

WITH JOY  
Psalm 100

Intro: It is obvious from the Word that one of the outstanding characteristics of the people of God is to be JOY.

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic is love. Cf. John 13:34, 35. See also Gal. 5:22, 23 and 1 Cor. 13:13. But joy is close behind.

Consider what Paul wrote to the Philippians in Phil. 3:1 and 4:4--and remember where he was when he wrote that to them. They had the example, too, of what Paul and Silas did in the Philippian jail. See also Phil. 4:6, 7.

Joy is evidence of the fulness of the Spirit. Cf. Eph. 5:18-21.

The OT gives us the same emphasis.

In addition to the Psalms, note what the people of Judah did when they went out to battle against the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the people of mount Seir. Cf. 2 Chron. 20:20-22 ff.

Tonight let us look again at Psalm 100--one of the shortest of the Psalms, and yet a Psalm rich in blessing for us once we act upon what it tells us to do. We have considered it before, but it is a Psalm that we can come to again and again.

Before we see what it has to say, let us ask ourselves, Why should there be such an emphasis in the Word of God. Why should we have to be told to be happy and to rejoice?

- 1) One reason is because of the world we are living in. With all that can be said about the blessings we have, our joys always seem to be tainted with sorrow, do they not? There is always something to be unhappy about. It seems that almost every day there is some new group protesting about something. Homes are being broken up. Children are being neglected. Crime is up.
- 2) Thinking of the Lord's people, and the Lord's work, there is a lot to be uphappy about there.

I heard about another pastor just a little over a week ago who wants out of the pastorate, into some other form of Christian work. I know of a pastor's wife who does not want her husband to be a pastor--and I have known a lot of such cases during my ministry. There are many people who have been hurt in church work who do not want to get involved in the Lord's work any more--or they will tell you, "at least not for a little while. Think of what a lot Paul was talking about when he wrote about "the care of all the churches"!

Besides, how many Christians do you know who are really joyful--joyful in the Lord, in spite of all of the trials that we have. Was Paul being realistic when he wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always"? Or was that just possible in the first century, but not the twentieth century?

I have struggled with this problem myself over and over again, and have failed often. The Lord's work has been a terrible burden at times, and it may always be that way. But what about all of those exhortations in the Word which tell us to be joyful?

Well, the best thing to do is to look at them carefully, one at a time, meditate on them, and see what they really say. And so let us look at Psalm 100 to learn what we can.

There are seven reasons given us in this Psalm for rejoicing in our lives day by day. Notice what they are:

I. WE ARE TO COME TO THE LORD WITH JOY BECAUSE, IN THIS PSALM, SIX TIMES THIS IS WHAT HE HAS TOLD US TO DO.

He does not tell us that we have to come with our money, or with our promises, nor to spend a long amount of time, but when we do come, we are to come with our praises, and with joy.

Have you done this when your heart is particularly heavy? Have you felt the Lord lifting your spirit, so that you can honestly and deeply praise Him? Do you notice how prominent the Lord is in these six statements? (Read them.)

If the Lord tells us to do something, He will help us do it. And if we do it, we are going to experience the blessings which He intends for us to have. No time of prayer ought to begin, or end, without special time given to praising the Lord, and rejoicing in the Lord.

That is the first reason: Do it because the Lord says that we are to do it!

II. REASON #2: "KNOW YE THAT THE LORD HE IS GOD."

"Know" here can have the force of remembering, or, in some cases it means to learn this for the first time. Both "Lord" and "God" suggest sovereignty. We do not learn this overnight. It is not something that you can learn once, and then forget about it. It has to be reviewed and reviewed. Cf. Psa. 46:10, 11. The NASB renders it, "Cease striving," or "Let go, and relax." He is God! He is greater than your problem, and He is greater than anyone who is involved in your problem.

So, to be able to rejoice, we need to get our minds off of our problems (at least for the moment), and think about the Lord.

III. REASON #3: "IT IS HE THAT HATH MADE US, AND NOT WE OURSELVES."

He is our Creator, and the Creator of all that is around us. And, since He never changes, He can alter our circumstances any time He desires to do so.

Some people are not concerned when evolution is being taught in our schools instead of creationism, but when you look at the Word you will realize that the truth that God is our Creator is one of our greatest sources of peace and joy. God is ultimately going to have His way in this world.

Besides, He made us, and He has given us those legitimate desires which we have, desires which He will satisfy in His own way and time.

IV. REASON #4: "WE ARE HIS PEOPLE, AND THE SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE."

It is a wonderful thing to know that He is our God, He is our Father, but it is even more wonderful to know that we are His!

Contrast Isa. 41:10 and 43:1. How would the Lord say, "Thou art mine"?

Contrast Psa. 23:1 and John 10:28-30, esp. v. 28.

Just think of what it means that you are His people (and always will be), and you are His sheep!

That alone ought to keep our hearts rejoicing.

V. REASON #5: "FOR THE LORD IS GOOD."

The Lord is not only God, but, as God, He is good!

This is a part of a song which the children of Israel sang on many occasions: ". . . for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psa. 136:1) And so the verse begins, "O give thanks unto the Lord . . ."

What you are going through right now may not appear to be good, or what we are going through, but it is! I am not talking about times when we sin, but even then God is good in His dealing with us!

Was not Paul thinking about the goodness of God when he wrote Rom. 8:32?

Daily we are surrounded by evidences of the Lord's goodness.

VI. REASON #6: "HIS MERCY IS EVERLASTING."

Remember that God's mercy is the counterpart of human misery. How many times have you been in a miserable situation, and then experienced the mercy of the Lord? It is no wonder that David spoke and wrote so frequently about God's mercy because he lived on it!

And, if it is "everlasting," it can never be exhausted.

We could go on and on talking about these subjects of praise and joy, but let me turn now to the last one.

VII. REASON #7: "AND HIS TRUTH ENDURETH TO ALL GENERATIONS."

"Truth" here, as in so many places in the OT, is faithfulness.

This is one of the most amazing characteristics of God--His faithfulness!

God's goodness and God's mercy and God's faithfulness all fall more or less into the same category, do they not? And yet here the Psalmist mentioned them separately. And so we have a threefold reason for rejoicing in the Lord, for coming into His presence with singing.

And will you notice that the Psalmist does not even raise the question of our worthiness. We never are worthy of what God does for us. Even when we have done our worst, we can always be amazed at the goodness, the mercy, and the faithfulness of God. He is good by nature, and therefore He is merciful and faithful.

Concl: Psalm 100 is an illustration of what Isaiah wrote in Isa. 26:3, 4.

We do not think about the Lord enough, and many times when we think about Him we do not think correctly. Perhaps we are too discouraged, or too angry. That is when we need to take the Word, ask the Lord to use the Word to turn our hearts to Himself that we may experience the benefits that can only come when our minds and hearts are stayed on Him.