

Psalm 33

Psalm 33: The outline of this hymn of praise is unmistakable: the call to praise (verses 1-3), the cause for praise (verses 4-19), and the conclusion (verses 20-22). The call is directed toward the righteous, for whose praise to God is fitting. The cause for praise is twofold: The Lord is dependable in both word (verses 4-9), and work (verses 10-12), and the Lord is just and loyal in dealing with His children (verses 13-19). The conclusion is an expression of the joyful hope of the godly in the Lord.

Verses 1-22: This psalm is a general hymn of praise. Its two primary themes are:

- (1) Yahweh is the Lord of nature; and
- (2) He is Lord of history.

In biblical thought, these realms are always related; the Creator sovereignly rules over His total creation, over all creatures throughout time.

- I. A Praise Prelude (33:1-3).
- II. The Rationale for Praise (33:4-5).
 - A. The Lord's Sovereign Power in Natural History (33:4);
 - B. The Lord's Sovereign Providence over Human History (33:5).
- III. The Response of Praise (33:6-19).
 - A. The Creator's Sovereign Power (33:6-9);
 - B. The Creator's Sovereign Providence (33:10-19).
- IV. A Prayer Finale (33:20-22).

Verses 1-3: Five different expressions in the imperative tense are used as a call to praise and thanksgiving. They are commands for the "righteous", not options: "Rejoice, praise the Lord, Praise the LORD with harp, sing unto Him, play skillfully with a loud noise".

Psalm 33:1 "Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: [for] praise is comely for the upright."

"Comely": This means that praise to Him is proper, suitable, and fitting. On the propriety of praise (compare Psalm 147:1).

This Psalm was probably sung in the temple, so this first verse sets the pace for the chapter. God inhabits the praises of His people. The Christian's sacrifice unto God is praise. We have much to rejoice for. We have been redeemed. The word comely above, means suitable or beautiful. I personally like beautiful better.

Psalm 33:2 "Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery [and] an instrument of ten strings."

Here for the first time, the psalmist mentions musical instruments, reflecting the Old Testament style of worship. When the rebuilt wall of Jerusalem was dedicated, Levites journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate with gladness, thanksgiving, and singing, using cymbals, stringed instruments and harps (Neh. 12:27).

It is interesting to me that the harp is specifically mentioned as an instrument of praise here and in Revelation, as well.

Revelation 14:2 "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:"

In some churches today, it is forbidden to use instruments of music to sing by. In Psalms, the use of instruments for praise and worship was prominent. There are also, two mentions of the harp being used in praise to God in Revelation. I do agree that some churches have allowed the music to become very worldly however. Music or singing should be worship and not entertainment. The psaltery was a lyre. The instrument of ten strings could be many different instruments, such as a guitar.

Psalm 33:3 "Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise."

"A new song": I.e., a new occasion and impulse for expressing fresh praise to God (compare Psalms 96:1; 98:1; 149:1).

Every "song" sung in worship can reflect moment-by-moment appreciation for the grace of God in one's life. The goal of godly musicians should be to "skillfully" offer praise and thanksgiving for the glory of their Maker.

God is not nervous, so music a little louder than you and I like it will not bother Him, if it is used in praise to Him. Singing to entertain should not be done in the church. We should sing unto the Lord. Have you ever gone down the road, singing to the Lord, thoughts that came into your spirit? That is singing a new song to Him. To play skillfully, one would have to be trained on the instrument he was using. We want to be a sweet sound in His ear.

Verses 4-9: The Word of God is "right" (pure), in a world full of uncertainty, His Word can be trusted. His Word is powerful, God's hand in creation exhibits His great power (Gen. 1:6-7).

Psalm 33:4 "For the word of the LORD [is] right; and all his works [are done] in truth."

All God's counsels and commands, whether contained in the Scriptures, or given forth in his providence, for the government of the world, are wise, and just, and good, without deceit or defect.

"And all his works are done in truth": Or rather, "in faithfulness." That is, all that he does is executed faithfully. He does all that he promises, and all that he does is such as to claim universal confidence. Whatever he does is, from the very fact that He does it, worthy of the confidence of all his creatures. None, however they may be affected by what he does, have any reason to doubt that it is perfectly right. God is the only Being of whom we have any knowledge, concerning whom we can feel this certain assurance.

The Word is Jesus Christ the Creator of all the world. He is Truth. The Lord Jesus Christ is right in all His dealings.

John 1:1-3 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The same was in the beginning with God." "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Psalm 33:5 "He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD."

"Righteousness" is the essential principle of justice; "judgment." The carrying out of the principle in act. God loves both, a further ground for praising him.

"The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord": Or, loving-kindness (compare Psalm 119:64). The earth is full, not only of God's glory (Isa. 6:3), and of his riches (Psalm 104:24), but also of his mercy or loving-kindness. A ground of thankfulness that all will acknowledge.

Every time God created something He said, and it was good. All things were created good. The sin came into the world by the deception of Satan toward mankind. Satan from the beginning, tried to turn the good into evil. Jesus defeated Satan, when He shed His blood on the cross. The blood of Jesus defeated Satan. God did not leave anything out when He made the earth. The earth was made to be a beautiful habitation for man. It will be just that again, during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus is righteousness for Himself and for all His followers as well. Our righteousness is in Christ.

Verse 6 and 9: God's utterances created a universe out of nothing (compare "God said" in Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26).

Psalm 33:6 "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."

“Host”: This designation refers to stellar and planetary bodies (compare Isa. 40:26; 45:12), and/or heaven’s complement of angels (compare Psalm 103:20-22). The former emphasis is more prominent in the immediate context.

If we were to look at the Scriptures in Genesis, we would find that actually the Father, Word, and Holy Spirit were all involved in the creation of the heavens and the earth and all that are therein. Breath in verse 6 above, means Spirit. The Word of God is also, Creator.

Psalm 33:7 "He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses."

“He layeth up”: On this picturesque language of God’s “heaping up” waters as a “pile” of dirt or sand (compare Exodus 15:8; Joshua 3:13-16; Psalm 78:13).

We saw in the miracle at the Red sea that God had power of the waters of the earth. We also saw in the flood of Noah that God told the sea to rise, and it did. It also receded at His command. Jesus spoke to the sea, and told it to be calm, and it did as He said. God is the controller of nature.

Psalm 33:8 "Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him."

The righteous alone have a right to "praise" God (see verse 1). But "all the earth", i.e. all mankind, may be called upon to "fear" him. He is an object of awe and true "godly fear" to godly men. To the ungodly he is an object of terror and fear of punishment.

"Let all the inhabitants of the world": The power displayed in the works of creation appeals to all alike.

"Stand in awe of him": Reverence or adore him. The expression is equivalent to "worship," fear or reverence entering essentially into the idea of worship.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Let all the earth stand in awe. Anyone, who does not have the greatest of respect for God, should think about God making the whole world and everything in it. Just the fact that the planets stay in orbit is a miracle, that I cannot explain. The human brain is said to be the most complicated and sophisticated computer ever known to man. Only a fool would not be in awe of God.

Psalm 33:9 "For he spake, and it was [done]; he commanded, and it stood fast."

Rather, and it was. The thing of which he spake at once existed. See the passage of Genesis which Longinus thought so striking an instance of the sublime, "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light" (Gen. 1:8).

"He commanded, and it stood fast": Literally, and it stood. God's lightest word once uttered, is a standing law to which nature absolutely conforms, and man ought to conform (compare Psalm 119:90-91).

This says, not only that He made it, but that it followed every command He made. Out of nothing, the Word of God created everything.

Verses 10-11: A sharp contrast is drawn between mankind's shaky plans and the Lord's sovereign plans.

Psalm 33:10 "The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect."

Literally He frustrates the counsel of the heathen, and causes it to fail (see 2 Kings 6:8-12; Dan. 6:5-28).

"He maketh the devices of the people of none effect": The same thing is expressed here as before. In different words, for the further confirmation of it, and that it might be attended to. This is the Lord's doing. He is omniscient, and knows all the secret plots and designs of men. And he is omnipotent, and counteracts them, and confounds them in all their measures. And is faithful to his people, cause, and interest.

In our study of the children of Israel being delivered out of Egypt, we saw how helpless the great pharaoh was. Not only was the great pharaoh of Egypt no match for God, but the gods of the Egyptians were no match either. God's laws are absolute. They are not changeable. Jesus fulfilled the law.

Psalm 33:11 "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

By which are meant, not the doctrines of the Gospel, nor the ordinances of it; though these will stand firm, and remain to the end of the world. But the purposes and decrees of God, which are wisely formed in himself. And are eternal and set, and relate to all things in providence and grace. The Lord does all things according to the counsel of his will in the government of the world, and in the salvation of men. The choice of persons to everlasting life is according to it. And so are their redemption, effectual calling, and glorification.

"The thoughts of his heart to all generations": Which, with respect to his own people, are thoughts of peace, grace, and mercy. These are many, and within himself, were very early, even from all eternity. And have their sure and certain effect (Isa. 14:24; see Prov. 19:21).

The counsel of the LORD is found in the Bible, the Word of God. The Word of God is as current today as our daily newspaper. The Bible is current to all generations. It is the Word of God, and will live on forever. The thoughts of His heart were revealed through Jesus Christ to all of His followers. The world would not understand, but the followers of Jesus would understand.

Psalm 33:12 "Blessed [is] the nation whose God [is] the LORD; [and] the people [whom] he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

For the meaning of the word "blessed" (see the notes at Psalm 1:1). The idea here is, that the nation referred to is happy, or that its condition is desirable. What is true of a nation is also as true of an individual.

"Whose God is the Lord": Whose God is Yahweh, for so this is in the original Hebrew. That is, the nation which worships Yahweh, and is under his protection. This is evidently said to distinguish such a nation from those which worshipped false gods or idols. Such a nation is blessed or happy.

"And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance": They are "blessed" in two respects. First, because they know God as Jehovah. And secondly, because he has chosen them out of all the nations of the earth to be his "peculiar people" (see Exodus 19:5; Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 1 Kings 8:53; Psalm 135:4).

Some time ago the United States proclaimed belief in God. It seems in the last few years that many people want to get away from the very belief this country was founded upon. We have been blessed, because we proclaimed faith in the One True God. Even our coins proclaimed (In God we trust). It is a very dangerous thing for our nation to wander away from God. We Christians are His inheritance.

Ephesians 1:18 "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"

Psalm 33:13 "The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men."

Where his throne and temple are, upon the earth and men, and things in it, as follows.

"He beholdeth all the sons of men": The evil and the good. Which is contrary to the sense of many wicked men, who imagine he takes no notice of what is done here below. But his eye is upon all, upon all the workers of iniquity, how secret whatsoever they may be. And not only his eye of Providence is upon good men, but his eye of love, grace, and mercy. And he has a special and distinct knowledge of them.

We know that God sees and knows everything. We know also, that He looks at individuals as he did Job.

Job 1:8 "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that [there is] none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?"

God does not look at the earth and see great masses of people. He looks at individuals. He beholds all the sons of men, one at a time.

Psalm 33:14 "From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth."

Which is heaven, that is, the habitation of his holiness, and of his glory (Isa. 63:15).

"He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth": Good and bad. And not the nation of Israel only, but the Gentile world. Whom in former times he overlooked. But under the Gospel dispensation visits in a way of mercy. By sending his son to die for them, and by spreading his Gospel among them. By calling them by his grace, by planting churches in the midst of them, and by continuing his word and ordinances with them.

The place of the habitation of God is heaven. He looks down on us from His lofty position in heaven.

Psalm 33:15 "He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works."

"He fashioneth their hearts": This is the potter's word (compare Gen. 2:7); for the significance of this statement (see Isa. 29:15-16).

We know that God has placed a heart in every individual. This is possibly, the part of man that God will judge. The heart of man is what he is. God notices even when we give a cold cup of water to a little child. No job regardless of how small it is, goes unnoticed of God, if it is done to His glory.

Verses 16-19: On the teaching of these verses, compare the maxim of Zech. 4:6.

Psalm 33:16 "There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength."

He may be at the head of a numerous army, and yet not get the victory over a lesser one. Nor escape safe, but be taken by it, there have been such instances. And if he is saved, or gets the victory, it is not owing to the multitude with him, but to the Lord, that gives salvation to kings (Psalm 144:10). Hence it appears that even such men need salvation themselves, and cannot save

themselves. Though they have ever so many at command, and therefore are not to be trusted in. Salvation is only of the Lord.

"A mighty man is not delivered by much strength": As Goliath with his great strength, could not deliver himself out of the hands of David, a stripling. Wherefore the mighty man should not glory in his might (compare 1 Sam. 17:47).

God does not save anyone because of their great power or wealth. All, whether king or slave, must humble themselves as a little child to come to God.

Psalm 33:17 "A horse [is] a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver [any] by his great strength."

Though it is prepared for the day of battle, and is a very warlike creature. And of great service in war, yet safety only is of the Lord (Prov. 21:31). This is put for all kinds of military preparations which men are apt to trust in, but should not, for they are "a lie". As the horse is here said to be; that is, deceives and disappoints when trusted to.

"Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength": In the time of battle; either by fighting for him, or fleeing with him.

Pharaoh's army on horseback, found out how little safety there was in being on the back of a powerful horse. All of Pharaoh's horsemen and the horses they were using, drowned in the Red sea. God delivered the Israelites on foot who had been slaves to Pharaoh.

Verses 18-19: God sees everything at all times and discriminates between "them that fear Him" (follow), "Him" and those who do not (33:13-15). Because God sees all and knows all, He is able to render aid to His people, no matter how perilous their situation.

Psalm 33:18 "Behold, the eye of the LORD [is] upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;"

He watches over them, and "he" guards them from danger. His eye is, in fact, upon all men. But it is directed with special attention to those who fear him and trust in him. Their security is in the fact that the eye of God is upon them. That he knows their wants and that he sees their dangers. And that he has ample ability to deliver and save them.

"Upon them that hope in his mercy": Upon the pious and upon his friends. The expression is a very beautiful one. It describes the true state of a pious heart. It in fact characterizes the whole of religion. For we imply all that there is in religion on earth when we say of a man, that conscious of his weakness and sinfulness, "he hopes in the mercy of God."

The only one acceptable for us to fear is the Lord. Fear of man is lack of faith in God. God sees and knows who fear Him. The hope of us all is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing but the mercy of God will get any of us to heaven. Not anyone I know wants justice from God. We all cry out for His mercy. Be merciful to me a sinner, O Lord.

Psalm 33:19 "To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine."

To preserve their "lives," for so the word "soul" is to be understood here. The meaning is, to keep them alive. That is God is their Protector; He guards and defends them when in danger.

"And to keep them alive in famine": In times of want (compare Job 5:20). He can provide for them when the harvests fail. Famine was one of the evils to which the inhabitants of Palestine and of Oriental countries generally, were particularly exposed. And it is often referred to in the Scriptures.

God delivered Joseph and his family in the great famine that struck that part of the known world. God showed Joseph how to provide, and they lived through the famine. God miraculously fed the millions of Israelites on their way to the Promised Land by raining down Manna from heaven. Deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Psalm 33:20 "Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he [is] our help and our shield."

This, and what follows, are the words of the church. Expressing her expectation, faith, and joy, by reason of what is suggested in the preceding verses. She signifies her expectation of good by waiting for the Lord. Either for his coming in the flesh, and salvation by him; for which the patriarchs, prophets, and all the Old Testament saints waited (Gen. 49:18).

"He is our help and our shield": The Lord is the help of his people in time of trouble, when none else is or can be. And he is a present one, and helps early and at the best season. And he is their shield, who encompasses them about with his love and favor, keeping them by his power in the greatest safety. All which encourages their waiting upon him, and expectation of good things from him.

We are cautioned to watch, and wait, for we know not when our Lord will return. Be like the five virgins who waited, and were prepared to meet their groom. God is not only our protector in time of trouble and our help when we are weak, but is in fact, all things to us. Without Him, we could do nothing. With Him, all things are possible to us.

Psalm 33:21 "For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name."

Not in sin, nor in themselves and in their boastings, all such rejoicing is evil. But in the Lord, "in his Word"; as the Targum is, in the essential Word of God, Christ Jesus. In his person,

righteousness, and salvation. And this joy is heart joy, inward joy, real joy, joy in the Holy Ghost; and is unspeakable and full of glory. This is what the psalmist calls upon the saints to do, in the beginning of the psalm. And so, his end in composing it is answered.

"Because we have trusted in his holy name": That is, in himself, who is holy, just, and good. And so faithful to every word of promise, to every engagement of his, and therefore to be trusted in. And hence it appears that the joy before spoken of is the joy of faith.

The following Scriptures tell us what we must do to be saved.

Romans 10:9-10 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

You see, salvation is of the heart. We who trust in the name of Jesus will rejoice on judgement day, when we are called His sheep.

Psalm 33:22 "Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee."

That is, an application of it in its effects. It is a prayer for a communication of grace and mercy to help in a time of need. And for a discovery of pardoning grace and mercy. And it is a prayer of faith; for the mercy of the Lord is upon his people in great plenty, and it continues. And they have reason to believe it forever will (Psalm 103:17).

"According as we hope in thee": Not according to any merits of theirs, but according to the measure of grace. Of the grace of hope which God had bestowed on them. And encouraged them to exercise on him, in expectation of finding grace and mercy with him.

The Christian is not like the world who has no hope. We have hope of the resurrection. The mercy of God has provided eternal life for us who believe. My hope is in Jesus Christ our Lord. His mercy endureth forever.

Psalm 33 Questions

1. What was one of the probable uses of chapter 33 of Psalms?
2. God inhabits the _____ of His people.
3. What is the Christian's sacrifice to God?
4. What does comely, in verse 1, mean?
5. Verse 2 says, praise Him with _____.

6. Where is the harp being played, specifically mentioned besides in Psalms?
7. Music and singing in church should be _____ not _____.
8. What should we want to be in His ear?
9. Who is the Word?
10. Who is Creator God?
11. What did God say after He had created each thing?
12. When did Jesus defeat Satan?
13. What was the earth made for?
14. My righteousness is in _____.
15. How were the heavens made?
16. What is the breath speaking of in verse 6?
17. Name at least one miracle in the Bible that shows that God is in control of the water.
18. What is the only fear that is pleasing unto God?
19. What is said to be the most complicated and sophisticated computer known to man?
20. What two great world powers were defamed by God in Egypt?
21. Where is the counsel of the Lord found?
22. Who was the thoughts of God revealed to?
23. Blessed is the nation whose God is the _____.
24. God beholds all the sons of men, _____ a _____.
25. Where is God's place of habitation?
26. What must all people, great and small, do to come to God?
27. Give a good example of a horse not being able to save its rider.
28. What is fear of man?

29. We do not want justice from God, we want _____.

30. Give a good example of being saved in famine.

31. What must I do to be saved?

32. What is the Christian's hope?

33. How long does God's mercy endure?