

“Prayer and Praise”

The Six Psalms, Part 5

Psalm 103

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I. Praising an Insecure God?

Does God really need our praise? Before becoming a Christian, C. S. Lewis struggled with the same question.

C. S. Lewis. The miserable idea that God should in any sense need, or crave for, our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments, or a vain author presenting his new books to people who never met or heard of him, is implicitly answered by the words “If I be hungry I will not tell *thee*” (50, 12). Even if such an absurd Deity could be conceived, He would hardly come to us, the lowest of rational creatures, to gratify His appetite. I don’t want my dog to bark approval of my books.¹

We are so beneath God, our praise should rather insult Him!

II. Psalm 103: Reasons to Bless God

If Psalm 88 was the darkest psalm, 103 is the brightest.

V. 4. [He] redeems your life from the grave.

The psalm is a call to worship, bookended such summons:

1. *Individually*: Bless the Lord, O my soul! (v. 1–2)
2. *Cosmically*: Bless the Lord, all you His angels... hosts... works! (v. 19–22)

In between are reasons for such a call to praise.

1. Our Benefits in God (v. 3–5)

- a. Forgives our sin (v. 3a)
- b. Heals our ills (v. 3b)

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York, NY: Mariner Books, 2012), 93. Kindle.

- c. Redeems from the grave (v. 4a)
- d. Crowns with mercy (v. 4b)
- e. Fills our life with good (Heb. *tov*; 7x in Gen 1) things (v. 5a)
- f. Renews our youth (v. 5b)

2. Our Knowledge of God (v. 6–10)

- a. His *deliverance* on earth (v. 6)
- b. His *revelation* to Moses (v. 7)
- c. His *nature* toward us (v. 8–10)

3. Our Forgiveness in God (v. 1–13). Awareness of our sinfulness produces awe of God's forgiveness.

Patrick Henry Reardon. This is a psalm... to be kneaded carefully into the leaven of the soul, for it is concerned with the blood-forgiveness we receive in Christ our Lord.²

- a. *Height*: as high as the heavens from earth (v. 11)
- b. *Breadth*: as far as east from west (v. 12)
- c. *Depth*: as a father has compassion on his child (v. 13)
- d. *Cross*: symbolizes the height and breadth

Rom 5:8. God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Pet 3:18. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

1 John 3:16. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us.

² Henry Patrick Reardon, *Christ in the Psalms*, revised (Chesterton, IN: Conciliar Press, 2011), 204. Kindle. He suggests using this psalm as a thanksgiving after confession.

Jeremiah 31:31–34. Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

4. God’s Knowledge of Us (v. 14–18)

- a. Our *weakness* (v. 14)
- b. Our *mortality* (v. 15)
- c. His eternal *mercy* (v. 16–18)

III. Praise Raises Us

Why praise God?

C. S. Lewis. But the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything —strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honour. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise.... The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game—praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical

personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars... praise almost seems to be inner health made audible.³

Praise is the raising and expanding of our soul in God's eternal beauty.⁴ We bless God not to *give* Him something *He* needs, but to *enter into* something *we* need.

C. S. Lewis. I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation.... The worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be. If it were possible for a created soul fully (I mean, up to the full measure conceivable in a finite being) to “appreciate”, that is to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme [beatitude].⁵

To praise God is to raise our soul into His eternal life.

Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us; for You are good and You love mankind. Amen.

³ Ibid., 93.

⁴ Lewis points out that complainers and cranks limit what we are permitted to praise.

⁵ Ibid., 94.