

# 24. Psalm 100

September 26, 2019

Here in America, while we have experienced financial ups and downs in the last century – some of them significant – we nevertheless benefit from an unprecedented level of abundance. Never in human history have so many people lived in the kind of comfort and security we enjoy today. And American culture leads the world in luxury. Many families have cars, a house full of modern appliances – many dedicated to entertainment – a closet full of clothes, and a refrigerator full of food. Unfortunately, in these days of abundance and wealth, we tend to become ungrateful, even presumptuous. Instead of thanking God, we develop a spirit of entitlement.

Please don't misunderstand. Abundance is not sinful. Scripture describes several people who were both wealthy and godly: Abraham, Job, Joseph, David, Josiah, Barnabas, and Lydia, to name a few. But we also find some who became enamored of their wealth and lost sight of the Lord and His right to rule their lives. There's nothing wrong with owning nice things, but trouble begins when those nice things own us. A spirit of entitlement can quickly overshadow an attitude of generosity and humility. Psalm 100 is a song of celebration that will help restore a spirit of thanksgiving and joyful gratitude that bring submissiveness to our God.

## A. THE MAIN THEME AND OUTLINE

1) **Theme:** Thanksgiving for God's faithfulness

2) **Outline:**

- Joyfulness: v1-2
- Submissiveness: v3
- Thankfulness: v4-5

## B. INTERPRETATION

We can easily understand the people of Israel shouting joyfully in praise to their great God, but the psalmist calls for all the nations of the earth to praise Him.

1) **Joyfulness**

*Psalm 100:1-2 Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! 2 Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.*

What is your interpretation for this?

The term "joyful" doesn't appear in the Hebrew. Literally rendered, it's "Shout to the Lord!" The Hebrew word for "shout" is "ruah". It comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to raise a noise, to give a blast as on a trumpet."

When's the last time you shouted like a sports fan because of something you read in Scripture? When have you ever pumped your fists and shouted after a sermon on God's attributes? I'm not suggesting we become uncontrolled charismatic like some denomination believers, but certainly, we should feel some excitement, at least a little joy. Sometimes I'd like to yell at our very subdued Sunday morning congregation to show some excitement of their heart in worship and praise. Shout to Him. Lift up your voice in praise to the Lord! By doing so, we counteract that grind of ingratitude that so easily can climb into our hearts.

A healthy sign of the grateful life is serving the Lord and others. Few decisions are more effective in easing the daily grind of ingratitude than serving others. In doing

God's work, we serve Him. Please observe that the motivation is neither grudging nor guilt-ridden; we are urged to serve "with gladness."

This psalm doesn't imply we should serve the Lord only when our hearts are filled with joy. On the contrary, we are commanded to serve regardless; gladness will soon follow. In fact, when I start feeling sorry for myself or my attitude takes a cynical turn, I know it's time to serve someone who's in worse shape. It's not long before gladness pushes negativity out of my heart.

Ultimately, we show the Lord our gratitude through obedience. A holy life flows from a heart filled with thankfulness for God's grace, mercy, love, and salvation. Instead of living for ourselves and our own pleasures, we'll want to exalt Christ in all that we do, say, and think. And as we allow God's Spirit to control us, He will faithfully enable us to live in a manner that is pleasing and honoring to the Lord.

## 2) Submissiveness

*Psalm 100:3 Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*

What do you see here?

Those words "Know that the Lord, He is God" are what separate Christian optimism from the rest of the body of literature about the New Age idea of positive thinking. There's a wide array of material about optimism and positive thinking. Books, magazines, seminars, courses, workshops, and websites. But positive thinking is worthless unless it's grounded in God's theology. It's nothing but cotton candy and vaporous thoughts without this truth – "The Lord, He is God."

On the other hand, the existence and perpetual reign of the Lord Himself as God of the universe is sufficient to fuel anyone's optimism. Those words "The Lord, He is God" are the answer to every problem, the solution to every heartache, and the remedy for every perplexity we ever face.

The Lord is on His throne. He is in control. He is our God, and nothing can withstand Him. God is the sovereign ruler of the earth to whom everyone will give an account. He wants us to make a joyful shout to Him, to serve Him with gladness, and to come before Him with singing. We don't do this because He is an ego maniac, rather by doing so, He makes us realize that we are loved by Him; protected by Him.

The 20th Century British theologian Authur Pink said, "Sovereignty characterizes the whole being of God. He is sovereign in all His attributes." Amen!

I see two implications of practical importance here. First, God is not only the sovereign Ruler of the universe, having dominion over galaxies and able to command the forces of nature, but He also is sovereign over each of us, individually. He's my and your sovereign king. He's the boss; we answer to Him whether we are believers or not. When we surrender to that fact, life becomes much easier to understand and joy takes the place of frustration.

Second, our knowledge of God as our sovereign Lord must be gained through personal experience. That implies a personal relationship in which He leads and we follow. And through that ongoing interchange, the decision to trust Him becomes settled, unshakable confidence. Confident people in God are joyful people.

### 3) Thankfulness

*Psalm 100:4-5 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.*

What do you get out of this portion?

As I was preparing this study, I found myself singing an old Maranatha Chorus music "I will enter into His gates with thanksgiving in my heart, and I will enter His courts with praise."

What were the psalmist referring to the "gates" and "courts"? There are two possibilities. First, it could refer to the stronghold of a ruler, where he holds court, deciding cases and granting favors. If so, the invitation is to enter the audience hall with praises and thanksgiving rather than seeking something from the Ruler.

The second possibility is a reference to the temple, the place where the people of God approached the Lord. In the OT, the glow of His glory – called the shekinah glory by the Hebrews – filled the Most Holy Place in the temple according to 2 Chronicles 5:14 and 1 Kings 8:10–11. The temple had gates and courts, both of which gave access to the presence of God.

Because Jesus Christ satisfied all the requirements of the temple rituals, we no longer go to a specific place to meet God. Today, we worship in spirit and truth. So, how do we enter His gates and His courts? What is our access to His presence today? The answer is prayer.

*Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

The Hebrew word for "give thanks" is "towdah." It is a single verb that means "to confess, praise, acknowledge, extol, thank." This is more than a mere "Thanks, God, for the blessings." This depicts someone naming the specific reasons for gratitude, telling a story with God as the hero. We do this when telling a friend about a particularly good physician who cured a long-term malady. We gush with details and gratitude. We feel unable to say enough good about the doctor. Similarly, this "giving thanks" literally can't say enough about the Lord and what He does.

If you're looking for signs of the last days, then be on the lookout for ingratitude. 2 Timothy 3:1–5 lists "unthankful" in a list of attitudes that will mark the dark days before the end of time. Complaining about what we have or what we don't have is displaying the attitude of our unthankful heart. Whatever we have and whatever we don't have are from Him and His sovereign decision. If the Lord thinks that we need more, He would have provided us more. Cultivating an unthankful heart is no small issue with God.

*James 1:17a Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights*

The Hebrew word for "bless" is from "barak", which means "to kneel, praise, salute." The idea is to show honor and homage to God, recognizing His name as higher than any other name. In the Ancient Middle East, a person "blessing" a superior did so while bowing or kneeling. He or she then expressed a desire for the honoree to have power, prosperity, longevity, success, etc. Of course, the Lord already possesses all power, prosperity, longevity, and will certainly succeed in all He chooses to do;

by “blessing His name,” we affirm His power and goodness, and we commit ourselves to join His cause.

The two actions, “thanksgiving” and “blessing His name,” have a special significance deeply rooted in the Ancient Eastern custom. To receive the hospitality of a nobleman and to pronounce a blessing in return effectively established an alliance, a life-long indebtedness that linked two people in a bond of friendship. In this case, the psalmist calls us to pledge allegiance to the supreme King.

Having called everyone to join him in song, the psalmist declares the reason God deserves universal thanksgiving and praise. His reason for celebration is based on three facts concerning the Lord’s character:

**Fact #1: He is good.**

Psalm 100:3 told us “He is God,” the one and only Creator and Sovereign of the universe; this final verse 5 tells us “the Lord is good.” Verse 3 states His position and role; verse 5 describes the quality of His character. The Hebrew word “tov” means “pleasant, agreeable, delightful, good.” How different from the present-day concept many people have of God. He is not an irritated tyrant pacing the floors of heaven looking for reasons to smash our lives or squelch our happiness – like some celestial bully with a bolt of lightning in His hand. No! He is good. And His commands are for our good. Love motivates His every word and deed.

**Fact #2: His mercy is everlasting.**

Mercy is perhaps one of the most important words in the entire OT because it effectively sums up the character of God. That meaningful word is so steeped in Hebrew culture and theology that it has no equivalent in other languages. It describes God’s covenant love for His people – a passionate, merciful, pursuing, unrelenting kindness that overlooks our inability to repay Him or even return His love.

The Bible is filled with wonderful, moving stories that show God’s mercy in action. I think of Jonathan, the son of King Saul, and how he extended extraordinary friendship to David despite the enormous personal cost: the right to succeed Saul as king in 1 Samuel 18:1. And when David eventually became king, he extended extraordinary mercy to Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan in 2 Samuel 9.

Of course, we have no greater example of kindness than God Himself, who demonstrated His love in becoming a human in the person of Jesus Christ. God loves and accepts us as we are, knowing that we have no way of repaying the debt of extraordinary kindness. His unequalled love and acceptance are behind His every command. Moreover, nothing will cancel or compromise His mercy for us; it lasts forever.

**Fact #3: His truth endures to all generations.**

The Lord is not partial. The God who commands is fair and faithful to all generations. He didn’t make a limited-time offer to one generation only to rescind it from the next. He doesn’t play favorites. His commands and promises apply to all people throughout all time because God never changes. He remains consistently faithful.

Note the psalmist didn’t call for this joyous response to God as merely our part of a transaction. We don’t praise and worship the Lord because of what we can get in return. He calls for worship as a natural response to our firsthand experience of God’s character.

### **C. APPLICATION**

In spite of whatever kind of situations we might be in, we can always give thanks to the Lord and praise His name because He is our great and faithful God.