

Joyful Expectations – Joy and Gladness

“This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24)

Psalms 118 is the middle chapter of the whole Bible. Therefore, it must have some significance because nothing is random with God. Here are a few important facts that this verse brings to our attention:

- This day is God’s gift to us. God is our Creator. God made today, and today is a precious time frame that God has given us.
- We will do something with this day (whether we are conscious of it or not). While God made today, it is left up to us to do what we ‘will’ with this day.
- We are required to rejoice and be glad in this day. Some Hebrew scholars say that this is an imperative command. It’s an order! Implying that if we do not rejoice and be glad we have wasted this day, and the whole purpose of today.

Notice, we must have the mental and emotional discipline to make our hearts **rejoice** and be **glad**. This is not always an easy task. But we can decide (make the choice) if we want to. Alternatively, we can choose to be angry, offended, and bitter. It is up to us? Yet know this, if we choose to use this day for anything other than what God has purposed for it, there will be consequences. Therefore, as we approach each day (the day that God has made), we can approach it with one of two mindsets - pessimism or optimism.

- (1) **Pessimism.** Are you inclined to expect the worse for every day? Do you over-emphasise the features, conditions, and possibilities of bad outcomes? In a study of 99 Harvard University students, those who were optimists at age 25 were significantly healthier at ages 45 and 60 than those who were pessimists. Other studies have linked a pessimistic explanatory style with higher rates of infectious disease, poor health, and earlier mortality. This doctrine of pessimism can be the reality of evil forces. Does evil overcome good? Does sadness prevail over happiness? No! Pessimism is a type of hopelessness and lack of faith. Pessimism is being in disagreement with God, it voices your fear and anxiety. Are you inclined to use each day, this gift from God, to talk doom and gloom? Don’t waste today - it is truly precious! Bad attitudes infect others, and infections spread. If you embrace a negative attitude, whatever angers or disappoints you will eventually control your life. So remember, you can never overcome negativity, you must overwhelm it with joy and gladness.
- (2) **Optimism. Romans 8:28,** *“And we know that all things work together for the good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.”* An optimist sees the donut hole, a pessimist sees the hole. One of the greatest gifts you can give to God, and to yourself, is optimism. That is, a positive attitude! Optimism is inclined to apply favourable and constructive views (and actions) throughout the day. Optimism is a hopeful attitude. Optimism dreams of a better day -every day! The optimist has a tendency to make lemonade out of lemons, and to then see the glass as half-full when it’s half-empty. It’s an admirable quality, one that can positively affect your mental and physical health. Few things in the world are more powerful than a positive attitude. A simple smile is enough. A kind world of optimism and hope. A “you can do it” even when things are tough approach. What is your view of this day?

An optimist sees the best in each day, while a pessimist sees only the worst. An optimist finds the positive, even in the negative, yet a pessimist can only find the negative in the positive. For example, an avid duck hunter was in the market for a new bird dog. His search ended when he found a dog that could actually walk on water to retrieve a duck. Shocked by his find, he was sure none of his friends would ever believe him. So he decided to try to break the news to a friend of his, a pessimist by nature, and invited him to hunt with him and his new dog. As they waited by the shore, a flock of ducks flew by. They fired, and a duck fell. The dog responded and jumped into the water. The dog, however, did not sink but instead walked across the water to retrieve the bird, never getting more than his paws wet. This continued all day long; each time a duck fell, the dog walked across the surface of the water to retrieve it. The pessimist watched carefully, saw everything, but did not say a single word. On the drive home the hunter asked his friend, "Did you notice anything unusual about my new dog?" "I sure did," responded the pessimist. "Your dog can't swim!"

Yes, a pessimist will never acknowledge a miracle! In this day, God is all powerful and has all wisdom. And He knows what He is doing with this day! God is in complete control! Therefore, if this is true, then there's a miracle waiting to happen today! Do you really believe that all things work together for the good to them that love Him? You must minimise adversity by knowing that there's something good on every horizon (a silver lining to every dark cloud). Otherwise you are easy prey for the enemy. It is the devil's strategy to keep you from joy and gladness. Why? Because without joy and gladness you are weak! A Christian without joy is like a boat that's taking in water. Learn to stay afloat; learn to use today for what it was designed for. Use today to rejoice and be glad!

An optimist knows (as faith knows), that while we wait; God brings us to it, or God bring us through it. God will either lighten your load, or He will strengthen your back. However, if you're going to rejoice and be glad there are four things you need to remind yourself to do:

- Fear not!
- Fret not!
- Faint not!
- Forget not!

This is the day that the Lord has made and we will rejoice and be glad in it! God is not asking us to rejoice in yesterday or tomorrow, He is asking us to rejoice and be glad in this day! The best way to enjoy things and make best use of your time is to live "one day at a time."

Psalm 96:2 says, "***Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day.***" We do need to appreciate and thank God daily for what we have. You should praise Him for your wife/husband, your children, your parents, your home, your job, your calling and your very existence. I read a story recently about a husband who was going through some of his wife's belongings and he came across a special article of clothing. As he unwrapped the gift box he stared at both the silk paper and the box and he said to his friend standing there by him: "You know, my wife got this the first time we went to New York, 8 or 9 years ago; she's never worn it, she always said that she was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is it." So he got near the bed and he placed the gift box next to the other articles of clothing that he was taking to the funeral parlour. Yes, his wife had just died. He turned to his friend again and he said: "Never save

something for a special occasion; every day, every hour, every minute is special. Don't ever forget that." We all know how true that is, yet again, how many times do we still say: "One of these days." A good principle to follow is to simply do the best you can with what you have, where you are, today. That's about all you can do. Once you've given it your best shot, turn it over to God. Then, when you know, the day is over, go to bed and pray, "Please give me peace of mind God, give me a good nights sleep, I'm turning these problems over to You. I've placed tomorrow in your capable hands so I know I'll get a good nights rest." We should learn to live in the present, leaving the past behind and committing our future to the Lord. However, to feel secure about our future we need to spend more time with God!

Spending a day with God may sound scary or difficult to pull off. But think for a moment of not doing it. Imagine reaching the age of seventy, having received more than 25,000 days as a gift from God, and not having given a single one back to Him because you're "too busy." I don't have to remind you that each day is a precious gift. I didn't understand that when I was a boy. I thought my days were unlimited, that they would never end. But I know that's not true. As we age, as we watch our loved ones get older, we realised that we have been given a finite amount of time. Our time on this earth is not unlimited. Each day we live is one less day we have, and it's up to choose how to make good use of it.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics website has a chart for the average hours per day people spend on certain activities. For example, Americans spend an average of 8.5 hours sleeping, 1.2 hours eating and drinking, 2.6 hours watching television and 3.4 hours working (the rest is taken up by non-activities). The chart is broken down into all ages and ethnicities and geographical locations. But do you know what the one number is that's consistent across the board? When you add up all the numbers in all the columns, you always get 24 hours. No more, no less. 24 Hours is what we've each been given; regardless of the size of our house or the model of our car or the way we make a living. No matter how many times we say, "I wish there were more hours in a day!" There's not, and that's it! This is your gift from God.

So if we know the time in each day is fixed, and we know the number of days we have is limited, what's keeping us from making God more a part of each day? What would happen if in one of our "To Do" notes we wrote, "time with God?" Prayer time or scripture reading or serving somewhere or even taking a walk in nature. Let me ask you, "Have are you glad that you have the gift of today? Have you thanked God for it and invited God to spend it with you?"

We're all going to have bad days, and we'll all have good days, days when we can almost feel the promise of God's peace and wholeness like a soft blanket around us. But, no day starts out either way. Each day is a blank canvas, a gift, and it deserves a chance to be a good day. We no longer have yesterday. We do not yet have tomorrow. What we do have is today, a day that was created for and gifted to us, but which ultimately belongs to God. Remember, a day spent with God, regardless of what happens, is a good day. It's something He has made!

Psalm 68:19 declares, "***Blessed be the Lord who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation.***" Every day God packs our lives with benefits! And again, the list would be endless if we were to start recording all the things that God does for us - even on a daily basis. We take so many things for granted don't we? We need to consider what God does for us today and then rejoice and be glad in it! His benefits

are endless! That is why we can confidently say:

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”