

THE ONE WHO COULDN'T PRAISE GOD ENOUGH!

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This is a psalm whose author remains unidentified. He might have been the leader of one of David's choirs, but evidently he was a man absorbed in lyrical poetry. He believed that music was an ideal way to return thanks to Jehovah. This particular psalm has five verses, but they include seven milestones on a highway leading to the heart of God. They are important words: make, serve, come, know, enter, be thankful, and bless His name. These may be called seven stages of graduation from God's Musical Academy.

Make ... The Great Appeal

Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands (Ps. 100:1).

A joyful noise may be interpreted as a shout of acclamation or a cheer, but in this setting it refers to music. The writer seemed to be anticipating the time when all nations would unite in praising God. It would be informative if the historical background of this psalm were known. For example, when David returned the ark to Jerusalem he danced ahead of the procession, and the entire population was filled with jubilation. This poem could easily have been the product of that occasion. Only people out of touch with reality would have been critical on such a remarkable day. The citizens whose faith was in God had every reason to be happy, for the friendship of the Almighty could never be replaced. David was correct when he wrote: "Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Ps. 144:15).

Serve... The Great Acknowledgment

Serve the LORD with gladness (Ps. 100:2).

Service is the child of praise; intense gratitude begets a desire to share with other people. Only hermits are islands in the ocean of humanity. The people who live alone die without mourners. The ancient writer realized that earthly joys are

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temporal. Experiences that take a long time to arrive, may depart in moments. Unless blessings are shared, they become memories. The most inspiring testimony is useless unless it is heard. To share gladness is to spread the good news, and privileged indeed is the man who can make people happy. Solomon was wise when he said: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10). Unless a man exercises his arm, it may become a useless limb attached to his shoulder. Testimonies are the secret of spiritual enthusiasm. Unfortunately, such services have for the most part been discontinued.

Come ... The Glad Acceptance

Come before his presence with singing (Ps. 100:2).

Come is one of the greatest words in the Scriptures. It is difficult to comprehend that the Creator of the universe desires fellowship with human beings. It would be startling if the Queen of England were consumed with a passion to fellowship with hobos, Gypsies, or the poorest of her subjects. It is infinitely

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more difficult to understand why God constantly urges insignificant people "to come unto Him." The psalmist and his readers were already recipients of God's grace. They had "Come

unto God," but were being urged to come repeatedly. They were being invited to drink from a river whose supplies were inexhaustible. This text may be divided into three sections. (1) This is an extended invitation. People are never limited in their communion with the Lord. This is not one glorious, never to be forgotten experience; it is an invitation to endless friendship. (2) This is an extraordinary invitation only known by special people. Money could never purchase the privilege, and fame and repute cannot lead to God's presence. Entrance is only gained through Christ, who said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). (3) This leads to excellent inspiration. Joy is expressed in music which God appreciates. The song of the redeemed can only be appreciated by people cleansed in the precious blood of Christ.

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And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Rev. 5:9).

Know ... The Growing Assurance

Know ye that the 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 (Ps. 100:3).

This great text speaks of the Father who lives, the family who is loved, and the flock which is led. It is among the greatest revelations ever made of Jehovah. Surrounded by nations that made and worshiped idols, Israel was commanded to have no other gods beside the Lord. He desired His people to be loyal, and this verse reminded them of that obligation.

The Father Who Lives

The hideous idols manufactured by Israel's neighbors were unable to speak, hear, or move. They were inanimate things unable to respond to the simplest prayer. People liked them because they never rebuked evil. Food placed in their shrine was either eaten by priests or stolen by birds. On the other hand, Jehovah could love and sustain His people and be an intricate part of their daily living. He had created the universe, but it was amazing that He had chosen Israel to be His special joy.

The Family Who Is Loved

"We are his people." God had decided to live among the Hebrews, and His house was in the midst of their camp. No other nation enjoyed that favor. When the Lord issued a command, the tribes were expected to follow His directions. They would be led into green pastures and beside still waters. When they refused to obey the Lord, problems increased and the future became ominous. It was difficult for the people to understand this new concept. They had always feared the Almighty who could shake mountains and divide the sea. The

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idea of sharing His love was strange, mystifying, and some-

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times frightening. It was only when Jesus of Nazareth instructed His disciples that the new revelation became a delight.

The Flock Which Is Led

"We are. . . the sheep of his pasture." An interesting story comes from Switzerland where one day a tourist visiting a shepherd's hut in the mountains saw a sheep with a broken leg. She asked how the accident happened, and was surprised to hear the reply, "I did it." He explained that the sheep was very rebellious. When it would not respond, he broke its leg. He said, "I left it alone for a time, but when I went to feed it the sheep tried to bite my hand. After a few days its attitude had changed; it not only accepted food, it licked my hand." He then said, "Let me tell you something. When this sheep is well, as it soon will be, it will be the best in my flock. No animal will hear my voice more quickly, and none will be closer at my side. That animal has been transformed; it learned obedience through suffering."

Enter ... The Grand Advance

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise (Ps. 100:4).

Some years ago a skeptic asked an evangelist, "Do your converts stand?" He was surprised when the preacher replied, "No, they go forward." It would be encouraging if that were always true, but the writer to the Hebrews expressed the heart of the Christian faith when he said: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest" (Heb. 4:11). He made numerous appeals of the same type. "Let us enter" (4:11); "Let us hold fast" (4:14); "Let us come boldly" (4:16); "Let us go on" (6:1). The psalmist would have agreed with his brother of a later age for he also said: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." His counterpart said: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). Both writers would have agreed that in spite of what had been received, there was much more

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available. The desire to enter must never diminish. True fellowship with God surpasses everything.

Be Thankful ... The Great Appreciation
Be thankful unto him (Ps. 100:4).

Ingratitude is a blight on humanity. When people become the recipients of great generosity, the least they can do is return thanks and be appreciative. God, through His servant Jeremiah, said: "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number" (Jer. 2:32). That complaint was repeated again and again (see 3:21; 13:25; 18:15; 23:27). Finally the prophet said: "My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place" (Jer. 50:6). The history of the Hebrew nations cited many occasions when God lifted their burdens, solved problems, and delivered them from oppression. Yet they quickly forgot their Benefactor. The people sought God when they needed something but seldom returned thanks for His graciousness. It is wise to remember that even God likes

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to be thanked. Before the Savior returned to heaven, He instituted the Last Supper and said, "Do this in remembrance of me." He wanted to be remembered.

Bless His Name ... The Glorious Adoration
Bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations (Ps. 100:4-5).

Perhaps the eternal ages will be filled with surprises, for what God has prepared for His people has never been revealed. It is known that heaven will be filled with praise. John was very explicit when he wrote: "And they sung a new song and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 5:9-11). It is impossible to imagine a choir of over one hundred million people. There has never been such a gathering of singers, but

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the text supports the conclusion that God's country will be filled with harmony. The psalmist believed that joy could be known, at least in part, on earth. Within the short span of five verses in the hundredth psalm, the writer mentioned gladness, joy, and thankfulness seven times. He expressed the desire to make a joyful noise immediately, and thereafter to enter into God's fellowship with songs of praise. Happiness is part of the inheritance of the redeemed. If Christians were required to carry a banner on their pilgrimage to the Celestial City, the words upon it would be BLESS HIS NAME. It is impossible to be bitter, critical, argumentative, resentful, and faultfinding when the soul praises the Lord. It is far better to praise than to pout.

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