

Psalm 103

Psalm 103:1–22

Praise God for His Redemption of Mankind

Outline of Chapter 103:

	Inscription
vv. 1–2	Introduction: Praise Jehovah
vv. 3–5	The Good that God Does for Us
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Charts and Maps:

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Doctrines Covered	Doctrines Alluded To
	Doctrine of Sheol

Introduction: Psalm 103 is certainly a psalm of praise and celebration, as the first two and last three verses indicate, wherein the Piel imperative of *ble*ss or *pr*aise occurs 6 times. However, one of the amazing aspects of this psalm is the clear teaching of the gospel and God’s grace toward sinful man. It is clear to anyone with a brain that the New Testament—particularly in the book of John—that the mechanics of salvation are taught clearly and succinctly. In Romans, Ephesians and Galatians (as well as in other books), we find the theological approach to salvation—that is, why is it possible for God to save us. How can God spend eternity with us and still retain His perfect character? What we find in this psalm is a clear explanation that God, in His grace, will separate us from our sins; furthermore, it is made clear that we, in our human bodies, are both frail and ephemeral. We lack a justification as to *why* God can remove our sins from us; we are not given the mechanics of salvation—to believe in Jehovah God of Israel, known to us as Jesus Christ; however, we are given a very clear presentation of one aspect of salvation—that it is God’s grace, that it is undeserved, and that God deserves our praise for His graciousness.

We both begin and end this psalm with a call to praise God. At first, David speaks to his own soul, telling himself to praise and to celebrate the character and work of God (vv. 1–2); at the end of this psalm, he calls upon all of God’s creation to praise Him (vv. 20–22). Therefore, we would expect David to include *why* all of God’s creation should praise and celebrate God’s character and work. He speaks first simply to his own soul, listing several things which God has done and will do for him: (1) God pardons David’s iniquities, (2) God heals David’s diseases; (3) God purchases David’s life from the grave; (4) God places a crown of grace and mercy upon David’s head; (5) and God gives David great pleasure and satisfaction (vv. 3–5). All of these things which God does on behalf of David have **temporal and eternal implications**, which we will cover with a **chart** at the end of v. 5.

In vv. 6–14, we find that God performs righteous acts (which we may classify under the heading of *duh*); but following this statement (v. 6), we have the God is gracious and merciful toward us and that he will remove our transgressions far from us (vv. 8, 10–12). Today, we know how God is able to retain His perfection and his

righteousness, yet still provide us with salvation; however, in this psalm, we are simply told that he does retain His perfect character and is still able to separate us from our sins. We are not given the mechanics in this psalm.

Then David discusses man in general—just how ephemeral man is: his days are like the flower of the field, which emerges and then dies, and there is nothing left behind to tell those who look out into the field that this flower was ever there (vv. 15–16). This is contrasted to God and His righteousness, which is shed upon generation after generation (again, the mechanics for obtaining this righteousness are not given; nor is the justification for God’s ability to bestow such righteousness).

Finally, God’s complete sovereignty is celebrated (v. 19) and all creation is called upon to praise and celebrate God’s character and person (vv. 20–22a). Then David ends this with the refrain, [Praise Jehovah, O my soul!](#) Not an unusual approach to poetry and song, David ends this psalm as he began it.

The NIV Study Bible approaches the division of this psalm differently. The major division, vv. 6–19, are six couplets divided into two equal parts (vv. 7–12, 13–18) and framed by vv. 6 and 19. The first half is God’s compassion toward His people as sinners and the second is God’s compassion toward His people as frail mortals.¹ Such a division is valid and their approach caused me to go back and reevaluate my own outline (which division I changed slightly).

Bullinger² has his own way of organizing this psalm, saying that it *is a beautiful example of a large introversion of ten members*:

Bullinger’s Organization of Psalm 103

- A | vv. 1–5 Exhortation to bless
- B | vv. 6–7 Gracious goodness (the Kingdom of Grace)
- C | v. 8 Merciful goodness
- D | v. 9 Sparing goodness
- E | v. 10 Pardoning goodness
- E | vv. 11–13 Pardoning goodness
- D | vv. 14–16 Sparing goodness
- C | vv. 17–18 Merciful goodness
- B | v. 19 Glorious goodness (the Kingdom of Glory)
- A | vv. 20–22 Exhortation to bless

Quite frankly, I don’t know that I buy into exact organization; however, Bullinger does have a knack for seeing certain literary principles and organizational aspects which I would otherwise miss.

Several psalms are divided into 22 verses, to match the 22 Hebrew letters (e.g., Psalm 33, 34, 103). In a true acrostic psalm, each verse begins with successive letter of the alphabet (that is, the first verse begins with aleph, the second with bêyth, etc.). Psalm 103 is not a true acrostic psalm, as Psalm 34 is. Psalm 119, by the way, is an acrostic psalm because each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Barnes remarks: *The psalm is exceedingly regular in its structure and composition; beautiful in its language and conceptions; adapted to all times and ages; fitted to express the feelings of gratitude to God for deliverance from trouble, and for the manifestation of his mercy; fitted to elevate the soul, and to fill it with cheerful views. These circumstances have made it a favourite psalm as a vehicle of praise in all ages. It is, moreover, eminently fitted to express the feelings of the soul in view of the redeeming love and mercy of God; the goodness of God in the forgiveness of sin through a Saviour; and his tender*

¹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 887.

² Taken from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 376.

compassion for his people as a Father; and it is, therefore, one to which the Christian oftener turns than to almost any other of the psalms as expressive of the deep and grateful feelings of his heart.³

J. Vernon McGee: *This psalm looks forward to a new day; in fact, it looks beyond the Millennium into eternity where it will find the fullness of fulfillment. To the past the nation of Israel turned to this psalm, today the godly Israelites turns to this psalm, and in the future, he will also turn to this psalm. Individual believers today find it a real source of strength and light. It is a psalm of thanksgiving for things, and a psalm of praise for Person—that Person is Christ.*⁴

As we begin our examination of this psalm, I want you to keep the Lord Jesus Christ foremost in your mind. This psalm describes the attributes of God; this psalm tells how God deals with us in grace—and all of this is manifest in Christ's public ministry on this earth.

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Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

To David.

Psalm
103 inscription

By David.

A Psalm of David.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	[A Psalm] of David.
CEV	[By David.]
JPS (Tanakh)	Of David.
NASB	A Psalm of David.
REB	For David
The Septuagint	To [or, of] David
TEV	The Love of God [HEBREW TITLE: <i>By David.</i>]
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	By David

What is the gist of this verse? The inscription here, which is found in the Hebrew, simply gives us the name of the author of this psalm.

Psalm 103 inscription			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâvîyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	<i>beloved</i> and is transliterated <i>David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 73.

⁴ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 90–150*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 42.

Translation: By David. I must admit that, for many years, this particular way of listing a psalm was rather irritating. Everywhere else, the lamed preposition means *to, for, with reference to*. Only in these psalms do we really find this preposition used differently; or, so it seems. However, I have had an interest in music for years, and many musicians, when they describe their creative process, often speak of the song already being there and they just happened to find it; or that the song just sort of came to them. This is really the connotation we have here. The Holy Spirit has brought this psalm to David. The Holy Spirit has laid this psalm at David's doorstep. David felt a burden to create, to write, and the Holy Spirit brought this to him. This psalm is about David's own personal experience, as are most of his psalms, but David, using the lamed preposition rather than the bēyth preposition, recognizes that God the Holy Spirit has brought this to him. It was not dictated by God the Holy Spirit, but David is recognizing that it is through and by God that he is inspired and guided to write this psalm.

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Introduction: Praise Jehovah

Slavishly literal:

**Bless, O my soul Y^ehowah
and all of my inward parts [bless] a name
of His holiness.**

Moderately literal:

**Celebrate Y^ehowah, my soul
and [celebrate] His sacred Name, all [that
is] within me.**

Psalm
103:1

**Celebrate Jehovah, my soul
and celebrate His sacred name, all that is within me.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Bless — affectionately, gratefully praise — the LORD, O my soul, and all that is [deepest] within me, bless His holy name!
CEV	With all my heart I praise the LORD, and with all that I am I praise his holy name!
<i>God's Word™</i>	Praise the LORD, my soul! Praise his holy name, all that is within me.
JPS (Tanakh)	Bless the LORD, O my soul, all my being, His holy name.
NASB	Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, <i>bless</i> His holy name.
NJB	Bless Yahweh, my soul, from the depths of my being, his holy name.
NLT	Praise the LORD, I tell myself; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name.
The Septuagint	Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all within me [bless] His Holy Name.
TEV	Praise the LORD, my soul! All of my being, praise his holy name!
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Bless, O my soul, Jehovah, And all my inward parts—His Holy Name.

What is the gist of this verse? David speaks to his own soul, and commands his soul to praise or celebrate Jehovah God. In the second half of the verse, there is an ellipsis, where David speaks to his inner being, again telling himself to praise or celebrate Jehovah God.

Psalm 103:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bâarak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK</i> ^e]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Piel imperative	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
nep ^h esh (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>NEH-fesh</i>]	<i>soul, life, living being, desire</i>	feminine singular noun with a 1 st person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5315 BDB #659
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Rotherham provides an interesting footnote here—he tells us that the rhythm of the verse would place the accent on the second syllable of Y^ehowah⁵ (which is the way I have presented it).

Translation: *Celebrate Y^ehowah, my soul...* When one invokes blessing or a celebration or a praise of God, this celebration occurs on the inside. This is why David speaks to his soul and tells his soul to celebrate Jehovah. This verse begins and ends with this phrase, as does Psalm 104 (although Psalm 104 adds a hallelujah at the end).

As Bullinger points out, *the soul is used for the will, affection, or desire, which are its operations and effects.*⁶ The words *my soul* can simply express the idea of *myself*.⁷

In another psalm, we classified the Davidic psalms by their inscriptions. Let's now classify the psalms which begin with an imperative.

⁵ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 582.

⁶ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 545.

⁷ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 838.

A Classification of Psalms Which Begin in the Imperative

Command	Psalm	Notes on the Imperative
	Psalm 4, 86	David calls on God to answer him. In Psalm 86, he calls on God to incline His ear and to answer him.
	Psalm 5, 17, 55, 61, 141, 143	David calls on God to listen to him. In the second psalm named, he tells God to listen to his just cause. In the third, God is implored to listen to David's prayer. In Psalm 61, David tells God to listen to his cry, to pay attention to his prayer and to lead him to the rock that is higher than he. David's call to God to listen to him is more poetic in Psalm 141. David issues several commands along this line in Psalm 143.
	Psalm 6	David tells God not to rebuke him in anger.
	Psalm 12	David tells God to help him.
	Psalm 16	David tells God to preserve him.
	Psalm 26, 43	David tells the Lord to vindicate him. He asks to be vindicated before God. Psalm 43 appears to be very personal and that his soul is troubled because he does not feel vindicated by God.
	Psalm 35	David tells God to fight with those who fight against him.
	Psalm 38	David tells God not to rebuke him in wrath.
David (along with other psalmists) command God to do something.	Psalm 51, 56, 57	David tells God to be gracious to him. In the second psalm, David tells God to be gracious to him because he has been trampled upon by man. In the third psalm, David tells God to be gracious to him because his soul takes refuge in God.
	Psalm 54	David gives God four commands in the first two verses: <i>Deliver me, vindicate me, hear my prayer and listen to me.</i>
	Psalm 59, 69, 70, 140	David tells God to deliver him from his enemies. In Psalm 69, this is temporal deliverance of one whose head is barely above water. David commands God several times in this Psalm 69 (see vv. 1, 14, 16, 17, 18, 24, 27). He asks God to rescue him in Psalm 140.
	Psalm 64	David calls upon God to hear his voice, to preserve his life and to hide him from the secret counsel of evil doers.
	Psalm 67	In one of the very few psalms where God is commanded something by someone other than David—the psalmist tells God to be gracious <i>to us</i> . This is actually the Piel imperfect and not the Piel imperative.
	Psalm 72	Solomon tells God to give the king (which is Solomon) His judgments (or His justice). He is asking God—no, telling God—to give him the ability to rule justly in Israel.
	Psalm 80, 102	Asaph tells the <i>Shepherd of Israel</i> to listen to what he has to say. Come and save us! O God, restore us! (vv. 2b–3a). God is told to hear the prayer of the afflicted in Psalm 102.
	Psalm 83	Asaph tells God not to remain quiet.

A Classification of Psalms Which Begin in the Imperative

Command	Psalm	Notes on the Imperative
	Psalm 94	The psalmist asks Jehovah, God of Vengeance, to shine forth, to rise up and then to render recompense to the proud.
The key to these psalms is not David's impertinence for telling God what to do, but his commands to God tell us about God's character and David's relationship to God. We should be able to expect the same from God.		
	Psalm 29	David tells those who are mighty to ascribe strength to God. Essentially, they are to acknowledge God's might.
	Psalm 33	The righteous ones are commanded to sing for joy.
	Psalm 37	David tells others not to be upset because of those who do evil.
	Psalm 47, 106	The reader of the psalm (actually, those who are read to) are told to clap their hands and to shout to God with joy. They are told to praise Jehovah in Psalm 106.
	Psalm 49	Another psalm of the sons of Korah (like Psalm 47). <i>All peoples</i> are the object of the command—here, they are told to hear.
The Psalmist commands others to do something.	Psalm 66, 100	All the earth is told to shout joyfully to God and to sing the glory of His name. All the earth, in Psalm 100, is told to shout joyfully to Jehovah and to serve Him with gladness.
	Psalm 78	Asaph tells the people to listen to his instruction.
	Psalm 81, 95, 96, 98, 105, 111–113, 117, 135, 147–150	Asaph implores others to sing for joy and to shout for joy. In the next three psalms, the reader or listener is implored to sing to Jehovah God. In Psalm 105, the reader is implored to give thanks to Jehovah, to make His deeds known to the people, to sing to him, to sing praises to Him, to speak of His wonders, etc. Psalm 111–113, 117, 135, 147–150 all begin with <i>Praise the LORD</i> . This is repeated several times in Psalms 148 and 150.
	Psalm 107, 118, 136	The reader or listener is told to give thanks. This is the overall theme of Psalm 136 and is repeated several times.
	Psalm 134	The reader or listener is told to bless (praise or celebrate) Jehovah.
We find other writers occurring in this category as often as David.		
David commands himself to do something.	Psalm 103, 104, 146	David tells his soul to bless (or celebrate or praise) the LORD. It is unclear who the author is for Psalm 146, but it is very similar to the previous two psalms in its first and last verses.
Interestingly enough, there are only 3 psalms with this beginning.		

To sum up, in most of our psalms, the author implores God to do something. In all of these cases, we may look to God to do the same on our behalf (although these psalms would have been written from the standpoint of being in fellowship and being filled with the Holy Spirit). In the second group, the psalmist tells someone else—generally the hearer, to do something. Finally, in the psalm that sent us down this path of exploration, there are three psalms where the psalmist tells himself to do something.

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Psalm 103:1b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
qereb (קֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>KEH-re^bv</i>]	<i>midst, inward part</i>	masculine plural noun with a 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #7130 BDB #899
ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
shêm (שֵׁם) [pronounced <i>shame</i>]	<i>name, reputation, character</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #8034 BDB #1027
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>koh-DESH</i>]	<i>holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6944 BDB #871

Translation: ...and [celebrate] His sacred Name, all [that is] within me. The Name of God is His reputation and character; and the inner being of David—his soul and spirit—are to praise and celebrate Who and What God is.

References to God's holy Name can be found throughout the psalms. In Psalm 32:21, we read: [For our heart rejoices in Him because we trust in His holy name.](#) Psalm 105:3: [Glory in His holy name; let the heart of those who seek Jehovah be glad.](#) Psalm 145:21: [My mouth will speak the praise of Jehovah and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.](#) God's name is His character and being, and what the Old Testament saints trusted in, as there was no cross.

Barnes: *The soul of man was made to praise and bless God; to enjoy his friendship; to delight in his favour; to contemplate his perfections. It can never be employed in a more appropriate or a more elevated act than when engaged in his praise.*⁸ Who should we praise in the alternative? Other men? Lucifer? Ourselves? Barnes continues concerning the phrase *all that is within me*: *All my powers and faculties; all that can be employed in his praise: —the heart, the will, the affections, the emotions. The idea is, that God is worthy of all the praise and adoration which the entire man can render.*⁹

**Bless, O my soul, Y^howah
and forget not all of His benefits.**

Psalm
103:2

**Celebrate Y^howah, my soul
and forget not any of His benefits.**

**Celebrate Jehovah, my soul
and do not disregard any of His benefits.**

⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 73–74.

⁹ Ibid.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Bless — affectionately, gratefully praise — the LORD, O my soul, and forget not [one of] all His benefits,...
CEV	With all my heart I praise the LORD! I will never forget how kind he has been.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Bless, O my soul, Yahweh, And forget not all his dealings: — ... [Rotherham footnotes the word <i>dealings</i> with: “ <i>Dealings</i> ” is not only more exact than “benefits,” but is here the more expressive word; since, in the enthusiasm of his gratitude, the Psalmist may have felt that all the divine “dealings” formed a fitting subject for praise. ¹⁰]
God’s Word™	Praise the LORD, my soul and never forget all the good he has done:...
JPS (Tanakh)	Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all His bounties.
NASB	Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits.
NJB	bless Yahweh, my soul, never forget all his acts of kindness.
NLT	Praise the LORD, I tell myself, and never forget the good things he does for me.
The Septuagint	Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his praises;...
TEV	Praise the LORD, my soul, and do not forget how kind he is.
<i>Young’s Literal Translation</i>	Bless, O my soul, Jehovah, And forget not all His benefits,...

What is the gist of this verse? We are to celebrate the person of Jehovah and to recognize all that He has given us.

Psalm 103:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Piel imperative	Strong’s #1288 BDB #138
nephesh (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>NEH-fesh</i>]	<i>soul, life, living being, desire</i>	feminine singular noun with a 1 st person masculine singular suffix	Strong’s #5315 BDB #659
’êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong’s #853 BDB #84

¹⁰ Joseph Bryant Rotherham’s *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 582.

Psalm 103:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: Celebrate Y^ehowah, my soul... Again, the one who is tied to God by relationship is to celebrate this relationship to Him.

Psalm 15:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (לא) [pronounced <i>a</i>]	<i>not</i>	adverb of negation	Strong's #408 BDB #39.
shâkach (נָשָׁח) [pronounced <i>shaw- KAHKH</i>]	<i>to forget; to forget and leave</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #7911 BDB #1013
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
In the English, it sounds too much as though David is saying, "You can forget some of the benefits, but don't forget them all. However, the idea is that, he is telling himself not to forget any of God's gracious benefits." ¹¹			
g ^e mûwl (גְּמוּל) [pronounced <i>g^e-MOOL</i>]	<i>[proper] recompense, dealing, benefit</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1576 BDB #168

Recall that Rotherham felt that *dealings* is the better rendering for this last word (which is one of the meanings of *g^emûwl*). Barnes also, after giving many passages where *g^emûwl* is found, says that *divine dealings* is the best way to understand this word in this context.

Translation: ...and forget not any of His benefits. One of the things which is common to too many believers is that we do not realize all that God has given us. He applies a little pressure or a little testing, all of the time retaining for us great blessings, and we often forget these blessings and the benefits associated with Him. David here warns not to forget and disregard the benefits of relationship to God. Moses often reminded Israel of what God had done for them: "Guard yourselves, so that you do not forget Jehovah Who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." (Deut. 6:12; see also Deut. 8:11). In fact, in Deut. 6:10b–11, we have a list of the benefits that Israel enjoyed in their relationship with God.

The most obvious benefit is our salvation. It is because of our relationship to God, and not because of anything that we have done, that we will spend eternity in fellowship with God. This means no more sorrow, no more pain, no more tears; the old things will pass away (see Rev. 21:4). God sees to it that our daily needs are met; and often,

¹¹ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 836.

he adds on additional blessing besides. This does not mean that you live the perfect life with everything that you have ever desired; it does mean that God looks out for us and takes care of us. Barnes: *We will find, when we reach the end of life, that all which God has done, however dark and mysterious it may have appeared at the time, was so connected with our good as to make it a proper subject of praise and thanksgiving.*¹² A personal note: I was not thrilled that, upon graduation, I could not find a job in my field in the area where I lived. I eventually had to move 2000 miles away to the city place that was my third choice (of three cities), and take a job at a school which was my second choice of the schools where I applied. In retrospect, I cannot imagine it happening in any other way. There are still occasions where this or that happens to me, and I say to myself, "That was messtup!" But God knows what He is doing. I may not see the purpose for what God does in my life, but He does.

We should not understand this verse out of context, or just think that this was a nice thing that David said about God. What David will do in the next three verses is give us a list of the things which He has done for us.

McGee comments: *When I read this psalm, I recognize that the best I can do just doesn't quite make it. My soul goes out to Him but not like it should. My friend, I want to put up a warning signal. There is a real danger today of going to church, observing the ritual, and parroting pious platitudes. This is the thing God warned His people about in Isaiah 29:13, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." It is nothing more than lip service. There is no submission to God's Word and His demands. They just follow the precepts of men. We see this in Judaism and Romanism; and it is pretty easy for Protestants to pint a finger at them and say, "Look how dead their religion is!" My friend, how dead is your church and your personal worship? Oh, if only my praise could be pure and from the depths of my heart! That is what I long for and what we should all long for. There is a lot of chanting and ritualism today in church. It is easy to say that liberalism rejects all of the great truths of God's Word, but if we simply go to church and mouth these truths, it can also be said of us, "Men worship Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." This psalm says, "All that is within me, bless his holy name." The flesh cannot do this. I am going to make a confession to you: I can't worship the Lord like I want to. Do you know why? This old flesh of mine can't rise to that level. It is only by the Holy Spirit that you and I can worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.*¹³

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The Good That God Does for us

**The [One] forgiving each iniquity of yours;
the [One] healing to all of your diseases.**

Psalm
103:3

**The One forgiving your every transgression
[or, all of your transgressions]
the One healing all of your diseases.**

**The One Who forgives everyone of your transgressions
and the One Who heals all of your infirmities and diseases.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

CEV	The LORD forgives our sins, heals us when we are sick,...
God's Word™	He is the one who forgives all your sins, the one who heals all your diseases,...
JPS (Tanakh)	He forgives all your sins, heals all your diseases.
NASB	Who pardons all your iniquities;

¹² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 74.

¹³ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 90–150*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 42–43.

NJB Who heals all your diseases;...
 He forgives all your offences,
 cures all your diseases.

REB He pardons all my wrongdoing
 and heals all my ills.

The Septuagint ...Who forgives all your transgressions,
 Who heals all your diseases.

Young's Literal Translation He forgives all my sins
 and heals all my diseases.

Young's Updated LT Who is forgiving all your iniquities,
 Who is healing all your diseases,...

What is the gist of this verse? God forgives us our sins and He heals us from our sicknesses (the latter phrase will require some explaining).

Psalm 103:3a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çâlach (נָלַח) [pronounced saw-LAHKH]	<i>to forgive, to pardon; to overlook, to not hold responsible for, to not hold to</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #5545 BDB #699
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʿâvôwn (אָוֹן) [pronounced gaw-VOHN]	<i>iniquity, crime, offense, transgression, depraved action, guilt, punishment from wrongdoing</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #5771 BDB #730
<p>It will be difficult to render the final two words with the suffix into an easily understood English sentence. Literally, this is <i>every [or, each] your transgression</i>; we may reasonably render these words as <i>every transgression of yours or your every transgression</i>.</p> <p>What possibly eases the translation is if ʿâvôwn is plural, which is how it is found in 1 early printed edition, the Septuagint and the Vulgate.¹⁴ This would give us: <i>Who pardons all of your iniquities</i>. On the other hand, it is more reasonable for the wording to be changed into something which makes more sense rather than into something that makes less sense.</p>			

Translation: *The One forgiving your every transgression [or, all of your transgressions]...* When understanding any portion of Scripture, it is imperative to examine the context and to note to whom anything is being written (if there is a specific audience for a given passage). Here, the specific audience is David; he tells his own soul to celebrate his relationship with Jehovah God (vv. 1–2). At the end of v. 2, David noted that there were benefits to this relationship that we ought not to forget. The first of these is the fact that God forgives us every one of our transgressions. This is not applicable to everyone; David applies it to himself, and we may therefore apply it to believers in general.

Now, as to forgiveness of sins—this is not some New Testament concept which Jesus inserted into the believer's life, or some doctrine which Paul concocted; the forgiveness of sins has always been an integral part of Scripture. God told Moses about His own character in Ex. 34:6b–7a: *"Jehovah Elohim is compassionate and gracious, slow*

¹⁴ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 582.

to anger, and abounding in grace and truth. I preserve grace for thousands and forgive iniquity, sin and transgressions; yet these will not remain unpunished.” It may be that many ancient theologians read this passage and wondered, “God here clearly forgives sins and iniquities; but then it says that these things will not go unpunished. How do we make sense of this?” It is clear to us today—Jesus took upon Himself the penalty for our sins—there were no sins left unpunished; however, we are, because He took upon Himself our punishment, forgiven. Our very relationship with God is dependent upon past, present and future sins being forgiven. For additional Old Testament Scripture on forgiveness of sins, see Psalm 86:5 130:3–4, 8 Isa. 43:25.

Psalm 103:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râphâ` (רָפָא) [pronounced raw-FAW]	<i>to heal</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #7495 BDB #950
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^o)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Râphâ` is occasionally followed by a lâmed preposition. This preposition does not necessarily need to be reflected in the English translation.			
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced koh]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
tachălû`îym (תַּחֲלִיּוֹת) [pronounced tah-chuh-loo-EEM]	<i>diseases, sicknesses</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #8463 BDB #316

Translation: ...the One healing all of your diseases. Okay, at first this phrase gave me pause. God does not heal each and every believer of each and every disease. Since we all die, it is reasonable to figure that not all Christians simply die in their sleep. Many times, it is the result of a disease of some sort. So, what about this verse? Again, the key is context. David is speaking to himself, to his own soul. Up until that point in time, God had healed David of every disease (compare Psalm 30:2). Throughout Scripture, we will see that God continues to heal David of his diseases until he does die of old age. Therefore, we cannot take this verse as a promise to each and every believer. Obviously, God will punish some believers in time with disease when they are out of fellowship. God will test other believers. However, this is true, in context, that God had healed and would continue to heal all of David's diseases (one may contrast this with Saul, who was plagued by mental disease throughout the latter portion of his life).

We should also allow a wider definition for *diseases*; not because it would suit our sensibilities, but because that would be in line with other passages. In Ex. 15:26, God warns Israel, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of Jehovah your God and do what is right in His sight, and listen to His commandments, and keep all of His statutes, I will place none of the diseases on you which I have placed on the Egyptians; for I, Jehovah, am your Healer.” God intentionally placed upon the Egyptians plagues and illnesses, because they stood in opposition to Him. In Jer. 30:17a, God promises Israel deliverance from captivity, saying, “For I will restore you to health and I will heal you of your wounds.” In this passage, the *healing* refers to the regathering and restoration of Israel. Finally, throughout the gospels, Jesus heals person after person of this and that disease; He certainly acted out of compassion and to show that He is the Messiah; however, there is a meaning in these healings which is not to be lost: the healing of the body is an indication that God, in eternity future, will heal both the body and soul completely.

I should insert here a point that Barnes makes: the healing of disease can take many forms; we are not restricted to miraculous cures by the touch of Jesus. This can easily include the cure of a physician, through whose hands,

God works. There are some religions which take it as a lack of faith to see a doctor about this or that physical ailment. Certainly, you should pray concerning your own sickness and it is a bonus if others do so as well. That does not mean, however, that you should never seek the help of a physician. Luke was a doctor and nowhere in Scripture is his vocation belittled. Furthermore, when you seek a physician, this does not mean that the time for prayer has past. All visits and procedures should be accompanied by prayers and supplications.

Interestingly enough, forgiveness of sin and the healing of sickness will be tied together in Isa. 33:24, where the eternal state of Zion and its residents are discussed: **And no resident will say, "I am sick." The people who live there will be forgiven their iniquity.** This passage also points toward eternity for a full understanding of the forgiveness of sin and the healing of disease. When a paralytic was brought before Jesus to be healed, the first thing that Jesus said to him was, **"Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven."** (Matt. 9:2b). The remainder of this passage is quite interesting, as the attendant scribes think to themselves that this forgiveness offered by our Lord is blasphemy. Jesus then asks them, **"Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up and walk?'"** And then Jesus tells the paralytic to get up and walk (see Matt. 9:2–8). Therefore, we should expect for the forgiveness of sin to be tied closely to the healing of our diseases (compare also Isa. 53:5 Jer. 17:14). As St. Peter wrote to us: **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were reconciled (or, healed)** (1 Peter 2:24).

McGee interprets this is being applicable to eternity and that the diseases healed include the removal of spiritual diseases.¹⁵ I believe that he is half-right in this conclusion and Isa. 33:24 would support this notion (**And no resident will say, "I am sick." The people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity**). Let's keep this phrase in mind when examining the remainder of the context: (1) God pardons our iniquities, something which must occur in time and in eternity (v. 3a); (2) God redeems our lives from the grave or the pit (v. 4a); (3) God crowns us with grace and mercy (v. 4b); and (5) He satisfies us with good things (v. 5a). So, we may reasonably assume that the phrase in question has both temporal and eternal implications. The temporal implications—that God has healed David of all his diseases—has been discussed. However, in eternity, all of us will have resurrection bodies, bodies which are perfect and free from disease and aging. In fact, let me be very specific: if you worked outside and had the sort of body that converted most of what you ate into muscle, and if you took your body during its physical peak years (late 20's or early 30's), that will be the appearance of your resurrection body, as we will have a body just like His. At least, that is a reasonable theory, given 1 Cor. 15:35–49.

What we cannot do is look down on those who suffer from this infirmity or that. This psalm does not guarantee that we will all enjoy perfect health in time. The Apostle Paul, whose life and works are head and shoulders above any of ours, suffered from an eye disease for most of his life (and apparently all of his spiritual life). McGee points to Fanny Crosby and John Milton, who were both blind all of their lives. There was nothing wrong with these people because they suffered those infirmities. Again, we must take this passage in its context—David is speaking to his own soul—and also realize that this context has eternal considerations, which are the most important.

**The [One] redeeming from a pit your lives;
The [One] crowning you [with] grace and
tender affections.**

Psalm
103:4

**The One redeeming your life from the pit;
[and] the One crowning you [with] grace and
compassion.**

**The One Who redeems your life from the corruption of the grave;
and the One Who surrounds you with grace and compassion.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

The Amplified Bible

Who redeems your life from the pit and corruption; Who beautifies, dignifies and crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies.

CEV

...and protects us from death.

His kindness and love are a crown in our heads.

¹⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 90–150*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 43.

God's Word™	the one who rescues your life from the pit, the one who crowns you with mercy and compassion,...
JPS (Tanakh)	He redeems your life from the Pit, surrounds you with steadfast love and mercy.
NAB	Delivers your life from the pit, surrounds you with love and compassion,...
NASB	Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion.
NJB	he redeems your life from the abyss, crowns you with faithful love and tenderness;...
NLT	He ransoms me from death and surrounds me with love and tender mercies.
REB	He rescues me from death's pit and crowns me with love and compassion.
The Septuagint	Who redeems your life from corruption; Who crowns you with mercy and compassion;...
TEV	He keeps me from the grave and blesses me with love and mercy.
Young's Updated LT	Who is redeeming from destruction [of] your life, Who is crowning you—kindness and mercies,...

What is the gist of this verse? Jehovah God is said to pay for our lives, so that we are not thrown into the pit. He is also said to crown us with grace and mercy.

Psalm 103:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gâ'al (גָּאֵל) [pronounced <i>gaw-AHL</i>]	<i>to redeem, to purchase</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #1350 BDB #145
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
shachath (שַׁחַת) [pronounced <i>SHAH-kath</i>]	<i>pit, cistern; underground prison; sepulcher, grave; corruption, destruction; grave; death</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7845 BDB #1001
In the ancient world, <i>the pit</i> simply referred to either a hole dug in the ground designed to capture animals; a cistern [which could be filled with mud]; an underground prison; or to a sepulcher (grave). By the time of the New Testament, it came to mean <i>corruption</i> and was so translated from the Hebrew into the Greek.			
chayyîym (חַיִּים) [pronounced <i>khay-YEEM</i>]	<i>being alive, being vigorous, having life, sustaining life, living prosperously—it is life as opposed to death</i>	Masculine substantive plural abstract with the 2 nd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #2416 BDB #313

Translation: The One redeeming your life from the pit;... We find a parallel to this verse in Psalm 49:15, which reads: *But God will purchase my soul from the power of Sheol; for He will receive me.* Sheol, by the way, is the

dwelling place of the dead. Our very lives condemn us to being subject to Sheol. Psalm 34:22: [Jehovah redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who take refuge in Him will be judged guilty](#). See also Psalm 56:13 Isa. 43:1.

The NIV Study Bible unfortunately has the footnote that *redeems* means the same as *delivers*.¹⁶ These two terms are related theologically, and might even be seen as opposite sides of the same coin; however, they are not synonymous terms. In the case of the word *redeems*, we have mechanics: Jehovah God pays or purchases our lives from the pit. There is some exchange of money of some sort (which Thieme terms *coin of the realm*). *Delivers* is the result of this purchase. A simple analogy to clear up the difference between these two words: you put a dollar into a coke machine and *purchase* a coke; when it comes out, you *drink* it. You can *drink* the coke because you *purchased* the coke. *Purchase* and *drink* are not synonyms; one merely is the result of the other.

We have studied the **Doctrine of Sheol** back in Job 7:9.

In this half of v. 4, David continues with the list of reasons why we should celebrate Jehovah God. In the ancient world, *the pit* simply referred to either a hole dug in the ground designed to capture animals; a cistern [which could be filled with mud]; an underground prison; or to a sepulcher (grave). By the time of the New Testament, it came to mean *corruption* and was so translated from the Hebrew into the Greek. Our mortal lives are condemned to corruption; in fact, to eternal corruption; to the eternal grave. God is here said to have redeemed (or, *purchased*) us from that corruption.

At that time, it was unclear as to what to coin of the realm was. What did our Lord use to purchase us from the pit? We are all born deserving of death; our lives are a continual compiling of more reasons why we should not enjoy any sort of fellowship with God. As each day ends, we have committed more and more sins; we have developed more and more distance between ourselves and God. Yet David tells us here that God has purchased us from the grave or the pit. In Psalm 22, also written by David, we have the cross—we have the suffering of our Lord, which paid for our lives. We deserved infinite death, and Jesus took upon His body the death and hell that we deserved.

Did anyone in the Old Testament have a complete Christology developed in their own minds? I doubt it. They all had pieces of the puzzle, which the New Testament puts together so handily. However, no one fully knew what was to come and just exactly who our Lord would be. David would have recognized Jesus; he would have been one of his flock during the time of Jesus, as he was during his own time; but he did not fully grasp every detail of the cross and its significance.

The question I have heard is, *why isn't the gospel as perspicuous in the Old Testament as it is in the New?* The typical answer that I have heard is, *it is*. And this position seems to make sense, if one does not examine it too closely. After all, the most careful examinations of the cross are found in the Old Testament: Psalm 22 and Isa. 53, with a reasonable analogy to the theology in Gen. 22. However, I doubt that anyone from Old Testament could have sat down and given us a clear theology of the cross, of the first advent of our Lord, or what was to come. There is a reason for this. First of all, let's touch on salvation. When you believed in Jesus Christ, you knew precious little about Christology and soteriology; you were taught the cross and that Jesus paid for your sins, but you did not have a full and complete understanding of that doctrine; and you were saved based upon the very small amount of faith that you had in the very little that you knew. Old Testament believers were not unlike you—they trusted in Jehovah Elohim. They did not have everything put together, but they trust in the One who had redeemed them and forgave them for the sins they committed. They did not know how all of this was accomplished—in fact, with respect to the cross, they knew even less than we know at our own salvation. But salvation is not based upon the quantity of information that we know, it is based upon what Jesus did for us on the cross and the minuscule amount of faith that we place in Him.

Now that I have made it clear that the gospel is not as perspicuous in the Old Testament as it is in the New (at least, not to Old Testament believers), and now that I have explained why it is not necessary for Old Testament saints

¹⁶ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 887.

to have a complete grasp of Christology and soteriology, let me tell you why no Old Testament saint had a complete picture in his head of what was to come in the first advent: the cross was explained in shadow form in the Old Testament, so clearly that *we can look back* at Psalm 22 and Isa. 53 and recognize that God taught the suffering of our Lord in the Old Testament. However, to Old Testament believers (and unbelievers, of course), there was a veil—a veil which was lifted in the New Testament. Our Lord—His teachings, his very short ministry, and His death on the cross—tell us exactly what all those passages were speaking of. The reason for this is simple: the greatest student of the Old Testament was Satan. He knew Scripture backward and forward. He knew Psalm 22, Gen. 22, and Isa. 53—Satan is a genius and he memorized those verses along with the entire Old Testament. However, he was unable to put it altogether in his own mind. Satan did much of the footwork in the gospels to crucify Jesus. He was the motivating factor, both in Judas and in the hearts of the scribes, pharisees and Sadducees. Satan did not grasp that God the Father would pour out on God the Son all of the sins that we deserve punishment for. He did not realize that was the key to the salvation of mankind. Had he known that, had he been able to figure out that, Satan's attacks upon our Lord would have taken on a different and more subtle twist. Instead of being hated and persecuted, he would have inspired the pharisees to do what religious leaders do today—they would have patronized our Lord, but they would not have physically persecuted Him. However, even with a full and complete knowledge of the Old Testament, Satan did not realize what the first advent was all about, and he vented his complete hatred for all that is holy upon the Lord, and became complicitious in all that led up to the cross. The Old Testament had to present the gospel in shadow form, so that we could look back and recognize how clearly it was taught, and yet still appreciate that Old Testament saints never completely grasped the most fundamental doctrines of soteriology. This was all done so that the greatest enemy of God—Lucifer—would act in such a way as to bring our Lord to the cross. Even in his genius, he did not know realize what he was doing when he orchestrated the illegal trials and illegal execution of our Lord. He was merely venting his hatred, and God the Father used his actions in order to judge our sins in the body of His Son on the cross.

Psalm 103:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâṭar (אֲטַר) [pronounced <i>gaw-TAHR</i>]	<i>to surround [with a crown], to crown</i>	Piel participle with the definite article and the 2 nd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #5849 BDB #742
cheṣed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced <i>KHEH-sed</i>]	<i>grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2617 BDB #338
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
rachămîym (רַחֲמִים) [pronounced <i>rah-khuh-MEEM</i>]	<i>tender affections; pity, grace, favor; compassion, mercies</i>	masculine plural noun (always plural)	Strong's #7356 BDB #933

Translation: ...[and] the One crowning you [with] grace and compassion. This is more than making our lives filled with grace and compassion. We have a crown with indicates grace and compassion from God. It should be obvious that from this psalm so far that David understood salvation and God's purchase of our souls from death (recall that David is still speaking to his soul, as noted by the use of the 2nd person feminine singular suffix).

Barnes comments: *The idea here is not merely that God is the source of these blessings, but that there is something of beauty, of dignity, of honour, as in the conferring of a crown or garland on any one...God shown mercy to him [David],—evinced compassion [and mercies],—and these were so abundant that they might be said to be the crown or ornament of his life.*¹⁷

¹⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 75.

We have a parallel verse in Psalm 5:12: It is You who blesses the righteous man, O Jehovah; You surround him with grace as a shield.

<p>The [One] satisfying in the goodness your ornaments; You renew [yourself] like the eagle your youth.</p>	Psalm 103:5	<p>The [One] satisfying [or, saturating] your accessories [i.e., the facets of the soul] with good things. You renew [or, refresh] your youth like the eagle.</p>
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**and One Who saturates your soul with good things.
 Therefore, you are refreshed in your youth like an eagle.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

- CEV Each day that we live, he provides for our needs and gives us the strength of a young eagle.
- God's Word™ the one who fills your life with blessings so that you become young again like an eagle.
- JPS (Tanakh) He satisfies you with good things in the prime of life, [Meaning of Heb. uncertain] so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- NASB Who satisfies our years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.
- NKJV Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- NLT He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!
- The Septuagint Who satisfies your desire with good things; [so that] your youth is renewed like the eagle.
- TEV He fills my life with good things, so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.
- Young's Updated LT Who is satisfying with good your desire, Renew itself as an eagle does your youth.

What is the gist of this verse? God saturates and satiates the soul of David with good things.

Psalm 103:5a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sâ ^h va ^r (שׂוּבָה) [pronounced saw ^h -VAHG]	<i>to satisfy, to satisfy [with food or drink], to fill, to satiate</i>	Hiphil participle with the definite article	Strong's #7646 BDB #959
This word can also mean <i>to saturate [the ground]</i> . Here, we have a soul which is saturated.			
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
tûw ^h v (טוֹב) [pronounced too ^h v]	<i>good things, goodness, prosperity, well-being, beauty</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2898 BDB #375

Psalm 103:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿăḏîy (אֲדִי) [pronounced guh-DEE]	<i>ornaments, ornament trappings, accessories; age; mouth</i>	masculine plural collective noun with a 2 nd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #5716 BDB #725

Everywhere else, this noun means *ornaments, trappings, accessories*. However, here, the meaning is unclear, so the latter two meanings have been assigned to it. Barnes¹⁸ tells us that this word is rendered *your age* in the Chaldee, *your desire* in the Arabic, Greek and Latin; and *your body* in the Syriac. Gesenius renders this word *age* (in this context), as contrasted with the word *youth* (which word is found in parallel in the second half of this verse). Barnes agrees that the parallelism would demand this, although there is nothing in the word's usage elsewhere which would allow for this definition. Professor Alexander renders this *your soul*, submitting that the soul is the chief glory or ornament of man (which, to Barnes, seems to be a very forced explanation). Interestingly enough, Barnes admits to being flummoxed by this word in this context. I offer this so that you have a better idea as to the history of the ascribed meanings of ʿăḏîy given above.

Translation: The [One] satisfying [or, saturating] your accessories with good things. This is a rather tough call, as to its meaning, which I appreciated more when I found that even Barnes was at a loss here. *Ornaments* is modified by the 2nd person feminine singular suffix, which refers back to the soul of the psalmists, who is speaking to his own soul (v. 1). Therefore, the key is not necessarily the parallel word found in the second half of this verse, but it the context in general. In context, David is speaking to his own soul. Therefore, when he says that God satisfies *your accessories* or *your ornaments*, we may reasonably understand this as referring the to *accessories* or *ornaments* of the soul. Now, obviously, a soul does not have physical ornaments. However, a soul can be multi-faceted (in fact, a soul would be, just by definition). All of these facets of the soul are filled or satiated or saturated with good things.

Let's approach this a Thieme would: the soul of man (actually, technically, the heart) is made up of several facets. There is the frame of reference, where one has an overall understanding of doctrine, including those things which may not seem to be immediately applicable when first heard. For instance, in salvation, you were originally just interested in *how does this affect me?* The way that God achieved our salvation and the fact that He maintained His entire character may have not made much difference to us, but we wrote down the pertinent points anyway. Now, when other things are taught to us, they all begin to fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. This frame of reference are the pieces of the puzzle which begin to come together as one learns more in the Christian life. David certainly had a frame of reference filled with doctrine, which would come under the heading of good things.

The soul has a memory center, which can provide us with wonderful moments. I can think back on times with my family or times as a teacher or times with friends which fill my soul with great recollections. These are the good things spoken of in this verse.

Vocabulary and categorical storage: as doctrines are built upon doctrines, and as certain ideas and relationships are given names, our vocabulary increases (which increases our ability to think). Few believers appreciate this. In fact, their thinking is sloppy, illogical and emotional. They are unable to make fine distinctions. Hell, they are unable to make obvious distinctions. **For the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even the division of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, and is able to evaluate the thoughts and intentions of the heart** (Heb. 4:12). Scripture draws lines, makes distinctions, and carefully distinguishes between this and that. As we increase our vocabulary and categorical storage, we increase our own ability to do so. Let me give you a quick and easy example. The tongues crowd. There are those believers who are unable to distinguish between churches where there is some enthusiasm and churches where people "get the ghost." They

¹⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 75.

may even be jealous of the excitement and enthusiasm that they see in some charismatics; and believe that we can fellowship with them as with other believers. The problem here is that such a person is unable to distinguish between enthusiasm (primarily a function of the personality) and speaking in tongues. When vocabulary is increased and when the various categories of doctrine start to come together, one can recognize that the tongues crowd is the third largest Christian cult (the first and second being the Roman Catholics and their alter egos, the Greek Orthodox). However, also, as these increase, your appreciation for what God has done and designed increases as well.

Finally, we have the conscience. As a new believer, there are a lot of sins that we disregard or give little thought to. Therefore, we find ourselves falling out of fellowship often, as we begin the Christian life by allowing the world (our background and early teaching) to define sin for us. As we increase in our knowledge of God's Word, we also see an increase in our understanding of right and wrong. We don't fall to pieces because someone is a homosexual, and then spend a significant portion of our day gossiping about said homosexual. Certainly, homosexual acts are sinful; but then, so is gossiping. An increase of the ornaments of the soul—the saturating of the soul with doctrine—also increases our understanding of sin and we tend to be more concerned with our own behavior and we give those around us a break.

We have several parallel passages of God satisfying the believer in Psalm 107:9 145:16 (in the former, it is the believer's thirst which is satisfied and in the latter, it is the *desire of every living thing*).

Psalm 103:5b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châdash (חַדַּשׁ) [pronounced <i>khaw-DAHSH</i>]	<i>to renew [onself]; to repair [onself]</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hithpael imperfect	Strong's #2318 BDB #293
kaph or k ^e (כּ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
nesher (נֶשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>NEH-sheer</i>]	<i>eagles, vultures</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #5404 BDB #676
n ^{er} ûrîym (נְעֻרִים) [pronounced <i>n^{er}g^{oo}-REEM</i>]	<i>youth</i> (it is always found in the plural, so we might render it <i>youthful years</i>)	masculine plural noun with a feminine singular feminine singular suffix	Strong's #5271 BDB #655

Translation: *You renew [or, refresh] your youth like the eagle.* The morphology of this verb is rather confusing. All of the 2nd person suffixes have referred to the 2nd soul of David, the writer of this psalm. Suddenly, we have a reference to a masculine singular noun, who is being addressed (this *could* be the 3rd person feminine singular in morphology). What we would like to see is either the 2nd person feminine singular or the 3rd person masculine singular forms here; either of which makes perfect sense (in the former, the soul acts upon itself, as the Hithpael would imply (the Hithpael is the reflexive of the Piel); and the latter would be God acting upon the soul (which is incongruous with the Hithpael, but otherwise reasonable). I will assume that this is a reference to the soul acting upon itself. Our soul—our mentality, conscience, our frame of reference—becomes tired. We cannot take in, for instance, 6 or 8 hours of doctrine a day. It's just too much. However, when the soul is saturated with doctrine, it renews itself; it becomes youthful. The analogy is to the powerful eagle, who flies until it becomes tired; it rests and renews itself, and has the strength to fly great distances again. Here, the soul is said to renew its youthfulness. That is, the soul renews its vigor and youthfulness and interests. The mind of some older people atrophies, and, as a result, there are a plethora of mental problems which can set in. However, if the mind is kept active in the study of God's Word, it will renew itself. It will strengthen itself like a muscle. *Youth* is simply a metonym for *personal strength*.

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In v. 2, we are told to never forget the benefits of our relationship to God (actually, to be completely accurate, David is saying this to his own soul—we can obviously apply this to ourselves as well).

The Temporal and Eternal Implications of Vv. 3–5

Benefit	Temporal	Eternal
God pardons our iniquities (v. 3a):	This gives us temporal fellowship and blessing from God (I John 1:8–10).	Because of this, we can enjoy eternal fellowship with God (I Cor. 14:21–23).
God heals our diseases (v. 3b):	God’s blessing can extend to our health. For David, this meant that God kept him healthy (at least, up to the time when he wrote this psalm). Luke 5:12–20 7:1–10 8:40–56 (the healings of Jesus are object lessons for us; they testify to His power and testify to God’s grace and sufficiency).	When we receive our resurrection bodies, they will not be subject to human ailments or aging. (I Cor. 15:36–44 Phillip 3:21).
God redeems our life from the grave (lit., <i>the pit</i>) (v. 4a):	We deserve separation from God. We deserve to die eternally. We are herein given hope to strengthen us in our daily walk. John 5:24 6:40.	In eternity, we will be raised from the grave in a resurrection body (I Cor. 15:21, 42 Gal. 6:8 I Tim. 1:16). For, as in Adam, all die, so also in Christ, all will be made alive (I Cor. 15:22).
God crowns us with grace and with mercy (v. 4b):	During our time on this earth, our actions are deserving of death. There are many times when God should reasonably just strike us down with lightning. However, in our temporal life, He extends to us grace and mercy. Rom. 5:14–21 7:14–25 8:1–5.	In eternity, we will spend this time with Him, which is a testimony to His grace and mercy (I Cor. 15:50–57).
God saturates our lives with good things (v. 5a):	Early in my Christian life, when under the teaching of Bob Thieme, he spoke of the test of prosperity. I often thought, <i>hell, I’d like that test</i> . I stayed with God’s Word and I was given that test. Rom. 15:29 II Cor. 9:5–6 I Peter 3:9.	What we receive as believers in this life is nothing compared to what He will give to us in eternity. Our blessings in eternity almost defy description (II Cor. 4:17–18 Heb. 9:15).

The Temporal and Eternal Implications of Vv. 3–5		
Benefit	Temporal	Eternal
Our youth is refreshed like the eagle (which implies freedom and strength):	God gives us great latitude in this life, and, for those in His will, He often rewards us with great strength and health (David is speaking to himself, but this can be applied to others). Luke 5:12–20 7:1–10 8:40–56 (again, these healings of Jesus are object lessons).	In eternity, we will be given that which is superior to the fountain of youth. Our resurrection bodies will be youthful and not subject to earthly restraints. I Cor. 15:36–49 Phillip 3:21.

Our verse again reads: *You renew [or, refresh] your youth [or, strength] like the eagle.* In Isa. 40:31, we have a parallel verse: *Those who wait for Jehovah will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not get tired; they will walk and not become weary.* In the book of Job, Elihu speaks for God, and reveals the afterlife to Job and his three companions, which is an exact parallel to our own passage: *“Then let Him [God] be gracious to him [Job, and, by application, to any believer] and say, ‘Deliver him from going down to the pit [because] I have found a ransom.’ Let his flesh become fresher than in youth and let him return to the days of his youthful vigor.”* (Job 33:24–25). In two short verses, from one of the oldest books in the Bible, we have the ransom of the cross, the deliverance from the pit, and the resurrection body all alluded to, as well as being a perfect parallel to the passage we are examining. Paul gives us a slightly different perspective in I Cor. 4:16: *Therefore, we do not loses heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*

In the next section, the psalmist will leave his rather narrow examination of God’s grace to him and apply this grace to all mankind.

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God’s Judicial Approach to Our Sins

A doer of righteousneses Y^ehowah and justices to exploited ones.

Psalm 103:6

Y^ehowah [is] a maker of righteous [acts] and [correct] judicial verdicts to the exploited ones.

Jehovah sees to the righteous vindication of those who are oppressed and exploited; He makes certain that they received honest judicial verdicts.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

- CEV *God’s Word™* For all who are mistreated, the LORD brings justice. The LORD does what is right and fair for all who are oppressed.
- JPS (Tanakh) The LORD executes righteous acts and judgments for all who are wronged.
- NASB The LORD performs righteous deeds And judgments for all who are oppressed.
- NLT The LORD gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly.
- NRSV The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.

REB	The LORD is righteous in all he does; he brings justice to all who have been wronged.
The Septuagint	The Lord executes mercy and judgment for all that are injured.
TEV	The LORD judges in favor of the oppressed and gives them their rights.
Young's Literal Translation	Jehovah is doing righteousness and judgments For all the oppressed.

What is the gist of this verse? David makes it clear that God is One Who does that which is righteous and just, and that this justice extends to even those who are oppressed (that is, those who often do not find justice in this life).

Psalm 103:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâsâh (אָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>a doer of, a maker of, a constructor of, a fashion of, a preparer of</i>	Qal active participle, masculine singular construct	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
ts ^e dâqâh (צְדָקָה) [pronounced <i>ts^edâw-KAW</i>]	<i>righteousness, executed righteousness and justice, righteous vindication</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #6666 BDB #842
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: Y^ehowah [is] a maker of righteous [acts]... This portion of v. 6 is directly tied to the second half. In this world, there are those who are oppressed, exploited, and taken advantage of, which is the masculine plural, Qal passive participle of ʿâshaq (אָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SHAHK*]. There are those who are honest, hard-working and poor who get the shaft from our judicial system, their employers, and from other people in general. God sees to it that, at least occasionally, that they receive what is right; that they get their just reward. In eternity, every man is evaluated justly. Ultimately, no one gets away with anything and all injustices are righted.

Psalm 103:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mîsh ^e pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced <i>mîsh^e-PAWT</i>]	<i>judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, the judgement of the court; the act of deciding a case, the place where a judgement is rendered</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4941 BDB #1048

Psalm 103:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿâshaq (אֲשַׁק) [pronounced <i>gaw-SHAHK</i>]	<i>to exploit, to oppress, to wrong, to extort</i>	masculine plural, Qal passive participle	Strong's #6231 BDB #798

Translation: ...and [correct] judicial verdicts to the exploited ones. Our judicial system has become a mess. Judges, in a grab for power, have decided that it is their business to make the laws, rather than to simply render accurate verdicts. I recall from my Freshman government class of two opposing results derived from the same law by two different judges. Essentially, one judge decided one way, which made the law say one thing; and, several years later, another judge took the same law and made it say the exact opposite, thus changing the result of the application of that law. The end results of judicial verdicts have become, in the United States, much more powerful than the laws which are twisted and turned to produce the outcome which suits that particular judge. Some examples: Row v. Wade; Fruit from the Poisonous Tree (had it not been 30 years since I took that class, I might recall more). Millions of dollars are rewarded by some courts essentially because juries feel sorry for the plaintiffs; even though there was no criminality or malfeasance involved on the part of the defendant (I have experienced that first hand). Furthermore, the innocent are often trapped because of their innocence and openness to talk and the guilty are often freed or given lighter sentences because they have higher criminals that they can bargain for or because they simply know how to work the system. God vindicates some on this earth; and He vindicates all in eternity (compare Psalm 9:8 146:7 Isa. 9:7).

Barnes comments: *God sees that justice is done to the oppressed. [The oppressed are those who are oppressed by] harsh laws; by unjust governments; by slavery; by unrighteous decisions in courts; by the pride and power of wicked men. God is on their side. His law, His commands, His judicial decisions, His providential interpositions, are in their favor. This does not mean that it will be done at once; or that there will never be any delay; or that they may not suffer even for a long time, —for this occurs in fact; but the meaning is, that God has their true interest at heart; that at proper times, and whenever and wherever there are any dealings of his in the case, his acts are in favor of those that are oppressed; and that there will be sooner or later such interpositions in their behalf as shall entirely vindicate their cause.*¹⁹

**He makes known His ways to Moses;
to sons of Israel His actions.**

Psalm
103:7

**He makes known to Moses His ways
and [He shows] His actions to the sons of
Israel.**

**He teaches His principles to Moses
and He reveals His character by His actions to the sons of Israel.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

The Amplified Bible

He made known His ways [of righteousness and justice] to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.

CEV

He taught his Law to Moses
and showed all Israel what he could do.

God's Word™

He let Moses know his ways.

¹⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 75–76; edited somewhat.

	He let the Israelites know the things he had done.
JPS (Tanakh)	He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the children of Israel.
NASB	He made know His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel.
NLT	He revealed his character to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel.
The Septuagint	He made known his ways to Moses, his will to the children of Israel.
Young's Updated LT	He makes known His ways to Moses, To the sons of Israel His acts.

What is the gist of this verse? God revealed a more complete understanding of His justice to Moses, via the Law, which Moses made known to the sons of Israel.

Psalm 103:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâda ^ʿ (יָדָע) [pronounced yaw-DAHḤ]	<i>to cause to know, to make one know, to instruct, to teach</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
derek ^ê (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced DEH-rek ^ê]	<i>way, distance, road, journey, manner, course</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1870 BDB #202
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^ê)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Mosheh (מֹשֶׁה) [pronounced moh-SHEH],	<i>to draw out [of the water] and is transliterated Moses</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #4872 BDB #602

Translation: He makes known to Moses His ways... God taught Moses principles of His character to Moses. God spoke the Law to Moses, which Moses wrote down dutifully, and then presented to the sons of Israel. Moses was amazing in his complete obedience to God. There was only one occasion revealed in Scripture where Moses failed to act as God had told him to act. Often, I cannot seem to go a day without doing that which is wrong; Moses appeared to go for years without doing that which is wrong. His complete obedience and faith are amazing. Therefore, God did not have to do anything to Moses by way of actions to keep him in line. Once Moses got with the program (which did take some time), he stayed with the program.

This portion of v. 7 is witnessed to by pretty much the Law from Exodus through Deuteronomy, but Psalm 99:6–7 sum it up well: *Moses and Aaron were among His priests; they called upon Jehovah and He answered them. He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; they kept His testimonies, and the statute that He gave them.*

Psalm 103:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^ê)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

Psalm 103:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bên (בן) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Yis ^{ra} êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
ʿălîylâh (עֲלֵי־לַוָּי) [pronounced <i>al-ee-LAW</i>]	<i>actions, deeds; wanton acts</i>	feminine plural noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5949 BDB #760

Translation: ...and [He shows] His actions to the sons of Israel. On the other hand, the sons of Israel, particularly those two generations, were bundles of negative volition. They all believed God originally; however, their actions throughout the march to the Land of Promise were deplorable. God, on several occasions, revealed actions and deeds to them in order to get their attention and to get them on track again. He had done enough so that His Law should have been good enough for the sons of Israel; however, their negative volition and slave mentality was so great as to cause them to rebel against God again and again.

You may wonder why on earth God chose a people who were so negative towards Him; a people who, as a whole, would later reject His Son. The idea is this—in some ways, there has never been a people as unlovely and as undeserving as the Jews. In no way could we think that they ever deserved what God did on their behalf. In this, they are an object lesson to us. It does not matter how unlovely and how undeserving that we are—God will still have us. It doesn't matter that we appear to everyone around us a loser in every respect—God will still have us. It does not matter how awful and how rebellious that we have been, nor does it matter how many and what sort of sins that we have committed—God is willing to forgive us. Jesus died on behalf of every man and we need only trust Him for our salvation. The Jews in all their negativity are our object lesson: [He declares His words to Jacob and His statutes and His ordinances to Israel](#) (Psalm 147:19). The principle is called grace—they don't deserve it and we don't deserve it.

Merciful and gracious [is] Y^ehowah, slow of nostrils and much of grace.

Psalm
103:8

Y^ehowah [is both] merciful and gracious, slow [to] anger and [having] much grace.

**Jehovah is both merciful and gracious,
slow to anger
and possessing abundant grace.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

CEV	The LORD is merciful! He is kind and patient, and his love never fails.
God's Word™	The LORD is compassionate, merciful, patient, and always ready to forgive.
JPS (Tanakh)	The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love.
NASB	The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.
NJB	Yahweh is tenderness and pity, slow to anger and rich in faithful love;...

NLT	The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love.
REB	The LORD is compassionate and gracious, long-suffering and ever faithful;...
The Septuagint Young's Updated LT	The Lord is compassionate and pitiful, longsuffering, and full of mercy. Merciful and gracious <i>is</i> Jehovah, Slow to anger, and abundant in mercy.

What is the gist of this verse? God is merciful and gracious; He is slow to anger and has abundant mercy (which He is willing to shed upon us).

Psalm 103:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
rachûwm (רַחוּם) [pronounced <i>rah-KHOOM</i>]	<i>compassionate, merciful</i>	adjective	Strong's #7349 BDB #933
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
channûwm (חַנּוּן) [pronounced <i>khahn-NOON</i>]	<i>gracious</i>	adjective	Strong's #2587 BDB #337
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: Y^ehowah [is both] merciful and gracious,... I think that the proper rendering of *rachûwm* is *merciful* rather than *compassionate*. Compassion implies that God has a knowledge of our circumstances and our inner character, and let's us get by with stuff because he recognizes our deficiencies. You might see someone in need, someone who is sick, someone who is down and out, and you will feel compassionate toward them, regardless of how they got there. God does not function that way. God is perfect and He cannot have fellowship with imperfect beings. He is holy (set apart from all that is wrong, sinful and worldly), and cannot enjoy fellowship with those who are not set apart. So God does not look down on us and think to Himself, "That is really sad; I need to do something good for Charlie Brown today; he's taken a lot of hard knocks." Instead, mercy recognizes that we are totally undeserving of God's grace, yet He gives us grace regardless.

Grace, to borrow from Thieme, is *all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the cross*. God gives us what we do not deserve and could never earn. God overlooks what we have done; He gives us what we do not deserve; none of this is based upon a human notion of compassion, but upon His Son's work upon the cross.

Psalm 103:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾerek ^e (אֶרֶךְ) [pronounced <i>EH-rek</i>]	<i>slow, patient, long</i>	adjective, masculine singular construct	Strong's #750 BDB #74

Psalm 103:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾaph (אֵף) [pronounced ahf]	nose, nostril, but is also translated face, brow, anger	masculine dual noun	Strong's #639 BDB #60

Translation: ...slow [to] anger... Although the word ʾaph literally means *nostril*, it also means *anger*, and is used much more often in that sense. God takes a long time to become angry with us. This is an anthropopathism; God does not get angry. However, it seems like when we sin, that often God does not discipline us right away (which is done for our own good because we are sons of God through Christ Jesus). In the Old Testament, God is said to be slow to anger if He did not lay on the discipline immediately.

From mid-Exodus through the book of Numbers, we have a study of God's patience and longsuffering. Although the exodus generation witnessed the greatest miracles ever performed, up until the first advent of our Lord, they still complained, they still doubted God, and at every turn, were willing to return to their idolatrous ways.

Psalm 103:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	and	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
rab (רַב) [pronounced rahv]	many, much, great (in the sense of large or significant, not acclaimed)	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7227 BDB #912
cheṣed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced KHEH-sed]	grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2617 BDB #338

Translation: ...and [having] much grace. This is easy to understand, although difficult to render word-for word. God is abundant in grace; He possesses and incredible amount of grace. David did not know exactly the reason; he did not have a complete and full understanding of soteriology (which is true of almost all Old Testament believers); but he believed in Jehovah God, and he recognized that saved him; and he recognized that the result was that God poured on a huge amount of grace upon him, which he did not earn and he did not deserve.

This verse appears to be taken directly from Ex. 34:6b, which reads: "Y^ehowah, Y^ehowah God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in grace and truth." This would be a point of interest, as it is much more rare for one Old Testament writer to quote another (even though the books of the Old Testament agree in doctrine). On the other hand, it is very common for the New Testament writers to quote the Old Testament. In any case, this is a common doctrine, expressed also in Num. 14:18 Neh. 9:7 Psalm 86:15 145:8 Joel 2:13 Jonah 4:2 Micah 7:18–19 Nahum 1:3 James 5:11.

**Not to forever He contends;
and not to perpetuity He keeps.**

Psalm
103:9

**He will not find fault [with us] forever
and He will not keep [a case against us]
forever.**

**God will not find fault with us forever
nor will He keep us under indictment forever.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	He will not always chide <i>or</i> be contending, neither will He keep His anger for ever <i>or</i> hold a grudge.
CEV	The LORD won't always be angry and point out our sins;...
God's Word™	He will not always accuse us of wrong or be angry [with us] forever.
JPS (Tanakh)	He will not contend forever, or nurse His anger for all time.
NASB	He will not always strive <i>with us</i> ; Nor will He keep <i>His anger</i> forever.
NJB	his indignation does not last for ever, nor his resentment remain for all time;...
NLT	He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever.
The Septuagint	He will not be always angry; neither will he be wrathful forever.
Young's Updated LT	Not forever does He strive, Nor to the age does He watch.

What is the gist of this verse? Although God reasonably has a case against us; or even though He can reasonably find fault with us, He will not do so forever.

Psalm 103:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (אֵל אוֹ אֵל) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nêtsach (נֶצַח) [pronounced <i>NAY-tsahkh</i>]	<i>forever, constantly, perpetuity, eternity, continually</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5331 BDB #664

Since so many of the translations incorrectly render this word *Glory* or *Strength*, I should offer some Scripture where this word is consistently rendered *forever*: 2Sam. 2:26 Psalm 9:6 77:8 79:5 Jer. 50:39 Amos 1:11. Although both Gesenius and BDB offer a plethora of meanings for this word, the ones given should suffice for Scripture.

rîy ^b v (רִיב) [pronounced <i>ree^bv</i>]	<i>to debate, to contend, to dispute; to conduct a case or suit [against someone], to make a complaint [against someone]; to find fault</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7378 BDB #936
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Translation: He will not find fault [with us] forever... We have a very careful parallelism here, although it is not easy to understand. The first statement is, however, which should allow us to correctly understand the second. The verb used is for someone filing suit or bringing a complain against another. God has a complaint against us; He has a contention with us. He does find fault with us. However, this will not go on forever. David recognizes that, even though God reasonably conducts a case against us, He will not do that forever.

However, we must bear in mind that this verse does imply that God will find fault for a period of time; He will rebuke His Own people for a short time (a short time by His reckoning, not ours). *He may rebuke His people, but this will not be forever. He will punish them; He will manifest His displeasure at their sins; He will show that He does not approve of their course, but He will show that He loves them as well, and does not seek their ruin.*²⁰

Psalm 103:9b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô ⁷ (אֵלֹא or אֵלֹאֵי) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>leh</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿôwlâm (עוֹלָם) [pronounced <i>ô-LAWM</i>]	<i>long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761
ʿôwlâm together with the lâmed preposition mean <i>forever</i>			
nâṭar (נָטַר) [pronounced <i>naw-TAHR</i>]	<i>to keep, to maintain; to guard</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5201 BDB #643

Translation: ...and He will not keep [a case against us] forever. By itself, this half of v. 9 means very little. Literally, it is *and He will not keep forever*. The obvious question is *keep* or *guard* what? Context is the key. God has a case against us; He has found fault with us; He has filed suit against us. He will not keep or guard *this case against us* forever. *His anger is but for a moment, His grace is for a lifetime; weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy [greet]s the morning* (Psalm 30:5; compare Isa. 57:16 Jer. 3:5, 12).

**Not as our sins has He done to us
and not as our iniquities has He recompensed
upon us.**

Psalm
103:10

**He has not done to us according to our sins
and He has not recompensed us according to
our iniquities.**

**He has not dealt with us according to what we deserve because of our sins
nor has He recompensed us according to our iniquities.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

CEV
God's Word™

he doesn't punish us as our sins deserve.
He has not treated us as we deserve for our sins
or paid us back for our wrongs.

JPS (Tanakh)

He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
nor has He requited us according to our iniquities.

NAB

Has not dealt with us as our sins merit,
nor requited us as our deeds deserve.

²⁰ Quoted and paraphrased from Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 76.

NASB	He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
NJB	he does not treat us as our sins deserve, nor repay us as befits our offences.
NLT	He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve.
REB	He has not treated us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our misdeeds.
The Septuagint	He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor recompensed us according to our iniquities.
Young's Updated LT	Not according to our sins has He done to us, Nor according to our iniquities Has He conferred benefits upon us.

What is the gist of this verse? This verse implies that we deserve eternal punishment (or some kind of terrible punishment) for our sins and our iniquities. However, this verse states clearly that God does not act as our sins would dictate that He act; He does not reward (i.e., *punish*) us as our iniquities would require.

Psalm 103:10a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (אֵלֹא or אֵלֹאֵי) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
kaph or k ^e (כּ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
chêṭ ^{er} (חַטָּיִם) [pronounced <i>kheyf</i>]	<i>sin, offense, fault; penalty for sin, calamity</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #2399 BDB #307
âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition with the 1 st person plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: *He has not done to us according to our sins...* Again, we have a very carefully written parallelism, with the structure of the sentence and many of the words being exactly the same. What this does for us is, if we cannot figure out one side of the psalm, the other side will give us enough information so that we can. We are all deserving of eternal death; we all deserve punishment for our sins. There have been almost innumerable times that we have sinned, we knew it was wrong, and we just went ahead and did it. We have done this as believers and as unbelievers. God does not deal with us as these sins would require. The sins we have committed require discipline and eternal punishment. However, God does not deal with us according to what we deserve for committing these sins. David, when he wrote this psalm, understood God's grace and its implications. As McGee concludes: *My friend, if God would deal with us according to our sins and according to our iniquities, none of us would be saved.*²¹

²¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 90–150*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 45.

Psalm 103:10b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô ⁷ (ל ⁷ or ל ⁷ ל) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
âvôwn (א ⁷ ו ⁷) [pronounced <i>âw-VOHN</i>]	<i>iniquity, crime, offense, transgression, depraved action, guilt, punishment from wrongdoing</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #5771 BDB #730
gâmal (ג ⁷ מ ⁷) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAHL</i>]	<i>to produce [fruit]; to wean; to do, to make; to give, to recompense; to reward, to bestow [blessings as a result of a stage of growth; when followed by לו]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1580 BDB #168
al (א ⁷ ל) [pronounced <i>âhl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752

Translation: ...and He has not recompensed us according to our iniquities. We should receive our just rewards for our behavior. Just because we have a sin nature, this does not mean that we are helpless. You cannot complain (or state the argument) that God cannot punish me for doing these things because God made me this way. We all have free will. Our free will can be remarkably resistant to our inner impulses and to outer influences. Therefore, a homosexual cannot say, God is love, God made me a homosexual, and therefore, it is right for me to commit homosexual acts. A Lothario cannot say, God is love, God made me attracted to women, and therefore, it is right for me to chase women. A drug addict cannot say, God is love, God made me an addict, and therefore, it is right for me to indulge myself with drugs (or alcohol). For every sin and every weakness and every flaw, God also provided free will. Each time that we sin according to our area of weakness, it is easier to fall into that sin again; however, each time, we still have free will and we can always exercise free will. Let's see if I can give you a more common illustration. You are married, you have children, and you are tempted by a member of the opposite sex. If you think about this, you could be trading for you life, your marriage, your children, and the well-being of your spouse for a few hours of pleasure. A married alcoholic with children faces the same dilemma every time he (or she) is tempted to drink; a married drug addict with children is faced with the same dilemma each time he (or she) is tempted to use drugs. If you stop and give the temptation some thought, men and women time and time again, often with God's help, do not succumb, even though they have a desire to give in to their lusts. They weigh out the short amount of pleasure against the vast amounts of pain which will be generated, not only in their own lives, but in the lives of those they are closest to, and they are able to engage their free will to act responsibly. My point in all of this is, we cannot blame God for being tempted and we cannot blame God for our succumbing to temptation. Therefore, on the basis of personal sins alone, apart from any other theological approach, we deserve eternal punishment, eternal separation from God, for our iniquities. However, David tells us here that God does not reward, or requite or recompense us according to our iniquities. God does not give us what we deserve (compare Ezra 9:13). **For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23).**

For as high [two] heavens [are] above earth,
Has been strong His grace upon ones fearing
Him.

Psalm
103:11

For as high as the heavens [are] above the
earth,
His grace has been greater [lit., *been stronger*]
upon [or, *is exalted over*] those fearing Him.

His grace is greater upon those who fear and respect Him
than heaven is above the earth.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great are His mercy <i>and</i> loving-kindness toward those who reverently <i>and</i> worshipfully fear Him.
Barnes	For like the height of the heavens above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.
CEV	How great is God's love for all who worship him? Greater than the distance between heaven and earth!
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	For <as the heavens are exalted over the earth> His lovingkindness hath prevailed [Ginsburg thinks it should be "is exalted"] over them who revere him;...
<i>God's Word™</i>	As high as the heavens are above the earth— that is how vast his mercy is toward those who fear him.
JPS (Tanakh)	For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.
NAB	As the heavens tower over the earth, so God's love towers over the faithful.
NASB	For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear [or, <i>revere</i>] Him.
NLT	For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
The Septuagint	For as the heaven is high above the earth, the Lord has increased His mercy toward them that fear Him.
TEV	As high as the sky is above the earth, so great is his love for those who honor him.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	For, as the height of the heavens <i>is</i> above the earth, His kindness has been mighty over those fearing Him.

What is the gist of this verse? A comparison is drawn between the unfathomable grace of God to the unfathomable distance between heaven and earth.

Psalm 103:11a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
gâ ^b vôhah (גַּבְוָהָה) [pronounced <i>gaw^b-VOH-ah</i>]	<i>high, exalted</i>	adjective construct	#1362, #1364 BDB #147

Psalm 103:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH-yim]	heavens, skies	masculine dual noun	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	earth (all or a portion thereof), land	feminine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75

Translation: For as high as the heavens [are] above the earth,... We have a different sort of comparison here in Scripture than we might have made ourselves. The comparison is between the distance between heaven and earth and the strength of God's grace. We have only in this past century began to see just how great the distance is between the outreaches of heaven and earth is. In fact, the distance is pretty much beyond our imagination. We can put it into words, we can ascribe numbers to it, we can design units around it, but it comes down to being unfathomable. This gives us a better clue as to what David means here—the distance from earth to the furthest heavens is unfathomable; just as God's grace to us.

Psalm 103:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gâbar (גָּבַר) [pronounced gaw ^b -VAHR]	to be strong, to be mighty, to exhibit greater strength than, to be stronger than, to prevail over	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1396 BDB #149
Although Rotherham translates this word <i>hath prevailed over</i> , he notes that Ginsburg thinks that it should read <i>is exalted</i> . Given the obvious parallelism, Ginsburg could very well be correct.			
cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced KHEH-sed]	grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2617 BDB #338
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
yârêʿ (יָרֵא) [pronounced yaw-RAY]	to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect	masculine plural, Qal active participle with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3372 BDB #431

Translation: ...His grace has been greater [lit., been stronger] upon [or, is exalted over] those fearing Him. As high as heaven is above earth, God's grace is even greater. Psalm 36:5–6 seems like a natural continuation of this verse: Your grace, O Jehovah, extends to the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the skies; Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgements are like the deep; O Jehovah, you preserve man and beast.

Now note, there are various ways of referring to believers. We find the term *believer* in the New Testament; in the time period immediately following the Apostolic era, *Christian* designated those who are His. However, in the Old Testament, we have the verb *yâê*, which means *to fear, to respect, to reverence*.

Because of new age philosophy, we, as adults, have backed off giving our children any reason to fear us; the result is, just when these children think that they are invulnerable, they find themselves in juvenile hall or in jail with a permanent record, which does follow them all of their lives. The results to us as parents have been far more devastating, resulting in schools and streets and churches which are no longer safe havens.

Depending upon your age, you may never have known someone who inspired both fear and respect. I think back on one particular principal that I worked under as a teacher; he was a Senior principal, and he was tough and gritty and he applied discipline when necessary (which included swats); and yet he never was embarrassed to show his love for his students. The students respected him and they feared him. He could hold an assembly with 400+ students and no teachers, and they wouldn't utter a peep. They showed tremendous respect and they also knew what their jackass behavior could result in. This is God as Israel knew Him. He revealed great love and grace to Israel; however, you did not mess around with His Truth and with His Law. His justice was equally strong; one example would be Korah and his followers, who were swallowed up in an earthquake. There were plagues in the desert wilderness which took thousands of lives when Israel strayed from God.

The parallelism here is a bit difficult to grasp. The comparison that is meant is, the heavens are far above and envelope the earth in a huge way. The earth is completely immersed in the heavens; similarly, believers are completely immersed in His grace.

**As a being distant of east from west,
He has removed from us our infractions.** Psalm 103:12 **As the distance [is] from the east to the west,
[so] He has removed our violations from us.**

He has removed our infractions as far from us as the east is from the west.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Barnes (updated)	Like the distance of the east from the west [or, <i>like its being so far</i>], so far has He removed our transgressions from us.
CEV	How far has the LORD taken our sins from us? Farther than the distance from east to west!
God's Word™	As far as the east is from the west— that is how far he has removed our rebellious acts from himself.
JPS (Tanakh)	As east is far from west, so far has He removed our sins from us.
NASB	As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
The Septuagint Young's Updated LT	As far as the east is from the west has He removed our transgressions from us. As the distance of east from west He has put far from us our transgressions.

What is the gist of this verse? God has removed our transgressions far from us (and therefore the punishment that we deserve).

Psalm 103:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced k ^e]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
râchaq (רָחַק) [pronounced raw-KHAHK]	<i>to thrust away, to repel; to go away far, to be afar off, to be distant, to be remote</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7368 BDB #934
There is some disagreement as to the word here; Edersheim has the noun/adjective rāchôq (רָחֹק) [pronounced raw-KHOHK], which means as an adjective, <i>distant, far</i> ; as a noun, it means <i>distance</i> (which can be a reference to time or space). It is obviously the noun/adjective cognate for our verb. Strong's #7350 BDB #935. Both the New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament and Gesenius see this as the verb. The difference of opinion does little to change the meaning.			
miz ^e râch (מִזְרָח) [pronounced miz ^e -RAHKH]	<i>eastward, east, place of sun rising</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4217 BDB #280
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ma ^c ârâb (מַעְרָב) [pronounced mah-guh-RAW ^{BV}]	<i>west; (merchandise, market)</i>	masculine singular noun (this is a homonym)	Strong's #4628 BDB #788

Translation: *As the distance [is] from the east to the west,...* Again, we have a distance set up to parallel God's dealings with us. Here, we are looking at the distance from the east to the west. For travelers at that time, going from where the sun arose to where it went down in the evening was pretty much as impossible to them as going to moon would have been. Some traveling and migration took place, but, generally speaking, they covered relatively short distances. No one today thinks much of traveling the distance from Egypt to Israel—it's like going from one state in the United States to a bordering state; however, at that time, it was an arduous journey (which journey takes up most of the books of Moses).

It is an interesting choice here, *east and west*. Had the psalmist chosen *north and south*, then, when one heads north, he would eventually arrive at the north pole and, if he kept on going, he would be going south. However, when it comes to going east or west, there is no point at which going east becomes going west. If you go east, then you must stop and head in the opposite direction to go west. Therefore, this is a very apropos choice of compass directions.²²

²² Taken from J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 90–150*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 46.

Psalm 103:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râchaq (רָחַק) [pronounced raw-KHAHK]	<i>to remove, to cause to remove; to go far off, to take far off; to go away far</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #7368 BDB #934
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
peshaʿ (פֶּשַׁע) [pronounced PEH-shahg]	<i>violation, infraction, disobedience, insubordination, rebellion, transgression, trespass</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #6588 BDB #833

Translation: ...[so] He has removed our violations from us. The parallelism is exactly as we had in the previous verse; the author David takes two things which are far from each other and compares this to what God has done with our sins. Our sins are as removed from us as the east is from the west. One of the reasons we study the Old Testament is that there are a lot of silly misconceptions about the doctrine of the Old Testament. Some think that the Israelites had to obey the Law in order to be saved; however, David makes it clear in this psalm that the key is not our good behavior, but that God removed our sins from us. Now, what is meant here is not the actual sins, but the natural penalty which would come from committing those sins. Our relationship to God is as if we were completely separate from our sins—and this is exactly what the New Testament teaches; the only difference is that the actual mechanics are given in the New Testament. Our sins were put on Christ; Jesus was punished for our sins; **Jesus became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him** (1 Cor. 5:21; see also Rom. 3:19–20 5:1, 8–11).

The sin that David is best known for was his adultery with Bathsheba and then causing her husband to die in battle. David spent no little time out of fellowship until Nathan the prophet approached him. Nathan gave David an analogy of a poor man with his ewe lamb and how it was stolen by a rich man. David was incensed against this rich man, until he found out that it was him. Then we have the very short confession of sin, followed by God's forgiveness: **Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against Jehovah." And Nathan said to David, "Jehovah also has caused your sin to be removed; you will not die."** (2Sam. 12:13). By the cross, our sins are ultimately removed from us. When it comes to temporal fellowship with God, when we sin, we confess that sin and God removes it from us—that sin is no longer a barrier to our fellowship with Him. Hezekiah has a similar bout with sin, and received from God complete and total forgiveness (see Isa. 38:17). Compare Zech. 3:9 Rom. 4:7. **Because of this act of God, There is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus** (Rom. 8:1).

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Ephemeral Man/Eternal God

As [the] compassion of a father upon sons,
[so] has had compassion Y^ehowah upon those
fearing Him.

Psalm
103:13

Just as a father has compassion for [his] sons,
[so] Y^ehowah has compassion for those who
fear [and respect] Him.

Jehovah has the same compassion toward those who fear and respect Him as a father does for his
own sons.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

- The Amplified Bible* As a father loves *and* pities his children, so the Lord loves *and* pities those who fear Him — with reverence, worship and awe.
- CEV Just as parents are kind to their children, the LORD is kind to all who worship him,...
- JPS (Tanakh) As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear Him.
- NASB Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.
- NJB As tenderly as a father treats his children, so Yahweh treats those who fear him;...
- NLT The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.
- The Septuagint As a father pities children, the Lord pities them that fear Him.
- Young's Updated LT* As a father has mercy on sons, Jehovah has mercy on those fearing Him.

What is the gist of this verse? To understand God’s compassion for us, the psalmist suggests that we examine the compassion of a father for his sons.

Psalm 103:13a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kaph or k ^e (כּ) [pronounced 'k ^e]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
râcham (רַחַם) [pronounced raw-KHAHM]	<i>to have compassion, to behold with the tenderest affection</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #7355 BDB #933
ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced aw ^b]	<i>father, both as the head of a household or clan</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1 BDB #3
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
bên (בְּנֵי) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

Translation: Just as a father has compassion for [his] sons,... As in the previous several verses, the psalmist is offering us another analogy. God’s treatment of us is similar to the treatment that a father gives his own sons.

This love of one’s son is a recurrent theme in Scripture. It begins with Abraham, who’s only son by Sarah is Isaac. God tells Abraham to offer Isaac up as a sacrifice, “...the son whom you love!” (Gen. 22:2b). We find this in the

book of Zechariah, when Zechariah stares down the corridors of time to the crucifixion of our Lord, and he records the words of God: “And I will pour out on the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me Whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only begotten son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.” (Zech. 12:10). We find this in the gospels, when God calls down from heaven: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased!” (Matt. 3:17b). Finally, we find this again in the epistles of Paul, where he writes: **Since God did not spare His own Son, but He delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?** (Rom. 8:32).

Psalm 103:13b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râcham (רַחַם) [pronounced raw-KHAHM]	to have compassion, to behold with the tenderest affection	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #7355 BDB #933
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]	transliterated variously as Jehovah, Yahweh, Y ^e howah	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
‘al (עַל) [pronounced ġahl]	upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
yârê’ (יָרֵא) [pronounced yaw-RAY]	to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect	masculine plural, Qal active participle with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3372 BDB #431

Translation: ...[so] Y^ehowah has compassion for those who fear [and respect] Him. Again, the reference is to those *who fear and respect Him*. This is a typical way to refer to believers of the Old Testament. If we understand the great love a father has for his own sons, then that gives us an idea as to God's love for us.

**For He has known our body,
remembering that dust we [are].**

Psalm
103:14

**For He knows our [bodily] form,
recalling that we [are] dust.**

**For He knows our bodily form,
recalling that we are but dust.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

CEV	Just as parents are kind to their children, the LORD is kind to all who worship him, because he knows we are made of dust. [v. 13 is included for context].
Updated Emphasized Bible	For he knows how we are formed [more literally, <i>our formation</i>] He is mindful that dust we are.
God's Word™	He certainly knows what we are made of. He bears in mind that we are dust.
JPS (Tanakh)	For He knows how we are formed; He is mindful that we are dust.
NAB	For he knows how we are formed, remembers that we are dust.
NASB	For He Himself knows our frame [i.e., <i>what we are made of</i>]; He is mindful that we are <i>but</i> dust.

NKJV For He knows our frame [*understands our constitution*];
He remembers that we are dust.

NLT For he understands how weak we are;
he knows we are only dust.

The Septuagint For He knows our frame; remembers that we are dust.

Young's Updated LT For He has known our frame,
Remembering that we are dust.

What is the gist of this verse? God knows what we are made of; he recognizes that we are inherently weak, possessing an old sin nature.

Psalm 103:14a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>he, it</i>	masculine personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
yâda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced <i>yaw-DAHÇ</i>]	<i>to see; to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to know, to become acquainted, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
yêtser (יָצַר) [pronounced <i>YAY-tser</i>]	<i>body, form; ethereally, it means purpose</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #3336 BDB #428

Translation: For He knows our [*bodily*] form... God was the One Who designed our bodies. He knows the complete inner workings of our soul and body. Science has only begun to scratch the surface of the intricacies of our human body. However, what David is implying is that God knows all there is to know about us; He knows our very weaknesses, our desires, our inner beings. Here, the reference appears to be, on the surface, just to our physical bodies; however, God fully understands us and our workings. What is more important, God will not fall for any nonsense like, we have no self-control, we were made this way, we are unable to choose to do anything else.

Allow me a tangent here: it has become, during my lifetime, acceptable for one to engage in homosexual behavior. One of the rationalizations for this (and the chief rationalization) is that, *this is how God made them*. Pedophiles, on the other hand, do not get off the hook that easily. I doubt that any man chooses at some time in his life, simply to lust after undeveloped youths of either sex as his own means of self-expression. I am certain that is an innate drive—you see, the old sin nature has areas of weakness, and this can take on many forms, including pedophilia. I doubt that this is a sin that anyone chooses for themselves, but eventually manifests itself. I would not be surprised if there was something in the genetic makeup of a pedophile which makes him a pedophile. This does excuse the pedophile in any way; just as genetic predisposition does not excuse the homosexual (if they are genetically predisposed).²³ My point in all of this is, God knows our genetic predispositions; He knows our weaknesses and the things which tempt us. He does not allow these to be excuses, nor does God condemn us eternally because of the commission of several heinous sins. God knows our form—further, He knows the interrelationship of our souls and bodies; He knows our souls.

²³ Since a significant number of homosexuals either dress themselves up as women or look for partners who are men dressed as women, that would indicate that homosexual behavior is not entirely a genetic predisposition.

Psalm 103:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zâkar (זָכַר) [pronounced zav-KAHR]	<i>remember, recall, call to mind</i>	Qal passive participle	Strong's #2142 BDB #269
<i>The passive participle [here used] appears in some cases to express a state which is the result of the subject's own action.²⁴ In other words, this can be understood in the active sense.</i>			
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
ʿâphâr (עָפָר) [pronounced ʿaw-FAWR]	<i>dry earth, dust</i>	masculine singular substantive	Strong's #6083 BDB #779
ʾănach ^o nûw (אֲנַחְנוּ) [pronounced uh-NAHKH-noo]	<i>we</i>	1 st person plural pronoun	Strong's #587 BDB #59

Translation: ...recalling that we [are] dust. God knows that our bodies are simply made of the same chemicals found in the earth. This is mentioned at least several times in Scripture (Gen. 2:7 3:19 18:27 Eccles. 12:6–7), something which science confirmed several millenniums later. This is not David's point, however. He is, certainly, alluding to the fact that God made our bodies out of the elements of the earth (even though he may not have even realized how literal that is); however, it is man's inherent weakness as well as his lack of importance that is really being emphasized, in a poetic sort of way. David expresses a similar sentiment in Psalm 139:13–15a: *For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows that very well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret* [i.e., in the womb]. To paraphrase Bullinger, man remembers our faults and sins, but not necessarily our inherent infirmities; God, however, calls to mind our inherent infirmities, but He will forget our sins.²⁵

Barnes states his opinion: *God knows that we are made of dust; that we are frail; that we are subject to decay; that we soon sink under a heavy load...In His dealings with us, He does not forget of what frail materials He made us and how little our frames can bear. He tempers His dealings to the weakness and frailty of our nature, and his compassion interposes when the weight of sorrows would crush us. Remembering, too, our weakness, He interposes by His power to sustain us, and to enable us to bear what our frame could not otherwise endure.*²⁶

The psalmist on the death march approaches this from a personal point of view. *Your hands made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments* (Psalm 119:73). He recognizes that God did fashion our human bodies; he therefore asks God to influence his soul.

**[Mortal] man—like the grass;
his days [are] like a flower of the field—
so he blossoms.**

Psalm
103:15

**Mankind [is] like the grass;
his days [are] like the flower of the field;
so he blossoms.**

²⁴ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 582, quoting from p. 137 Dr. A. B. Davidson's *Hebrew Syntax* (T. & T. Clark, 1896).

²⁵ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 885.

²⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 77–78.

**Man is like the grass and his days are like the flower of the field;
he blossoms.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

- CEV We humans are like grass
 or wild flowers that quickly bloom.
- God's Word™ Human life is as short-lived as grass.
 It blossoms like a flower in the field.
- JPS (Tanakh) Man, his days are like those of grass;
 he blooms like a flower of the field;...
- NASB As for man, his days are like grass;
 As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
- NLT Our days on earth are like grass;
 like wildflowers, we bloom and die.
- REB The days of a mortal are as grass;
 he blossoms like a wild flower in the meadow; .
- The Septuagint Man—his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he will flourish.
- TEV As for us, our life is like grass.
 We grow and flourish like a wild flower;...
- Young's Updated LT Mortal man! As grass are his days,
 As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

What is the gist of this verse? In this verse and the next, David draws an analogy between man and the flower of the field. Man's life is compared to a flower that appears in a field.

Psalm 103:15a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>אָנוֹשׁ (אנוש) [pronounced en-OHSH]</p>	<p><i>mortal, mortal man, mankind; fallen man, depraved man, feeble man [liable to disease and calamity]; peons, hoi polloi, the great unwashed, rabble</i></p>	<p>masculine singular noun</p>	<p>Strong's #582 BDB #60</p>
<p>When this word is used for man, the emphasis is either a reference to man in his fallen state (the emphasis does not have to be upon sin; it can be upon man's fragility and mortal nature) or upon the lower classes of man, <i>the peons, peasants, hoi polloi, the great unwashed, rabble</i>.</p>			
<p>כִּי (כ) [pronounced k^e]</p>	<p><i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i></p>	<p>preposition</p>	<p>No Strong's # BDB #453</p>
<p>חֵצֵי (חצר) [pronounced khaw-TSEER]</p>	<p><i>grass, green grass, herbage; fence; dwelling, dwelling area; settled abode</i></p>	<p>masculine singular noun with the definite article</p>	<p>Strong's #2682 BDB #348</p>

Translation: **Mankind [is] like the grass;...** David begins to draw another analogy—this taken from his personal observations—and one which is famous and known by millions to this day. He compares fallen man to the grass or herbage. This is actually a rather common theme in Scripture. Psalm 90:5: **You had swept them away; like a flood, they fell asleep. In the morning, they are like a grass which sprouts anew.** Isa. 40:7b: **All flesh is grass, and**

all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. Peter will quote this in I Peter 1:24 (which I will quote in full when I complete these verses, as they are all half-thoughts).

Psalm 103:15b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yôwm (יּוֹם) [pronounced yohm]	day, today (with a definite article)	masculine plural noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
kaph or k ^e (כּ) [pronounced k ^e]	like, as, according to; about, approximately	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
tsîyts (צִיץ) [pronounced tzeetz]	blossom, flower; a shiny thing [e.g., the plate of gold worn by the High Priest]; a wing	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6731 BDB #847
sâdeh (שָׂדֵה) [pronounced saw-DEH]	field, land, open field, open country	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7704 BDB #961

Translation: ...his days [are] like the flower of the field;... Man's days are like the flower of the field. Job 14:2: "Like a flower, man comes forth and withers. He flesh is like a shadow and does not remain." I recall as a younger person, I planted some bulbs in my yard, and they came up and they were beautiful and, it seemed like they lasted such a short time that when I looked at them again, they had lost their flower. I recall thinking, "That's it? That's all I get for the care that I gave them?" Our lives are like the flowers of those bulbs.

Psalm 103:15c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kên (כֵּן) [pronounced kane]	so or thus	adverb	Strong's #3651 BDB #485
tsûwts (צוּץ) [pronounced tzoots]	to blossom, to flourish	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6731 BDB #847

Translation: ...so he blossoms. Just like the flower of the field, it stands up, colorful and attractive, catching the attention of all who walk by. James applies this specifically to the rich man, which passage we will quote in its entirety in the next verse.

The Comments of Albert Barnes: *These thoughts are fixed on man; —man, who is so frail and weak; man, who is not only made originally of earth, but man who is also delicate, feeble, soon to pass away like the spring grass, or like the fading flower...He is like a flower that is flesh and beautiful, and that soon withers away.*²⁷

²⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 78. Slightly revised.

For a wind has passed over in him and his nothing; and he does not contemplate him again his place.

Psalm 103:16 For a wind passes over it, and [it is] no longer [lit., *nothing*]; and its place does not acknowledge him [ever] again.

For, after a wind passes over it, it is no longer; and its place on this earth goes on as though it had never been.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

- CEV But a scorching wind blows, and they quickly wither to be forever forgotten.
- God's Word™ When the wind blows over the flower, it disappears, and there is no longer any sign of it.
- JPS (Tanakh) ...a wind passes by and it is no more, its own place no longer knows it.
- NASB When there wind has passed over it, it is not more; And its place acknowledges it no longer.
- NLT The wind blows, and we are gone— as though we had never been here.
- REB ...a wind passes over him, and he is gone, and his place knows him no more.
- The Septuagint For the wind passes over it, and it will not be; and it will know its place no more.
- TEV then the wind blows on it, and it is gone— no one sees it again.
- Young's Updated LT For a wind has passed over it, and it is not, And the place does not discern it any more.

What is the gist of this verse? David continues the previous verse, concluding that our lives are like the flower of the grass, which is here one day, and gone the next.

Psalm 103:16a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced <i>ROO-ahkh</i>]	<i>wind, breath, spirit, apparition</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7307 BDB #924
ʿâbar (עָבַר) [pronounced <i>gaw^b-VAHR</i>]	<i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5674 BDB #716
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

Psalm 103:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾēyn (אֵין) [pronounced ān]	<i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession</i>	particle of negation; substantive of negation with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #369 BDB #34

Translation: For a wind passes over it, and [it is] no longer [lit., *nothing*];... First of all, this verse refers back to the flower, which is the basis of the analogy. Both the references in this verse and the flower are in the masculine singular. The wind passes over the flower, and it no longer exists. The idea is not necessarily a violent wind, but a flower goes through its life, and then all it takes is a wind to remove its petals. The flower dies, and it becomes nothing. That analogy is, of course, applied to man, who lives on this earth, and, after so many years, passes away and becomes nothing.

We find a parallel verse in Psalm 78:39: He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind [or, *breath*] that passes and does not return. Psalm 102:11–12: My days are like a lengthened shadow, and I wither away like grass. But You, O Jehovah, abide forever and Your name continues in all generations. I have already quoted two other passages, which I left incomplete. Let me complete them here. Psalm 90:5b–6: In the morning, they are like the grass which sprouts anew. In the morning, it flourishes, and sprouts anew, but towards the evening, it fades and withers away. I Peter 1:24: All flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever (Isa. 40:6–8).

James applies this same principal specifically to the rich man: The rich man will glory in his humiliation, because he will pass away like the grass that flowers. The sun rises with a scorching wind, and the grass withers, its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too, the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away (James 1:10–11). Elsewhere, David uses this same analogy with those who do wrong: Don't fret yourself because of those who do evil; don't be envious of those who do wrong. For they will wither quickly like the grass and fade like the green herb. Trust in Jehovah and do good (Psalm 37:1–3a).

The thoughts of Barnes: *The reference here is either to a hot and burning wind, that dries up the flower; or to a furious wind that tears it from its stem; or to a gentle breeze that takes off its petals as they loosen their hold, and are ready to fall. So man falls, —as if a breath—a breeze—came over him, and he is gone. How easily is man swept off! How little force, apparently, does it require to remove the most beautiful and blooming youth of either gender from the earth! How speedily does beauty vanish; how soon, like a fading flower, does such a one pass away!*²⁸

Keil and Delitzsch give their thoughts on the previous verse and a half: *Man's...life's duration is likened to that of a blade of grass, and his beauty and glory to a flower of the field, whose fullest bloom is also the beginning of its fading...and the wind that scorches up the plants, referred to man, is an emblem of every form of peril that threatens life; often enough it is really a breath of wind which snaps off a man's life...[however] in the midst of this frail destiny, there is one strong ground of comfort: there is an everlasting power, which raises all those who link themselves with it above the transitoriness involved in nature's laws, and makes them eternal like itself. This power is the mercy of God, [which is shed upon] all those who fear Him.*²⁹

We are so caught up in ourselves and in our own lives, that we have no true concept of history. Or, sure, we can look back at our youth, and remark how much things have changed, but we often do not seem to realize just how

²⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 78 (slightly revised).

²⁹ Keil & Delitzsch *Commentary on the Old Testament; Psalms*; 1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 648 (slightly revised).

ephemeral we are, and just how relatively short our stay is here on earth. Our only reasonable approach is to grab onto that which is eternal—that which existed before the earth, and that which will exist after this world has been transformed. David in this psalm will suggest that we look to God’s grace; Isaiah emphatically states that it is the Word of God which is eternal. These are the things to which we should adhere; our lives and our possessions, our hopes and our dreams, are temporary. Older people realize that, as time progresses, the years seem to whiz by. Compared to mankind, our lives are the flower of the grass the grows for a moment, and then is blown away by a wind. Compared to eternity, our lives are even less significant than that.

Psalm 103:16b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^o (or v ^o) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
lô ^o (לוֹ אוֹ לֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong’s #3808 BDB #518
nâkar (נָכַר) [pronounced <i>naw-KAHR</i>]	<i>to contemplate, to behold, to recognize, to acknowledge, to be acquainted with, to know, to know how, to care for</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong’s #5234 BDB #647
ôwd (עוֹד) [pronounced <i>gohd</i>]	<i>still, yet, again, besides, in addition to, even yet</i>	adverb	Strong’s #5750 BDB #728
mâqôwm (מָקוֹם) [pronounced <i>maw-KOHM</i>]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong’s #4725 BDB #879

Translation: ...and his place does not acknowledge him [ever] again. The subject of the verb is the final word in this verse, which is *his place* (or, *his station*). The flower had a place on earth where its roots were; when it came up, it looked out over a certain field, a certain place, which was the place of the flower. However, once this flower passes away, the place where the flower was does not contemplate, recognize or acknowledge that the flower was there. Imagine a clear, green field, with a marvelous violet flower rising above the short grass that can be seen from a distance. A few months later, you can walk to the same field and look, and there will be no sign of this flower (unless, of course, it propagated itself). But if it did not lay down seed (or if the seed will not appear until spring), you can examine this field and never have a clue where the flower was or even that there was this marvelous violet flower. After a time, there will be nothing in this field that acknowledges the previous existence of this flower. The analogy is to man; men can have all sorts of personalities and impact during the time that they are here; however, after several years pass, and they have pass away, where they lived, the places that they frequented, have no mention of their existence. Imagine an old man who, for the last 20 years of his life, walks the same mile-long walk every morning. However, once this man passes away, there is nothing along that walk that tells you that he was there.

One of the recurrent themes of Job is, given a few centuries, and the impact of any man on where he lived is nothing. “So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up. He will not return again to his house, nor will his place know him any more.” (Job 7:9b–10). “He thrives before the sun and his shoots spread out over his garden. His roots wrap around a rock pile, he grasps a house of stones. If he is removed from this place, then it will deny him, saying, ‘I never saw you.’ Listen, this is the joy of His way and out of the dust, others will spring forth.”

(Job 8:16–19). “He perishes forever, like his own refuse. Those who have seen him will say, ‘Where is he?’ He flies away like a dream, and they cannot find him. Even like a vision of the night, he is chased away. The eye which saw him sees him no more, and his place no longer beholds him.” (Job 20:7–9). For those who know the book of Job, it is interesting that these are three quotes from three different men, all of whom are arguing about Job’s condition. However, all three of these men agree here on how ephemeral is the life of man.

Now, of course, some men try to achieve some human-viewpoint sort of immortality and have buildings, foundations, grants and scholarships named after them. I recall at one school where I taught, there were two scholarships given, to which were affixed the names of two previous teachers. I didn’t know these teachers; none of the students knew these teachers; and the teachers were still alive. At some point in time, all who knew these teachers, who were probably marvelous and dynamic people, will no longer be in the district and most will have passed away. The scholarships might survive, but they are simply names; names which mean very little even to the recipients. And, for the average man, for the most part, 100 years after he is gone, there is nothing which tells us that this man even existed.

The point is, what is man? He lives on this earth and often leaves not a trace of his existence. I’ve looked at my genealogy and have been able to go several generations back. However, this barely takes me into the 1800’s, and those names and dates that I have of those ancestors from the 1800’s tells me precious little about them. I know their names, their birth dates and the days of their deaths. Beyond that, I know precious little. The houses that they built or lived in are no longer there. Other than the records which I have, the best I could expect from any ancestor of the 1800’s is to find a grave marking the place of their burial (and even that is highly unlikely). David has spoken of God and what God has done on our behalf in vv. 1–13. Now he has begun to think more about man and how ephemeral that man really is.

Again, the words of Albert Barnes: *“Place” here is personified, as if capable of recognizing the objects which are present, and as if it missed the things which were once there. They are gone. So it will soon be in all the places where we have been; where we have been seen; where we have been known. In our dwellings; at our tables; in our places of business; in our offices, studies, laboratories; in the streets where we have walked from day to day; in the pulpit, the courtroom, the legislation hall; in the place of revelry or festivity; in the prayer room, the sanctuary—we will be seen no longer...and the impression on those who are there, and with whom we have been associated, will be best expressed the language, “He is gone!” Gone; —where? No one that survives can tell. All that they whom we leave will know will be that we are absent—that we are gone.*³⁰

**And grace of Y^howah from perpetuity as far as
perpetuity unto those fearing Him
and His righteousness to sons of sons,...**

Psalm
103:17

**Furthermore, the grace of Y^howah [is] from
everlasting to everlasting to those [who] fear
[and respect] Him
and His righteousness [is given] from
generation to generation [lit., to sons of
sons],...**

**Furthermore, the grace of Jehovah is given from eternity past to eternity future to those who fear and
respect Him
and His righteousness is given from generation to generation,...**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

CEV

The LORD is always kind to those who worship him,
and he keeps his promises to their descendants.

God’s Word™

But from everlasting to everlasting,
the LORD’s mercy is on those who fear him.

³⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 78 (slightly revised).

His righteousness belongs
to their children and grandchildren,...

JPS (Tanakh) But the LORD's steadfast love is for all eternity
toward those who fear Him,
and His beneficence is for the children's children...

NASB But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who
fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children.

NLT But the love of the LORD remains forever with those who fear him.
His salvation extends to the children's children...

NRSV But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting
on those who fear him,
and his righteousness to children's children,...

REB But the LORD's love is for ever on those who fear him,
and his righteousness on their posterity,...

The Septuagint But the mercy of the Lord is from generation to generation upon them that fear Him,
and his righteousness to children's children;...

TEV But for those who honor the LORD, his love last forever,
and his goodness endures for all generations...

Young's Updated LT And the kindness of Jehovah
Is from age even unto age on those fearing Him,
And His righteousness to sons' sons,...

As you no doubt notice, even from a precursory glance, most translations have vv. 17–18 as a cohesive whole. The thought does not end with v. 17; you will need to hold onto it through to the next verse.

What is the gist of this verse? In contrast with ephemeral man, God's grace is forever to those who fear and respect Him. The imputed righteousness of one generation can have resounding effects on the generations which follow.

Psalm 103:17a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
cheçed (חֶסֶד) [pronounced <i>KHĒH-sed</i>]	<i>grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2617 BDB #338
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ôwlâm (עוֹלָם) [pronounced <i>ôo-LAWM</i>]	<i>long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

Psalm 103:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿad (עד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
ʿōwlām (עוֹלָם) [pronounced <i>gō-LAWM</i>]	<i>long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761
Together, these words (going back as far as the <i>min</i>) mean <i>from everlasting to everlasting, from eternity past to eternity future</i> or <i>from antiquity to everlasting</i> . This phrase has been translated to <i>the age and forever</i> (Young), <i>to times age-abiding and beyond</i> (Rotherham), <i>forever and ever</i> (NASB, NJB), <i>never</i> (this is with the negation in the NAB, REB, NIV and NRSV), and <i>forever</i> (<i>The Amplified Bible</i>).			
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
yârêʿ (יָרֵא) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAY</i>]	<i>to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3372 BDB #431

Translation: Furthermore, the grace of Y^ehowah [is] from everlasting to everlasting to those [who] fear [and respect] Him... Since god is eternal, his character is eternal; since His character is eternal, His grace is eternal, and it is bestowed upon those who place their faith in Him (in the Old Testament, the most common phrase for the believer was *those who fear Him*, which fear/respect demands faith in the first place).

Barnes comments on *everlasting to everlasting*: *It is from the eternity past to eternity future. It had its foundation in the eternal decrees of God; it has its security in his purpose that where it is conferred, it will not be withdrawn. It had no beginning; it will have no end. There never was a period in the past when it was not the purpose of God to save His people; there never will be a period in the future when it will be said that his saving mercy has ceased.*³¹

There are two very important points that David makes in this verse, which are cornerstones of the Christian faith: in this first half, God puts His grace upon those (or gives His grace to those) who are believers—and this grace does not remain with them from a short time (as long as they are good), but stays with them from eternity past to eternity future. Eternity past is when God conceived of His plan (I am speaking in human terms), so that those who had never been born received His grace even then. And furthermore, this grace is upon them to eternity future. David tells us that God does not pull the rug out from under us.

As we would expect, it is easy to find a parallel passage which speaks to the eternal nature of God's grace: *Remember, O Jehovah, Your compassion and Your graciousness, for they have been from eternity past* (Psalm 25:6). The key to this and the preceding verses is that, man, even though he is so ephemeral, can take a hold of that which is eternal: God's grace and His righteousness. It is our bonding with that which is eternal which gives an eternal nature to our lives. Apart from God, our lives and our impact is minimal; with God, our lives are tied to that which is eternal. In Christ, we are eternal, as we share in His attributes.

Application: All believers screw up, and some more than others. In some cases, what they do is very obvious to those around them, and in other cases, it is very subtle and few, if any, know. In all religions, the blessings of God extend to those who seek Him and obey Him and generally speaking, over that period of time that they seek and obey. Those who leave the fold are often spoken of as being in worse shape than when they came. However, this

³¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 78–79 (slightly revised).

is not the case. You may have screwed up your life; you may have done all that you could have to ruin your relationship with God. That doesn't matter—if you are a believer, His grace goes from everlasting (eternity past) to everlasting (eternity future). Even if you are under discipline, that is put on you as a father to a son—it is for your benefit. If you want to fight it—fine; just bear in mind that your relationship with God will extend beyond this period of hard-headedness in your life.

Psalm 103:17b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ts ^e dâqâh (תְּדַאָּחַ) [pronounced <i>ts^edâw-KAW</i>]	<i>righteousness, executed righteousness and justice, righteous vindication</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6666 BDB #842
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bên (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
bên (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

Translation: *...and His righteousness [is given] from generation to generation [lit., to sons of sons],...* The second theological point that David makes is that God's vindication extends from generation to generation. Now we, as believers, may not appreciate that very much—generally because our sense of past and present doesn't extend beyond those we know. However, to the Jew, who will be picked up and thrown out of Israel and scattered to other countries—this is an important concept. God's righteousness continues from generation to generation—it is given to every generation. Now, each individual of each generation has to make the choice himself; however, for those who believe in Him—in Jesus Christ—God's righteousness is given, no matter how far removed you are from Israel.

The biggest problem with this verse is that you cannot simply stop with v. 17. God does not automatically give His righteousness to every subsequent generation. The option is there; in the next verse, David continues this thought, telling us how this righteousness may be appropriated.

**...to keepers of His covenant
and to rememberers of His commandments to
do them.**

Psalm
103:18

**...to those keeping His pact
and to those remembering His commandments
and obeying same [lit., to do them].**

**...to those who keep his pact
and to those who remember and obey His commandments.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

The Amplified Bible

To such as keep His covenant — hearing, receiving, loving and obeying it; and to those who [earnestly] remember His commandments to do them [imprinting them on their hearts].

CEV	The LORD is always kind to those who worship him, and he keeps his promises to their descendants who faithfully obey him. [v. 17 is included for context]
God's Word™	to those who are faithful to his promise, to those who remember to follow his guiding principles.
JPS (Tanakh)	...of those who keep His covenant, and remember to observe His precepts.
NASB	To those who keep His covenant And who remember His precepts to do them.
NLT	of those who are faithful to is covenant, of those who obey his commandments!
REB	on those who hold fast to his covenant, who keep his commandments in mind.
The Septuagint Young's Updated LT	...to them that keep His covenant and remember His commandments to do them. To those keeping His covenant, And to those remembering His precepts to do them.

What is the gist of this verse? Those in subsequent generations, if they hold onto His covenant, will receive God's eternal grace (from v. 17) as did their ancestors.

Psalm 103:18a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAR</i>]	<i>a keeper of, a guard of, a watcher of, a preserver of</i>	Qal active participle, masculine plural construct	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036
b ^e rîyth (בְּרִית) [pronounced <i>b^ereeth</i>]	<i>pact, alliance, treaty, alliance, covenant</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1285 BDB #136

Translation: **...to those keeping His pact...** God made a pact with Israel— “I will be their God and they will be My people” (Jer. 31:33b; see also Ezek. 14:11 37:27 Zech. 8:8 Heb. 8:10). As well as, “I show mercy to thousands who love Me and keep My commandments.” (Ex. 20:6). And “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deut. 5:29; see also Lev. 22:31 26:3 Deut. 5:10).

Psalm 103:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

Psalm 103:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zâkar (זָכַר) [pronounced <i>zaw-KAHR</i>]	<i>remembering, recalling, calling to mind; those recalling, those remembering; who remember, who recall</i>	masculine plural construct, Qal active participle	Strong's #2142 BDB #269
pîqqûwdîym (פְּקֻדֵיִם) [pronounced <i>pik-koo-DEEM</i>]	<i>commandments, mandates, precepts</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6490 BDB #824
This word is found only in the psalms. In Psalm 103:18, it is spelled with a mem (which, according to Owen and the New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament, is not a preposition here).			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	Qal infinitive construct with a 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

Translation: ...and to those remembering His commandments and obeying same [lit., to do them]. Israel was responsible to know God's Law. It was written on stone in a public place (Deut. 27:8 Joshua 24:26). We still do not know how widespread copies of Scripture were or what medium may have been used for the common man (and it may have been retained by memory, as this verse implies). Psalm 119:52: I have remembered Your ordinances from old, O Jehovah, and [I use them to] comfort myself. Deut. 7:9: "Know therefore that Jehovah your God, He is God, the faithful God, Who keeps His covenant His grace to the thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments." Psalm 25:10: All the ways of Jehovah are grace and truth to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.

Here is the problem—who is really able to keep all His commandments? No one, including David, the psalmist, is able to remember and to obey all of God's commands. The key is fearing Him (this is the Old Testament phrase) or believing in Him (the New Testament phrase).

**Y^ehowah in the [two] heavens has established His throne;
and His kingdom in the totality has ruled.** Psalm 103:19 **Y^ehowah has established His throne in the heavens
and His kingdom rules in [the presence of] all.**

**Jehovah has established His throne in the heavens
and His kingdom rules over all.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

- CEV God has set up his kingdom in heaven, and he rules the whole creation.
- God's Word™ The LORD has set his throne in heaven. His kingdom rules everything.
- JPS (Tanakh) The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His sovereign rule is over all.
- NAB The LORD's throne is established in heaven;

	God's royal power rules over all.
NASB	The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; And His sovereignty [or, <i>kingdom</i>] rules over all [i.e., <i>the universe</i>].
NLT	The LORD has made the heavens his throne; from there he rules over everything.
The Septuagint	The Lord has prepared His throne in the heaven; and His kingdom rules over all.
TEV	The LORD placed his throne in heaven; he is king over all.
Young's Updated LT	Jehovah in the heavens Has established His throne, And His kingdom over all has ruled.

What is the gist of this verse? The God of Israel is sovereign over all, as His throne has been set up in heaven.

Psalm 103:19a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAH- yim</i>]	<i>heavens, skies</i>	masculine dual noun with the definite article	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029
kûwn (כּוּן) [pronounced <i>koon</i>]	<i>to erect (to stand up perpendicular), to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #3559 BDB #465
kiççê' (כִּסֵּא) [pronounced <i>kis-SAY</i>]	<i>throne, seat of honor; seat of judgment</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3678 BDB #490

Translation: *Y^ehowah has established His throne in the heavens...* As you should note, this begins a new topic. We are no longer speaking of man and God's graciousness toward man. As an earthly king would rule in the midst of his kingdom, perhaps from a well-fortified city on a high mound, God rules from His throne in heaven.

We find a parallel passage in Psalm 11:4a: *Jehovah is in His holy temple; Jehovah's throne is in heaven* (see also Psalm 9:4, 7 123:1). The idea, which is given abundant Scriptural support, is that Jehovah God, although He chose a specific people for Himself, is the God of the Universe.

Barnes: *This is the ground of the security that His blessing will be imparted to those who fear Him, and to their children's children...God is a Sovereign. His throne is fixed and firm. His dominion is not vacillating and changing. His reign is not, like the reign of earthly monarchs, dependent on the capriciousness of a changeable will, or on passion; nor is it liable to be altered by death, by revolution, or a new dynasty. The throne of God is ever the same, and nothing can shake or overthrow it.*³²

³² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 79.

Psalm 103:19b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mal ^e kûwth (מַלְכוּת) [pronounced mahi-KOOTH]	<i>royalty, royal power, reign, kingdom</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4438 BDB #574
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
kol (כֹּל) [pronounced kol]	<i>the whole, totality, all, the entirety, every</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
mâshal (מָשַׁל) [pronounced maw-HAHL]	<i>to rule, to have dominion, to reign</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4910 BDB #605

Translation: ...and His kingdom rules in [the presence of] all. God's dominion is not that of a particular country; the God of Israel is the God of the Universe Who rules over all things. We have several parallel verses from Psalm 47: For Jehovah Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth; ...for God is the King of all the earth. God reigns over the nations; God sits upon His holy throne (vv. 2, 7a, 8). Also, Psalm 83:18: That they may know that You alone, whose name is Jehovah, are the Most High over all the earth (also see Psalm 22:28 66:7 80:1 113:5). When Daniel warned the Jews of God's discipline, he added the fact the Jehovah God is the God over all (Dan. 4:17, 25). To paraphrase Barnes, *since God reigns over all, He can therefore execute all His plans.*³³

This recognition that the God of Israel is the God of all brings us full circle to the end of this psalm, where David will call for all to celebrate Who and What God is.

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Praise Jehovah, a Refrain

Praise Y^ehowah, His messengers,
strong men of power,
doers of His Word,
to listen in a voice of His Word.

Psalm
103:20

Celebrate Y^ehowah, you His messengers [or,
angels],
mighty ones of power,
those doing His Word,
to listen to the teaching [lit., voice] of His
Word.

Celebrate Jehovah, you His messengers, mighty ones of power;
those who do His Word and those who listen to the teachings of His Word.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

³³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 79.

CEV	All of you mighty angels, who obey God's commands, come and praise your LORD!
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Bless Yahweh, ye messengers of his, — Heroes of vigour doing his word, To hearken [again] to the voice of his word;...
<i>God's Word™</i>	Praise the LORD, all his angels, you mighty beings who carry out his orders and are ready to obey his spoken orders.
JPS (Tanakh)	Bless the LORD, O His angels, mighty creatures who do His bidding, ever obedient to His bidding.
NAB	Bless the LORD, all you angels, mighty in strength and attentive, obedient to every command.
NASB	Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word!
NJB	Bless Yahweh, all his angels, mighty warriors who fulfil his commands, attentive to the sound of his words.
NLT	Praise the LORD, you angels of his, you mighty creatures who carry out his plans, listening for each of his commands.
The Septuagint	Bless the Lord, all you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His bidding, to listen to the voice of His words.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	Bless Jehovah, you His messengers, Mighty in power—doing His word, To listen to the voice of His word.

What is the gist of this verse? We should therefore praise or celebrate Jehovah God. This is actually directed toward those who teach His Word here on earth.

This call to praise Jehovah or to celebrate His sovereignty, is directed toward all created things, which helps us to interpret each line of the next several verses.

Psalm 103:20a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yohh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Psalm 103:20a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The Septuagint and Vulgate insert an <i>all</i> in here, ³⁴ making this: Celebrate Y^ehowah, all you his messengers...			
mal ^é âk ^é (מַלְאָכִים) [pronounced <i>mah^é-AWCH^é</i>]	<i>messenger</i> or <i>angel</i> ; this word has been used for a prophet (Isa. 42:19) priest (Mal. 2:7)	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4397 BDB #521
gibbôwr (גִּבּוֹרִים) [pronounced <i>gib-BOAR</i>]	<i>strong men, mighty men, soldiers</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1368 BDB #150
kôwach (כּוֹחַ) [pronounced <i>KOE-ahkh</i>]; also spelled kôach (כֹּחַ) [pronounced <i>KOE-ahkh</i>]	<i>strength, power, ability</i>	masculine singular substantive	Strong's #3581 BDB #470

Translation: [Celebrate Y^ehowah, you His messengers \[or, angels\], mighty ones of power...](#) We can interpret the words of this verse in a couple of different ways. The most common is to assume that David is addressing the angels of God, or the elect angels. The problem with that is he seems to repeat himself in the next verse, which would be okay, if he repeated himself again in v. 22. That would establish a clear parallelism, which would be reasonable, given the repetition of the Piel imperative of bârak^é. However, we do not seem to have a continued repetition of the same thought in the next verse nor in the one after that, save for this particular phrase. Therefore, we may reasonably assume that David is referring to different entities in each verse. Furthermore, the elect angels are never spoken of elsewhere as those who do God's Word or those who listen to His Word. Therefore, we should take the word mal^éâk^é to refer to a *messenger* from God, whether a prophet, priest or even a poet. Those who are messengers from God are said to have great power. These would be the ministers of His Word (in the day of David, this would be prophets, priests, and, not too long ago, judges).³⁵

Barnes: *This psalm began with an exhortation to "praise [or, celebrate] the Lord." That exhortation was, however, then addressed by the psalmist to his own soul, and was especially founded on the benefits which he had himself received. This psalm closes also with an exhortation to "praise [or, celebrate] the Lord," yet on a much wider scale. The psalmist feels that there is not only occasion for him to do it, but that the reason for it extends to the whole universe. The meaning is, that God is worth of universal praise; and all ranks of beings—all worlds—should join in that praise.*³⁶

Psalm 103:20b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>a doer of, a maker of, a constructor of, a fashion of, a preparer of</i>	Qal active participle, masculine plural construct	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
dâ ^b vâr (דְּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1697 BDB #182

³⁴ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 582.

³⁵ In Psalm 147:1–3, the same word would be applied to angels, given the context.

³⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 79–80 (slightly paraphrased).

Psalm 103:20b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâma ^ʿ (שׁוּמָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i>]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
b ^ə (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6963 BDB #876
dâ ^b vâr (דְּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1697 BDB #182

Translation: ...those doing His Word, to listen to the teaching [lit., voice] of His Word. Here, a minister of God's Word both does God's bidding and listens to God's teaching. So, God's messengers receive God's imperatives first.

**Praise Y^ehowah, all His armies,
His ministering ones,
doers of His will.**

Psalm
103:21

**Celebrate Y^ehowah, all you His hosts [or,
armies],
His ministering ones [or, servants]
who do [lit., doers of] His will.**

**Give praise to Jehovah, you His armies,
His servants who act on His behalf.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Bless — affectionately, gratefully praise — all of you His hosts, you ministers of His who do His pleasure.
CEV	All of you thousands who serve and obey God, come and praise your LORD!
<i>God's Word™</i>	Praise the LORD, all his armies, his servants who carry out his will.
JPS (Tanakh)	...bless the LORD, all His hosts, His servants who do His will;....
NASB	Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, doing His will.
NJB	Bless Yahweh, all his armies,

servants who fulfil his wishes.

NLT Yes, praise the LORD, you armies of angels who serve him and do his will!

The Septuagint Bless he Lord, all you His hosts; His ministers who do His will.

TEV Praise the LORD, all you heavenly powers, you servants of his, who do his will!

Young's Updated LT Bless Jehovah, all you His hosts, His ministers—doing His pleasure.

What is the gist of this verse? David calls upon *the hosts of Jehovah* to praise Him. This is a reference to all angelic creation.

Psalm 103:21a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bâarak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ts ^e bâ'ôwth (צְבָאוֹת) [pronounced <i>tz^{eb}-vaw-OHTH</i>]	<i>armies, wars</i>	masculine plural noun, simply the plural of Strong's #6635, but often used in titles; with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6635 BDB #838

Translation: Celebrate Y^ehowah, all you His hosts [or, armies],... *His hosts* or *His armies* refers often to the angelic beings; there additional material in this verse seem to indicate that is of whom we are speaking. Therefore, all angelic creation is to celebrate Jehovah, or to praise Jehovah. In reference to the word *hosts*, Barnes adds: *His armies; the vast multitudes of holy beings, arranged and marshalled as hosts for battle, in all parts of the universe.*³⁷

I have already given you passages where *messenger* or *angel* can refer to prophets or priests (within the Hebrew table). *Hosts* is used for human armies, but it is also used for angelic creation. See 1Kings 22:19 Neh. 9:6 Psalm 148:2 Luke 2:13.

³⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 80.

Psalm 103:21b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shârath (תַּרְשָׁ) [pronounced shaw-RAHTH]	to serve, to minister	masculine plural, Piel participle with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8334 BDB #1058
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ʿaw-SAWH]	a doer of, a maker of, a constructor of, a fashion of, a preparer of	Qal active participle, masculine plural construct	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
râtsôwn (רָצוֹן) [pronounced raw-TSOWN]	own will, free will, favour, grace, accepted, desire, pleasure, delight	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7522 BDB #953

Translation: ...His ministering ones [or, servants] who do [lit., doers of] His will. Those who are to praise and celebrate Jehovah are further described in the second part of this verse. Here, we are not speaking of those who listen to God's Word, but those who act in accordance with His pleasure; that is, they do what God asks them to do. These would be all His angels, whose functions we only have an inkling of. Heb. 1:14: **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?**

Barnes: *These...execute His purposes...that is, what is agreeable to Him...Employed in His service, and appointed to execute His will, they are called on to bless His name. The fact of being employed in His service is a sufficient reason for praise. It is implied here that those "ministers of His" actually do His will. They are obedient to His commands; they regard themselves as employed for Him.*³⁸

**Praise Y^ehowah, all His works
in all places of His dominion.**

Psalm
103:22

**Celebrate Y^ehowah, all His creation
in all places of His realm.**

Praise [ye], O my soul, Y^ehowah.

Praise Y^ehowah, O my soul.

**Give praise to Jehovah, all He has created
everywhere in His realm.**

My soul will praise Jehovah.

Here is how others have handled this verse:

The Amplified Bible

Bless the LORD, all His works in all places of His dominion; bless — affectionately, gratefully praise — the Lord, O my soul!

CEV

All of God's creation and all that he rules,
come and praise your LORD!

JPS (Tanakh)

With all my heart I praise the LORD!

...bless the LORD, all His works,
through the length and breadth of His realm;
bless the LORD, O my soul.

NAB

Bless the LORD, all creatures,
everywhere in God's domain.

³⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 80.

NASB Bless the LORD, my soul!
 Bless the LORD, all you works of His,
 In all places of His dominion;
 Bless the LORD, O my soul.

NLT Praise the LORD, everything he has created,
 everywhere in his kingdom.
 As for me—I, too, will praise the LORD.

REB Bless the LORD, all created things,
 everywhere in his dominion.

The Septuagint Bless the LORD, my soul.
 Bless the Lord, all his works, in every place of His dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul.

Young's Updated LT Bless Jehovah, all you His works,
 In all places of His dominion.
 Bless, O my soul, Jehovah!

What is the gist of this verse? All the Jehovah has created is to praise and celebrate Him. Then the final line is a refrain which concludes the psalm.

Psalm 103:22a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ma'ăseh (מַעֲשֵׂה) [pronounced <i>mah-ġa-SEH</i>]	<i>deeds, works, production, that which is done</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4639 BDB #795

Translation: Celebrate Y^ehowah, all His creation... Everything that God created is to praise and celebrate His being. This is, of course, poetical language. Inanimate objects to not cry out, "Praise Jehovah!" However, the beauty and intricacy of their structure praises God by its very nature. We find a similar verse in Psalm 145:10, which reads: All Your works will give thanks to You, O Jehovah and Your godly ones will bless You. Psalm 19:1: The heavens tell of the glory of God and their expanse declares the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor are there words; their voice is not heard. All His creation would be the heavens, the earth, and all that is in them. Psalm 150:6: Let everything that has breath praise Jehovah!

Psalm 103:22b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
mâqôwm (מִקְוֵם) [pronounced maw-KOHM]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
mem ^e shâlâh (מִשְׁלַח) [pronounced mem ^e -shaw-LAW]	<i>ruler, dominion, realm; in the plural, our best rendering would be realm</i>	feminine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4475 BDB #606

Translation: *...in all places of His realm.* All of God's creation is to celebrate Him, no matter where it is found. *The heavens declare the glory of God and their expanse declares the work of His hands* (Psalm 19:1, another psalm by David). The implication is that there is a great deal to God's creation beyond our immediate periphery.

Barnes adds: *Bless the LORD, all His works. All that He has made, animate and inanimate, intelligent and brute. It is not uncommon to call on the inanimate creation to join with intelligent beings in praising God. In all places of His dominion. Wherever He reigns, on earth, or in heaven; here or in distant worlds.*³⁹

Psalm 103:22c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced baw-RAHK ^e]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #1288 BDB #138

When David speaks to his own soul, and tells it to celebrate or to praise Jehovah, then we would expect the verb to be a 2nd person feminine singular, and not a masculine plural, as we find. The difference is the ending; the same verb in vv. 1–2 has a yodh (י) at the end while the verb here has a wâw at the end (ו). This form of the verb makes little sense here and one could be easily mistaken for the other.

³⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 80 (slightly edited).

Psalm 103:22c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nephesh (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>NEH-fesh</i>]	<i>soul, life, living being, desire</i>	feminine singular noun with a 1 st person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5315 BDB #659
`êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	generally untranslated	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

This is an example of a copyist error which was perpetuated because later copyists did not want to change anything in the text they received. So, even though this is obviously a feminine singular noun, it is rendered as a masculine plural because that is what that copyist found. This inaccuracy is a testimony to the accuracy of the copyists throughout the centuries. If you didn't understand that, let me see if I can explain: there is a fairly obvious mistake here, and, if the Biblical text was *not* revered, any copyist would have simply changed it to suit the grammar of this verse. Their attitude was, *I know this is wrong, but this is the text I was given to copy, so I will copy exactly what is here.*

Only the REB and the NJB properly separated this final portion of v. 22 from the rest of the psalm. It was the line which marked the beginning and the end of this psalm. It framed this psalm; therefore, it is reasonably set apart from this psalm. It is at once the *title* and the *conclusion*, the *hello* and the *goodbye*.

Translation: [Praise Y^ehowah](#), [O my soul](#). At the end of this psalm, four different entities are commanded to praise and to celebrate Jehovah: God's faithful ministers—those who bring the Word of God to man; God's great hosts, the angelic creation; God's creation—the heavens, the earth and all that is in them; and the soul of David. This psalm began with this phrase, and within the psalm, we found reasons why David's soul should celebrate the person and character of God. This phrase, therefore, marks a natural ending for this psalm. The similar beginning and ending of Psalm 104 suggest that David wrote these psalms together, either in the same night or on successive nights.

Barnes: Ending the psalm as it began, and with the additional reason derived from the fact that the universe is called on to do it. As one of the creatures of God; as a part of that vast universe, the psalmist now calls on his own soul to unite with all others—to be one of them—in praising and blessing the Creator...David's heart was full; and in a universe thus joyous—thus vocal with praise—he wished to be one among the immense multitudes that lifted their voices in adoration of the great Jehovah.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 3*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 80 (slightly edited).