

Psalms 103:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

Analysis

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. This verse intensifies the previous call to worship (verse 1) by addressing a universal human tendency: spiritual amnesia. The Hebrew *al-tishkechi* (אל-תשכחי, "forget not") uses a strong prohibitive form, commanding the soul to actively resist forgetfulness. The word *gemulav* (גְּמוּלוֹ, "his benefits") refers to God's dealings, recompenses, and beneficial acts—everything He has graciously given.

The phrase "all his benefits" emphasizes totality—not selective gratitude for favorite blessings, but comprehensive remembrance. Verses 3-5 enumerate specific benefits (forgiveness, healing, redemption, love, satisfaction, renewal), but the principle extends beyond any list. Biblical memory is not passive recollection but active engagement with God's faithfulness that shapes present trust and future hope.

This command to "forget not" appears frequently in Deuteronomy (6:12, 8:11, 8:14) where Israel is warned against prosperity-induced amnesia. Remembering God's benefits serves multiple purposes: it fuels gratitude, strengthens faith during trials, prevents presumption, and motivates obedience. The soul must be intentionally directed toward remembrance because our natural drift is toward forgetfulness, ingratitude, and self-sufficiency.

Historical Context

Psalm 103 is a Davidic psalm of pure praise, likely written in his later years when he could reflect on a lifetime of God's faithfulness through trials, sins, and deliverances. Ancient Israel had a culture of remembrance built into their religious calendar—Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, Sabbath—all designed to prevent forgetting God's mighty acts.

The command to remember God's benefits stands in stark contrast to the surrounding nations' capricious deities who demanded appeasement but offered no covenant faithfulness. Israel's God established a record of specific, historical interventions (Exodus deliverance, wilderness provision, conquest victories) that could be recalled and celebrated. This wasn't mythology but history.

In David's personal history, he had experienced dramatic deliverances (from Goliath, Saul, rebellions, battles), devastating failures (Bathsheba, Absalom's rebellion), and restoration through God's merciful forgiveness. His call to remember wasn't theoretical but emerged from decades of experiencing both God's discipline and His tender compassion. The temple worship system David established emphasized continual remembrance through daily sacrifices, psalms, and festivals.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What specific benefits from God have I forgotten or taken for granted in my daily life?

2. How can I create regular rhythms of remembrance to combat spiritual amnesia?
3. What role does gratitude for past benefits play in strengthening my faith during present difficulties?
4. In what ways does forgetting God's benefits lead to sin, anxiety, or self-reliance in my experience?
5. How might intentionally remembering God's faithfulness to me enable me to encourage others who are struggling?

Interlinear Text

בְּרַכֵּךְ י	נַ פְּשִׁי	אֶת	יְהוָה	וְאֵל	וְשָׁכַחְתָּ	כָּל	גְּמוּלוֹ:
Bless	O my soul	H853	the LORD	H408	and forget	H3605	not all his benefits
H1288	H5315		H3068		H7911		H1576

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 116:12 (References Lord): What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

Isaiah 63:7 (References Lord): I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

Psalms 105:5 (Parallel theme): Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

Deuteronomy 6:12 (References Lord): Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Deuteronomy 32:18 (Parallel theme): Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

Deuteronomy 32:6 (References Lord): Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

2 Chronicles 32:25 (Parallel theme): But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Psalms 106:21 (Parallel theme): They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt;

Psalms 106:7 (Parallel theme): Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.

Isaiah 63:1 (Parallel theme): Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.