

# *Worship the Lord*

## *with Gladness*

### *Psalm 100*

By  
Dr. Dallas R. Burdette

Website: [www.freedominchrist.net](http://www.freedominchrist.net)

Psalm 100 reveals our proper posture on earth—a posture of thanksgiving and praise. This psalm is an admonition about thanksgiving. The author is writing about worship. He is also writing about knowing God. The writer uses poetic language in order to address the inner hearts of men and women. We cannot read these words without calling for praise and thanksgiving and worship with gladness. Psalm 100 was not just a call to Israel to praise God, but for “all the earth” (Psalms 100:1). The psalmist begins this master piece with a call for cheerful worship: “Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth” (100:1). Yes, God inspires ecstatic and joyful worship. Does God detect a note of joy in our worship? Does God sense an awareness of pleasure in our souls when we assemble with His people?

When the psalmist speaks of worship, he is not simply speaking of something that simply occurred at the Temple, but rather of their service to God twenty-four hours a day. This psalm is as relevant today as it was at the time it was written. God still wants His people to “Shout for joy to the Lord.” Whether we are assembled with the saints on Sunday or whether we are serving God in our daily walk, this worship, according to the psalmist, is to express joy, delight, and pleasure. It is not uncommon for many church gatherings to assume an air of dignity that actually squeezes out the spirit of thanksgiving and rejoicing. It is not uncommon for songs to lack the note of exhilaration. Is it any wonder that the little boy whispered in his mother’s ear: “Is God dead?” Yes, we, as Christians, often give the impression of being gloomy, despondent, and unenthusiastic—whether assembled or not. Psalm 100 is a Holy Spirit poetic chapter that should cause each of us to stop, look, and listen to the words of the Holy Spirit. Is this inspired writing real to us? Is this message of the writer a part of our walk with God? Listen to Psalm 100 as he captures the very essence of worship:

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. <sup>2</sup> Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. <sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his

people, the sheep of his pasture. <sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100:1-5)

## “SHOUT” FOR JOY

The first verb in this exhortation of praise is “shout.” Do we have this inner experience of gratitude and rejoicing for the spiritual blessings in Christ? Do we stifle every breath of praise? We, as members of the company of redeemed ones, have every reason to praise God for his willingness to adopt us as sons and daughters “through” Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14). This thanksgiving work of the author is a call to praise. The psalmist articulates this summons to praise with four imperatives: (1) Shout, (2) Worship, (3) Come, and (4) Enter. In other words, the inspired poet desires that “all the earth” submit to the power and presence of Yahweh. When the community of God praises its maker of heaven and earth, then this worship embraces a life that is doxological. When we live lives of doxology,<sup>1</sup> this kind of life demands a reorganization of our priorities. To state another way, when we submit to Yahweh, we reorient our lives that are different from the old ways.

## “WORSHIP” THE LORD WITH GLADNESS

The second verb in this psalm of worship is “worship.” When we shout for joy to the Lord, we will “Worship the LORD with gladness” (Psalms 100:2a). This worship is not simply a “moment” of worship, but rather it embraces a life that is dedicated to offering our bodies as living sacrifices to God—whether in the assembly or outside the assembly. This kind of service, or worship, supports a life of praise. The worship of the psalmist breathes a faith of simple trust, a life of glad surrender, and a faithful responsiveness to God in every area of our lives—twenty-four hours a day. As stated above, this worship is a reformation of our lifestyle. In other words, it is the reordering of our lives to God’s glory. Have we reordered our lives to God’s glory?

The Hebrew word עָבַד (‘ā·bַ‘d) “to work, to serve, to be a servant) conveys the idea of conduct that is appropriate to a royal figure. This word (‘ā·bַ‘d) can be translated “worship” because its focus is God, but the English word *worship* does not convey satisfactorily the comprehensiveness of the term. The Hebrew word is more wide-ranging than just what one performs at the gate of the Tabernacle, or Temple. It is that, but it is much more. Worship also includes the whole of our lives dedicated to the service of God. The same is still true today in our use of the word *worship* to describe what takes place on Sunday mornings. The activities that we share on Sunday mornings may be called worship, but we must not limit worship to one hour a week—between 10am and 11am.

When we congregate on Sundays, we must be conscious that God has not prescribed or ordained a so-called worship service.<sup>2</sup> Paul calls attention, in the Book of Romans, to a lifestyle

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<sup>1</sup>Doxology is a liturgical expression of praise to God.

<sup>2</sup>See Dallas Burdette, “Congregational Worship and Division,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 171-180.

that is devoted to God, which is our “spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1). Worship, for us, as believers, concerns our way of life lived in harmony with the teachings of Scripture. Since God has not ordained a worship service, then we do not violate any Scripture if we employ instruments of music in our praise to Yahweh. When we worship God, we bring our lives into conformity to the image of Christ. Serving God excludes allegiance to another deity. Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, calls attention to the necessity of choice: “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24).

We, as God’s people, should lift up our voices in a “shout.” We should lift up our voices in praise for the inner experience of God’s peace and for the inner experience of God’s grace. Have we stifled, or suffocated, every breath of praise before it is half grown? Are we selfish and self-centered? Do we lift up our voices in praise to God for the redemption that He has made available “in” and “through” Jesus Christ? As Paul contemplates redemption, he breaks forth in rapturous language in his contemplation of God’s scheme of redemption?

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he<sup>a</sup> predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> **to the praise of his glorious grace**, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. <sup>9</sup> And he<sup>b</sup> made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Ephesians 1:3-10)

### “KNOW” THAT THE LORD IS GOD

The fourth verb—“know”—gathers up and interprets the first three verbs—“shout,” “worship,” and “come.” In all of these verbs, we are immediately conscious of the imperative nuances, or fine distinctions, of these verbs. This knowing “that the LORD is God” is more about recognition than cognition, or perception. We must not vacillate between allegiance to God and allegiance to Satan. The psalmist is encouraging the heart to cry out for certainty. He wants the people of God to know that Yahweh is God. How firm are we about this fact? Is He the God of the entire universe with unlimited power? Does He possess absolute knowledge? Do we stand in awe and reverence in our knowledge about God? Are we conscious that God is the Creator of the world and its inhabitants? Do we rejoice in the thought that He is our God and that we belong to Him?<sup>3</sup>

Alongside of the confession—the Lord is God—the psalmist says, “It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture (Psalms 100:3bc). God is the creator

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<sup>a</sup> Or *sight in love. He*

<sup>b</sup> Or *us. With all wisdom and understanding, he-----*

<sup>3</sup>I strongly recommend Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004) for a defense of the One who created the heavens and the earth.

of His world and His creatures. God made Israel His chosen people to be a light to the nations, and He has made His people to be a light to “all the earth” (v.1a). Every individual belongs to God. No one can claim ownership of His creation. We are not self-governing; He is our rightful owner—“we are his people.” This making is not the creation of the world—even though God did that—but this making is the fashioning of His people into a worshipping/serving community. Again, this concept of ownership refers back to the psalmist’s earlier command: “Worship the Lord with gladness.” Since we are the people of God, we must reorient our lives in such a way that we magnify God’s sovereignty.<sup>4</sup>

As we reflect upon the words of the Holy Spirit in Psalm 100:3, we cannot help but think about the words of Paul to the Corinthians: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are **not** your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). As Creator, God has special rights and claims upon His people. God made us for Himself. He has a right to our love, to our gratitude, to our praise, and to our devoted service. God has redeemed us through the Atoning work of Jesus upon the Cross. It is in this vein that Paul writes: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Again, the words of the psalmist, “We are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (Psalm 100:3c), capture the essence of Psalm 23:1: “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” **This hymn (Psalm 100) asserts a covenantal identity of Israel with God, but today, this hymn also addresses the followers of Christ who are in covenant relationship with God “through” Jesus.** Is it any wonder that Paul encourages the Ephesians to “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19a)? Paul yearns for believers to “Sing and make music” (5:19a), but this singing and making music (playing instruments) was not just a ritual, but also something that was to be carried out with one’s whole heart. Listen to Paul as he elaborates on this **singing** and **making music**: “**in your heart** to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19b-20). The RSV translates the Greek text, **τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν** (*tē kardia hymōn*), as “with all your heart.”<sup>5</sup>

The words of Paul, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and the words of the psalmist, “We are his people, the sheep of his pasture,” ring a bell from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John:

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—<sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:14-16)

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<sup>4</sup>Since worship is what Psalm 100 sets forth, I highly suggest the following book by John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth: A Refreshing Study of the Principles and Practice of Biblical Worship* (New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1996).

<sup>5</sup>*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

## “ENTER” HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING

Jesus is our Shepherd. We are His people; we are the sheep of His pasture. God issues another imperative through the psalmist. Since Israel belonged to God, He issued another imperative—“**Enter** his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name” (Psalms 100:4). This “**enter**” is the fifth verb in God’s instruction to Israel. Psalm 100 moves from a concrete metaphor (sheep) to a liturgical act of praise. When the Israelites entered into “his gates,” this act of entering into the area of the Temple with singing caused the children of Israel to reflect upon their blessings from God. Psalms 136 is another classic example of a “thanksgiving psalm” that calls attention to the goodness of God. This psalm begins: “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever.” Even today, as we gather as a corporate body of believers, we, too, reflect upon the goodness of God, especially our exodus from the world of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Colossians 2:13).

Psalms 100:4 intensifies the invitation to enter His courts with thanksgiving and praise, but the psalmist does not stop with this summons. He gives the reasons for “**thanksgiving**” and “**praise**”: “For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” (100:5). Just as this act of thanksgiving and praise kept the Israelites focused on their responsibilities to God, so, too, the act of thanksgiving and praise helps us to keep things in proper perspective. Doxology puts life in its proper outlook. It calls attention to the blessings of God as a gift, not an achievement from our efforts.

*Thanksgiving* invites us to enter the sanctuary with a consciousness that “It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture” (Psalms 100:3bc). On the other hand, *praise* invites us to offer a responsive sacrifice to the One who loves us. The superscription of Psalm 100—“A Psalm. For Giving Thanks”—expresses our gratitude for God’s goodness. Verse 4 expresses beautifully the superscription. Thanksgiving is rooted in a concrete action of Yahweh. Praise is rooted in God’s character. The two terms move us from memory to ecstasy.

Life for us, as believers in the Atonement of Christ, is no longer self-grounded without thanks, but a life that is now a life rooted in thanks. This psalm reveals what our proper posture on earth should be—a posture of thanksgiving and praise. In this act of “thanksgiving” [תודה, *tô-dā(h)* ], we speak with exuberance of what God has accomplished for us, His people, and of who God is. In this thanksgiving and praise, we speak about our dependence upon God. In spite of difficulties in life, we still praise God. It is true that in this world, doxology is not an easy thing, but praise is still permitted by our faith (see Psalms 73) in spite of tribulations. We, as worshipers of God, are permitted to experience all of life in fresh forms and faithfulness when we enter “into” Jesus Christ who is our Shepherd.

Just as God made Israel, so the new Israel, too, is made by God: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10). As Paul contemplates the richness of salvation, he writes about thankfulness and gratitude, which reminds us of Psalm 100:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And **be thankful**.<sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:15-17)

## THE LORD IS GOOD

Why should Israel praise God? Why should we praise God? The answer is: “For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations” (Psalm 100:5). This psalm is designed to bring individuals back to the origin of thanks—know that Yahweh is God. We cannot reflect upon the word *good* (טוֹב, *tōwb*) without thinking about God’s creative activity in Genesis 1. **Even in the darkest hours of history, we must never forget that God is still “good.”** No storm or cloud can drive the believer to say that God is not good. The believer continues to sing: “Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” (100:3)

## CONCLUSION

Does this psalm cause us to overflow with thanksgiving for all our spiritual blessings in Christ? Does this psalm impress upon our hearts the necessity of rendering worship to God as our way of life? **Do we “shout” for joy for our redemption in Christ?** Do we worship God with gladness? What does it mean to us to say, “We are His people”? Has this truth made a difference in our day-to-day walk? Do we know that the Lord is good? Do we know that He is God? Are we thanking God and praising Him for His goodness? Even in heaven, with all God’s angelic host, God’s goodness calls forth a response that makes the portals of heaven ring with joy of praise.

And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. **Each one had a harp** and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.<sup>9</sup> And **they sang a new song**: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.<sup>10</sup> You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”<sup>11</sup> Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.<sup>12</sup> In a loud voice **they sang**: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”<sup>13</sup> Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”<sup>14</sup> The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:8-14)

The triumphant trust displayed by “The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders” is still needed among God’s people today. In the midst of tragedy, in the face of perils, in the hour of sorrow, we need to remember the goodness of God. We must continue to turn our hearts

and voices toward heaven in thanksgiving and praise. Do we enter this Assembly of God's people with thanksgiving and praise? Surely, such contemplation of God's goodness will lift our hearts in the kind of thanksgiving and praise that God delights in. **We should rejoice in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary.** The Christ event should cause us to bow in thanksgiving for such richness of grace. Just a reflection upon Psalm 100 should make Christianity our own affair. When we come to God, this coming is like dying to self. It is the most private act we can perform. This psalm calls for the constant touch with the eternal world, which contact is the very heart and pulse and beat of Christianity.

Attendance with the Sunday gathering of God's people is a good thing, but, at the same time, the Lord's people still need daily refreshing through spiritual exercises—listening to and singing spiritual music, reading and studying God's written Revelation, gathering with God's people for comfort and encouragement, and praying on a daily basis. Also, we must never forget that the inner life of the church depends upon the religious life at home. There must be private and diligent study of the Bible in our homes if the church wishes to be effective in its outreach. A renewal of vital Christianity must begin in the home. **Unless we are ambassadors for the faith in the home as well as the world at large, we are not holding out the faith to our families or to a dying world.** Every believer is to be a crusader. A living church is a missionary church. Psalm 100 is still a psalm for the church. This psalm should be read in the light of Christ's human life as an activity of God in time. This activity of God in sending His Son into this world abounds with God's concern for the redemption of humanity—triumphing over the powers of spiritual forces and conquest over the last enemy—death. God brought about His victory over the powers of darkness through the introduction of a new age into the world of corruption and brokenness with the advent of His Son.

We rejoice in the Gospel of God, a Gospel that offers redemption by grace through faith in His Son Jesus. As we reflect upon the Gospel, we realize that the Gospel of God is a Word from beyond. In other words, the Gospel is the Word of God coming from eternity into time. With the coming of Jesus, God invaded time. Christianity has a history before its history on earth. Christianity is a religion of redemption—achieved redemption on the part of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not come as a grand spiritual personality, but as the Redeemer of humanity. The Cross of Jesus is either the life of Christianity, or it is its death. When the Cross ceases to be the center of Christianity, then Christianity in time will lose its moral and public energy. The Cross of Jesus is not just an impressive spectacle but a decisive act in the moral order of God's holiness.<sup>6</sup> Christianity deals with **forgiveness**. Psalm 100 is a psalm that we should continue to sing with shouts of joy and exuberance as we reflect upon the richness of God's grace “in” and “through” Jesus.

## Psalm 100

**Shout** for joy to the LORD, all the earth. <sup>2</sup> **Worship** the LORD with gladness; **come** before him with joyful songs. <sup>3</sup> **Know** that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people,

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<sup>6</sup>See Dallas Burdette, “Folly and Scandal of the Cross,” in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Jesus and Our Responsibilities*, Vol., 1 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 27-43.

the sheep of his pasture. <sup>4</sup> **Enter** his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; **give thanks** to him and **praise** his name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.