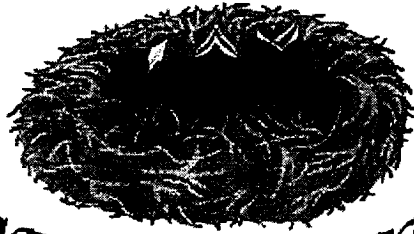


They shall mount up...

ON EAGLES' WINGS



AERY NUGGETS

...with wings of eagles.

Isaiah

40:31 purpose

October 2012

Bless the LORD, O my soul!

Psalm 103

Steven J. Faulkner

On a certain day in late September, my daughter and I were walking together on the bicycle path south of our home. My heart on that day seemed burdened with many cares, and I felt the need to go to a peaceful place and just think on the Lord. When considering a major life decision, or when troubled by some unpleasant circumstance, do you ever seek such a place of solitude for prayer and meditation? Consider the lovely expression in Genesis 24:63 relating a time of reflection for Isaac as he anticipated the arrival of Rebecca, his bride, "*And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide...*".

The evening is such a lovely time of the day, don't you think? On our bicycle trail walk, the beauty and solitude of the park seemed to encourage a thankful and prayerful spirit in me. As we coursed our way along a winding trail through the rolling grassland, with the occasional stands of trees on either side of the path, all decorated in the vivid hues of autumn, the glory of God's creation seemed to fairly cry out to us. As my daughter described the scene to me, I could picture a world, though in autumnal decline, full of incredible beauty. The woods around this field were simply on fire with color, and I rejoiced as she described the vibrant reds, oranges, and yellows that were all around us, painted against a background of golden grass and a deep blue sky. And to think, the Lord crowned even the declining season with such splendor! What a contrast! It was a time when all the plants of the field were dying back, yet at this very time, the Lord of the universe brought out the most splendid scene of the year! Though my eyes could no longer perceive this glorious display, my soul thrilled at the very description, and in my mind's eye, I saw it all. I immediately forgot my cares, and my very soul cried out in delight to the Lord because of His amazing works! My utter delight found expression in the words of *Psalm 103:1, 2*: "*Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits...*".

As we consider the first two verses of Psalm 103, we might find ourselves wondering what happy circumstance in David's life elicited such praise. But, in fact, as we read the Psalm, it seems apparent to me that the psalmist was not rejoicing so much about some recent victory or a happy occurrence in his life, though this too could certainly have been a part of his praise. Rather, I think, David's soul responded to something much more sublime; I believe the Holy Spirit led David to consider the amazing mercy and goodness of God for His people, and all the wonderful plans that God has for his own. So, the praise that is called for does not depend at all upon present circumstances. Israel, even in times of difficulty, could bless the God whose mercies were as great as the heavens are high above the earth (verse 11); and whatever their situation over the centuries, the faithful of Israel could always rejoice in God's loving kindness towards His people, as well as in the ultimate blessings He had in mind for them as a nation. Regardless of the difficulties or failures of the present, God has wonderful plans for His children!

In verse 2 of this Psalm, we are called upon to "forget not all His benefits." Do we remember the benefits of the Lord even during the difficult times? They are just as real then. What are some of these benefits? We read in verses 3-5, "*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's*". My dear Christian friend, just like a father provides good things for his children, God daily blesses His own.





On any day, we who are believers can remember that God forgives our iniquities and heals our

diseases. How blessed we are to be able to say, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us,”* (verse 12). This is the magnificent truth for all who have trusted in Christ! And as for our diseases, while many of us may still have sickness or feel the effects of advancing age, we can always be cheered to know that despite our declining health, we have eternal life in Christ. We also can know that the God of the universe understands our weaknesses and actively helps His own all along our wilderness path: *“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust,”* (verses 13, 14). Come what may in our lives, we have a great High Priest who can sympathize with us in our infirmities, having walked on this earth as a man, and this same One knows how to help us and sustain us all along our journey through this life. *He shall not suffer thy foot to be moved (Psalm 121:3).*

It may be that at times, we see only the hardness of the way, and we forget for a time all He has done and continues to do for us. But, these benefits are just as true and real for the child of God during times of decline as during times of growth; just as true during the hard times as they are during the good times. Remember, dear Christian friend, in everything and in every circumstance, God reigns. For me, this is one of the most comforting thoughts in this Psalm. We read in verse 19, *“The LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all”*. He reigns in the sunshine as well as in the storm; in times of prosperity as well as in times of loss. If we experience infirmities, business reverses, or even persecution, we can know that the Lord can use those very circumstances to our ultimate benefit: *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,”* (1 Peter 1:7,8). Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Even in our darkest hour, we can look to the cross and see the greatest gift of love the world has ever seen, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,”* (John 3:16.)

The Lord Jesus Christ, in His finished work on Calvary’s cross, has purchased our pardon through His blood; and we through faith in Him, have forgiveness for our sins, are become the children of God, and have great glory before us. We who have trusted in Christ for our salvation are most blessed, and this is true whatever the ease or difficulty of our path here below! *“Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18—“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

A mind at “perfect peace” with God:
Oh, What a word is this!
A sinner reconciled through blood:
This, this indeed is peace!

By nature and by practice far,
How very far from God!
Yet now by grace brought nigh to Him,
Through faith in Jesus’ blood

So nigh, so very nigh to God,
I cannot nearer be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He.

So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves the Son,
Such is His love to me.

Why should I ever careful be,
Since such a God is mine
He watches o’er me night and day,
And tells me, “Thou art Mine.”

Hymns for The Little Flock #27*

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