far too little for the enterprise. There is too much in this Psalm for a thousand pens to write! It is one of those all-comprehending Scriptures which is like a miniature Bible in itself.

There are no clouds in the horizon of this Psalm, nor notes of sadness in its music. No purer outburst of thankfulness enriches the Church of the Lord Jesus! It is well that amidst the many Psalms which give voice to mingled pain and trust, there is one of unalloyed gladness – as untouched by sorrow as if it were sung by the angels in heaven! It is purely an outburst of thankful joy. The Psalmist's praise flows in one unbroken stream, which broadens into a river as it goes further and further on; personal benefits and individual praises open out into gifts which are seen to fill the universe, and thanksgiving is heard from every extremity of His wide dominion of lovingkindness.

In the most ardent feelings and exercises of faith and of a believing heart, the Psalmist here acknowledges the infinite mercies of God, both temporal and spiritual. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" he exclaims. And in the first three verses, he embraces six different kinds of Divine mercies and benefits – for which he

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

Undoubtedly, this is "a Psalm of David." It is in his own style when at its best; and we should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because he had a keener sense of sin than he did in his younger days. His clear sense of the frailty of life indicates his weaker years, as also does the very fullness of his praiseful gratitude. Just as in the lofty Alps, some peaks rise above all others; so also, even among the inspired Psalms, there are heights of song which overtop the rest. This 103rd Psalm has always seemed to us to be the "Monte Rosa" of the Divine chain of mountains of praise, glowing with a ruddier light than any of the rest! It is like the apple tree among the trees of the woods, and its golden fruit has a flavor such as no fruit ever bears unless it has been ripened in the full sunshine of mercy. It is man's reply to the benedictions of his God; it is his Song on the Mount, answering to his Redeemer's Sermon on the Mount. Nebuchadnezzar adored his idol with flute, harp, sacbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music; and David, in far nobler style, awakens all the melodies of heaven and earth in honor of the one and only living and true God.

The Psalmist first sings of personal mercies which he himself had received (verses 1-5); then he magnifies the attributes of Jehovah, as displayed in His dealings with His people (verses 6-19); and he closes by calling upon all the creatures in the universe to adore the Lord and join with himself in blessing Jehovah!

exhorts all those who are Godly to give praise unto the Lord with their whole heart, and to celebrate His great and holy name. The first kind of mercy that is enumerated here is the remission of all our sins in Jesus, and for His sake. He is our only Mediator and High Priest. By Himself, He sustained the just and infinite wrath of God, which burned against our sins; and He offered Himself as a Sacrifice to God for them – by which offering, He reconciled us with the Eternal Father, and now pleads for us with an unceasing and prevailing intercession. The second kind of mercy is the healing of our manifold infirmities, which are by no means light, and which shall remain in the flesh of the saints as long as they live in this world. The third kind of mercy is a continual and daily protection and defense against all the dangers of death, into which we continually fall. And we would surely fall into more and greater of them, and we would be destroyed by them on account of the deservings of our sins, if God did not mercifully save and preserve our lives. The fourth kind of mercy is a manifold display of God's grace, wherewith He covers and defends us, as with a shield. The fifth kind of mercy is that boldness wherewith – by the aid and urgency of the Holy Spirit – we fearlessly preach before the world these great mercies of God toward us. Hereby, many others also may learn to acknowledge and lay hold of the goodness of God in Jesus, and to embrace it themselves in true faith. And the sixth kind of mercy is the restoration of our depraved nature, by Christ, into the image of God. When we have been renewed into this image by the Holy Spirit, we begin – with full purpose of heart – to obey the Lord. And by His grace, we continue to do so, until – being made perfect in the life to come – we shall be able to render a full obedience with our whole unimpeded powers.

David, therefore, renders thanks to God for all His spiritual benefits; and then, from the depths of his heart, he thanks Him for bestowing blessings of every kind – including (but not limited to) peace, good leaders, righteous laws, Godly wives, happy children, the fruits of the earth, and all necessary provisions. The Psalmist sets forth God as a most kind and loving Father toward us, who are nothing more than wretched sinners. Yet He does not deal with us according to our sins! Rather, He treats us lovingly and mercifully; and He protects us, according to His infinite grace and mercy, as dear children. However, He does all this with the intention that we will keep His Covenant and His counsel – that is, so that we will believe in Him, love Him, and have Him for our God.

At the end of the Psalm, David calls upon the angels and the hosts of God – all powers and all dominions – to praise and magnify our King Who sits upon His throne in the heavens. Let us pray for grace so that we may not fail to do just that!

Thank You, Lord, for the blessed assurance that “as far as the east is from the west,” so far have You purged away and removed all our sins and transgressions from us! Amen.

