

# Psalm 103 • The Complete Work of Grace

## Introduction

The Hebrew word “hesed”—translated in the NASB as “lovingkindness”—is an Old Testament concept that is often equated to “grace” in the New Testament. However, that falls short of its actual meaning. “The New Bible Dictionary” (Inter-varsity Press) succinctly provides that “the passages where it is found reveals its close connection with the two ideas of covenant and faithfulness. Its meaning may be summed up as ‘steadfast love on the basis of a covenant.’ It is employed both of God’s attitude towards his people and of theirs to him...” David elaborates on this more fully in this Psalm, providing the benefits and activities of God’s grace—“lovingkindness”—based on our attitude towards Him, and how it’s a complete work of God through and to Him.

<sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And all that is within me, bless His holy  
name.

<sup>2</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And forget none of His benefits;

<sup>3</sup>Who pardons all your iniquities,  
Who heals all your diseases;

<sup>4</sup>Who redeems your life from the pit,  
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and  
compassion;

<sup>5</sup>Who satisfies your years with good  
things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the  
eagle.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD performs righteous deeds  
And judgments for all who are oppressed.

<sup>7</sup>He made known His ways to Moses,  
His acts to the sons of Israel.

<sup>8</sup>The LORD is compassionate and  
gracious,  
Slow to anger and abounding in  
lovingkindness.

<sup>9</sup>He will not always strive with us,  
Nor will He keep His anger forever.

<sup>10</sup>He has not dealt with us according to  
our sins,  
Nor rewarded us according to our  
iniquities.

<sup>11</sup>For as high as the heavens are above the  
earth,  
So great is His lovingkindness toward  
those who fear Him.

<sup>12</sup>As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions  
from us.

<sup>13</sup>Just as a father has compassion on his  
children,  
So the LORD has compassion on those  
who fear Him.

## [Read v.1-5]

### Q: What are God’s “benefits”?

- Pardon
- Healing
- Redemption
- Crowning
- Satisfaction
- Renewal

### Q: How would you describe the scope of His benefits? Are they mainly earthly or temporary? On what do they seem to be fixed?

A: They’re the sum of the work of salvation for this life and the life to come. They’re the work of God for all eternity that begins in this life and completed in the next.

**Application:** If you were to list all of the great things you have, are, and will receive from God, how many of these would’ve been on your list prior to reading this Psalm? Is there something you think is missing from, or you wish was on, this list? What might that say about your spiritual walk?

## [Read v.6-14]

### Q: List the attributes of God’s grace provided in v.6-10.

- “...performs righteous deeds...” (v.6)
- “...made known His ways...” (v.7)
- “...compassionate and gracious...” (v.8)
- “...slow to anger...” (v.8)
- “...He will not always strive with us...” (v.9)
- “...has not dealt with us according to our sins...” (v.10)
- “...has not...rewarded us according to our iniquities.” (v.10)

### Q: How might we interpret these things together to mean that they are the working of His righteousness in our life?

A: All of these things have to do with building spiritual character and walking according to **His** ways, not ours. The emphasis is completely on our soul, not our body; on our spiritual walk, not our fleshly existence.

[Continued on next page.]

<sup>14</sup>For He Himself knows our frame;  
He is mindful that we are but dust.

<sup>15</sup>As for man, his days are like grass;  
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

<sup>16</sup>When the wind has passed over it, it is  
no more,  
And its place acknowledges it no longer.

<sup>17</sup>But the lovingkindness of the LORD is  
from everlasting to everlasting on those  
who fear Him,  
And His righteousness to children's  
children,

<sup>18</sup>To those who keep His covenant  
And remember His precepts to do them.

<sup>19</sup>The LORD has established His throne in  
the heavens,

And His sovereignty rules over all.

<sup>20</sup>Bless the LORD, you His angels,  
Mighty in strength, who perform His  
word,

Obeying the voice of His word!

<sup>21</sup>Bless the LORD, all you His hosts,  
You who serve Him, doing His will.

<sup>22</sup>Bless the LORD, all you works of His,  
In all places of His dominion;  
Bless the LORD, O my soul!

**Q: What are the 3 examples/images used in v.11-13 and what do they teach?**

- (v.11) For those who “*fear Him*”—that is, respect and approach Him with an obedient heart, soul and mind for Who He is—His grace is without measure: “...*as high as the heavens are above the earth...*”
- (v.12) For those who “*fear Him*”—that is, respect and approach Him with an obedient heart, soul and mind for Who He is—His work of salvation is without measure to have removed our transgressions “*as far as the east is from the west*”.
- (v.13) For those who “*fear Him*”—that is, respect and approach Him with an obedient heart, soul and mind for Who He is—His grace is the evidence of the Father’s regard and love for us as His very own children: “...*as a father has compassion on his children...*”

**Q: How does v.14 summarize why God requires so little from us for grace without measure?**

A: He is acutely aware that He is God and we are not. Therefore His nature is to magnify beyond measure His love towards those who make the minimal effort that a human being is capable of. He does not require anything that is extraordinary or beyond our ability.

**[Read v.15-18]**

**Q: What is the contrast between man and God stated here?**

A: Man’s existence is so fleeting and fragile that it can be completely erased and forgotten; God’s grace is the only thing that can truly cause him to be remembered and sustained.

**Q: What is the critical condition stated here? Who will experience His grace?**

- “...*those who keep His covenant...*”
- “...*those who...remember His precepts...*”
- “...*those who...do them.*”

It’s being faithful in the relationship we’ve entered into with Him and following through with obedience to the responsibilities He’s assigned as a result of same.

**[Read v.19-22]**

**Q: What is the response of His angels to the knowledge and experience of God’s sovereignty?**

A: “...*who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word!*” (v.20) They are obedient.

**Q: What is the response of His heavenly hosts to the knowledge and experience of God’s sovereignty?**

A: “...*serve Him, doing His will.*” (v.21) They are obedient.

**Q: What, therefore, is the example throughout all levels of God’s entire creation of the correct response to Him, whether in heaven or on earth?**

A: Obedience.

**Q: In the context of this Psalm, in what does obedience result?**

A: God’s grace—lovingkindness—without measure.



## Overall Application

- *Notice that nothing but God's blessings can come from obedience. Do we see obedience as a chore or the natural extension of our relationship with the Father?*
- *Do we sometimes think of "grace" as God giving us something in spite of our disobedience? Is that the teaching in this Psalm?*
- *If His grace provides for our eternal needs beyond measure and beyond just the boundaries of this present life, how should we live **THIS** life?*