

Intro:

“Among the psalms attributed to David, Psalm 103 stands a little apart: it is less intensely personal than most of his; less harassed, if at all, by enemies or private guilt. The personal note is there, but David is soon speaking for us all. It is a hymn rather than a private thanksgiving, and we are reminded that David was the founder of the great choirs of Israel.”¹

Notes:

I. An ‘inward dialogue’ (1-5)

David opens by having a conversation with himself, “using his mind and memory to kindle his emotions.”² — He is ‘talking to himself, not listening to himself.’³

Benefits: noun form of verb in 13.6, ‘Because He has dealt bountifully with me’ (NAU)

Forgetting benefits is more than just ‘absent-mindedness’

Hezekiah forgot a benefit because he was proud (2 Chr 32.25, cf. Dt 8.12-14)

The benefits all seem to be in the spiritual realm (‘diseases’ in v. 3 notwithstanding)

Pardons
Heals
Redeems
Crowns
Satisfies

All of these speak of spiritual birth and progress in sanctification.

Ultimately, the soul that accepts this self-admonition (1) is renewed in spiritual strength and vigour by a proper contemplation of God’s spiritual intervention on his behalf (5).

II. Acknowledging the gracious way of God (6-14)

The Lord works for the ‘poor in spirit’ – for those who know themselves to be oppressed (6)

Illustrated by Exodus and Sinai (7)

¹ Kidner, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 364.

² Kidner, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 364.

³ Jim Berg

“No story surpasses the Exodus for a record of human unworthiness: of grace abounding and ‘benefits forgot’.”⁴

The Lord’s motivation flows from his compassionate nature (8)

Men think of God, especially the God of the OT, as angry, vindictive, judging, antagonistic – the exact opposite of the truth.

Men think this way because man’s way is opposite to God’s way.

Man’s way is to keep conflicts going – feuds, bitterness, dredging up the past, remembering [and magnifying] past offenses.

Verse 8 is almost word for word of Ex 34.6 – God’s ‘self-portrait’

God’s ways are seen to be:

Gracious – cease striving, laying aside anger, not dealing with us as we deserve. (9-10)

Superlative – God’s way is so different from man’s that it is compared to immeasurable distance (11-12, cf. Isa 55.6-9)

Familial – God enters into a family context with his people, not only showing compassion on our needs, but knowing our weakness also (13-14)

III. Contrasting the fading futility of man against the eternal constancy of God (15-18)

Man’s being (and his promises) are fleeting – like the grass that quickly fades away (15-16)

God’s lovingkindness never fails – his covenant is forever (17-18)

We are tempted to put our trust in the promises of men...

Or we are tempted to put our trust in the strength of our own resolve...

Only God can be relied upon forever – ‘from everlasting to everlasting’ (compare Moses, Ps 90.2)

IV. Concluding summons to praise (19-22)

The Lord is sovereign over *the* all (note article) (19)

Angels called to bless the Lord (20)

Armies of heaven (21)

All creation (22a)

Me [back to the self-talk] – the object of the psalm is personal, the message of the psalm is public [a hymn] (22b)

⁴ Kidner, *Psalms*, vol. 2, p. 365.