

## Serve the LORD with Gladness! – Psalm 100

**Introduction** – Before salvation, serving the LORD was impossible. Man's good works were considered by God as filthy rags because man has no righteousness in him at all. *Isaiah 64:6 (KJV)*, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." This state of rejection and condemnation was not known to man at all. This is evidenced so plainly in our time today than ever before. We have to be blind not to see the arrogance of man in his inventions and he has made God into his own puny image. Some have even tried to erase God from His existence. But man has failed miserably. He will stand before this same God, whom he despises arrogantly today, and will be justly sent by God to Hell for eternity. This was our state too before salvation. All who are born again in Christ began from this same starting point. There is no exception.

However, after salvation everything changed. The power of the blood of Christ has transformed a sinner into a saint whereby everything about him, from his mind, heart, tongue, his hands and his feet to all his deeds, has been cleansed and made worthy of service to God almighty. He had never experienced such an honour and privilege before in his entire life! This is a new experience that must be learned and taught. It does not come naturally to the new man in Christ. It is just like a person from a different culture who has been adopted into a new family in a foreign land. He is awkward at first in his new environment with the new language, new way of dressing and new relationships with his new parents! He is very careful how he behaves and conducts himself. Everything he used to do, from the way it is to be done to the right and wrong things, have to be unlearned before he can learn new ways. This is more or less the same with the child of God in his new life in Christ.

He can serve God almighty now in the new spiritual adoption into the family of God that he has in Christ. All the old ways and concepts of service must be discarded. The new ways, the right that is to be done and the wrong that is not to be done must be learned afresh by the child of God. The knowledge that his service can be accepted by God because it is good in the sight of God is something new to him. The believer must want to serve God and serve God acceptably. The psalmist expresses the acceptable way of service well in Psalm 100.

**I. Serve with Knowledge (verses 1-2)** – He calls this psalm a psalm of praise in his introduction. It is praise to the LORD who accepts his service and has enabled him to serve well. He begins by declaring out loud to "make a joyful noise unto the LORD." Singing songs of praise is one of the best ways to make a joyful noise. It is to fill the mouth of the worshipper with only one theme. It is the theme of praising the LORD, no one else. Know who you are serving. The glory of God must be sought. It is not the glory of any god but of the LORD, the God of Israel. The covenantal Name of God is used here. The LORD is the God of Israel. He has made a covenant with Israel. He is Israel's personal God who cares for Israel

and will protect Israel. Israel has been given the privilege to bear the Name of God whenever the name Israel is mentioned. The LORD is reflected by Israel's manner of life and existence. Israel was born out of God's direct care. The LORD called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to form the nation of Israel. Ever since that time, Israel was God's only people on the whole earth. Israel was enjoying God's special favour, i.e. His grace since her inception. Israel had the Word of God, the abiding presence of the LORD throughout her existence, God chose Israel to place His Tabernacle (later the Temple) on this earth which was God's "home" and which represented His presence in the midst of Israel. Israel truly has much cause to "make a joy noise unto the LORD."

Using synthetic parallelism, the psalmist declares to "all ye lands" to also make a joyful noise unto the LORD! Why is that the case? The reason is because the message of the Messiah, who is Jesus Christ, is through Israel. Israel's testimony and life as a godly nation would point the world to Christ. That is why the whole earth has very good reason to rejoice and praise the LORD! In Jesus Christ there is hope of everlasting life. Through Israel, there would be power to defeat sin, death and hell. For out of Israel would be born the Messiah (or "the Christ" in Greek) who would save the world from sin. Israel's existence in OT times demonstrated this truth. Israel's entire system of sacrifice pointed to Christ. Israel's way of worship and life of holiness lived according to God's Word would point Gentiles to Christ. The LORD gave all these spiritual blessings to the whole earth through the birth and protection of the nation of Israel. For these spiritual reasons, the psalmist cries to the whole earth to give thanks and praise the LORD God of Israel.

**Verse 2** (synonymous parallelism)—Using two imperatives in this verse, the psalmist commands the whole earth to serve the LORD with gladness, i.e. rejoicing. It was costly in OT times to serve the LORD because the worshippers had to bring many animals that were without blemish before the LORD. These were expensive animals that a farmer or shepherd would like to keep for reproduction. Maimed and injured animals were to be killed for food and not for reproduction. Therefore, with the sacrifice of these expensive animals, it could be difficult at times to "serve the LORD with gladness." However, when the worshipper understands the grace and mercies the LORD has bestowed upon him in Christ, the privilege and honour given to him by the LORD to be able to serve Him outweighs all the costs of worship. He does not think of the cost. He serves with all his heart, soul, strength and mind. Counting the cost of what he has to sacrifice to serve the LORD would be a sin compared to what the LORD has given to him. Israel would not have existed if not for the LORD's doing! Believers could not have worshipped if not for Christ's death and resurrection! Serving the LORD with genuine and sincere rejoicing of heart is not just the only way but the right and just way.

To ensure that there is no misunderstanding between service and worship, the psalmist employs synonymous parallelism to drive home the point. He states in his second line or stich to “come before His presence with singing.” The presence of the LORD in OT times was very vivid, for they worshipped the LORD in spirit, in truth and in location. The location was God’s choice. Before the time of King David it was in Shiloh where the Tabernacle was located. From King David’s time, it was changed to Jerusalem, the city of God. Then in Solomon’s time, the Tabernacle was replaced by the Temple, a permanent structure to symbolise home.<sup>1</sup> Therefore when the psalmist commanded all the earth to “come before His presence with singing”, it means to come to Jerusalem the city of God. This means that the earth must acknowledge that the one and living true God was found only in Jerusalem, Israel. The earth must not come before any god in any place and sing in worship! That would be blasphemy! It was only to be in Jerusalem! To do that meant that they must accept and believe in the Messiah and their LORD God just like Israel. Today, believers worship the LORD God only in spirit and in truth. Christ said to the Samaritan woman at the well, *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:23-24) To worship “in spirit” means “in sincerity” and “in truth”, according to the Word of God. Man is never allowed to worship and serve the LORD any way he likes. It must be based upon what the LORD has stipulated. God made it very clear to man in the perfect Word of God.

We also notice in this verse that service and singing, i.e. worship, are one and the same. The believer cannot separate the two. Serving the LORD slothfully and then singing with gusto is a hypocrisy that the LORD rejects immediately. Serving the LORD is not to be limited to church service. It includes everything that the child of God does in his life from Monday to Sunday. Place and time do not affect his faithful service. The reason is that the LORD’s presence is everywhere. The believer’s life is to shine for Christ all the time without exception. His private and public life are the same to the LORD. Those who serve the LORD faithfully everywhere they go will have no problem worshipping the LORD in spirit and in truth. They cannot wait to assemble together with God’s family every Lord’s Day to praise the LORD with all his brothers and sisters in Christ. The Lord’s Day will always be the high point of the entire week. It reminds them of their eternal home in heaven where praises to the LORD continue forever. With such a heart of devotion and love, it is wonderful and always a privilege and honour to serve the LORD with joy!

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that the only reminder to the saints in the New Heaven and New Earth of Revelation 21 and 22 is the name “Jerusalem”, for their new and eternal capital city is called the “New Jerusalem.” This is God’s eternal home!

**II. Serve as God's People (verse 3)** – To serve the LORD as strangers is impossible. Yet this seems to be the trend today. This is evidenced by the type and manner of worship that characterises our times. There are people who seem to worship the LORD in any way that they like as long as it is right in their own eyes! This is the sign of the last days! God's people are the ones who know the LORD and that he is God! The name "God" is used for the first time in this psalm. The word "elohiyim" points to the power of God. His almighty power is emphasized whenever the word "elohiyim" is used. Used together with the name "the LORD," it means that the LORD is God almighty and the worshiper must never forget this! The LORD must not be trifled with. We must not take the grace and mercies of God for granted and think that the LORD is a Person who does not care, is weak and helpless because He seems to let sinful man get away with slothfulness and hypocritical worship! The LORD God will put a stop to such fallacious notions! Just because the LORD is patient and longsuffering in dealing with us does not mean that He is blind and helpless and has gone to sleep and does not care about our transgressions. He is not a helpless LORD but the all powerful God!

He is the One who made us. God is our Creator. It also means that He is also the One whom man answers to on the day of death! He is the One man must please while he lives on the earth. As sinners without Christ, this must cause man to tremble. For in death and in sin, he faces the wrath and judgement of God which is to be sent to hell! Man did not make himself as the theory of evolution has deceived man into thinking! This lie of Satan has caused the world to decay and deteriorate into lasciviousness and great debauchery. The life of fornication and homosexuality is being touted as beautiful and acceptable. Those who condemn such a life are castigated as bigoted and unloving, whereas those who promote such an evil godless way of life are exalted and put on a pedestal of praise. Such an inverted and twisted manner of life where the ugliness of sin is euphemistically portrayed as beautiful is so common worldwide that it has become the new norm. The denial and rejection of the truth that God made man and man did not make himself has borne the fruits of sins as evidenced all over the world. The psalmist wants to restore man back to the path of righteousness. But man must first realize that he was made by God and that his existence is not an accident. There is a purpose for his existence because the LORD is a God of purpose. Man is not supposed to exist for existence sake. He was made by the LORD to glorify and to enjoy God forever as a creature must to his Creator! This purpose is to be right with God once more through Christ Jesus. The way to Christ is to know the Christ of the Bible.

After salvation, believers now know that they are God's people. They do not live for themselves but for God alone. They are God's people because they belong to God. They have been redeemed by God with the blood of Christ. Salvation is a legal act on the part of God whereby all of God's law and requirements to save mankind have been fully paid for.

There was no short cut or short change of any laws of God. As such believers must realize that when they serve the LORD, they do so only as God's people. If they do not see themselves as God's people, it is nearly impossible to serve God with joy and lifelong perseverance. They will soon quit out of tiredness. They might even pretend to be noble and excuse themselves from service by saying "it is now time for the younger ones to serve." Such carnal notions will not come out of the mouths of those who know that they are God's people for eternity and that they serve as God's people for life. There is no quitting. They might change ministries but they do not stop serving! God made us and saves us. Believers are indeed by God's grace His people, owned by God or rather, they belong to God! What a wonderful revelation! This was exactly what Apostle Paul said in **Romans 9:25-26 (KJV)**, "*As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. 26 And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.*"

Not only are we God's people but we are also "the sheep of His pasture." This means that we are under God's protection. The best explanation of a Shepherd-sheep relationship is in Psalm 23. **Psalm 23:1-6 (KJV)**, "*A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*" Believers have nothing to be afraid of on the earth as they serve. No harm or hurt can come to them without the heavenly Shepherd's permission. When persecution comes, the sheep know that their Shepherd has allowed it for their good to strengthen their faith and trust in the LORD! This assurance of the Shepherd's protection and provision is a great reason to serve the LORD. Believers must measure their life not by the material things that they possess but by their walk with the LORD their God, the Shepherd of their life. Serving the LORD with such a wonderful assurance makes service a joy.

**III. Serve with Thankfulness (verses 4-5)** – The result is that the believer will definitely worship the LORD with thankfulness. As mentioned before, worship and service are synonyms in the sense that when a person serves the LORD correctly and sincerely, he will also worship the LORD with the same heart. Therefore, the psalmist commands the people of God to "enter into His gates with thanksgiving." The gates here refer to the entrances, not the Tabernacle. The presence of the LORD on the earth was where the Tabernacle was. To enter with thanksgiving is with a heart filled with gratitude based upon a personal and intimate experiential knowledge of the LORD who has helped him or blessed him in one way

or another. His prayers have been answered or the LORD has protected and provided for his family and peace prevails in the Land of Promise. These are all spiritual and material blessings that Israel received from the LORD because of the LORD's promises in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 as part of the covenant with Israel.

The knowledge of salvation in Christ through the typology seen in the numerous sacrifices and blessings from the LORD was genuine and sincere reason for the psalmist to command all who have the same experiences to enter into the presence of the LORD and give thanks to Him. Through the gates would be the courts where the laver and altar of burnt offering were located. The priests and Levites would be there to receive the worshipper and assist him in his worship. He comes to praise the LORD for His faithfulness and goodness toward His people. He exalts the LORD as the most High God in his life. He acknowledges from the depths of his soul the greatness and goodness of God almighty and how He has saved him by His abundant grace and mercies and watched over him and his loved ones and how He bestows upon him the privilege of being His witness. All these would fill the heart and lips of the worshipper in great humble adoration, thanksgiving and praise. The willingness to come with joy is unstoppable. There is nothing more delightful to him than to stand before the LORD with a grateful and thankful heart. With all the sincerity in his soul he can truly thank the LORD and praise Him for the nearness and intimacy that he has experienced in his continuous communion with the LORD every moment of every day. Entering in the gates and the courts of the Tabernacle would be the highest point of his life. To be accepted by the LORD is a most amazing and wonderful experience!

Using synonymous parallelism, the psalmist presses home his point of serving and worshipping with thankfulness. Using the same verb and also in the imperative, he again commands the people of God to be thankful. This time he commands them to bless the Name of the LORD. "To bless" means "to exalt and lift up" the name of the LORD. The theme of the words that come out of the lips of the worshipper in his praise is the LORD and not man, not even himself. The LORD alone must receive all the honour and glory and praise. That is why the worship is always God-centred and not man-centred. The lyrics of every hymn must be focussed on the LORD and not man. It is not sentimental singing but highest praise to the almighty God.

**Verse 5** (synthetic parallelism) – The blessed reason to worship and serve the LORD with thankfulness is that the LORD is good. God is all powerful and thankfully He is always good. Imagine a God who is all powerful but is sometimes good and other times bad! Man would be in great peril. He would be severely punished and destroyed without any hope of salvation. However, all who know the LORD like the psalmist would surely confess with him that indeed the LORD is good! All believers have experienced the goodness of God over and over again. Those times have been too numerous to count. The magnitude of God's

goodness is too stupendous to measure! He gave us life. He gave us family, friends and teachers and all sorts of people to shape and mould us to become the servants of God that He wants us to be. Then He saves us by sending His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to die for us. After salvation, He gives us the privilege to serve Him. He gives us spiritual gifts, the love of Christ as our motive and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to transform us into a spiritual person to do spiritual work. He gave us the perfect Word of God to guide, protect and direct us so that we may serve with righteousness and in the will of God. We must not forget the future hope of the new heaven and new earth. The list goes on. The LORD indeed is good! This is because of His mercies. We do not deserve one minute iota of God's goodness. Mercy is defined as the withholding of punishment that we deserve. Christ took the punishment on our behalf. God's mercy is everlasting and endless. It is not for the moment or under certain circumstances only that we experience God's mercies.

Using synthetic parallelism, the psalmist expresses the final reason for serving the LORD with thanksgiving in our hearts! The LORD does not hide His goodness from us. He reveals it all in His holy and perfect Word. The LORD reveals His truth from the beginning to the end in the complete and perfect Bible! If God almighty were to leave man to his own sinful nature without any intervention, the world would plunge into a diabolical chaos that words cannot describe. The thought of such a world would send the shivers down our spine! Thank God the Truth of all things is found in this one amazing perfect good Book! No generation of man was ever without this wonderful Book. Through progressive revelation and over a period of more than 1,500 years, the Bible was completed and preserved perfectly by God Himself. Man has always possessed the perfect Bible.

**Conclusion** – Serving the LORD with gladness is to serve with knowledge. Knowing who we are serving is key to right and lifelong faithfulness in service. To serve is to worship and to worship is to serve. The two cannot be separated. Having experienced salvation in Christ, we need to serve as God's people and not grudgingly as unwilling slaves. Serving as God's people is the highest honour the LORD could give to anyone. As God's people we are part of God's family. Lastly, serve with thankfulness out of a heart that owes God everything! To return our lives completely to God and to live for Him is the natural outcome of being redeemed by the blood of Christ. At the end of our life of service, we can only say . . . we ARE BUT UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS! Amen.