

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

by

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HE FORGIVES MY SIN

One of the great Christian hymns reads, in part, “Count your blessings, name them one by one: Count your many blessings, see what God hath done” -Johnson Oatman, Jr.

Psalm 103 is a passage of scripture which does just that. Observe the listing of God’s blessings as I read verses 1-5. *“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”*

I call your attention to five great blessings (which the psalmist calls “*his benefits*”) mentioned in that text of Scripture. (1) God forgives my sin. (2) God heals my body. (3) God gives strength in my weakness. (4) God provides for my daily needs. (5) God renews my strength. What a list of divine blessings that is!

How much God must love us to be concerned about us so that He provides us in such a complete way. It makes us love Him the more to know of His love toward us. He is personally involved in the life of each of us. No wonder the psalmist calls us to praise before God, saying *“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and*

forget not all his benefits.” Let us examine the five benefits given in Psalm 103:1-5. God forgives my sin. Glory! That puts us on shouting ground! Think about it. “God” forgives my sin. That makes forgiveness infinite and eternal. God “forgives” my sin That means the sin problem is settled for me. God forgives “my” sin. That releases me from personal guilt and spiritual danger of judgment. God forgives my “sin” That puts me in a relationship of peace and freedom before Him. Yes, God’s forgiveness is a cause for rejoicing. *“Forget not all his benefits!”*

The nature of forgiveness

The nature of forgiveness is the removal of the cause of offense and the restoration of peace and harmony. The term “forgive” means “to lift up and bear away; to remove; to (even scarlet sins) in His forgiveness. Psalm 32:1-5 reads, *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord give up all claim to punish or exact a penalty for an offense; to cancel.”* It is pictured in the Old Testament ritual by which hands were laid on the head of an animal, sins were confessed and the animal was taken away from camp so far it could not find its way back. It was symbolically carrying away the sins of the people on its head. In the New Testament, Jesus is identified as *“the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29).

That is what happens when you bring your sins to Jesus Christ, confess them and ask His forgiveness. He removes them from you *“as far as the east is from the west”* (Psalm 103:12). Once forgiven, the guilt of those sins shall never face us again, I think that is why the forgiveness of sin is listed first in recounting the “benefits” of God in His blessings to us.

The scope of forgiveness

The scope of forgiveness is boundless. God forgives “all” our iniquities. Since all sin is forgiven, there remains nothing to hinder fellowship with God or peace in the heart of the believer in Jesus. I rejoice in Bible passages such as Isaiah 1:18, *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* God includes the worst of sins *imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile... I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”* Look at the list of different kinds of offenses against God: transgression, sin, iniquity, guile. Then look at His repeated assurances of the remission of them all: forgiven, covered, imputed not. Yes, there is forgiveness with God-- total forgiveness of every sin. The New Testament confirms that truth in these words, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness.”* Apply that promise to yourself. It means you have committed no sin which is beyond His power and willingness to forgive. Trust Jesus to forgive you totally and eternally.

The source of forgiveness

The source of forgiveness is Jesus Christ. The early apostles preached, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12).

On the other hand, there is full forgiveness in Jesus Christ. *“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 5:31). All through Christian history the message has been *“Through this man is preached unto*

you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:38,39).

Your relationship to sin is determined by your relationship to Jesus. To be “in Christ” means your sins are forgiven; you are no longer a sinner but a saint of God. The way to get in Christ is by turning from sin by an act of your will and trusting Jesus alone to forgive and save you from your sins. He promises, *“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).*

The basis of forgiveness

The basis of forgiveness is the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is in Him that *“we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of grace” (Ephesians 1:7).* Did you catch that statement? We have redemption (that is, the forgiveness of sins) *“through his blood.” “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10),* because *“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: (Romans 5:8).* Jesus died for us *“that he might sanctify the people with his own blood” (Hebrews 13:12).*

You can be set free from the guilt and penalty of your sin because Jesus bore both guilt and penalty when He died for you on the cross. You can be *“justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood... that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:24-26).* There is no hope of forgiveness in any other way or through any other person, *“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life: (I John 5:12).*

The way to forgiveness

The way to receive forgiveness is repentance and faith. Turn consciously from sin to the Savior. Resolve to be done with and seek His forgiveness. Confess to Him that you have sinned against God. Ask for His forgiveness. Trust Him to forgive you, because He promised to do so. Believe that *“whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).* Trust Him and enter into the blessed rest of the forgiven.

HE HEALS MY BODY

Psalm 103 calls us to the praise of God in view of the many blessings He gives us. *“Bless the Lord, O my soul,”* is the opening statement of the psalm. As if that is not enough, the appeal is repeated, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul.”* The reason for such an expression of praise of God is given in verses 3-5. God gives five *“benefits:* to us. I call your attention to the first, *“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.”* We have spoken of divine forgiveness. So look at the second, *“Who healeth all thy diseases.”* Forgiveness for the human spirit and healing to the physical body are two great reasons to *“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”*

There is much discussion in religious circles these days concerning what is called “divine healing.” Many believe there are occasions when God intervenes personally and miraculously to effect the healing of our physical bodies. Others deny there is the exercise of the gifts of healing today. The real question is, “What does the Bible say concerning sickness and healing?”

Illness is a Bible fact

The fact of infirmity of the body is recognized in Holy Scripture. Disease and sickness are

real. During His personal ministry on earth, Jesus dealt with illness as real. The Gospels report His healing a deaf-mute, one sick with palsy, one with a fever, two who were lepers and five who were blind. Some were congenital cases, sickness or infirmity resulting from birth defects because of heredity or prenatal environment. Some were due to mental or spiritual problems. But all were treated by Jesus as if there were real, and He effected healings to them all.

Man's personal experiences is that sickness is real. Who of us has never experienced pain associated with physical illness? Who of us has never known death to come to some friend or relative? We have ample evidence that sickness is a real human malady.

Jesus would not deceive us, even if we were deceived in our interpretation of personal experiences. You can trust Him when you cannot trust yourself. His recognition of sickness, and response to it with His healing power, is ample proof of the reality of physical infirmities of many kinds.

Causes of sickness are many

The causes of infirmity are varied. All infirmity of the body is the result of original human sin. God made the body capable of recreating itself as new cells replace the old. But when man sinned (Genesis 3) the decree was given that he must return to the dust for which he came. That meant the process of deterioration would overrun the process of recreation and the body would grow old, get sick and die. But there are other causes for sickness besides that.

Sickness is sometimes the result of specific sin

And it comes as a punishment for it. It was the desecration of the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper that caused Paul to write to the Corinthians, "*He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among, and many sleep*" (I Corinthians 11: 29, 30). But not all sickness is God's discipline on wrongdoing.

Sickness is often Satan's testings of a believer.

That was the cause of Job's sufferings as "*Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown*" (Job 2:7). That was the source of the "*thorn in the flesh*" which the apostle Paul suffered. It was "*the messenger of Satan to buffet me,*" as he described it (II Corinthians 12:7).

Sickness is sometimes children's suffering for the sins of the parents.

God revealed Himself in the Old testament as "*a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*" (Exodus 20:5). You see that today as infants are born with venereal disease received from the mother, or with an addiction to narcotics because the mother was taking drugs while the babe was in her womb. That was so commonly believed that ancient Israel developed a saying, "*The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*" (Ezekiel 18:2).

Sickness is sometimes for the purpose of glorifying God.

Jesus recognized that the illness of His friend Lazarus, which brought about Lazarus' death, was "*for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*" (John 11:4) in the resurrection of Lazarus from death at the word of Jesus. A man who was born blind did not

suffer as a result of his sin or his parent's sin, Jesus said, *"but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"* (John 9:3). I have known people to give a testimony for God from their sick bed which they would never have given in health. So their sickness was for the glory of God.

Healing is the work of God

The healing of infirmity is the work of God. All healing is the work of God. Here are two people who are sick. One goes to a physician, receives medical aid and recovers. The other does not seek a physician but prays for God to heal, and he recovers. Which of the two experienced divine healing? Both! There is no healing which is not by the power of God, whether medical help is sought or not.

Jesus used many different methods in effecting physical healing during His ministry in the flesh. (1) Sometimes He used means to effect healing, as when He made clay and anointed the eyes of a blind man (John 9:6,7). He used the touch of His hand when He enabled a mute person to speak (Mark 7:33) and caused the fever to depart from Simon Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:15). (2) Sometimes he used no means. He spoke and a person was healed (Luke 7:7-9); He commanded a man with a crippled hand to stretch it forth and healing was effected immediately (Luke 6:10). Sometimes he was near enough to the sick person to touch him (Mark 8:22-25) and at other times He was far off from the person who was healed (Luke 17: 12-14). Those instances teach us not to try to confine God to one way of working. When healing is effected, the question is not "How?" but "Who?" And the "who is always God.

Examples of healing are limited

The cases of healing of infirmity were limited. Not every case of illness was healed in New Testament times. The apostle Paul had a physical malady (called a "thorn in the flesh") which God did not heal though Paul prayed three times about it. Timothy, a missionary-companion and fellow-minister with Paul, had the "oft infirmity" of stomach disorder but was not healed. He was commanded to drink *"a little wine"* to help him endure it instead (I Timothy 5:23). Paul had to leave Trophimus under the care of loving friends as he continued a missionary journey because Trophimus became too sick to travel and Paul did not help him (II Timothy 4:20). Sickness is no sign of spiritual failure. It is possible for the inward man to be renewed day by day at the very time the physical body is perishing away. The idea that God wants you well and the devil wants you sick, and the natural conclusion is that if you are sick it is a sign that you are out of the will of God, are just not biblical.

Yet, God is concerned about your physical health just as He is concerned about your spiritual health. Take every issue to God in prayer and ask His intervention. God can and does heal our bodies in answer to prayer.

HE HELPS IN MY WEAKNESS

Let us worship God in words from Psalm 103, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits."* Then follows a list of benefits which God gives to us, the third of which is *"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies"* (Psalm 103: 1, 2,

4).

What a blessed benefit that is. The term “destruction” means waste, dissolution, profitlessness.” The promise is that God keeps your life from being wasted, but makes it useful for good instead. He does that through flooding life with His lovingkindness and tender mercies. That suggests three truths. (1) God gives meaning to my life, redeeming it from “destruction” -waste, dissolution. (2) God is kindly disposed toward me in helping me, His help marked by “lovingkindness” with which He crowns me. (3) God is involved in helping me, His “tender mercies” being a daily experience with me. He helps. His help is personal and kind. What more could we ask? Let’s discuss those three blessed benefits which God gives us.

God gives meaning to life

God gives meaning to life, redeeming it from “destruction.” I wish it were possible to have time and space to review the book of Ecclesiastes at this point. That is the best possible discussion of how life is kept from “destruction” and given meaning.

The writer of Ecclesiastes set out to “*seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven*” (Ecclesiastes 1:13). He wanted to determine what is the supreme good in life on the earth. What is it that is truly enduring and makes life worth living? He tested power, wisdom and knowledge, pleasure, riches and great works, and every other thing which men consider important and worth seeking. He came to the conclusion concerning each one separately and all of them together, “*This also is vanity and vexation of spirit?*” (Ecclesiastes 2:26). “*Vanity of vanities... all is vanity*” (Ecclesiastes 12:8).

What is the supreme good of life? What is it that makes life worth living and gives a sense of lasting joy and fulfillment to the human spirit? In the words of Psalms 103:4, what is it that redeems the life from “destruction” -waste and profitlessness? The answer is given in Ecclesiastes 12: 13, 14, “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*” The supreme good in human life is to know God personally and live in His will in this present world.

The personal knowledge of God is what redeems the life from “destruction.” Without Him life is but “*a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (James 1: 14)? “*How oft is the candle of the wicked put out ... God distributeth sorrows in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away*” (Job 21: 17, 18).

The person who knows God “*shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*” (Psalm 1:4). “*The way of the ungodly shall perish*” (Psalm 1:6). That is the kind of “destruction” from which God redeems His children. The ungodly are rootless, fruitless, and profitless. They are perishing and will eternally perish. Only God can redeem your life from destruction.

God’s redemption is one of the great “benefits” with which He “crowns” His dear children who trust Jesus. Make sure you are one of the blest.

God is kindly disposed toward us

God is kindly disposed toward us. Notice the word “lovingkindness” in the statement, “*Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies*” (Psalm 103:4). It is the translation of a Hebrew word *khehsed*, for which there is no true equivalent in the English language. So it is translated in different places as mercy, kindness, goodness, etc. But since those words do not

gather its full meaning, love and kindness were put together with the fuller meaning “lovingkindness.” It is a good term to indicate God’s kind disposition toward us and his loving help offered to us.

“Lovingkindness” denotes paternal affection on God’s part, answered by filial and loyal affection toward God and brotherly love toward man on our part. It is the divine love condescending to God’s creatures, more especially to sinners, in unmerited kindness. It is often associated with forgiveness and related to mercy.

“Lovingkindness” is a particular attribute of God. He is “abundant in lovingkindness” (Exodus 34:7). He “*delighteth in lovingkindness*” (Micah 7:18). In Psalm 136 the phrase “*for his lovingkindness endureth forever*” occurs 26 times when it is translated, “*His mercy endureth forever.*”

The lovingkindness of God is not just a theological principle. It is the spirit in which He deals with us. He meets us in love and deals with us in kindness. That is why we who lives are being wasted can be made profitable and our lives saved from destruction. “*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities*” (Psalm 103:10), because He crowns us with loving kindness instead. The lovingkindness of God is proof of His mercy and grace toward us. Come to Him as you are and He will meet you with acts of love and deeds of kindness.

God is involved in helping us

God is involved in helping us. He crowns us with “tender mercies.” That is a term which makes a person want to weep with joy. Over and over the Bible tells us of the mercies of God. “*The Lord is merciful and gracious slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy... He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy to them that fear him... the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting... and his righteousness unto children’s children*” (Psalm 103:8, 10, 17). That is the kind of God whom we meet in Jesus Christ. Praise His holy name!

To the mercy of God is added the element of tenderness. He crowns us with “*tender mercies.*” He is tender and merciful in view of our weakness: “*For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust*” (Psalm 103:14). Here is His personal promise to you: “*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms... who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord*” (Deuteronomy 33:27, 29).

You need have no fear in approaching God. His grace is sufficient for your sins. His mercy is sufficient for your weakness. His tenderness in dealing with you relieves any fear you might have. He daily crowns your life with His tender mercies.

Behold your God! He is infinite in power, majestic in holiness, limitless in understanding, beyond all reaches of time and space. No man can understand Him fully and personally. He thunders in the heavens, and the foundations of the earth tremble.

But that same God condescends to deal personally and tenderly with you and me. He keeps our lives from being wasted and makes them blessings instead. Our relationship with Him is marked by assured faith on our part and lovingkindness and tender mercies on His part. And we can know God personally and redemptively by faith in Jesus Christ.

HE PROVIDES MY DAILY NEEDS

Let us thank God for the blessings of this day for the Scripture says He “*satisfieth thy mouth with good things*” (Psalm 103:5). You have experienced His good provision as I have. He gives and gives, over and over, day after day. He never tires of giving good things, neither is His supply ever diminished by His giving.

I love the assurance expressed in Lamentation 3:22, 23, “*His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*”

He gives whether we deserve it or not. “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” (James 1:17). He gives as a dear and loving Father gives to the children of his heart. This is one of the five reasons given in Psalm 103:1-5 for our blessing and praising the Lord. When we consider our Father’s full giving, we can join the psalmist and say, “*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*”

God gives in response to our petitions

The Father gives in response to our petition. Yes, it is right for us to ask God in prayer to give what we need. Think about the Model Prayer that Jesus gave to guide our praying. It begins with the recognition of God, *Our Father which art in heaven.*” It continues with the glory of God, “*Hallowed be thy name.*” It entreats for the reign of God, “*Thy kingdom come.*” It yearns for the will of God, “*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*” Then the concern of the prayer passes from God to man. “*Give us this day our daily bread*” is the fourth of the seven petitions mentioned in the prayer (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3). It is the most basic and secular of any petition Jesus told us to offer. It has to do with this world with the needs of a physical body with things that are temporal and transitory. And yet, Jesus told us to pray for it.

There is a slight difference in the petition as recorded by Matthew and Luke. One has it, “Give us the food we need today.” The other has it, “Give us day by day the food we need.” The one petition looks to today only; the other looks to each day as a unit in itself in which we need supply for the physical body. But the essence of the petition is the same: God provides our food in response to our requests for it.

Yes, it is right for us to pray about non-spiritual matters. Whatever we need, we should talk to God about it. Any subject with which you cannot talk to God should be considered sin and put out of your life. Ask God for your daily need.

God gives according to His prior knowledge

The Father gives according to His prior knowledge. God does not remain uninformed until we tell Him what we need. He knows before we ask Him. But He wants us to ask that we might know our dependence on Him and that He might show His love to us in giving upon our request. Jesus gave an extended portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:25-34) to a discussion of worry over material needs. He taught us that worry over food, clothing, shelter is useless, heathenish and sinful. He pointed out how God feeds the birds of the air, adding, “*Are we not much better than they?*” He pointed out how God gives beautiful garments to the lilies of the field, and said, “*Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?*” He concluded the discussion by saying, “*Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek).*” Then He added this blessed word of assurance, “*Your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*” THANK GOD He knows and gives according to His perfect

knowledge rather than in view of our imperfect asking. Here is the key to having all your need. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33).

We ask for what we think we need. God gives what He knows we need. It is our business, therefore, to make the will and work of God first in our lives, and then we will receive from Him every need for life and godliness. Believe it. Trust Him to supply. And rest in faith.

God gives according to His heavenly riches

The Father gives according to the wealth of His resources. Hear this reading of Philippians 4:19, *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* Look at the statement carefully: *“My God/ shall supply/ all your need/ according to his riches in glory/ by Christ Jesus.”* What a promise!

God Himself is committed to supply our daily needs. It is our personal and individual needs which concern Him, not the need of all mankind as a mass. It is certain that we will receive “all” we need, for He has promised it. And He supplies *“according to His riches in glory.”* The supply comes *“by Christ Jesus.”*

I can hardly pass this text because of my wonder that God supplies *“according to his riches.”* That means that He gives from the fullness of His glorious riches in Christ Jesus, that He gives in proportion to the greatness of His wealth. If a poor man gave a gift “according to” his resources, it would be a small gift. If a rich man gave a gift “according to” His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, who can estimate the size of that gift? So I stand in wonder at His promise to give and provide our needs in proportion to the resources He has available in glory. Thank God for such a provision!

God gives as a loving Father

The Father gives because of His great love and His parental care over us. Jesus said, *“YOUR FATHER knoweth what things ye have need of..”* (Matthew 6:32). God is our Creator. He is Governor of the universe. He is Lord over all lords and King over all kings. And yet, to all of us who are in Jesus Christ He is our Father! He gives to us as a loving Father gives to His children. Jesus said, *“What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* (Matthew 7: 9-11).

We earthly parents might give our child a gift which works to his harm. He might cut his hand with the pocketknife, have a wreck in the car, fall and injure himself on the bicycle. But the heavenly Father never gives the wrong gift to us. His gifts are always “good things” which work to our good in the supply of our legitimate needs.

His giving is always right. He never gives too much or too little or too late. He never gives the wrong things but always the right thing. His gifts are always what we need, when we need, in the quantity we need. Even when they come through hands of men, they are still from God. For every good thing given, and every good act of giving, is inspired by and comes from God our Father.

Learn to ask Him and wait on Him. He is concerned about you every day. His gifts come to you (often unrecognized as from His hand) every day. You can trust Him for today and find Him faithful just as He was faithful to you yesterday.

“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation” (Psalm 68:19).

HE RENEWS MY STRENGTH

There is a promise of God which will have particular meaning to you when you are tired and your strength seems exhausted. The promise is, *“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength”* (Isaiah 40:31). That promise fits hand in hand with the fifth “benefit” which God gives to those who trust Him, as outlined in Psalm 103:1-5. It is God *“who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles”* (Psalm 103:5). It is God *“who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed as eagles”* (Psalm 103:5). How inspiring to find your exhaustion swallowed up *“so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles.”* Receive His strength and go on with the joy of living.

Limited strength

Our strength is limited. God recognizes that, *“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust”* (Psalm 103:14). He does not make demands upon us that exceed our ability to obey. The Bible says of God’s dealings with ancient Israel, *“He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again”* (Psalm 78:39). He is not some heartless tyrant who demands of us more than we can provide. He knows our limitations of strength. We recognize our limitations also. We say with the prophet Jeremiah *“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps:”* (Jeremiah 10:23). That is how limited our abilities are.

We dwell *“in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth:”* (Job 4: 19). We are made of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7) and remain creatures of earth. We are so limited that a disease germ too small to be seen with the natural sight can lay a full grown man down in death.

Give such a mortal man a knowledge of divine things. Its excellence only reveals more clearly his mortality. He must say, *“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”* (II Corinthians 4:7).

You feel that limitation, don’t you? You aspire to goals you cannot reach. You make plans you cannot carry to completion. You yearn for a holiness of life you fail to attain. You are sometimes distraught by your inability. until you are almost ready to say with the apostle Paul, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* (Romans 7:24). Do not despair. There is hope!

Limitless strength

God’s strength is limitless. That is one of His attributes of God. He is limitless in every divine perfection. Psalm 62:11 reads, *“God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.”* The prophet Isaiah reports, *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?”* (Isaiah 40:28). That’s it! God’s strength is never diminished that he grows weary or needs to rest so that His strength might be renewed.

Do not misunderstand God’s “rest” at the end of the sixth day of creation. The Sacred Record reports. *“The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified*

it: because that in it he hath rested from all his work which God created and made? (Genesis 2: 1-3). But God did not rest for the reason we rest. We rest because our energy is exhausted and we are unable to continue with the same force. God's energy is never depleted. He never grows tired or is weary. His creation rest simply means He ceased from labor. He did it, not because he needed to rest, but to show us the work was completed and to set an example for us to give one day in seven as a day of rest and worship.

Because God's strength is limitless, there is nothing too hard for Him. We say with Job, *"I know that thou canst do every thing"*(Job 42:2). That is a lesson that is important for us to learn. We tend to limit God's ability to our own ability as we face our problems. Not so! *"I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places"* (Psalm 135: 5,6). *"He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* (Daniel 4:35). *"For with God nothing shall be impossible"*(Luke 1:37).

Yes, we do not tremble in fear before such a powerful God. We approach Him with confidence and call Him our "Father." The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that indeed we are His dear children in Jesus Christ.

Shared strength

God's strength is shared with us. Think about that! It is like Samson's strength in an infant's arms when God empowers us with His exceeding great power. Hear this testimony recorded in Isaiah 40:28-31:

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint? and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

That paragraph from Holy Scripture is a blessing for two reasons. (1) It sets forth in such positive terms the power of our infinite God. (2) It assures us that He who is so powerful shares His power with those who trust Him, with you and me. Think about that!

What happens when ordinary men and women trust God and are empowered by His power? Hebrews 11:33-35 tells of those *"who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of aliens. Women received their dear raised to life again."* That is what an ordinary person is able to do when God strengthens him.

God promises to strengthen each of His dear children in their times of need. He says, *"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with thy right hand of my righteousness:* (Isaiah 41:10). Again, He promises, *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness:* (II Corinthians 12:9). There is a power that *"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us:* (Ephesians 3:20). That is God's power in His dear children as He makes our weakness strong and enables us to live in this present world. It is another of the many benefits which He daily loads upon us.

We have come to the conclusion of our review of five blessed benefits which God gives to those

who serve Him, as set forth in Psalm 103:1-5. Look at the list. (1) He forgives our sin. (2) He heals our bodies. (3) He helps in our weakness. (4) He provides for our daily needs. (5) He renews our strength. So might we say with the psalmist, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: (Psalm 103: 1,2).*