

Psalm 103: 1-5

- 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 do not forget 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 as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Those words tumble through my head as I go through each day. Some days they are a welcome presence, and other days they are a menace.

“Bless the Lord, O my Soul” as I go for a run on a warm sunny day.

“Bless the Lord, O my Soul” as I get cut off in busy traffic.

“Bless the Lord, O my Soul” as I contemplate how to complete my never-ending to do list

“Bless the Lord, O my soul.” What is meant as a psalm of praise invades my day, forcing me to reckon with its meaning in times I do not feel like praising.

The words of the psalmist become an expression of my praise when I am surrounded by God's glory, a gentle reminder of God's glory around me when I am overwhelmed with my many tasks and the call to lead God's people, a strong command not to forget God's many benefits for me when I feel like wallowing in my own insignificant problems, and a comfort when all else seems to be going wrong.

“Bless the Lord, o my soul, and *all that is within me*, bless his holy name.”

The psalm refuses to let us pay lip service to praising God—giving only part of ourselves to praise while focusing on what we think is more important in the moment. Rather, all of us, every bit, is called to praise the Lord. Some days, this is easy because everything is going right, and everything is working out, but other days, praising God is difficult work requiring perseverance, extraordinary faith, and trust.

Even more than being a simply expression of praise, the psalm is a reminder of *why* we praise and are called to praise. It is a reminder of the many gifts God has bestowed upon us.

Even though we sin and doubt despite our best efforts, God has forgiven all of our iniquity.

Even though we may be sick or in pain, God is the Ultimate Healer who will heal all of our diseases.

Even though our lives may seem gloomy and dark and evil seems to surround us, God has pulled us out of that dark pit of despair and promised not to return us to the pit of Hell.

Even though we feel insignificant and unable to serve the people of God, God has crowned us with steadfast love and mercy.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, so that others might see my praise and feel called to praise God themselves.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, so that God might be glorified by my praise.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, so that I might think less about myself and my own problems and think more about the many blessings God has given to me.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

We are called to praise God with all of our heart and soul and strength and mind. We cannot phone it in.

Bless the Lord, all your souls, and all that is within you, bless God's holy name. Bless the Lord, all your souls, and do not forget all God's benefits.

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