

# Psalm 66 • Shout for joy to God, all the earth

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Psalm 66. *“Shout for joy to God, all the earth;*

<sup>2</sup> *sing the glory of his name;*

*give to him glorious praise!*

<sup>3</sup> *Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds!*

*So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.*

<sup>4</sup> *All the earth worships you*

*and sings praises to you;*

*they sing praises to your name.” Selah*

<sup>5</sup> *Come and see what God has done:*

*he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.*

<sup>6</sup> *He turned the sea into dry land;*

*they passed through the river on foot.*

*There did we rejoice in him,*

<sup>7</sup> *who rules by his might forever,*

*whose eyes keep watch on the nations—*

*let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah*

<sup>8</sup> *Bless our God, O peoples;*

*let the sound of his praise be heard,*

<sup>9</sup> *who has kept our soul among the living*

*and has not let our feet slip.*

<sup>10</sup> *For you, O God, have tested us;*

*you have tried us as silver is tried.*

<sup>11</sup> *You brought us into the net;*

*you laid a crushing burden on our backs;*

<sup>12</sup> *you let men ride over our heads;*

*we went through fire and through water;*

*yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.*

<sup>13</sup> *I will come into your house with burnt offerings;*

*I will perform my vows to you,*

<sup>14</sup> *that which my lips uttered*

*and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.*

<sup>15</sup> *I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals,*

*with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;*

*I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah*

*16 Come and hear, all you who fear God,  
and I will tell what he has done for my soul.*

*17 I cried to him with my mouth,  
and high praise was on my tongue.*

*18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,  
the Lord would not have listened.*

*19 But truly God has listened;  
he has attended to the voice of my prayer.*

*20 Blessed be God,  
because he has not rejected my prayer  
or removed his steadfast love from me!”*

Psalm 66, a great Psalm. It's a Psalm of praise, it's a Psalm of thanks for God's rich blessings after a time of great trial and pain.

You've ever been through a time of great trial and pain? After which you rejoiced in the fact that God brought you through? In verse 10 he talks about it.

Notice that he says, “(You) *have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.*” You know how silver is tried? In the fire, in the crucible. They literally heat it up in an oven and it burns away the impurities, it just leaves the liquefied silver.

But he says, this is the way you tried us. He says, “*You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs;*” “And there was a time,” he says in verse 12, “(when) *you let (allowed other) men (to) ride over our heads;...*”

And he says, You know what “*we went through fire and (we went) through water;...*” We were... we either thought we were getting burned or we were going to drown, one of the two.

So, he's talking, the Psalmist here, is talking about a painful and a challenging time that they've gone through. But he says, “*yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.*” And he's saying, After that time of severe testing, You brought us into a season of abundance and plenty.

But, during that time of testing, the Psalmist admits that he made some promises in the form of vows. Look with me again in verse 13. He says, “*I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you,*<sup>14</sup> *that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.*”

That sometimes happens during a time of hardship, sometimes we make vows to the Lord, which is like promises. Have you ever done that to the Lord? Lord,

if you get me through this, I promise I'll do something. I don't know what. Promise something to the Lord.

Well, the Jews were big on vows, they did them a lot, and we have some really, really bad examples in the Bible of vows. One of them is in the Book of Judges. A guy by the name of Jephthah made a stupid vow before going into battle. (Judges 11:30-31) But there's another vow that you might not be as much aware of, that was made by a man by the name of Martin Luther. And I'm not talking about Martin Luther King Jr, I'm talking about Martin Luther who helped to usher in the Protestant Reformation.

You may not know that in the year 1505, July of that year, and by the way, he was born and raised in what is now Germany. But he got caught in a very, very severe thunderstorm and Martin Luther feared for his life, so he cried out.

He was Roman Catholic, so he believed in all of the patron saints, and so he called out to Saint Anne, the patron saint of minors. Not sure why he called out to that particular saint. Just...who knows, you're in a time of panic. But he called out saying, basically, save me, Saint Anne, and I'll become a monk.

And he was saved, the storm subsided, and he made it through. And so, he became a monk, much to the chagrin of his father, who was incredibly disappointed with that decision.

But, Luther felt that he needed to keep his promise and that began a search in Martin Luther's life, a search for God. Because do you know what kind of a guy Martin Luther was before he even became a monk? He was terrified of God. He was terrified of God's judgment, hated thinking about it, hated talking about it.

So, becoming a monk seems like a pretty ridiculous idea or vow to make before the Lord when you actually...this God that you're supposedly devoting yourself to, you fear Him in a bad way. So anyway, I don't know how much you know about Martin Luther and his life and how he sought God, but it's a sorry tale.

It's an amazing story, but it's a rather sorry tale from the standpoint of him looking for God. He would shut himself up in his cold room and sleep on stone floors, thinking that somehow if he rid himself of all physical comfort, maybe that was the way you find...he didn't know how to find God; he had no clue! He was doing what people did back then, using asceticism or any other of the other isms that people will try to adopt to say, I just want to find God.

He finally got fed up and he started reading the Bible. Yeah, go figure. He started reading the Bible! And guess what? Martin Luther found the Lord Jesus Christ in the pages of Scripture. He got saved and he never looked back.

Suddenly all that fear he had about God was gone because he realized that Jesus Christ took his sin and bore it on the cross. It's a powerful story, but suddenly now here he is a monk who's saved at a time that we refer to in Roman Catholicism time as the Dark Ages. Do you understand that the Protestant Reformation is what brought us out of the Dark Ages?

And it was a very dark period of time from about 500 A.D. to around 1500 A.D. A thousand years of just some of the most incredible darkness. Incredible corruption within the church. The church was wildly corrupt, and Martin Luther knew it, and so he decided he'd had enough and the rest, as they say, is history. All from a vow!

Here's what's interesting, Jesus told us; probably not a good idea to take vows. Let me show you this. Matthew chapter 5 on the screen.

**Matthew 5:33-37 (ESV)**

*“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.*

He says, “Again you have heard (said or) that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, (and that is referring to vows) either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. (What He means by that is people would vow, they’d say, by Jerusalem I say to you... They would take a vow. Sometimes it was a vow of honesty or sincerity, or sometimes it was a vow to the Lord. But He basically said,) *And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than (that) this comes from evil.*

He says, just let your yes be yes, let your no be no. And don't worry about all that other junk. So that's our New Testament idea of this, the vow thing. But the

Psalmist says in verse 16, “*Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done...*”

And this is a wonderful reminder that we need to tell others about God's faithfulness in our lives. When you've gone through a period of difficulty and God has brought you to the other side of it, tell people.

And, parents, if you...anybody here who still has kids at home? Tell your kids what God has done in your life.

I see so many kids...well, let me put it this way. It's not that uncommon to see parents get saved, start coming to church when their kids are 10, 11, 12, maybe up into their early teens, and the parent has had this radical change in their lives. And all the kids know is, we didn't go to church before, and now we're going to church all the time. That's all they know, and they're confused about the whole thing.

Mom and dad got religious. And they have no idea that it's all about Jesus, and all about the cross, and all about them recognizing their sin. There may be a story to tell about some testimony of God's faithfulness. How he saw them through and worked out incredible things in their lives and brought them to a place of recognizing their need of a Savior.

But I think it's really important for parents, particularly parents who've had a relatively recent change of heart or whatever related to the gospel, to sit down with their kids and go, can I explain to you what happened to me? Or what happened to us? Let me, tell you what happened, because it was big. Let the kids in on it, but even if there's no kids at home, tell people what He's done for you.

But then there's a very sober word that's given to us in verse 18. It says, “*If I had cherished iniquity (and that's another word for sin) in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*”

And the Psalmist was aware here, that sin still has the power to separate. The Bible talks about that. It says your sin has separated you from God (Isaiah 59:2).

You know what we Christians think? We think it can't do that anymore. Oh yes, it can. Sin can still separate you from God, not eternally. If you're a born-again Christian, if you've accepted Jesus and what He did on the cross, sin can no longer separate you eternally from God.

But it can separate you relationally. It can create a distance between you and the Lord if there's some area of sin in your life that you've cherished in your heart.

That's why the Psalmist says, had I done this, the Lord would not have listened. So, this is why Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer: *"Forgive us our trespasses."* (Matthew 6:12) Remember what trespasses are? It's where I know what the...what the barrier is, and I stepped over it, and I meant to.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who mean to step over those barriers in our lives. People write to me from time to time and they're very confused about the Lord's Prayer after they get saved. They'll say to me, I thought when I came to Jesus, all my sins were forgiven, past, present and future. Isn't that true? I say, yeah, it is.

Then why does Jesus tell me to ask for forgiveness in my prayers? I thought I was already forgiven. I said, you are, you're forgiven for eternity. You are forgiven and your salvation is predicated upon that forgiveness. But there are still relational issues. As you walk through life, you're going to mess up. And just because you mess up, doesn't mean you're not going to be saved anymore, but it is going to mean that there's going to be something now between you and the Lord.

It's just like when you do something against a human friend or your spouse, there's a wedge now between you. You got to get it taken care of.

Just like you need to go to your husband, or your wife, or your family member and say, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. Or, I apologize. That was really stupid. Would you forgive me? That relationship needs to be healed, right? When you sin as a believer you don't get unsaved, but there's still a separation.

And there are Christians walking around with a long, a big separation between them and the Lord, and they don't know why. They're like, God just feels really distant lately. Well, are there some areas of sin in your life that you've just been ignoring? That could be the reason right there. And the Psalmist reminds us it can actually create a block to your prayer life being effective and so forth.

And then he ends in verse 19 by saying, *"But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer. <sup>20</sup>Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!"*