

UPON THE ROCK

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OUR FAVORITE PSALMS

The Olive Tree and Children - Page 2

God—The Answer for Fear - Page 6

God's Path to True Happiness – Page 9

Reasons to Rejoice - Page 12

Come, Let Us Worship (Psalm 100) - Page 17

The Majesty of God - Page 20

Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship Announcement – Page 25

Upon the Rock is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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The Olive Tree and Children (Psalm 128)

Mark Reynolds

In this issue of *Upon the Rock* I have asked each of our writers to contribute an article on his favorite psalm. My intentions are two-fold: First, in my opinion articles and sermons are always best when the author gets to write and preach on his favorite topic. Second, I did this to “reward” our writers. They always take the topics I assign them and do an outstanding job, even when the subject matter is difficult, and takes a lot of work and research. I know our writers will especially enjoy this issue, and I hope that you, our readers, will also gain a lot from the efforts put forth in this issue. Now, on to my favorite psalm, Psalm 128.

As our lives get busier and busier it seems that often times we lose focus of the more important things in life, and concentrate on the things of lesser value. One of the things that seems to be blurred in the vision of many is the rearing of their children. It is easy to lose sight of how fortunate we are to have our children, but with all the challenges and temptations our children are facing today it is more important than ever for mothers and fathers to pick up the Bible and begin rearing our children according to the precepts of this precious Book! Psalm 128 reminds us of this: “Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: **thy children like olive plants round about thy table.** Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel.” Why did the Psalmist compare the olive tree to the rearing of children? Three outstanding facts about the olive tree will help us fully appreciate the responsibility parents have as they rear their children.

The Children of Israel Acquired the Olive Trees in Palestine

The olive tree was, and is, the most valued and useful of trees in Palestine. It was so important that they named the olive tree the king of the trees (Judges 9:8-9). This tree goes back to the earliest time in

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

- 1 Hear THE WORD OF GOD - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).
2. Believe THE WORD OF GOD - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).
3. Repent OF YOUR SINS - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).
4. Confess THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).
5. Be baptized FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS- (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4).
6. Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship

I have been attending the Memphis School of Preaching lectureship with my wife each year since 1994. Now when we go it takes a little more time to pack and prepare, because now we pack for five instead of just two. But any preparation that it takes is certainly worth it.; The spiritual strength that we receive from attending this lectureship is worth the little effort it takes to get there. It is something our family looks forward to each year.

Let me encourage you to make the effort, if possible, to attend the lectures this year. The sermons are always edifying. The fellowship is certainly uplifting. And the singing is absolutely beautiful. Each night before the evening preaching, there is a singing at 7:00. This is one of my favorite things about the whole week. When you have 1,000 or more Christians lifting their voices unto God, it is always beautiful and uplifting.

There are classes for pre-school children daily. Our children love going to the classes that are taught by the preacher's wives as well as some of the women from the Forest Hill Irene congregation.

Also, if you have an R.V., there are hookups provided. If you would rather stay in a hotel, you can get lodging information from the school. Call the School for more information. I hope to see you there!

Mark Reynolds

Canaan. The numerous times it is mentioned in the Bible along with many archaeological findings show the importance the olive tree has had in the economy of the inhabitants of Palestine. "The most fruitful trees are the product of bare and rocky ground situated preferably at no great distance from the sea. The terraces hills of Palestine, where the earth lies never many inches above the limestone rocks, the long rainless summer of unbroken sunshine, and the heavy 'dews' of the autumn afford conditions which are extraordinarily favorable to at least the indigenous olive" (International Bible Encyclopedia). The children of Israel would have understood and appreciated the value of the olive trees, so the Psalmist uses it as a comparison to children.

Further, the Psalmist would have known that the Israelites acquired the olive trees when they came into Canaan. "And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not. And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not and wells digged, which thou digest not, vineyards and **olive trees**, which thou plantedst not (Deuteronomy 6:10-11). The Israelites did not plant these trees, but would enjoy the benefits and would prosper because of them. God is the one that made it possible for them to enjoy the benefits of these trees.

Children, like the olive tree, are made possible by God. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord..." (Psalm 127:3). God has made it possible for us to have our children, through no great deed of our own. In fact, a man who cannot type, use chopsticks, throw a Frisbee straight, work a VCR, or hold a job can make a baby. But it takes more than that to skillfully protect, provide for, nurture, admonish, and love the child you acquired from God.

The Olive Tree Requires Years of Patient Labor Before It Bears Its Full Fruit

The olive tree is a slow growing tree. Its growth implies a certain degree of settlement and peace, for a hostile enemy can destroy in a few days the patient work of two generations. "The olive vineyard with their frosted silver leaves and the twisted and gnarled trunks, are

some of the most picturesque and constant signs of settled habitations and peace” (International Bible Encyclopedia).

Our children also require years of patient labor to help them grow into beautiful “fruit-bearing” adults. “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4). Just like the olive tree, children need water to live. The living water is supplied by Christ. Without this water our children will wither away. Just like the olive tree, our children need to be fed with sunshine. Help your child to desire to be fed with the word of God. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Parents, if our children grow up to be brain surgeons, professional athletes, a great scientist, but does not learn to love and obey the word of God, because I failed to instill it into him, I have failed in the rearing of my children. Let us remember the important things in life: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

The Young Olive Shoots Can, If Left Unattended, Take Over the Parent Root System

“Much attention is required [when tending an oliveyard]. The soil around the trees must be frequently plowed up; water must be conducted to the roots from the earliest rain, and the soil must be freely enriched...If neglected, the older trees soon send up a great many shoots from the roots all around the parent stem. These must be pruned away carefully, or the younger shoots can take over the parent tree” (The International Bible Encyclopedia). Do you notice that?! The younger shoots can grow up and take over the parent root system if not pruned. If they are left unattended they grow up as a wild olive plant and are useless unless they are carefully grafted with the parent tree!

The child is to honor and obey the parents, not the other way around, stepping out of his place as a child. “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy

Thirty-Ninth Annual Lectureship
March 27-31, 2005
Theme: “What Is Man?”
Memphis School of Preaching
3950 Forest Hill Irene Rd.
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Jerry Brewer	Brandon Britton
David Brown	Andy Cates
Annette Cates (Ladies Class)	Curtis Cates
Dan Cates	B.J. Clarke
Wayne Coats	Gary Colley
Maggie Colley (Ladies Class)	Harrell Davidson
Lane Dix	Keith Dixon
Corinne Elkins (Ladies Class)	Garland Elkins
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Irene Taylor (Ladies Class)	Allen Webster
Melinda Thompson (Ladies Class)	Timothy Wilkes
Bobby Woods	Ben Wright

We encourage our readers to repent of their sins and be baptized into Christ so that they are able to worship God in the beauty of holiness.

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God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12). Notice the punishment under the old law for not obeying this command: “And they [the mother and father] shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear” (Deuteronomy 21:20-21). A child, who has been and continues to be rebellious to the commands of his parents, is also in rebellion to Almighty God.

If our children are not pruned, they take over the parent system that God has set up. This is seen nearly everyday in our society. Not too long ago I heard a child tell his mother to “shut up,” and even sadder than that she listened! That child is a young, wild offshoot that is taking over the parent plant. Just like the olive tree, when this takes place, it renders both the parent tree and the offshoot worthless.

If the garden, that is the home, is neglected, it becomes a waste. Many parents are trading a life for a living. Parents all over are scrambling daily to make more money for better things, but what a price they are paying! Because they want bigger homes, better cars, and a stronger portfolio, their children are being neglected. We are wasting the best when we waste time that could be spent “tending our garden.”

A few years ago I was watching a rerun of the Walton Family Easter Special. There was a scene by a lake involving John Boy and a magazine writer who had always lived in New York City. The writer was quite smitten by the impressive beauty of Walton’s Mountain. After taking in the scenery, she turned to John Boy and said: “This is a great place to grow up;” To which John Boy replied, “You don’t grow up here; you are raised.” Parents are you rearing your children, or are they just growing up? Our precious families, our nation, and our lost world needs every man and woman to be great gardeners with the olive trees God has given them. That is why the Psalmist compares children to the olive tree.

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God - The Answer for Fear (Psalm 27)

Jim Bullington

For reasons that do not need to be disclosed, I have spent most of my life as a child and as an adult in fear. I do not think that I am alone in this matter. I have often been ashamed to admit my fears even when I really wanted and needed to talk about them. Perhaps it was this fear coupled with a belief that God always has an answer that drove me to the 27th Psalm. Whatever the reason, I have come to appreciate this marvelous passage and commend it to you for the reasons noted below.

I can identify with other men of faith who were sometimes afraid. David faced a lion, a bear, and Goliath (see I Samuel 17.31-37) but he sometimes was afraid. His fears, his worst fears, were that He would be forsaken of God and be left alone at the mercies of his enemies. This fear is reflected in his plaintive plea, “Do not hide Your face from me; Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not leave me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation” (Psalm 27.9). I am not ashamed to admit my fear when I realize that great and courageous men of faith have also been afraid.

I love the 27th Psalm because it begins with victory — God’s sure victory over our problems. The psalmist opened the psalm by jumping to the conclusion when God is allowed to work. “The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident... For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me (Psalm 27:1-3, 5-6a). When I take time to breathe and to think, I know I cannot lose.

The promises of the 27th Psalm are beyond human means and extend into eternity. “For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; In the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up

Another way in which we can bring glory to God’s name is by our actions. In Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus taught a great lesson to the religious leaders about what was the great part of the law. “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*” When we love God first and foremost, our actions will display the glory of God within us. We will be like Jesus, “going about doing good.”

“Worship The Lord In The Beauty of Holiness”

The psalmist makes this last request that we now consider, to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. He gives reasons why God should be worshiped in this way. He presents the sovereignty of God. He is over all things. He is over nature — “He is the Lord over the waters” (v.2). He is the supreme power — “The Lord sits as King forever” (v.10). He is the source of all blessings — “The Lord will bless His people” (v.11). He then presents the all-sufficiency of God. In eleven verses God is mentioned eighteen times — twice in all verses but three and in those three He is mentioned once. I cannot think of another book which places more emphasis on God than this psalm. When we come to understand the sovereignty and the all-sufficiency of God, we will want worship Him.

God has made it possible for us to worship Him in the beauty of holiness through His Son. “*Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen*” (Hebrews 13:20,21). When we were in sin we could not worship God properly because of sin in our lives. Because of the blood of Jesus that cleanses us of our sins we are now able to worship Him. God made us complete when we were washed in His blood, when we were baptized into the death of His Son (Romans 6:3,4).

not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring."

Since God has provided all things for us, we need to remember that every good gift and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights (James 1:17). We need to use these gifts to bring glory and honor to the one that created us.

"Give Glory Due To His Name"

The second request the psalmist asks is to give glory due to His name. Throughout the Bible, faithful servants of God gave praise and honor to God's holy name. Even the heathens were driven to give God the glory when they saw the power of the Almighty God. The king of Babylon praised God when he saw His power — "I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me" (Daniel 4:2).

We need to be reminded from time to time that we give glory to His name by words that proceed out of our mouths. What comes out of our mouths is what is in our hearts. In the Old Testament the name of God was not to be profaned. It was not to be used in connection with pagan worship (Leviticus 18:21). It was not to be used in connection with false oaths (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12). In the New Testament the word profane (*bebeloo*) is used twice (Matthew 12:5; Acts 24:6). It is defined as "to cause something highly revered to be identified with the commonplace, violate sanctity, desecrate, profane" (Danker 173). It would be good for us to get a good dictionary and notice some of the words people use in everyday talk that would profane the name of God. Look up the words "gosh," "oh my gosh," "golly," etc. We need to be careful that we do not profane the name of God.

above my enemies all around me; Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD" (Psalm 27:5-6). God's pavilion is His special place, known and accessed only by Him; God will share His special place with me. God will lift up my head above my enemies when otherwise I would be downcast and grist for their mill. He will enable me to sing when otherwise I would be weeping; he gives me "beauty for ashes" and "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (see Isaiah 61:3). God's promises motivate me to persevere.

The 27th Psalm helps me to focus on the essential and to minimize the inconsequential. Consider these words: "One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27.4). The "one thing" that David desired of God puts all else in perspective. In the later words of Jesus, David sought the kingdom first and allowed other things to take care of themselves (see Matthew 6.33). A rich young ruler who engaged Jesus in serious discussion about eternal life was told, "One thing you lack Because his priorities were not straight, the Bible says he "went away sorrowful" (see Mark 10.17-22). David did not allow "one thing" to stand between Him and the LORD; he placed God first and allowed all other things to line up in that order. This psalm helps me to keep my priorities straight.

I find the answer to all fears of anxiety in the 27th Psalm. The answer is simple; it can be committed to memory in a very, very few moments. However, in the emotion of the moment, when fear besieges me, I need to be reminded again what I ought to do when I become overly anxious. What is that answer? Hear David's words: "Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Psalm 27:14). We wait on God when we rely on God. We wait on God when we take acknowledge that He has the only real solutions to life's troublesome problems. We wait on God when we are content to know that He holds us in His love!

I am encouraged by this psalm because it speaks of a love that transcends human limitations! A hyperbole is a figure of speech that makes a point by obvious exaggeration. David made that point when he said, "When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the LORD

will take care of me” (Psalm 27.10). David never expected his father and mother to forsake him, but he used that expression to declare the depth, height, and width of God’s love. In literal language, David affirmed that there simply is no end to God’s care for His children. That was Paul’s point when he wrote, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8.37-38). Before the cross of Christ was a reality, David realized the greatness of God’s eternal love. This psalm helps me to consider the concept of unconditional love.

I learn the meaning of unquestioning submission in this great psalm. David put it this way: “When you said, ‘Seek My face,’ My heart said to You, ‘Your face, LORD, I will seek” (Psalm 27:8). The heart of David was perfectly tuned to the will of God; when God said to act David acted. Abraham had that kind of faith as demonstrated by his readiness to offer his son in obedience to God’s command (see Genesis 22). Moses had that kind of faith at the Red Sea when he told the Israelites. “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever” (Exodus 14.13). Saul, a renowned persecutor of Christians, had that type of faith when he said, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 8.8). That faith found further direction when Ananias told him, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22.16). That faith found forgiveness when Saul [later known as Paul] rendered unquestioning obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ in baptism. I understand God’s Sovereignty and my place of submission because of the message of the 27th Psalm.

Catch a glimpse of man at his best in the 27th Psalm; see man contrite before the Creator of all things in this song of praise and devotion. But better yet, catch a glimpse of God and His heart of compassion in this most marvelous of psalms!

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after the heavens had been shut up for three years; II Samuel 21:1-10. As a shepherd boy David witnessed much of nature’s splendor as he watched over the flocks in all kinds of weather — rain, thunderstorms, and in the heat of the sun.

In this article we are going to notice three requests the psalmist makes in this psalm. The first request is to **“give unto the Lord glory and strength.”** The second request is to **“give glory due to His name.”** Lastly he asks us to **“worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”** These requests are all made in the first two verses of the psalm and the following nine verses are reasons why these requests are valid.

“Give Unto the Lord Glory and Strength”

The psalmist makes the request that we give God glory and strength, Whatever glory or strength He has entrusted us with, we are to offer it to Him to be used for His honor, in His service. This psalm brings to mind other similar scriptures in the Bible that use nature to exalt God and give Him glory and strength.

One example is Daniel. He asked God for help with interpreting the king’s dream. God granted his request and he immediately gave praise and honor to God. *“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him. I thank You and praise You, O God of our fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, For You have made known to us the king’s demand”* (Daniel 2:20-23).

Further examples are found in Revelation 14:7, *“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water,”* and in Acts 17:23-28 when the apostle Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said “Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and Earth, does

David says that we should worship God because (1) He is God, and (2) He is good. These two qualities together should motivate us to worship him with great joy and gladness.

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The Majesty of God (Psalm 29)

Larry Reynolds

“Give unto the Lord, O you mighty ones, Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The voice of the Lord is over the waters; The God of glory thunders; The Lord is over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, Yes, the Lord splinters the cedars of Lebanon. He makes them also skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness, The Lord shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth, And strips the forest bare; And in His temple everyone says, “Glory!” The Lord sat enthroned at the Flood, And the Lord sits as King forever. The Lord will give strength to His people; The Lord will bless His people with peace” (Psalm 29).

Psalm 29 is sometimes called the nature psalm. The reason for this title is because the psalmist uses nature to teach us great lessons about God and His power and to exalt Him. Some think it was written to commemorate the abundant rain which fell in the days of David,

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Editor’s Note: Jim is also the author of an online devotional called “Today’s Little Lift,” that is sent out daily. You can email Jim for information on how to receive this.

GOD’S PATH TO TRUE HAPPINESS (Psalm 1)

Patrick Morrison

A study of the Psalms is a wonderful, fulfilling endeavor. So many verities are revealed in this collection of writings. Numerous are the emotions detailed by these children of God as they pour out their hearts upon the pages of Holy Writ. It seems a daunting task to explore these one hundred and fifty writings which comprise the book we call Psalms. It seems even more difficult because of the number of different ideas that are explored within this book. Perhaps we find it to be an arduous undertaking because we attempt to study the Psalms in the same manner as we do other books of the Bible. With other books, we attempt to find the pervasive theme of the entire contents, and then study each passage in light of that theme. Each of the psalms, however, must be studied individually, in light of the circumstance of their writings, their authors, etc., while at the same time they should be studied as a collective whole. The first psalm provides us with a number of themes that are prevalent throughout the entirety of the Psalms, thereby giving us a good foundation upon which to build our study of the other psalms. Let us explore these themes as they help us lay the groundwork for further study in the Psalms (many thanks to brother Bobby Liddell for the alliteration).

Sin Is Progressive

The first verse of Psalm 1 makes clear that sin follows a dangerous progression. Few have ever decided to jump into sin headlong. Most are gradually drawn into its evil clutches, slowly giving in to the progression of sin. Sin entices the potential suitor initially to get within earshot (walking in the counsel of the ungodly). If Satan can get one to stop and listen to the call of sin long enough, his chances for success increase dramatically. Many are foolish enough to think they can get as close to sin as possible without falling prey. Those who would be truly happy will stay as far away from sin as possible. Should one give ear to the beckoning of sin (listening to ungodly advice, listening to filthy jokes, ungodly music, etc.), he will soon find

himself “standing in the way of sinners.” He is now in the company of sinners, standing in their midst Sin has enticed yet another to join its band of ungodly brothers. Should one then refuse to part ways with this company, he will soon find himself “sitting in the seat of the scornful.” He has heeded the call of sin for so long that he is now the ringleader of this ungodly host He is seated in the captain’s chair, and is now enticing others to join in the sin parade. How many would fully expect or desire to find themselves in this position as they started down the path of sin? Sin is deceitful! All who desire true happiness will seek to avoid sin’s progression by refusing its initial advancements.

The Scriptures Are Priceless

The blessed (or happy) man is one who delights in the law of the Lord (vs.2). The only way to avoid the onslaughts of Satan and the allurements of sin is to fill our hearts and minds with the precious word of God. Our world increasingly devalues the Sacred Page, and the shattered lives and sin-scarred world is proof of how little society values it. The child of God must treasure God’s revealed will above all else. The wise Solomon wrote, “Buy the truth and sell it not; also wisdom, instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23). Many of the psalms beautifully portray the preciousness of God’s Holy Word. None does so more completely than does the 119th Psalm. The longest of all of the psalms is devoted entirely (176 verses) to this thought The Bible is the Christian’s sure defense, the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). A heart full of Scripture is man’s only fortification against temptation (Psalm 119:11; see also Matthew 4:1-11). Those who would be truly happy in this life will be those who meditate on God’s word day and night This can only be accomplished when one consistently, carefully, and prayerfully studies the Scriptures. Let each who truly values the word of God cry out as did the psalmist, “O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97)!

The Way of the Lord Is Prosperous

In the pathway of the saved is found true success. Those who give their all in service to the Lord will find that their undertakings for the kingdom of God will prosper (vs.3). What a beautiful illustration the

Consider the God we worship, as he is described in Psalm 100. “It is he that hath made us” (vs. 3) This speaks of great power. Scientists today know the chemicals and elements that make up the human body. But even if they were to mix them together in exactly the right amounts and combinations as to make a human body, they still cannot bring it to life. That secret is still locked up in the mind of God. It is He who made us. What a powerful God we worship!

We belong to him. “We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture” (verse 3) The one who is so powerful that he could literally speak the universe into existence is concerned about me personally. Let us rejoice. We are worshiping the creator who cares. He is God, and he loves me. Come, let us worship.

He Is Good (Verses 4-5)

Here we have the second of David’s calls to worship. “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.” (verse 4) We are to approach God with thanksgiving and praise. The false gods of the world cannot be worshiped this way. Those who sacrificed their children to idols would have approached with dread, resentment, and perhaps even hatred. We are called to worship God because HE IS GOOD. Suppose that God were evil. We would never know what horrible suffering would be next He would certainly not be a god in which to rejoice.

But our God is good. Because he is good, “his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.” (verse 5) Man’s mercy comes and goes. Parents will sometimes punish more severely if they are in a bad mood. But we never catch God in a “bad mood”. His punishments are always fair and right, and done for our own good.

His truth is unchangeable, and “endureth to all generations.” He is good and the same God always. What pleased him yesterday will please him tomorrow. We are called to worship—express our praise, appreciation, and adoration for—our wonderful God.

LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100).

This psalm of worship and praise is generally believed to have been sung by the Jews on their way to the Tabernacle or Temple to worship. It is a happy psalm. It uses words like “joy”, “gladness”, “praise”, and “thanksgiving”. It consists of two paragraphs that (1) issue a call to worship, and (2) tell why we worship. David gives two very compelling reasons we owe God our worship.

The Lord is God (Verses 1-3)

The first call to worship is given in verses 1-2, “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.” David is saying, “Everybody rejoice, it is time to worship. Let us enter God’s presence with gladness and singing.” Attending worship is not a time for moaning and complaining about how we would rather be doing something else. What else would a child of God rather be doing? This ought to be the highlight of the Christian’s week. What a beautiful opportunity! Just think, we get to assemble with our brothers and sisters and humbly, joyfully express our love and esteem for the God who made and provides for us.

We are called to worship because HE IS GOD (verse 3). He is not one of the horrible false gods of the nations surrounding Israel. Those nations knew no joy in their worship. Their worship often was a time, not of joy, but of weeping as they literally burned their own children in sacrifice. There would be no joyful singing on the way to such an assembly.

He is not like the false gods worshiped by so many today. People destroy their lives in the pursuit of money, pleasure, prestige, popularity, and a host of other gods. These sap the joy out of their life, but they do not know why. The problem is they are worshipping a false god.

psalmist paints of the child of God prospering in the salvation of the Lord! He is as a tree planted by the living water, whose roots run deep and are firmly planted by the life-giving stream. As a result, the storms and droughts of life will not shake this one. His goal is to bear fruit to the glory of God (John 15:8), Note that prosperity in the eyes of the Lord is not measured in the amount of money we may accumulate, nor the upscale friendships we may develop, nor the size of the house we may live in, etc. True prosperity in God’s eyes are those who “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33); those who have truly learned to “fear God, and keep his commandments” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). The one who desires true happiness will learn to be content in whatever circumstances life may bring (Philippians 4:11). His satisfaction comes in living each day close to the Lord, and in having fellowship with the congregation of the righteous. This is the pathway which the Lord knows (vs.6)—that is, this is the way that God approves.

The Way of the Sinner Shall Perish

In striking contrast to those who walk the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8) are those who travel the pathway of destruction (Matthew 7:14). Unlike a tree firmly rooted in fertile soil, those who live opposed to God are as the unusable husk (chaff) of wheat that blows away with the slightest of breezes (vs.4). This way may bring pleasure for a season (Hebrews 11:25), but the reward that lies at the end of this path is death (Romans 6:23; Proverbs 14:12). It is for this reason that the ungodly shall not be able to “[with]stand in the judgment” (v5). It is certain that both righteous and unrighteous will appear before God come Judgment Day (2 Corinthians 5:10), but those who have walked the broad way of destruction will rue the day they refused to walk in God’s way. Would God that men and women everywhere would learn that sin is such a cruel taskmaster! Unfortunately, far too many will learn far too late that the payment for a life of sin is eternal separation from Almighty God, and from all of those who have lived godly in Christ Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

These ideas expressed in Psalm I are reiterated numerous times throughout the Psalms. We would do well to heed the godly advice given to us through in this psalm. If you desire to be truly happy, then there is no other way than God’s way! Live a life of obedience to the

word of God, taking every precaution to avoid the pitfalls of sin, and striving to walk everyday in the path of truth and righteousness. You will never regret it!

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Reasons to Rejoice (Psalm 46)

Brandon Britton

Many people spent this past holiday season jobless due to an economy that is less than stellar. Countless soldiers have been away from home for a very long time, in increasingly dangerous situations, battling against ruthless insurgents. Virtually every newscast reports a murder, a terrorist attack, a kidnapping, a molestation or other form of abuse. Try as you might, you cannot escape the near constant flow of bad news. You can turn off the television and radio to try and tune it out, but as long as there is a mirror in your house you are reminded that you are growing older, your body is getting weaker as it gradually deteriorates little by little, day by day. Even if you avoid the mirror, you know how you feel. You are all too familiar with how long it takes you to “get started” in the morning. You frequently deal with sleepless at worst, or restless at least, nights due to pain. Every year there is one more candle on your birthday cake, a glowing reminder that you are officially one year closer to the grave.

Have I painted a grim and bleak enough picture for you? Believe it or not, the intention of these words is to cause us to realize that as bad as things can get in life, and they can get very, very bad, the child of God ALWAYS has reasons to rejoice, regardless of the situation. How is it that Paul and Silas found the strength, not to mention the motivation, to sing their hearts out in the middle of the night in a Philippian prison (Acts 16)? What would give Peter and John the strength to tell the rulers, elders and scribes who outlawed the preaching of Jesus, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:21)? And later, how was it possible for them to depart from their beating with hearts full of joy (Acts 5:40-42)? The answer is really quite simple, despite these and the many other problems, fears and foes that the Christian may have, we still have many reasons to rejoice. Periodically we need to be reminded of

might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

Conclusion

These four things do not exhaust the list of reasons we have to rejoice, but they are enough to remind us to perk up, put on a smile and be thankful. The Lord has never promised us a life of ease and peace, but He has promised us an eternity of it. God has not promised us a calm passage, but a safe landing. Brandon Britton may be reached at PO Box 329, Pulaski, TN. 38478.

Come, Let Us Worship (Psalm 100)

Phil Grear

“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Psalm 122:1). David rejoiced at the thought assembling at the Tabernacle each Sabbath Day to worship God. For us, the “house of the Lord” is not the building in which we gather, but consists of “lively stones” that are built up into a “spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5). Christians constitute God’s house today. But as we assemble with other Christians we should feel the same joy as did David.

Consider the wonderful privilege of worship. We enter into the presence of God to express our love and adoration to him. It is a time of great joy, and yet one of great solemnity as we gather in the presence of the Almighty God of the universe to express to him our great devotion, praise, and gratitude.

David understood the joy of worship. “O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms” (Psalm 95:1-2). Perhaps in no place did he express this joy in more beautiful terms than in the marvelous one hundredth Psalm.

“Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the

Our Final Destination (Verses 4-5)

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.” The Psalmist describes a place of great tranquility and safety. He contrasts the violent turmoil with a place of rest in perfect peace and tranquility. It is a place of beauty, with God dwelling in the midst. It is God’s home, His city and He will take care of it. The expression, “God shall help her, and that right early” literally means “at the turning of day/daybreak”, meaning He will not delay or wait until the last minute. He encourages the faithful that whatever befalls us on the earth, will be amended in God’s paradise (John 14:1-6; Luke 10:20). As a side note, if this Psalm was written concerning Sennacherib’s invasion, it is interesting to read of God’s deliverance of His people, especially as it pertains to the expression from verse 5 that “God shall help her, and that right early (at the turning of day/daybreak).” “And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses” (2 Kings 19:35).

Our Foes Defeated (Verses 6-11)

The last Scripture (2 Kings 19:35) is an ideal precursor to the final point made in this Psalm, that our foes will be defeated. The Psalmist describes the enemies as roaring and raging in anger, only to be destroyed and defeated by the voice of God (v. 6). The Lord is with His people to protect them and defeat their enemies (v. 7). Others may start it, but He will finish it (v. 8-9). God is able to destroy the weapons of our enemies (v. 9). When we face enemies that seem to be unbeatable, it is then that we are to turn it over to God (v. 10). Consider the outcome when Israel was cornered by Egypt (Exodus 14:13-14), when David stood at the feet of Goliath (1 Samuel 17:37, 45-46). No matter what the enemy, no matter how terrifying or powerful, He shall put all enemies under His feet (Acts 2:35). “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part in the same; that through death he

some of the many reasons we have to rejoice and be thankful, not just at Thanksgiving. A valuable source of encouragement for the child of God can be found in Psalm 46, wherein the writer greatly rejoices in his Lord and lists the many reasons he had to rejoice. It is interesting to note, although it cannot be absolutely proven, that this was likely written to give comfort to the nation of Israel in the face of Sennacherib’s invasion (2 Kings 19).

Our Faithful Deliverer (Verse 1)

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” God is our refuge, shelter from danger, place of safety. Sadly many will flee to the arms of another; a bottle or some other vice of sin to seek comfort and safety, or just to escape. God is our strength, not our wisdom, our physical strength or our wealth (1 Corinthians 1:19-21, 25). God is our very present help, He is very accessible, easy to be found, always there, always able. If you are in danger and need the police, fire or ambulance, how long will it take them to get to you? When you just need someone, are your friends and family always able to be right there with you? “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (2 Timothy 4:16,17). He is there, He is able and His arms are open, but will you come to Him? Would you refuse a life raft when drowning? There is an old joke that tells of a man who lived by a river that began to flood. A team of rescuers came in a truck to help him but he refused and said, “God will take care of me.” Later the high water forced him to the roof and when a boat of rescuers tried to get him to come he replied, “God will take care of me.” Eventually the floods forced him to climb to the top of the chimney where a rescue helicopter pleaded with him to grab the ladder but he yelled back, “God wilt take care of me.” Sadly he drowned and standing before God he asked, “Why didn’t you help me? I trusted in you.” To which the Lord replied, “I sent you a truck, boat and helicopter, but YOU wouldn’t get in.” “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). God gives us the assurance, do not be afraid to do what I have commanded, do not fear any enemy, for I am here with you. “...and, O, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20). “There hath no temptation take

you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Our Fears Destroyed (Verses 2-3)

"Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and thou the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Because God is our refuge, strength and help, therefore we will not fear (v. 2). He lists catastrophic events (metaphors for violent disturbances, earth be removed, mountains carried into the sea), things far worse than we normally endure, to show there is NOTHING to fear. I have seen the waters roar and be troubled (the word literally means foaming) and they can be menacing and terrifying. During Tropical Storm Hannah I sat on the beach and watched the ocean churn violently and instead of being their normal beautiful blue-green, the waves were gray. Although I was only on the shore, I cannot imagine being out in the sea in such conditions as were the apostles (Matthew 8:23-27), these turbulent waters were eerie and frightening. This is a terribly important lesson for us to learn because fear is a cancer to the church. Fear prevents church growth because Christians are too afraid to teach the Gospel to others. Fear prevents works from being done because money is held, just in case, instead of being put to use. Fear prevents obedience because of fear of failure (Matthew 25:25). Fear is fatal to the soul (Revelation 21:8). God can destroy those fears, remove these obstacles to our salvation and spiritual prosperity. In the midst of our troubles, trials and fears, remember who is behind us and what is before us: God and Heaven.

(continued on page 16)

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