

PSALM 33:1-22

CHAPTER STUDIES ON THE PSALTER

"God wants His people to be a joyous people, and the great cause and unfailing source of our joy is Himself."

In its fullness, this glorious Psalm of praise will be sung by redeemed Israel by and by, when, in the light of Christ, they shall enter into the full knowledge of God's character and ways; and shall be, as never before, "the nation," whose blessedness is celebrated in the middle line of this Psalm—the nation, namely, "whose God is Jehovah, and the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance."

But inasmuch as in and through Christ it is already our blessedness to know Israel's God in all the various aspects of His character which are unfolded in this Psalm, and inasmuch as we anticipate Israel in all the spiritual blessings of the new covenant of grace, we too are called upon to join in this glorious song of joy and praise.

Psalms 32 and 33 form a pair. Indeed, in a few ancient manuscripts they are written as one, by reason, probably, of the apparent continuity of subjects which was observed. Anyhow, it is no mere chance that the thirty-third Psalm begins with the same words with which the thirty-second closes.

The thirty-second Psalm may be regarded as the prelude and basis of the

thirty-third. There the blessedness is described of the man whose transgression is borne away, whose sin is covered, whose iniquity is not imputed, and it leads on to fellowship with, and joy in the Lord.

Now the climax of the thirty-second Psalm forms the basis of the thirty-third. In structure this is one of the most symmetrical and beautiful in the whole collection.

The word translated "rejoice" expresses exuberance, or audible demonstrative joy. It is the same word which, in the last line of the thirty-second Psalm, is rendered by the expression "shout for joy." In that same sense, as expressive of a holy joy which cannot contain itself, but must utter itself in a song of gladness, it is used in many other places in Scripture. Thus we find it in that beautiful little millennial song to be used by converted Israel by and by: "Cry out and shout for joy, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of Thee."

"In Jehovah"—all emphasis in this verse is thrown on the Holy Name as the great object of our joy.

God wants His people to be a joyous people, and the great cause and unfailing source of our joy is Himself—His eternal and unchangeable being; His glory and

majesty; His holiness, wisdom, and power; His faithfulness and love—and all the wonderful attributes of His character summed up in the Holy Name "Jehovah."

The exhortation in another Psalm is "Delight thyself in Jehovah," so that He Himself, the blessed God, and not merely His gifts and benefits, may be thine "exceeding joy." Indeed, the power to joy in God alone may be taken as the mark of a true Christian. Even worldly men can rejoice in God's outward gifts and benefits, but it takes a true believer to rejoice in Himself.

These, then, are the first words of this Psalm, "Rejoice in Jehovah." If it said, "Rejoice in yourself," some of us might well be sad; if it said, "Rejoice in your circumstances," many of us might well be gloomy; but to this call to "Rejoice in Jehovah" there is not one of His children, whatever their outward circumstances may be, who cannot respond.

Have all earthly sources of joy failed, you?—yea, do your very flesh and heart fail you? Then remember God Himself still remains the rock of your heart, and your portion forever; and there is a river the streams whereof continue to make glad the city of God, and which can never fail, because it proceeds not from any earthly source, but "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Therefore, fellow-Christian, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."

"Ye righteous"—this describes those who are invited to this holy task. But who are the righteous?

Not those innately so, for there are none such among the sons of men, and the spiritual in Israel, more particularly, knew well that their own righteousness was but as "filthy rags," and that if they were to enter into the presence of God it must be in a righteousness provided by Himself.

The "righteous" in our Psalm, dear reader, are those who have learned the secret, and passed through the experience of the thirty-second Psalm, which describes "the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputed righteousness apart from works," and know the truth of the promise in Isaiah that "their righteousness shall be of Me, says Jehovah."

But, linked with it, as one of the first-fruits of our justification by faith through the blood and righteousness of our Savior, is that subjective righteousness, showing itself in holiness of life, and this is brought out more particularly in the second line of our Psalm, where we read that "praise is comely to the upright."

The word translated "upright" describes those who walk in a straight course, and to such—that is, to all who avoid all moral crookedness, all that is of the darkness—in their mouths praise is "comely," or "meet," or "beautiful." There is harmony and appropriateness in the righteous singing the praises of the thrice holy Jehovah. "But to

the wicked God says, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes [or 'to sing My praise'], or that you should take My covenant in thy mouth? seeing you hate instruction, and cast My words behind thee."

But when a man's heart is full of the joy of the Lord, he not only wants a thousand tongues, but he tries to bring everything into requisition to help him to utter God's praise. "Praise Jehovah with the harp, with the ten-stringed psaltery sing unto Him." (*Types, Psalms, and Prophecies*, David Baron, updated by Mark Wash)

"Sing to Him a new song" (Ps. 33:3)

What is the new song and who sings it? Ps. 40:1-10