

Israel's Hymnal  
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### PSALM THIRTY-THREE

[Pss 33:1] Rejoice in Jehovah, O ye righteous: Praise is comely for the upright.  
 [Pss 33:2] Give thanks unto Jehovah with the harp: Sing praises unto him with the psaltery of ten strings.  
 [Pss 33:3] Sing unto him a new song; Play skillfully with a loud noise.  
 [Pss 33:4] For the word of Jehovah is right; And all his work is [done] in faithfulness.  
 [Pss 33:5] He loveth righteousness and justice: The earth is full of the lovingkindness of Jehovah.  
 [Pss 33:6] By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.  
 [Pss 33:7] He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: He layeth up the deeps in store-houses.  
 [Pss 33:8] Let all the earth fear Jehovah: Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.  
 [Pss 33:9] For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.  
 [Pss 33:10] Jehovah bringeth the counsel of the nations to nought; He maketh the thoughts of the peoples to be of no effect.  
 [Pss 33:11] The counsel of Jehovah standeth fast for ever, The thoughts of his heart to all generations.  
 [Pss 33:12] Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, The people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.  
 [Pss 33:13] Jehovah looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men;  
 [Pss 33:14] From the place of his habitation he looketh forth Upon all the inhabitants of the earth,  
 [Pss 33:15] He that fashioneth the hearts of them all, That considereth all their works.  
 [Pss 33:16] There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.  
 [Pss 33:17] A horse is a vain thing for safety; Neither doth he deliver any by his great power.  
 [Pss 33:18] Behold, the eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear him, Upon them that hope in his lovingkindness;  
 [Pss 33:19] To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine.  
 [Pss 33:20] Our soul hath waited for Jehovah: He is our help and our shield.  
 [Pss 33:21] For our heart shall rejoice in him, Because we have trusted in his holy name.  
 [Pss 33:22] Let thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, be upon us, According as we have hoped in thee.

The Book of Psalms is Israel's songbook. Not only the individual feelings and sentiments of the Israelites are expressed therein, but also the national hope. Of course, the Holy Spirit inspired the sacred writers to record every sentiment and thought.

Psalm 33 deals with problems that are vital to us at the present time. This great hymn falls naturally into three sections, the first of which consists of verses 1-7 and constitutes an exhortation to the righteous to praise God for certain things. The second section consists of verse 8-19 and is an exhortation to the world and all of its inhabitants to stand in awe of God and to recognize certain things and some definite facts.

The third and last section consists of verses 20-22, which foretell that Israel will be waiting anxiously for the return of King Messiah. With this brief analysis we shall now proceed to examine the psalm more minutely.

According to verse 1 the righteous are called upon by the inspired writer to rejoice in Jehovah and to praise Him because it is proper and right. The ones who are here called the righteous are evidently the pious in Israel who know God. There has never been a season when there were not true, faithful servants of God upon this earth and there never will be. Sometimes we, like Elijah, think that we are the only ones that are serving God and faithful to Him. Should the Lord, however, speak to us as He did to Elijah, He would doubtless inform us that there are now seven thousand that have not bowed to Baal.

Although the righteous in this psalm are evidently Israel, the general principle is true that praise is proper and appropriate for anyone who is righteous in God's sight. Of course man's good works and all his righteousnesses are as filthy rags, but those who accept the atoning work of the Son of God are clothed with His righteousness; hence they are in the language of this psalm, the righteous.

These righteous ones are urged to give praise to God upon instruments of music. Originally, at the beginning of the tabernacle service, there were no instruments of music used. Later on, however, David invented instruments of music and introduced them into the service of God at the expressed commandment of Jehovah given through His prophets. This is seen from the following verse: "And He (Hezekiah) set the Levites in the house of Jehovah with cymbals with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer and Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was of Jehovah by His prophets" (II Chron. 29:25). In the light of this passage we see that the addition of instrumental music to the worship was by the authority of God through His prophets. The writer of Psalm 33 recognizing this fact called upon his brethren to play hymns and to praise God upon the various musical instruments—to God's glory and to the edification of saints.

The righteous are urged to praise God "for the word of Jehovah is right; And all his work is *done* in faithfulness" (vs. 4). The term, the word of Jehovah, evidently refers to the written word of God. The Scriptures are verbally inspired and every thought is exactly as God would have it. By speaking thus I am thinking of the original manuscripts and not of the translations made by man. The Bible expresses the very will of God. It is, figuratively speaking, a transcript of His will and nature. It is therefore right and perfect. Moreover all that He does is done in faithfulness. God is faithful and true and cannot act otherwise. He is the very embodiment of love and righteousness. Being such He naturally loves righteousness and justice. Throughout the entire universe, according to verse 5, there is abundant and positive evidence of God's loving-kindness. Should we become discouraged, I would say that we ought to sing the song,

"Count your many blessings, name  
them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

The righteous are likewise urged to praise God and to render thanks to Him because "By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (vs. 6). The term, the word of Jehovah, here does not seem to refer to the written word but rather to the Living Word. The men of the ancient synagogue thus understood this Word of God to be a personal being and spoke of Him as the *memra*, the Word. According to verse 6 the heavens were made by the Word of God and all the

hosts thereof were formed by the breath of His mouth. It is somewhat difficult for us to determine exactly the event to which this language refers. Was the psalmist speaking of the original creation or was he thinking of the reconstruction period which is mentioned in Genesis, chapter 1, and which occurred during the six days referred to therein? Usually the biblical writers in speaking of the creation used the Hebrew word, *barah* which term means the bringing to existence of that which had no form nor substance prior to the act and is properly translated *create*. At other times the prophets spoke of the same act of creation but used a different term. In such cases they were not emphasizing the thought of bringing something into existence so much as focusing attention as its being formed according to design. In view of the two usage's it is impossible for one to determine which the psalmist had in mind in verses 6 and 7 of Psalm 33. Should one read Genesis 1:2-31 in this connection, one would be inclined no doubt to the conclusion that the psalmist was speaking of the reconstruction period which followed the disaster in Genesis 1:2. Regardless of the specific meaning of these verses we know that the psalmist was calling upon the righteous in Israel to praise God for His activity in the past in making the earth a suitable place for man.

In verse 8 we have this language: "Let all the earth fear Jehovah: Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him." Know longer was the Psalmist addressing the pious in Israel. In this second division of the psalm we see that he is addressing all the inhabitants of the world. He wants them all to have the proper reverence for and fear of God and to stand in awe of Him, recognizing His sovereignty and His supreme rights and dignities.

In the first place He calls upon the inhabitants of the world to stand in awe of Him because "he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Again we cannot tell whether or not the psalmist was speaking of the original creation or of the reconstruction mentioned above. Regardless of which interpretation we place upon this language, the force of the exhortation is just the same. The Almighty is the supreme governor and controller of the universe. He has made it what it is and is making it stand fast today as in the past.

Another reason why men are called upon to hold God in reverence and in awe is stated in verses 10 and 11. Here we are told that God brings the counsel of the nations to naught and makes the thoughts of the peoples to be of no effect. "Man proposes, but God disposes." Princesses, kings, emperors, and dictators often lay their plans and endeavor to carry out their schemes, ignoring the inalienable rights of men as human beings. We have a very fine specimen of this attitude in the present world situation. Hitler intended to make his new European order. The Japanese planned to have their co-prosperity sphere in Asia. Such were their announced plans. Upon a closer investigation of the situation in both these cases one learns that they, both the Japanese and Germans, had world conquest and dominion as their objectives. The Axis have done all within their human power to reach their goal. There can be no doubt in my mind, concerning the proposition that Satan is backing these aggressor nations and is causing them to do the things which they have already wrought and perpetrated upon the world today. But, according to verse 10 of our psalm, God oftentimes brings the plans and the counsel of nations to naught and makes the thoughts of the peoples to be of no effect.

On the other hand, God has a plan which began back in eternity prior to the creation of the world, which is being unfolded through time, and which will be developed throughout all eternity. The Apostle Paul spoke of this plan or purpose of the ages in Ephesians 3:11. "... According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him." God is absolute sovereign and no one can go contrary to His will or plan. It is true that He

has a moral government and deals with all His creatures upon the principle of the freedom of the will. Nevertheless, by His omniscience and His omnipotence He overrules and frustrates the plans of the nations, making all of their efforts to contribute to the advancement of His eternal plan.

During the dark days of World War I when the Germans seemed to be headed for victory, I took my stand upon this psalm, knowing that the cause for which Allied Nations were fighting was in keeping with the revealed will of God and that the plan of the Germans and their satellite countries was contrary to the will of God. Knowing these facts I took my stand, as just stated, unflinchingly upon this simple declaration of Scripture. The results of the war showed that I was right in thus standing upon the plain, unvarnished Word of the Living God.

The next reason which is assigned by the psalmist in asking the inhabitants of the world to stand in awe and reverence before God is that the Almighty has chosen Israel as His people: "Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, The people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (vs. 12). God by an act of creation brought Isaac into existence. Thus the Jewish nation which sprang from Him is the result of a biological miracle. Not only did God create the Hebrew people, but He chose them to be the lot of His inheritance. To be called and chosen of God is indeed to be in a blessed condition. Whenever the Lord confers His blessing upon a person or a group of people, their responsibilities are immeasurably increased. Where there is much given, much is required. Israel was entrusted with the oracles of God. Out of her midst He raised up prophets and righteous men to declare the coming of Messiah and the salvation of Israel, and from her loins sprang the Son of David, the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world. Thus Israel was and is the blessed nation mentioned here. Her failure to realize and appreciate her blessings and to live and walk before God as she should are the reasons why she is scattered throughout the world and is suffering as she is today.

He who curses Abraham and his seed is to be cursed, according to Genesis 12:2,3.

"... and I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee will all the families of the earth be blessed."

David, in Psalm 9:12, declared that, "For he that maketh inquisition for blood remembereth them; He forgetteth not the cry of the poor." The Lord will certainly not forget the cry of poor, suffering Israel today throughout the Axis countries. He will make inquisitions for the blood of the millions of poor, helpless, innocent Hebrews who have been slaughtered in the most cruel and ruthless manner. Through the prophet Zechariah God said that he who touches Israel touches the apple of His eye. No one can mistreat the Jew and go unpunished.

Our psalmist, in verses 13-19, gives us a passage which is the utmost importance for every man, woman, and child today. It is Jehovah God who is looking down from heaven and beholding all the sons of men. From His majestic place in glory He is looking forth upon all the inhabitants of the globe. It is He who "fashioneth the hearts of them all, That considereth all their works." It is in Him that all live, and move, and have their being. Should He withdraw His favor or His blessing from them for one moment, they would perish. Man is utterly dependent upon the Almighty. One may be in good health today and have his affairs arranged so as to be living in comfort and ease. Tomorrow some calamity may overtake him which will sweep away everything which he has. There is nothing that is sure in this life—that is, that which is of human manufacture and origin.

As the nations in their greed for that which belongs to another march ruthlessly over less fortunate and minor peoples, we who know God and His Word realize that there is no king who is saved by the multitude of a host and that a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A great warrior once said that God is on the side of the biggest guns. That statement seems to the worldly-wise man to be correct, but it is nothing but an expression of unbelief. God is on the side of the one whose cause is just. Prayer changes things. God can turn the darkness to day and can and often does bring sudden destruction upon the strong "so that destruction cometh upon the fortress" (Amos 5:9).

The horse in the days of David was one of the most powerful means of warfare. Horsemen were at a very great advantage over the infantrymen. So were the charioteers. Since Jehovah determines the outcome of any conflict, "A horse is a vain thing for safety; Neither doeth he deliver any by his great power," declared the psalmist.

On the other hand, "the eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear him, Upon him that hope in his loving-kindness; To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine" (vss. 18,19). God knows who are the righteous ones and those who are trusting in Him. Moreover, He understands how to deliver His people out of all danger and how to over-throw and to bring to naught those who are acting contrary to His will.

It is for us who know Him to have our eyes fixed upon Him, to hope in His loving-kindness, and not to trust in anything which we have done or might accomplish. When the proper time has come and when God has accomplished His purpose in allowing any calamity to come upon His children, He will deliver them from all danger. He knows how to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in time of famine and distress. God allows His faithful people to pass through various circumstances in order to enrich their lives and to prepare them for greater service in His cause, both in time and eternity.

In the last three verses of this psalm we catch a glimpse of Israel humbled and trusting God. Thus we read, "Our soul hath waited for Jehovah: He is our help and our shield." In this verse is presented a vision of the nation of Israel waiting for Jehovah. Waiting for Him in what sense? When I understand that someone is coming to visit me from a distant city and know on what train he is traveling, I will go to the station at the appointed time and await the arrival of the train in order to meet my friend. His coming is a personal matter and I believe he will appear at the proper time, because of his having given me that information. God has promised through the prophets that He will come to man in the person of the Messiah. Israel has been looking for her King throughout the centuries. He has not as yet come to her in fulfillment of those prophecies, which speak of His glories and which we find throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. He did, however, come in fulfillment of the plan as outlined by Moses and the prophets. His coming was set forth in the most graphic manner in such passages as Isaiah 61:1-3, for instance.

1 The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified.

His redemptive work consists of two appearances upon earth, separated by a long period of time during which He having been rejected at His first coming, is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Thus

having accepted the invitation of God to return to heaven and remain there until His people welcome Him and plead for His return, He awaits their turning to Him and their imploring Him to deliver them. In view of the teaching of the prophets, I know that the psalmist in the last verses of our hymn was looking forward and was describing the second coming of King Messiah when He will, in answer to Israel's plea, leave His place where He is enthroned above the cherubim, will shine forth, and will come and save Israel. At that time He will be the shield of the nation and will deliver her from all her troubles.

According to verse 21 the heart of the nation will rejoice in Him and will trust in Him implicitly. The people will realize that they are dependent upon the loving-kindness of Jehovah and will pray that His grace may rest upon the nation as they have hoped in Him. May the time speedily come when Israel will see the mistake of the nineteen hundred years' standing and will plead for Messiah to return to earth and deliver her. When she does, He will return. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!