

THE BENEFITS OF PSALM 103

Psalm 103 lists the basic benefits God promises/provides for believers: **1)** He forgives all iniquities (including all forms of sin); **2)** He heals all diseases; **3)** He redeems our lives from destruction (hell); and **4)** He crowns us with lovingkindness and tender mercies; (notice the plural 'mercies' indicating our frequent need for His mercy); **5)** He satisfies our mouths with good things (this could mean food and wise words); **6)** He renews our strength as it was in our youth—much like He renews an aging eagle (an interesting study in itself). Then we look at **Psalm 91** which enlarges on God's love and care for true Christians. I use the word '**true**' because not all church members—or those who say they believe in God and His only begotten Son—who came to earth and paid the eternal price to redeem mankind—have studied the Bible and allowed the Holy Spirit to develop a godly life-style in them. Jesus addressed these people in **Luke 3:24—30** as those who knew 'about' Jesus but didn't have a relationship with Him, and the door to heaven was closed to them—how sad.

Psalm 91 describes the provisions of God in practical terms of how the Lord meets us on our pathway and provides the specific help we need on our journey. Although not readily understood by a casual reading, hidden in this chapter are the conditions upon which the benefits are bestowed. This brief study will reveal the conditions upon which we can access the appropriate benefit we need every day of our lives. I hope and pray it may also explain why some prayers are not answered more quickly; and I pray it will alert our minds and spirits that we have to meet certain requirements to qualify for the above benefits and ultimate acceptance into heaven for eternity.

Notice that the '**Most High God**' has a secret place where believers may dwell with Him during their earthly lives. It is a refuge and fortress from the dangers and terrors that come our way. What could be safer or more peaceful than living under the shadow of Almighty God's wings? Of being protected from the plague and disease? Of living with a hedge of protection around us (**Job 1:10**)? Who is qualified to dwell in such peace and protection? By meditating on **Psalm 91** we find some basic guidelines for living a life that reflects the nature and attributes of God's kingdom—that will open the door to receive His benefits and blessings on our journey.

ONE When facing storms and overwhelming trials—in little things too—run to the sheltering, protective arms of the Lord. This means go to the Lord in prayer, together with singing and praise. Why wait? Why try to solve the problem that never seems to get solved? Why make prayer and God the last resort when it should be the first? Why suffer, fret and stew when you can make the Lord, who is your refuge, even the '**Most High**' God and **Creator** and **Father** of all, your dwelling place? He can provide the protection and solutions to life's thorny problems and enable you to live your life and fulfill your divinely appointed purpose. God may give you thoughts about what to do, or maybe He will open an unexpected door which you later realize solved the problem. God knows what your problems are and He knows how He can solve them. You do your part (prayer) and God will do His (respond).

TWO Learn to trust in the promises and faithfulness of God—(**Proverbs 3: 5&6**). Those who put their trust in His love and mercy—because God is faithful—reap the promised benefits because they do not forget the promises and they discover that God is trustworthy. Yes, we go through trials and testing. This is part of our spiritual growth in developing our faith and trust. Study the Old Testament Bible characters. Noah trusted God 100 years for earth's first rain—the reason he built the ark. Abraham waited twenty five years for the son of promise. Joseph suffered rejection and betrayal by his brothers, plus enslavement and prison, before the dream of his youth was fulfilled. David was hunted in caves and waste-lands by Saul but he eventually became king—and the list goes on. Tough times also bring us into close relationship with the Lord, which develops strong faith for doing great and mighty deeds. Trials test our faith as we learn to trust God. Meditate on **Psalm 37**.

THREE The Bible is true and Jesus is "*the way, the truth and the life*" (**John 14:6**). **Psalm 91** says that "*truth*" is our "*shield and buckler*" (to protect us from arrows and spears—and all the fiery

darts the devil throws at us (**Ephesians 6:16**)—because the devil has no answer for truth. Jesus used Bible truth to reject Satan's temptations (**Matthew 5**). And He said to those who believed He was the Christ: “*You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free*” (**John 8:32**). Truth is vital to the believer's journey on earth and will be critical to our admission into heaven. Consider **Psalm 24:3** “*Who can ascend into the hill of the Lord? V. 25* has the answer—“*He who has clean hands and a pure heart.*” Clean hands represents your deeds, what you do, how you react; and a pure heart reveals what you think, your motives and the guiding force which initiates your actions. **Psalm 15** enlarges on the importance of truth and integrity. Therefore truth repels the devil's lies and he can't hurt you; and truth is a kingdom quality, essential for those who approach heavens gate, because God will not allow any disobedience, deception or rebellion in future heaven. (Review Lesson MMM8)

FOUR **Psalm 91** reveals God's loving care for humanity. People are precious to Him. While God knows everything about the entire universe He knows every individual. He saw our physical forms while we were still in the womb (**Psalm 139:13—17**). He sees every human being and fashions (develops) our hearts (motives, desires) to His will and purpose—**Psalm 33: 13-19** (as we allow Him). He will guide and teach us (**Psalm 32:8**). The Holy Spirit will teach and instruct us (**John 14:26**). We can have the mind of Christ (**1Corinthians 2:16**). But to have intimate relationship with God we need to let Him transform our sinful nature into His loving, honest, caring, obedient, submissive, sinless nature so we will be qualified to spend eternity in heaven.

The **New Testament** confirms everything I have written above, and shows us how we can do what we need to do. In the book of **Romans, chapter 12 and verse 2** we are cautioned not to be conformed to this world and its godless culture, but rather be transformed—into the godly, righteous nature and character which qualifies us to live forever in heaven—by renewing our minds to believe, pray, trust, obey and submit to God's will and purpose for our lives.

So—to receive the blessings of **Psalm 91 and 103** we need to submit to the Lordship of Jesus and conform to the many Old and New Testament guidelines required to qualify for residency in God's eternal kingdom. We should begin each day with a prayer for guidance and have a daily Bible reading program to implant God's **living** Word in our hearts and minds. We should also pray throughout the day when faced with problems—when busy, prayer could be just a pause and whisper or a silent meditation. We should be attached to a Bible based church for fellowship, growth and opportunities to serve others. And above all—live to please God, not our own selfish interests. On that final day of judgment it is God who will permit entry into heaven according to the purity of our heart which implemented godly works while we lived on earth.

It was a young man's question, “How can I pray?” that helped inspire the **BarnabasAD** project. There is no one way only to pray, although we have the **Lord's Prayer** as an example of a short, basic prayer—**Matt. 6:9-13**. In my recent years I frequently begin my daily devotions with this prayer, adding some of God's names, applying portions to current issues in America and the world. I often begin my devotions singing choruses with new words and melodies as they come to mind. I worship the Lord. I have a list of people to pray for—unsaved and/or sick; and I pray for America to have God's favor and for the nations, including Israel. I pray for what comes to my mind—and I don't hurry. Sometimes I talk to God asking for guidance, for understanding of a Bible passage or for His will and purpose as world events unfold. Each month I read **5 Psalms** a day (5 X 30 = 150 Psalms) and I often read some of them in the present tense applying them to national and world events as well as to people on my prayer list; and I will give several examples in this series of how you can pray the Scripture. I advise young Christians to talk to God like they would a friend, and remember—God may redirect the way we pray as we gain experience.

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