

Forgiveness Forever?

Psalm 103

- ❑ David knows forgiveness from God personally, as we have seen in our earlier lessons in the Psalms. However, David can praise the Lord for more than just forgiving his sins, but also for “putting them away.” So where have David’s sins that have been forgiven gone? Has God really forgotten them forever? Have they really gone away, or will they just come back up and be remembered when David sins again?
- ❑ Maybe you’ve wondered whether your sins, though previously forgiven by God, are really just lurking somewhere close by. Could you be accused again for your past sins, though they have already been forgiven? Please read Psalm 103, where David answers this question as he makes an appeal for God’s “holy name” to be praised.¹

“Forget not all his benefits”

- ❑ David begins this psalm by calling on his own soul (his “inmost being”) to proclaim praise (“forget not”) for all that the Lord has done for him (“all his benefits”).
 1. What are the “benefits” that David’s soul has known from God in verses 1 - 5?²
 2. Why do you think that David would be so intent on remembering all of the Lord’s benefits?

“As far as the east is from the west”

- ❑ David turns from remembering personal benefits to proclaiming the ways that God deals with his people in verses 6 – 18. These ways include God’s justice for the oppressed³, God making himself known to them, God being compassionate (merciful) and gracious, God dealing with their sins, God being like a father to his children, and God bestowing on them everlasting love and righteousness.



¹ “Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being...” The word for praise used here is also translated as “bless”, and this verse suggests the highest form of whole-hearted worship. “Praise his holy name...” David calls for praise of the one who is holy (set apart—above all), whose name (his revealed character) is like no other.

² David reminds his soul that God has: forgiven his sins (v. 3a—sent away all of his offenses), healed all his diseases (v. 3b—healed the diseases of the soul—maybe guilt, fear, doubt, lust, hate, anger, jealousy, greed, and others), redeemed his life from the pit (v. 4a—freed from the destructive path he was following and the death penalty that was a consequence of his sin), crowned him with love and compassion (v. 4b—surrounded David with his love and tender mercy), and satisfied his desires with good things (v. 5—gave him the desires of his renewed heart—see Psalm 37:4).

³ David might have been remembering what God did for his people when they were oppressed in Egypt, in particular, but God’s concern for justice for the poor and oppressed can be seen throughout the Bible.

3. According to David, how does God deal with the sins of his people (those who have put their trust in him, and like David call him “Lord”)?
4. How far does David claim that God goes when dealing the sins of his people in verse 12?⁴

📖 Isaiah 38:17: “In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.”

📖 Jeremiah 31:34: “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

📖 Micah 7:19: “You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”

5. How should these verses about God’s forgiveness affect how we forgive others?

“Praise the LORD all his works”

- ❑ The psalm comes to a climax with an acknowledgement of God’s mighty power and authority over all in verses 19 – 22. David calls for all creation (angels, heavenly hosts, all his works), located in all places (“everywhere in his dominion”) to praise the Lord. As if reminding himself personally one last time, David concludes with “Praise the Lord, O my soul.”



Reflection/Application

- God’s plan for redemption and the forgiveness of the sins of his people (those who put their faith in him) is ultimately fulfilled in Christ Jesus, whose blood was shed on the cross for that very purpose (Colossians 1:13-14, 20). Have you experienced that irrevocable, forever forgiveness personally, and can you praise God for all his benefits, just as David was able to do?
- If you do know that forgiveness, do you remember that it is forever forgiveness, and do you take time regularly to “forget not all his benefits,” and refresh your soul with those truths, just as David did? This week, please read again Psalm 103. Meditate on and commit to memory those five benefits listed in verses 1 - 5, so that your youth (or at least the freshness of your faith) “will be renewed like the eagle’s.”

⁴ “...those who fear him”, “...those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.” Those statements don’t indicate that God’s forgiveness is somehow earned through fear or obedience (forgiveness is freely given— Eph 1:6-7). Rather, they reflect that those who truly turn to him as “Lord” and who know his forgiveness and love will be characterized by respect/reverence and a whole-hearted desire to obey his commands (see John 14:15).