

# Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

June 2006

PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.

## Psalm 33 – Looking to rejoice in the Lord always

I was recently on a plane heading somewhere and I recognised that when I was talking to someone I was complaining more than I was rejoicing. It seems that once you begin to focus on what you don't like then very quickly you can add to the list of things that you are not very happy about. Before I knew it I was complaining about the seats, complaining about the number of people on the plane and so on. Isn't it strange how sometimes a little voice will whisper in your ear and say how about looking for those things that you can rejoice in the Lord over. Almost immediately I began to think that flying certainly is much better than walking or swimming for that matter. I realised then that rejoicing in the Lord is something that we have to be intentional about and take the opportunity to look around and see what it is that we can rejoice in. Psalm 33 is really one of those Psalms that helps us get our focus on rejoicing primarily in the Lord and the various aspects of what it means to know the Lord. As much as I find myself seeing the evil of the world and really speaking out about the things that I dislike I find it is always better when I take time to look for things to rejoice in the Lord over. This doesn't mean that we become dreamy or strange in our perceptions of what is going on around us but it does mean that rather than let those things get us down we choose to rejoice in the Lord nonetheless.

There are five things that the Psalmist encourages us to rejoice over and I trust and pray that in this brief space I can encourage us all to learn afresh what it means to rejoice in the Lord. So the first point that the Psalmist brings to us in these opening three verses is to rejoice in the Lord and more appropriately how we should rejoice in the Lord.

**1. First of all we see that we are encouraged to praise the Lord with our voices.** This may mean that we come together in church and sing songs of praise or indeed it could mean just sharing with a friend chatting about things of the Lord and what it means to know Him. It could also mean that we praise the Lord with our musical instruments so in other words we are able to use our musical instruments to express our heart felt thanks to the Lord. We can also praise Him with new songs and I know there are many in the church today that are gifted at writing new songs of praise and thanks to the Lord. There are songs that move my heart deeply to praise and thank the Lord for who He is and for what He has done. I think it is important to make a distinction here which is that only the righteous can truly praise or worship the Lord. Now this can apply on both side of the scales, if you will, where by the righteous who are not walking with the Lord cannot truly worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth.

We can also make a point here that those who have never come into a personal relationship with the Lord can never truly worship the Lord either.

**2. Secondly we can rejoice in the Word of God in verses 4 and 5.** Now why is it that we can rejoice in the Word of God? Well there are a number of reasons that the Psalmist tells us; first of all that the Word of God is true. There is nothing worse than reading some of the modern magazines that seem to enjoy such incredible circulation. It is quite fascinating to read the different headlines of the various magazines that are in opposition to one another writing on the same person or topic. What is often more amazing is how two magazines can come with totally different stories on the same person or the same subject. What this highlights for us is that what is written in these magazines is simply not true or right. So we can rejoice in the Word of God because it is true. God has inspired His Word and every jot

and tittle of it is true. So therefore by implication we can also rejoice in the Word of God because it is trustworthy. For example as we memorise the Word of God and hide it in our hearts we know that His promises are true and amen. I have lost track of the times where I have read stories and illustrations of bible heroes who have placed their trust in the promises of God's Word and have found a sure ground on which to stand. Then we can also see as the Psalmist indicates to us that we can rejoice in the Word of God because it is just and righteous. We need to recognise that God does judge our sin, that God does deal with our rebellion but He does it in justice and righteousness. So we can have confidence that as we rejoice in the Word of God we can do it because His Word is just and righteous. Then last we can see that the Word of God proclaims the goodness of God and as we read of this we can rejoice in God and who He is. As we look around the Psalmist tells us that the whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

**3. Thirdly we can rejoice in the Lord because we can rejoice in His creation verses 6 to 9.** We can rejoice in God's creation because by His Word the heavens were made. We can rejoice in God's creation because by His Word the stars were born. We can rejoice in God's creation because by His Word the oceans were created and their boundaries were set in place. When we meditate on these things immediately it should bring a sense of fear of the Lord into our lives that is we stand in awe at who it is that we know and love and worship. Speaking the universe into existence speaks of a wonderful power and authority that God exudes. A classic example of this is when Jesus was out on the water with the disciples and they were fearful of drowning and Jesus stands up and says "peace be still" to a raging storm. So we can rejoice in God's creation every morning we wake up and look out the window as I did this morning and see the clear blue sky, to see the leaves on the trees and to hear the wonderful song of the birds.

**4. Fourthly we can rejoice in the Lord's sovereign control verses 10 to 15.** In this we see that the Lord reigns over the nations. I can't help but feel at times when I sit down and watch the news that there seems to be nothing but disharmony and division and disruption around the world. It seems that so many nations are in strife and there is so much corruption and sin that one could say how can we rejoice in the Lord. I think it is important for us to recognise that despite all that we see going on around us it doesn't take away from the Lord's sovereign control over the nations. I think what we need to recognise is that God allows mankind to experience the consequences of his sinful behaviour. We can also rejoice in the Lord's sovereign control because His plans do not or can not be changed by man. Once we have confidence in the sovereign providential working of God nothing can change that so we can rest in peace that God has everything under His control. So in keeping with all of that I think it is important to recognise that God does bless godly nations, godly people, and godly families as they walk in obedience to Him. That by inference tells us that nothing escapes His attention and that in all of the difficulties that go on around us in terms of the strife of the nations, the strife of the world and the strife that we see in families and relationships generally that the Lord uses all of these difficulties and struggles for those of us who know Him, to mould and shape our lives for His glory and His honour.

**5. We can rejoice in the Lord's deliverance and provision in verses 16 to 22.** Human strength and number do not necessarily deliver us. It is interesting that the Psalmist says

(Please turn over)

in verse 16 "No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength; a horse is a vain hope for safety, neither shall it deliver any by its great strength". So often we as human beings instead of rejoicing in the Lord's deliverance and provision put our trust in man and his schemes and provisions which so often fail. But we can rejoice in the Lord's deliverance and provision because those who fear Him treasure His mercy and will know genuine freedom from death and famine. I know there are many places around the world that are experiencing awful famine and drought but somehow or other God is able to provide for those who are struggling. There are things that I don't understand and I don't attempt to understand them other than just recognising that God is sovereign. It is

difficult to see such suffering and pain going on around the world and not to think how God can allow that to happen but as I put my faith in God for salvation, then I just simply place my faith in Him to give me understanding if He so desires of those things that are beyond my comprehension. Then we see that we can rejoice in the Lord because He delivers and provides for those who are willing to wait upon Him. Sadly for many of us rather than wait on the Lord we would rather scheme up some human method of sorting out our situation. So it really is important for us that as we rejoice in the Lord that we recognise that He delivers and provides for those who hope in Him. My prayer is, like I have had to learn, is that we can rejoice in the Lord day by day and moment by moment.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge

## Praise

1. Praise the Lord for the response to Carl Carmody's recent visit to the United States. We are slowing but surely seeing a number of churches coming on board to support particularly the work in Africa.
2. Praise God again for all of the support both prayerfully and practically that is coming into the work of Challenge. We have been greatly blessed by the Lord's provision of finances for the spread of the work that we are doing here in Africa and South America.
3. Praise the Lord for His ongoing care and protection of the Challenge building and its contents. As many of you are aware break-ins are a regular occurrence around Perth and so we don't take God care and protection for granted.
4. Praise the Lord for our partner organisations in New Zealand, South Africa, Kenya and South America. It is such a joy to work with like minded people who have such a hunger and thirst to get out the good news of Jesus Christ.
5. Praise God for the ongoing responses we are getting for the paper particularly in Africa as the paper is distributed.

## Prayer

1. Pray as we look to the Lord to get out our first edition of Challenge in South America. There are definite challenges in terms of translating from English to Spanish and our prayer is that the Lord will provide us with the people and the planning to do the job well.
2. Pray for the paper going into Malawi this month as we are endeavouring to get everything into place for our first edition.
3. Pray for the June edition of the paper which is a Soccer World Cup edition that is going into Australia, New Zealand, Southern and Central Africa and South America. In Africa and South America soccer is almost like a religion so we are really praying for a big response to it.
4. Pray for the visit of Harold Peasley who is the Director and founder of Multi Ministries in South Africa, who we work with. He will be visiting Australia from 25<sup>th</sup> May to 14<sup>th</sup> June. Pray for a successful time of promotion of the work of Challenge and Multi Ministries as we work in Townsville, Brisbane, Darwin, Alice Springs and Perth.
5. Continue to pray for the growth of the giving to the work of Challenge especially for our overseas ministry that is literally growing by the day. As you can imagine no matter how many papers are being produced in a continent like Africa there is just not enough nor will it ever be in our assessment. We would value your prayer for the Lord's wisdom in how we plan for the ongoing growth of the work.

Send your testimony to **Challenge** – Your conversion to Jesus Christ is a miracle, and is a wonderful means of witnessing to a lost world – Ring or write to Challenge for a testimony outline sheet.

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