

The Joy of Trusting God

Psalm 33

Michael Felkins

Grand Avenue Baptist Church

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When Stacy and I were in California a couple of weeks ago, some young men were trying to get a brush fire started on the property where Elliot and Alex live, but they were having trouble. One of them had the brilliant idea to use the leaf blower to aim it at the base of the dying coals in the fire. Well, the next time I looked out there, they had a massive fire going. Ashes from the fire were everywhere. It was all over Alex's car that I had just taken through the car wash. It was all over the deck of their house, so that anything you touched would get ash on your clothes for the next two days. Alex said Elliot (my son-in-law) would be mad that they had made such a mess, but I wanted to go over there and join them. I wanted to show them how to make a really big fire. Of course, I would have most likely set the whole property on fire, which is usually how I do things, or I should say, overdo things.

Listen, if you have ever had trouble getting a brush fire or a backyard fire going, just get some lighter fluid and a leaf blower, and you can set the world on fire.

Anyway, my point is: Psalm 33 functions like that leaf blower aimed at the base of the dying embers of our hearts. God wants it to set our hearts on fire so that we worship Jesus with great joy.

Remember, Psalm 32 describes the joy of having our sins forgiven. Now, Psalm 33 is the song of those who have been forgiven. It is a song of thanksgiving, praise, and trust in the LORD. It is a song for those whose sins are no longer counted against them. So, if you are a Christian, Psalm 33 is that leaf blower aimed at the smoldering coals in your heart. One of the things we do every Sunday in our worship is ask the Holy Spirit to blow fresh wind into the embers of our hearts as we worship. We want Him to rekindle the fire in our hearts for Christ so that we live for Him.

So, let me press pause right here because I need to show you the connection between Psalm 33 and Psalm 32. If you have your Bible, look back at v. 11 of Psalm 32:

Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Then v. 1 of Psalm 33 almost repeats v. 11 verbatim. Look at v. 1:

*Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!
Praise befits the upright.*

It is as if Psalm 33 were written as an extension of Psalm 32. The words they share stitch these two Psalms together. You should also notice that Psalm 33 doesn't have a heading, which most likely indicates that it is drawing its heading from Psalm 32. Interestingly, ten original Hebrew manuscripts have these two Psalms as a single Psalm. The point is that the joyful worship in Psalm 33 flows out of Psalm 32.

Here's the main idea of Psalm 33: *Those who trust in the Lord for forgiveness of sins have wonderful reasons to rejoice and be glad.*

King David's goal in Psalm 33 is to fan the joy of your worship into a flame. Verse 1-3 is our call to joyful worship.

Then, in vv. 4-19, he lays out three reasons to worship God. Look in v. 4. Do you see the word "For." It reads "For the word of the LORD"? The word "For" gives us the reason or cause to worship the LORD. Now, v. 10 and v. 13 don't have the word "For", but they are implied because these sections give us the other two reasons to worship God. Verses 10 and 13 could very easily have the word "For" at the beginning of the sentence.

Finally, in vv. 20-22, he concludes by showing us our confidence in our worship of God. Now, let's get to work on Psalm 33 and unpack the amazing reasons to worship God that flow from Psalm 32.

I. Our Call to Worship (vv. 1-3)

Let's begin by understanding the call to worship in vv. 1-3:

*Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!
Praise befits the upright.
2 Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!
3 Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.*

In these three verses are seven plural imperatives that call us to loud, vibrant worship of God. So, King David gets his leaf blower out, and turns it wide open. Let me show you what I mean.

Pastor James Johnston says that the phrase “*shout for joy*” is better translated as “*yell for joy*.” He says taking these words in the proper context means to be super excited and happy.¹ This makes sense when you consider that, in Psalm 32, we learned that we have been forgiven of all our sins and therefore we are “*Blessed*” by God.

If you remember, last Sunday I told you that the Lord had mercifully saved me out of a very rebellious and sinful lifestyle. He radically changed my life. I also told you that I struggled to understand and accept God's forgiveness. I remember when I finally understood that God had forgiven me. The joy of His forgiveness swept over me like a flood. It was an incredible experience and it still is.

Think about vv. 1-3 this way: Did you watch the Super Bowl last Sunday? If you did, you would remember what happened after the Seahawks won. The players and the crowd went wild with celebration. Then the green and blue confetti began to fall, covering everyone. This is the kind of joy vv. 1-3 want to stoke up in our hearts. It was the kind of joy I experienced when I understood God's forgiveness.

However, let me put this kind of excitement in context because the worship in Psalm 33 refers to both corporate and individual worship. So, Psalm 33 does not mean worship is to be a pep rally for Jesus or filled with emotionalism.

The kind of joy-filled worship described in Psalm 33 ranges from the lifting of hands in praise to God to a deep, contemplative “*Amen!*” during the sermon or in song. It could also be a deep groan or dropping of the eyes in reflection on the word of God.

Listen, we are not all wired the same when it comes to expressing joy in worship. I believe the depth of emotion is just as deep whether it is a tear that is shed or hands lifted in praise. The point is that we express honest, heartfelt worship. We are to be intellectually stable and emotionally grounded in the truth of God's word. This kind of worship expresses both gravity and gladness in worship for what Jesus has accomplished to save us from the penalty of our sin by dying in our place on the cross and by conquering death by rising from the dead.

Next, v. 2 call us to use instruments to praise the LORD. Then v. 3 tells us to sing a *new song* by playing skillfully with those instruments. This is the first time musical instruments are mentioned in the Psalms.²

However, I want us to spend some time thinking about what David meant by the term “*new song*.” I don't believe David was sitting around and thinking that the Hebrew people needed some new music. I don't believe he was thinking:

You know, I don't like the stuff that's on Hebrew radio, and the stuff we sing at the temple is old songs, so we need some new songs. I'm tired of singing Father

¹ James A. Johnston, *Preaching the Word: Psalms 1-41*, Vol. 1, 338.

² Psalm 33 is one of the many Psalms that endorse the use of musical instruments in worship.

Abraham had many sons, many songs had Father Abraham. I need to get the Levites to write some new songs.

The new song v. 3 actually looks forward to the new covenant. It pointing to the song of grace that comes in the person and work of Jesus. David is not simply referring to songs composed with new lyrics. He is talking about the state of the heart. He wants the unbeliever to be converted and born again so they can sing the new song of grace. He wants believers to have a fresh experience of grace in their hearts, a result of being renewed by the Holy Spirit. The new song we are to sing is the new covenant song given to us by Jesus.

This means our songs should be filled with the gospel. We need to sing about the work of Christ on the cross as He has paid for our sins, was buried, and rose victoriously from the grave. This means we need some new covenant songs with lyrics that sing about the gospel.

For example, in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther wrote new songs as the Protestant Reformation caught fire. Then, in the eighteenth century, Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley wrote new songs that fueled the Great Awakening. In the nineteenth century, Fanney Crosby wrote songs for her generation. As a matter of fact, we will sing one of her songs at the close of the service. And today we sing new covenant songs by the Gettys, Stuart Townend³, and even our own Eric Schumacher. Our worship leader, Ashley Hoobler, works with Eric to continue writing new worship songs to add to the old ones we cherish. All of these songs flow out of the grace given in the New Covenant. This is why Puritan pastor Andrew Bonar wrote:

[Psalm 33 is] a very simple Psalm, [because it follows Ps. 32, it is] full of feelings which a forgiven soul teems with. Never did any heart so abound in those feelings as the heart of the Lord Jesus; and his saints learn from him. It is He who is to lead the praise in the great congregation.⁴

So, we are commanded to “sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.” Why? Worship is a response to who God is and what He has done for us in Jesus Christ. The praise-worthy deserves praise.

Next, vv. 4-19, we learn how our joyful worship is grounded in three sovereign reasons.

II. We Worship Him Because: (vv. 4-19)

A. We Worship Him Because of His Sovereign Word (vv. 4-9)

First, look in vv. 4-7:

For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. ⁵ He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. ⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses.

When we think about God’s word, we must understand that God cannot be separated from His word. So, when it says that God’s word is upright (straight and level) and faithful (dependable, never failing), that is true because of who God is. His word flows from His character and nature. God doesn’t say anything crooked or deceptive. It is always true and upright, and it is because His word is an extension of who He is.

³ Ibid, 340.

⁴ Andrew Bonar, *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms*, quoted by Christopher Ash, *The Psalms a Christ-Centered Commentary*, Vol. 2, *Psalms 1-50*, 386.

Friends, God works in this world through His word, even as He did in the day of creation. His character is reflected in everything He says and does. Since He spoke the world into existence, His perfections and glory are displayed in creation.

When Stacy and I were in California, my son-in-law, Elliot, and I took Adam (my grandson) to the Monterey Aquarium. I don't know much about the ocean or the creatures that live in its depths. I've seen videos of things like that, but never up close and in real life. I was absolutely blown away by what I saw. The sheer volume of life in the ocean and the variety of living creatures there was sensory overload, and this aquarium only scratched the surface. Then, when you consider God spoke all of this into existence by the power of His word, as well as the universe, it is incomprehensible. Therefore, David knows we should feel what he says in vv. 8-9:

Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

Creation did not come into being through trial and error, struggle, chaos, or evolution. God did not wrestle the universe into shape. He spoke, and it was so. His Word carries absolute authority and power. This echoes Genesis 1: "And God said..." and the universe responded in obedience.

Think about the difference between building a house with your hands and building it with your voice. If we did it, we would have to labor to dig out the foundation and install a basement with a concrete floor. Then we measure, cut, and nail by the sweat of our brow. Yet, God simply speaks, and galaxies appear. *This is the sovereign power of the word of God.* This is the sovereign glory of God seen in His word. David calls us to worship God by standing in awe of such power.

Yet, when we think about the power of the word of God, our minds must think about Jesus and how He is the embodiment and fulfillment of that word. John 1:1 tells us,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same Word that created the heavens is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Jesus is not merely a messenger of God's Word—He is the Word. Hebrews 1:3 says He "upholds the universe by the word of his power." The same voice that said, "Let there be light," later said, "Lazarus, come out," and the dead man lived. This means when we read Scripture, we are not merely encountering ancient text—we are encountering the living voice of Christ. Friends, God's word is living and active right now.

So, are you rejoicing in worship because of God's sovereign Living Word? We are to give thanks and praise to God for His inerrant and infallible written Word. His word points us to and teaches us about the embodiment of the Word of God, Jesus Christ. As the embodiment of God's Word, He submitted Himself to the will of God by dying as our substitute on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Then by the power of His word, He rose from the dead victorious over death, ascended to Heaven, and intercedes for us even now. He sent His Holy Spirit to guard and guide us in His word and by His word. Are you rejoicing in His Word?

B. We Worship Him Because of His Sovereign Will (vv. 10-12)

Before we dig into vv. 10-12, we need to reflect on vv. 4-9 one more time. Here's the deal: The words of God and works of God always go together. James Boice illustrates it this way:

How different it is with us. We say one thing and do another, so that we are inconsistent at best and hypocritical or blatantly dishonest at our worst. God is utterly consistent, always upright, and consistently good. Thus he is always to

be praised for everything he says and for everything he does. There are no areas of his speech or actions for which he can be faulted.⁵

When you consider this, it makes sense that we would worship and praise God for His word and works.

However, as we come to vv. 10-11, we are looking at the counsel and plans of those who oppose the word of the Lord. They are working against the word of God. Look in vv. 10-11:

*The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
¹¹ The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.*

Bottom line: There are powerful world leaders and nations that are making plans that fly in the face of God's word and works. Yet while these people formulate their plans and implement their power moves, they are ultimately instruments in God's hands. It may not seem apparent to us, and it may not be reported in the news that way, but God is still working His sovereign will even through the wicked counsel and plans of world governments. This is God's world. He runs it and rules over it even when we can see it or understand how He does it.

Listen, even when things in our world seem utterly out of control, we can trust that God is working out His sovereign will. Friends, God's sovereign will that is at work in the world will not be reported in the news or on a podcast. If anything, most news reporters and podcasters make it look like there is no God. They want us to believe that chaos rules.

Yet, as Christians, we should, by faith, be confident that God is in control. He is in sovereign control over all things. This is what makes v. 12 so amazing:

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!*

Just to be clear, v. 12 is not about America. I've heard it applied to the U. S. many times over the years. Verse 12 is not about nations as we think of them today. Verse 12 is about God's elect people, those who are in covenant with Him. Verse 12 is about those who are God's heritage because He has placed His sovereign electing love on them.

In Psalm 33, this was Israel, but on this side of the cross, it is those who belong to Christ. It is the church universal and local. It is those who have placed their faith in Jesus, repented of their sin, and follow Him as their King. It is the church that is the blessed nation. Our God reigns over the whole world, and no one can defeat His will. We worship Him because of His sovereign will.

C. We Worship Him Because of His Sovereign Watchfulness (vv. 13-19)

The third reason Psalm 33 gives us to worship God is found in vv. 13-19. In these verses, we see His sovereign watchfulness. But God's watchfulness is more than simple observation. Let's dig into these verses:

In vv. 13-14, we see that God's gaze discerns all:

The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man;¹⁴ from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth.

⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 1-41: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 287.

The phrases “looks down from heaven” and “from where he sits enthroned he looks out” do not mean God is distant and uninvolved. He is not detached from the workings of the world. God is not the Great Observer who only watches.

He is, as v. 15 says, the One who fashions the hearts of men:

*He who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.*

The Hebrew words “fashions” and “observes” mean He understands and creates. So, when we think about His *watchfulness*, we need to understand that God’s watchfulness and ours are not the same.

God is working His will in His creation. He is not simply watching, making a move, and then seeing what you will do; He will then make another move. He’s not sitting there scratching His head wondering what move you will make next. This is what theologians call the heresy of Open Theism.

The Bible doesn’t teach Open Theism, which says that God doesn’t know the future. Instead, He only knows all the options. He doesn’t know what you will do, so He has to wait and work His will based on your next move. Then He hopes He can get you where He wants you, as if your life were a giant chess game.

Friends, the Bible teaches that God’s will is certain and set. His sovereign watchfulness is His intimate involvement in our lives. There is no guesswork with God. He’s not sitting on His throne, scratching His head, wondering what you will do next.

And yet, God breaks and shapes the hearts of sinners according to His predetermined plan. He is so intricately involved in our lives that He has crafted situations, worked out circumstances, and shaped our emotions so that He opens our hearts to the gospel at just the right time. At this point, God removes the blinders from our eyes and raises our dead hearts to life so that we see all that Christ has done to save us, and by faith we wholeheartedly want Him. However, here’s the deal: He planned all of this from the beginning, not in response to your choices.

Think about how some people come to faith in Christ: Some read the Bible, others hear a sermon, some are witnessed to by a friend, others listen to a podcast, and some are only prayed for. Some people suffer great tragedies that break their hearts so that they have nowhere to turn except to Jesus. Some of us will live lives that feel empty and realize there has to be more to life than what we see, feel, taste, and touch. Money and pleasure cannot bring deep-seated joy to life. There may be a thousand different, even painful, circumstances over many years that God uses to bring a person to faith in Christ. As John Piper so wisely said, *God is doing a thousand different things in every one thing that He is doing to bring about His sovereign will in the hearts of people.*

So, what are we talking about when we talk about God’s sovereign *watchfulness*? We are talking about God’s electing, sovereign grace of salvation for God’s people.

Look in vv. 16-17, because in these two verses, King David drives the final nail in the coffin of works-based salvation:

*The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
¹⁷ The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.*

David drives home his point that we cannot save ourselves with four emphatic negative phrases. Look at what he says: *The king is the warrior with the great army, and he has the latest weapon of the day – the war horse.* He has the market cornered on the latest and greatest of weapons, so it seems that he holds all the cards and will be able to achieve his own salvation. Yet, he is wrong! David then destroys our false hopes by saying they are all in vain: They cannot save. They cannot deliver you. They are all a false hope, because they cannot rescue you. Friends, we are not saved by our works!

Then in vv. 18-19, he tells us where salvation comes from:

*Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
19 that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.*

The Hebrew word “*deliver*” in v. 19 is an infinitive and means “*to save and keep on saving*.” It is not simply about physical life but about eternal life. This is God’s sovereign work to save His people, no matter what comes against them. They may die physically, but He has given them eternal life. Nothing can separate them from God and their salvation.

The Apostle Paul says it this way in Romans 8:28-39,

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. Our Confidence in Worship (vv. 20-22)

As we come to the end of Psalm 33, David drives home the fact that we can have confidence in our worship of God. Listen to his confidence in these verses:

*Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.
21 For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
22 Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
even as we hope in you.*

Let me wrap up Psalm 33 by applying our confidence in worship of Jesus this way:

First, let’s consider the power of God’s word and will in creation. Think about it this way: If a computer were observing 10 million stars per second, it would still take 63 million years for it to count all of the stars in the universe. Friends, this is the power of our God. The stars are the work of His fingers, but salvation is the work of His right hand, Jesus Christ.

Friends, in a wonderful way, God's work is in making sinners new creations in Christ Jesus. This work demonstrates a power greater than the ability to command the world into existence. Let us be amazed at the wonder of creation, but let us be overwhelmed in joyful worship of His sovereign saving grace in Christ Jesus, who bore the curse of our sins on the cross, died, and rose again to save us.

Second, I want us to think about worship in two ways. First, there is our lives as worship. How we live out our lives reveals who we worship. So, during the week, we reveal who or what we worship as we live out our lives. If we are spending time in God's word and seeking to live in obedience to His revealed will, we are living lives of worship. Secondly, how we live out our individual worship during the week prepares us for corporate worship on Sunday mornings. Brothers and sisters, may our weekly lives of worship be fuel for our hearts as we come to worship on Sunday mornings.