

## Building On Our Knees: Part 2: "Enter His Courts"

**Psalm 100:1 ESV** Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! **2** Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! **3** Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. **4** Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! **5** For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

- I. Two weeks ago, I introduced a new series on prayer called, "Building on our Knees". I spoke about how in the New Covenant, the people of God have been made to be a temple for the Holy Spirit; houses for God that were to be entered by exercising the greatest privilege God has given the church, the privilege of a life of personal prayer.
  - A. I concluded by giving what were hopefully helpful, practical suggestions on how to cultivate a life of prayer. Today I would like to continue along that theme.
  - B. Let me begin by asking you a question: what exactly is prayer?
    1. Many of you probably will probably answer confidently and correctly by saying that prayer is simply "talking to God".
      - a) That would be a beautifully succinct way to express what prayer is in it's purest essence. When we say that, we are celebrating the beauty and simplicity of prayer; and stating that it never has to be adorned with ritual or ceremony, or any religious paraphernalia in order to be valid.
      - b) We are saying that prayer is intimate, personal and powerful communication between a Father and his beloved sons and daughters, as opposed to a merely religious exercise that can only be mastered by a select few gurus or zen-masters. We are saying that this privilege is potentially accessible to anyone.
    2. But is there a more helpful way for us as believers to think about what is transpiring when we pray, rather than stating that we are merely "talking to God"? In other words, while "talking to God" is absolutely, undeniably true as a description of the act of prayer, is there more to it than that?
      - a) I might also ask, does everything that people call "prayer" these days, qualify biblically?
      - b) For example, when a rapper thanks God at the Grammys for allowing him to win an award for his album that is full of misogynistic lyrics, is that prayer? Or when a corrupt politician prays at a church or college campus during an election year photo-op, is that prayer? Or how about when a Tibetan Monk strings up flags in the wind, is that prayer as the bible defines it?
      - c) And if all of these things are **not** biblical prayer, what is it that makes a difference?
  - C. Both the Old and New Testaments describe the activity of prayer, encouraging God's people to engage in it as often as possible.
    1. The Psalms speak often of "calling on" and "crying out to" the Lord.

2. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a model prayer, not for us to have a script to repeat as a mantra verbatim, but rather to teach us the kinds of things that we should say when we come before the Lord.
    - a) Will you read these familiar words from Matthew's gospel with me?
    - b) **Matthew 6:9 NKJV** In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. **10** Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. **11** Give us this day our daily bread. **12** And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. **13** And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.
- D. Now did you notice how Jesus how Jesus talked about God's will being done on earth just like it is in His heavenly Kingdom? I think that one line gives us a clue to what truly makes the prayer of a believer in Christ and his gospel distinct from everything else that this world calls prayer.
- II. The kingdom aspect of prayer is huge! What will any great realtor tell you is the most important thing? "Location, location, location". The beauty of the gospel is that it tells us that God, through Jesus, loved us so much that he came to where we were (our location), and by dying on the cross, redeemed us from the corruption that exists in our own hearts, and in the earth where we live.
- A. When He did so, he enabled us to no longer be slaves of this world, but to be citizens of another world (His location). In other words, because of love, Christ came to where we were, in order to bring us to where he is.
1. Most Christians believe this. However, it's not uncommon for us to think that we will not be able to enjoy this reality until we are united with him at our deaths, or when he comes back to earth and makes all things new.
    - a) But the gospel teaches that being in his presence is not so much a matter of leaving one location and going to another, but rather the merging of heavenly and earthly realities.
    - b) What I mean is that though you and I are bound to this seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling (sensual) reality of our earthly existence, through the work of Jesus, we have access to the heavenly realm, here and now, with all of it's attendant glory and power.
  2. This is why Jesus told us to pray, "Your kingdom **come**. Your will be done **on earth as it is in Heaven**."
- B. But this access to the realm of the spirit, where Heaven meets earth, is not available to everyone. Only to those who have come into the fold of God through the door of God's choosing. Jesus says in John 10, "I am the door of the Sheep...If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." This access in to the pastures of God was purchased at the cross.
- C. **Matthew 27:50 ESV** And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. **51a** And behold, **the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom**.
1. The curtain in the temple was there to keep the common and profane things (like you and I) from wandering in to the the most holy and sacred place where God dwelt!

2. But when Jesus became sin for us on the cross, taking our penalty and bestowing on us his righteousness, something changed!
  3. The tearing of the curtain was not simply an act of divine vandalism by God, or some angry, vengeful outburst because his Son had been murdered! A far greater message was being sent! "You, who because of sin were barred from my presence, and bound to your earthly reality, can now enter boldly and freely into the realm of my glory, holiness and power because of the sacrifice of Jesus!"
- D. This truth is confirmed throughout the New Testament letters:
1. **Ephesians 3:12 ESV** in whom (the Lord Jesus Christ) we have **boldness and access** with confidence through our faith in him.
  2. **Hebrews 4:16 ESV** Let us then **with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.
- E. The way we step across the threshold from the earthly reality to the heavenly one is through prayer. It is the way we enter the courts and the very throne room of the almighty, cosmos-creating, sin-defeating, self-sustaining, worshipped-by-angels God.
- III. Our text today represents a protocol for how to properly enter his presence. The Psalms say 3 times that God is great, and greatly to be praised! Though we have been given the right by Jesus to enter boldly, that doesn't mean that we enter sloppily! He is holy. That word means "set apart". We should always enter his throne room in the complete awareness of that fact. So let's examine the 5 short verses of our text again, and see what insight we can find in order to do so.
- A. **Psalms 100:1 ESV** Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
1. The first instruction we have from Psalm 100 is to prepare to come before God with **joy**.
    - a) This could be confusing and maybe even frustrating for many people. You may feel like asking, "Can I only approach God when all is right with the world? Is my prayer rendered invalid when I am depressed, discouraged, or angry?" The answer to that question is of course, "no". God wants you to come in your time of need!
    - b) To "make a joyful noise" also does not mean that we pump ourselves up, or put on a hypocritical front, to come before God.
  2. Our problem results from a common yet fundamental misunderstanding of the concept of **joy** as it's presented in the Bible.
    - a) Our modern minds equate joy with conditional and fleeting happiness, good vibes, a general sense of all being right with the world. We tend to think about unicorns, rainbows, and winning lottery tickets.
    - b) But biblical joy is a completely different concept. In almost every biblical reference to joy in the Bible, it is something that God grants vs. something we work up or work for; it is most often a result of something that God has already done!
    - c) The gospel says that we can have joy no matter our circumstances or even our feelings because of what Jesus has done. It is something he has given freely to sustain us; something that runs deeper than passing moments of trouble.

3. The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk understood this well when he said: **Habakkuk 3:17 ESV** *Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls...*
    - a) He is writing to a people about to face a scary time of God's judgement on his people. Things were about to get hairy to say the least. He describes here how the food supply and the economy are about to be devastated during this time.
    - b) But inspire of that watch what he says next: **Habakkuk 3:18 ESV** *...yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*
    - c) The joy that belongs to a believer is not subject in any way to the winds of trouble or persecution, but it is secure, because God is the God of our Salvation (as Habakkuk says here)...and He cannot be moved!
  4. Therefore when we come before the Lord in prayer, it does not ever need to be with a groveling, fearful, tearful or mournful noise but a joyful noise because of what Christ has done!
    - a) This is never what you will produce in your own strength! You are too flawed and sin-craving to produce joy by trusting in your attempts at self-made holiness, or by trying to control your circumstances.
    - b) But the liberty that Christ gives can **only** result in joy! If your relationship with Jesus isn't producing deep abiding joy, no matter your circumstance, you might examine yourself, to see if you're really trusting him.
- B. Psalm 100:2 ESV** *Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!*
1. This is the attitude we must adopt as we take up the work of prayer! We serve the Lord, not in drudgery, but in gladness!
    - a) When I was the slave of sin, that was drudgery, that was hard labor and toil! I hated it! I was constantly exposed and humiliated! Sin sapped my joy and my strength, and robbed me of my confidence and peace.
    - b) **Romans 6:22 ESV** *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*
  2. I can come into his presence with singing because of what Jesus has done!
    - a) Oftentimes we don't want to be in God's presence because we're so aware of our sin (instead of being aware of our Savior!) so we feel like an impostor or a squatter!
    - b) Well you're NOT a squatter! You BELONG in the presence of God, thanks be to God! So come in singing, not trembling or crying!
- C. Psalms 100:3a ESV** *Know that the Lord, he is God!*
1. This is such an important attitude to take as we approach the throne of grace! It seems like it should be easy to remember who we're praying to, but trust me, it's not!
    - a) "Know that the Lord, He is God!" But how many times do you and I approach him (or fail to approach him) because we're convinced he is an angry taskmaster, a disappointed coach, an aloof father, or even a

careless shepherd! Oh God! Help us to repent and know that you are GOD!

- b) In Psalm 50, God rebukes his people, because he says, "You thought that I was one like yourself!"
    - (1) This is our crime against his holiness! He is better, more patient, more tender, kind, powerful and holy than we could ever imagine!
    - (2) May he open our eyes that we could see him as he truly is! It would electrify our praying for sure!
- D. **Psalms 100:3b ESV** It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
1. God's first right of ownership to you and I is that he is our creator. Let's not rush past this point. That means that he thoughtfully and carefully designed you in his perfect and infinite wisdom, just the way he wanted.
    - a) But if we're honest, so much of what he has made disgusts us! We don't like the way he made our bodies, the families he placed us in, the job that he has provided for us, or the circumstances we find ourselves in.
    - b) **Romans 9:20 ESV** But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "**Why have you made me like this?**"
    - c) Instead, we should praise him for what he has done, knowing that he does all things well. What may seem to me a disadvantage or a handicap, may be just the thing that God has placed in my life so that I can be a vessel for his glory, whether he chooses to reveal his healing power in me, or whether he teaches me to suffer well for his glory!
    - d) Because the truth is, no matter how much you and I resist, we will never be happy until we are spent for his glory alone!
  2. At the end of the day, we who are following the master must joyfully surrender and acknowledge we are his, or as the Apostle Paul put it, **1 Corinthians 6:19b ESV** You are not your own, **20** for you were bought with a price. **So glorify God in your body.** His second right to us is because he redeemed us!
  3. But that's far from all! We're not just God's possession, a piece of pottery for his glory! We are his people! That means no matter what family, what tribe, what nation we come from, our identity has fundamentally changed!
    - a) There are three sufficient analogies to explain what has happened to you:
      - (1) **Adoption.** No matter where you came from, you have a brand new daddy; you are part of a new family where you will never be forsaken, and always loved and cared for.
      - (2) **Immigration.** You are no longer a citizen of this world with all of its chaos and disaster, you are now a part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation and a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9). You have nothing to fear in this land, because you have a diplomatic immunity called grace.
      - (3) **Pardon.** Your crimes are forgiven and your record is clean because of Jesus.
    - b) Your identity is fundamentally changed! Not only are you not your own, you are also not the possession of your own flesh, this world or the devil! Nothing and no one but Jesus can lay claim to you!

4. Nor are you burdened with self protection or preservation! You are **his** sheep ,in **his** pasture!
    - a) **John 10:14 ESV** I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, **15** just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
    - b) Sheep are safe in his pasture because he alone is the “Good Shepherd!”
- E. Psalm 100:4 ESV** Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!
1. Earlier we were told to come into the presence of the Lord with singing, now we are told what we are to sing! Our mouths should be filled with songs of thanksgiving and praise!
    - a) There is a real reason God tells us to do this. Though I’m neither a prophet nor a psychic, I’ll bet that I can guess your number one sin struggle this morning with 100% guaranteed accuracy.
    - b) I’ll just bet that every wrong thing that you do is motivated by selfishness and pride. At least I know that all of my wickedness is! All human wickedness is rooted, from the Garden of Eden until now, in ugly, insidious pride!
  2. This is why, in order to enter His presence, we must be completely resigned to God’s goodness and his power, and we should be completely unimpressed with our own goodness and power!
    - a) So we enter with thanksgiving and praise. Why? Because it is absolutely impossible to be genuinely thankful and proud at the same time! Try it sometime. Sure you can fake it, you can say the right words; but you’ll never fool the God who looks upon your heart.
    - b) Do you think the fact that we are told to enter his gates with thanksgiving and praise might give us a clue as to why our praying is so ineffective?
      - (1) Isn’t true that we spend many of our times of prayer laying out either a list of grievances, or our shopping lists to God? We even spend a lot of time crying to him about how bad we are at being saints!
      - (2) But how would our prayer lives change if we spent the bulk of the time on our knees, thanking God for his love, forgiveness and power, and reminding him how much we love him!
        - (a) Remember when you first felt the fire of passion for your spouse? You didn’t say, “Hey baby! Someday we’re gonna have a mortgage...wonder how we’ll make the payment?” NO! You were too busy reveling in the love you shared!
        - (b) You probably began your walk with God in the same way! Don’t you think God misses hearing how much he means to you?
  3. Thankfulness is difficult when we forget all that God has done for us. Do you remember what he’s saved you from? Do you remember where you were? Who you were?
  4. **Luke 7:36 ESV** One of the Pharisees asked him (Jesus) to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. **37** And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,

**38** and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. **39** Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” **40** And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.” **41** “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” **43** Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” **44** Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. **45** You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. **46** You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. **47** *Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.*” **48** And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

- IV. **Luke 7:47 ESV** “Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”
- A. How much do you think you been forgiven? You can answer that question by asking yourself how much you love Jesus this morning. You see Psalm 100 reminds you of a great reason to renew your love for him, and to burst into his courts, boldly giving him praise and thanksgiving...
  - B. **Psalm 100:5 ESV** For the Lord is *good*; his *steadfast love* endures forever, and his *faithfulness* to all generations.
  - C. Why don't we gather and worship the Lord for all of his goodness this morning.