

What I Learned From My Study of the Psalms (Part 3)

by Bryan Gibson

A book this size, we could go on and on with important lessons, but let's wrap it up in this article with a few more (although we may later devote an entire article to the Messianic promises in this great book).

On the subject of joy...

It's a prominent theme in the Psalms—I found numerous expressions of joy and gladness throughout the book. What also became clear is that the joy described in Psalms is reserved for God's people—"those who God is the LORD!" (33:12; 144:15), who have Him as their help and hope (146:5), who "seek" Him and love His salvation (70:4); those who are "righteous" (32:11; 68:1-3), and therefore support His "righteous cause" (35:27); those who fear the LORD and walk in His ways (128:1), who trust in Him and love His name (5:11).

The above conditions helped me realize that my joy can quickly turn to anguish, unless my joy is accompanied with fear and trembling. "Serve the LORD with fear; and **rejoice with trembling**. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him" (2:11-12).

Alongside the many expressions of joy, I also found numerous expressions of sorrow, grief, and anxiety, even from God's people. Truth be told, God's people experience many of the same sorrows and heartaches others experience. So, in what exactly should I rejoice, and how do I keep rejoicing in the midst of sorrow, heartache, and intense persecution?

I can rejoice in My Maker, My King (149:2; 9:2)—in His many wonderful attributes, in His righteous reign over all nations (67:3-4), in my every opportunity to worship Him (122:1; 42:4). I can find pleasure in doing His pleasure (103:21; 119:35), and joy in His forgiveness when I don't (51:7-8, 12). I can rejoice, yes, even in the midst of suffering, because I know His provisions for my eternal salvation and joy (133:3; 16:9-11).

So much more could be added, but if I can take David's statement in 36:8 and personalize it, this will pretty much sum it up: "I am abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give me drink from the river of Your pleasures" (36:8).

On the subject of God's marvelous creation...

Consider the vastness of the universe, and then consider it was all brought into existence "by the word of the LORD" (33:6). "He spoke, and it was done" (33:9). It's all "His handiwork"—a booming declaration of His "glory" (19:1), so much so that the following admonition is given: "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him" (33:8). Truly, the entire universe unites in a symphony of praise to the great I AM (Psalms 148).

And let's not forget the manner in which He sustains His great creation, especially the earth, which "He has given to the children of men" (115:16). "The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing" (145:15-16). "You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it... You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth" (65:9-10). "Living things both small and great...what You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good" (104:25, 27-28).

Meditation on such things brings me to the same conclusion as the Psalmist: "I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being" (104:33).