

**Psalm 104: 31-34; “The Lord Rejoicing in His Works”, A Communion Sermon  
preached in relation to the New Year, delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on January 5th, 2013, in the Morning Worship Service.**

As we have now entered another New Year, I thought that it would be fitting that we would pause together and consider the passing of time. I would like to begin by each of us asking ourselves this question: In past years, have I been doing what the Lord would have me to do, according to the truth of the Bible, with my time, and with my strength? And if you can honestly answer that, in general, you have been doing what the Lord would have you to do, then ask yourself this question: What is it that I could be doing to serve Him better in the year 2014? I believe that the Psalmist David was thinking this way because he says here in verse 31 – “May the Lord rejoice in His works”. This evidently was something which was uppermost in his mind; that the Lord would be able to rejoice in His works. I think that by “rejoicing in His works” he means that God would be able to rejoice in what His people are thinking and doing for Him based upon His work of grace in them. Now, since our God whom we worship this morning is perfect in all of His works and all of His ways, we need to ask ourselves why He shouldn’t be able to rejoice in all of His works? The answer clearly is, that He would always be rejoicing in His works unless someone or something was not glorifying His holy name. Let us understand that it was only the entrance of sin into the world that marred God’s creation. It was the first man Adam that brought sin into the world, and since that time the only way that God could rejoice in His works was if He Himself dealt with that evil of evils, sin.

But David was not thinking of Adam when he penned these verses. I think that he was thinking about himself. He knew that God had been so gracious to him; that He had been so merciful to him in giving him the precious and magnificent promises of the future redemption in Christ, that he should respond in a way that would cause the heart of God to rejoice. He knew, that it would be most appropriate to try to live his life in such a way, with the remainder of days, that the Lord would rejoice in His works in relation to him. This is what we as New Testament Christians should want for ourselves, and resolve to do in this coming year. Let me show you 3 things which David was resolved to do which we ourselves also ought to resolve to do in this year of 2014, and indeed for the rest of our earthly lives; 1st – David was resolved that he would pray for, and promote, the glory of the Lord forever. 2nd – David was resolved to sing to the Lord as long as he lived. And 3rd – David was resolved that his meditation would be sweet to God. I am hoping that each of us will, in our hearts, bring these resolutions with us into our observance of the Lord’s Supper in a few minutes.

**1st of all - David was resolved that he would pray for, and promote, the glory of the Lord forever.** (verses 31)

“May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works.” In some translations it reads that, “The glory of the Lord shall endure forever; the Lord shall rejoice in His works.” I am told that the Hebrew can be translated either way; either “shall” or “may”, and so I believe we ought to be able to apply it both ways; either as a declaration, or as the prayer of David’s heart. It is true that the Lord shall indeed rejoice in His works, even though no person in all the earth would freely choose to rejoice in them. But God has created man for this great purpose, to bring glory to Him through the way that he thinks, and the way that he lives out his life before Him. And so it is not at all acceptable to God if He cannot rejoice in His work in relation to the highest of his earthly creation, man. Each person who is a Christian knows, or should know, that the glory of the Lord shall endure forever, but this verse is saying that it ought to be your prayer and your aim that the Lord would be able to rejoice in you, one of His works of grace. Through much of this Psalm, the glory of the Lord is being declared, as the Psalmist

thinks upon the physical creation. From verse 5 on, we find many detailed descriptions of what God did when He created the world, and how He upholds the whole creation now. Notice verse 10 – “He sends the springs into the valleys; they flow among the hills.” “They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst.” “By them the birds of the heavens have their home; they sing among the branches.” “He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.” Now, if the Lord did not do all of these marvelous and wonderful works, by His wise and timely giving of water in springs which flow into valleys and among the hills, the beasts of the field would be thirsty and have no means to quench their thirst, and the birds of the heavens would not have a home or sing among the branches. I would assert to you that these things were not written as mere information to be stored up by us and not believably applied to ourselves. They are written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the ages have come. We also, as the highest of God’s creation, those created in His blessed image and likeness, are also very wonderfully provided for and sustained day by day; even moment by moment by the grace and power of God. You see, don’t you, the need to trust in the lovingkindness of God in relation to His providing for your every need.

Well, if God has provided drink for every beast of the field, and He waters the hills from His upper chambers, so that the whole earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works, then will He not also provide for you, O you of little faith? But I need to go farther than this; than simply speaking of God’s great ability to provide for your physical needs every day. I need to speak to you of God’s great and abundant provision for your heart, after you come to faith in Christ. God is very great in his ability to provide for the needs of your spiritual heart. He is the One who feeds and waters your soul dear Christian, every day. When you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God provides to you everything necessary for life and godliness. 2nd Peter 1, verse 2 says: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” It is the Divine power of God and Christ, who through the Holy Spirit’s working has given to you all things that pertain to life and godliness. This precious reality of God’s working in your soul is hopefully being realized by you, more and more, when you read and trust in the promises that God has given to you in His word, the Bible. You come to realize that God has made you a partaker of the Divine Nature in the New Birth. You realize that God has called you, through the knowledge of Him in the gospel, and then you begin to acknowledge and realize more and more that is by Christ’s glorious power and by His virtue, the excellence of His grace, that you are being changed and transformed more and more, into a righteous and holy person. You see how dependent you are upon Him for the virtue of His death to be applied to your heart. You realize that it is the virtue of His glorious and powerful presence, the presence of His Spirit, which enables you to overcome your spiritual enemies and grow to be a more useful and profitable servant in God’s sight. Christ is the source of your spiritual life, dear Christian; therefore you must seek Him and His glory diligently, so that you will find the reality of His glory and virtue at work in your heart by faith. As you come to understand the reality of this, then you begin to pray, “May the glory of the Lord endure forever in me; here in my mind and heart.” “May the Lord be able to rejoice in His works, I myself being one of them.

Listen to Ephesians 1, verse 7, where the Apostle Paul describes for you what God has done to provide for your salvation dear Christian. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself...” When you believe in Christ, dear Christian,

you have (present tense) redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of all of your sins. It is not that you might have it; it is that you do have it. God has made His grace abound toward you, and He will forever make His grace abound to you; even when your experiences in life, or in your heart, may be seeming to contradict it. Remember William Cowper's hymn –

*“God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.” “Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.” “Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.” “Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace; behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.”*

Ah, this is when we truly grow as Christians, when we come to believe that Christ has died for our sins in particular; not just sins and sinners in some general and vague sense. And so when we do really believe the gospel, we should also believe, then, that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all for us; working for us and working in us. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, (that is, for all who trust in Him) how shall He not with Christ also freely give us all things?” If this is true, and it is, will you not pray – “May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in His works”, even in His work in me? For He who has begun a good work in you, will complete it until the day of Christ. And will you not promote His glory being seen in your life; in your words and your behavior that you would honor Him.

**Now 2ndly - David was resolved to sing to the Lord as long as he lived.**

Verse 32 says, “He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke.” “I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.” Now we have to ask ourselves why verse 32 was placed here? The answer to that is that it is placed here in relation to the prayer and resolution in verse 31, and also in relation to the resolution of verses 33 and 34. It is placed here in order to make the comparison between the physical and spiritual creation, so that we would look from the one to the other. We have already seen that it is the Lord's joy to “rejoice in His works”. We have seen that in order for the perfect and holy God to rejoice in His works, He can only do it through having Christ live and die on our behalf. He can only do it when we are being turned away from our sins by His imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, and imparting His great grace to our hearts, through Christ. It is because of Christ's grace that sinners are turned away from their sins; and that they then begin to sing the New Song of His grace and His salvation. Sinners who love their sin can never sincerely pray that the glory of the Lord would endure forever in them. They would be destroyed by the righteousness and perfect purity of that glory. Sinners who love their sin will never, sincerely from their heart, resolve to sing to the Lord as long as they live. They are too busy singing the world's songs or the Devil's song, or their own songs. Verse 32 shows us, and it shows them, if they will read it, that they have real reason to fear the loss of their eternal soul if they remain in that condition. It needs to be understood that the way that they are presently living their lives is in direct contradiction with the holiness of God, and this must change. There is a New Song for all who will believe in Jesus; a song which you can sing all of your days. If a person only lives their life to themselves, according to their own fallen and sinful thoughts, they will perish. They will come to know the wrath and terror of God against them which is so well pictured for us here in God's looking upon the earth and it trembles, and His touching the mountains, and they smoke. Apart from Christ, there is only fear in attempting to come into the presence of the holy God. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not

believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Believing in Christ brings to your heart a New Song.

You remember what it was like when God came down upon Mt. Sinai in the giving of the law. It is recorded for us in Exodus Chapter 29, verses 18-21, if you will turn over there with me. "Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire." "Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly." "And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice." "Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." "And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up." "and the Lord said to Moses, 'Go down and warn the people lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish.'" You can see here, that, in their natural state, apart from the saving grace of God, that God is really unapproachable because of His great holiness. In His great holiness, God has nothing but indignation and wrath against those who break His law. He remembers all of their sins and stores up His righteous wrath against them until the Day of Judgment. Those who try to approach Him, to gaze upon Him with an unholy curiosity, it says here, would perish. Those children of Israel who were brought out of Egypt with Moses, a good many of them did not really know the Lord as Moses and Aaron and Miriam, and Joshua, and some others, did. They had heard and some of them had sung the song of Moses at the Red Sea after God destroyed Pharaoh and his armies there; "I will sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously!" "The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!" "The Lord is my strength and song; and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him." Yes, all the people were thankful for the physical deliverance from Pharaoh's wrath, but many of those same people would not believe that they needed to be saved from their sins, so that they could "sing to the Lord as long as they lived; sing praise to God while they had their being." Instead, they murmured and complained against God, and He destroyed many of them there during their wilderness wanderings. They had heard the song of Moses, and perhaps even sang it, but they did not have the New Song in their hearts, or upon their lips, the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses I have related to you, but the song of the Lamb is found in the New Testament.

The song of the Lamb relates to Christ and what He has done for you. Revelation Chapter 14, verse 3 says: "They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits to God and to the Lamb." "And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God." And Revelation 15, verse 3 says – "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: 'Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty' "Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!" "Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?" "For You alone are holy." The song of Moses is Old Testament Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh and Egypt, and their being able to go to the Promised Land. This was a picture and type of the New Testament Israel's deliverance from Satan, and sin, and the World, and all the Anti-Christian forces against them. Truly, this gives every true Christian reason to sing. They have come to see Christ as their King; their strong Redeemer. And they are resolved to praise Him as long as they live. They will praise Him while they have their being.

Now turn over with me to Psalm 103, verse 1 for a moment. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Dear Christian, ought you not to bless the Lord for this? Ought you not to bless the Lord that He forgives all of your

iniquities, not just some? Ought you not to bless the Lord that it is He who heals all of your diseases, and through Christ heals your sin-sick soul? Ought you not to praise Him that He redeems your life from destruction and crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, and that He satisfies your mouth with good things? Truly you ought to sing praise to your God while you have your being; as long as you live. Let me ask you as you come down front to partake of the Lord's Supper whether you will resolve to sing the songs of Zion more, during the week, when you are not here at church; or whether you only sing worldly songs and listen to worldly music? How can this be glorifying to God? I can hardly believe that it could be so. So resolve by God's grace, even now, that you will begin to do differently in the days to come. Sing praise to God as long as you live; sing praise to God while you have your being, and you will never regret it.

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> - David was resolved that his meditation would be sweet to God.**

Verse 34 says: "May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the Lord." The King James says: "My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." The New American Standard Bible says: "Let my meditation be pleasing to Him; as for me, I shall be glad in the Lord." Now I want you to think about this prayer and this resolution which David makes here, and I want you to make them your own. "May my meditation be sweet to Him" is a both a prayer and a declaration, as we saw in verse 31. According to the New King James translation David is not asking that his meditation upon God would be sweet to himself, although I am sure that he would not at all argue with such a prayer. But rather, David was thinking about how his meditation, the meditation of His own heart, was seen by God. He wanted his meditation to be sweet to God. According to the other translations the emphasis is upon David's meditation upon the Lord being sweet because He was thinking about the glories, the excellencies and the perfections of God and the future Messiah, and what He would do for Him to merit salvation; these were sweet to Him. And indeed these should be sweet to you, dear Christian. The glories of Christ in His perfection of obedience to God, the glories of Christ in His suffering on your behalf so that you might be forgiven of your sins, and live to God's glory. The glories of Christ's powerful grace which leads us to a thorough repentance from our sins, and to a greater trust in Him in times of trial and temptation. The glories of communion with Christ in our hearts, because He purchased these for you by His death, and He opens those precious times of communion up; where you realize the great reality of the power and presence of Christ with you, helping you to rejoice forevermore, pray without ceasing, and be glad in Him even when your heart is breaking in its longing for His kingdom's advance in your heart, or in this fallen world. I think that it would be very fitting for each one of us to pray and to have this resolution for the days to come: I will be glad in the Lord. And you practice being glad in the Lord, you will find that you are only able to do this because you have believed that Christ has died to take away all of your sins, and He is certainly well able to make you glad with His presence. Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.