

Psalm 100

God is Good, and I am His, and I am Satisfied

Background

It is helpful to put Psalm 100 into the bigger context of the whole Psalter.

Books 1 and 2 (Pss. 1-41, 42-72) relate David's struggles and his coming to the throne. Book 2 ends on a high note with Solomon's coronation; Ps. 72 extols the blessings enjoyed when the king of peace reigns in righteousness.

But none of the kings of Israel was such a king. So Book 3 (Pss. 73-89) opens with a Psalm that laments the fact that things are not as they ought to be. Book 3 sustains that theme through to its close in Psalm 89.

Like Ps. 100, Ps. 89 majors on God's faithfulness – it mentions God's faithfulness seven times. Especially, it sees God's faithfulness as intimately bound to God's promise to David of an enduring dynasty. But shockingly David's throne had fallen: Babylon had captured and burned Jerusalem, killed the king's sons, and taken the king into exile. Ps. 89 closes Book 3 with the wounded cry, "Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?"

Book 4 slowly constructs a Biblical answer to this cry of pain. It does this by affirming: God's eternal nature (90); the love he bears towards those who trust in him (91); his dependability (92); the universality of his dominion (93); the certainty of his justice (94, 101); his glorious coming to reign (96-99); the mysterious nature of his saving purpose (102); his compassion and forgiveness (103); his creative/re-creative goodness (104); the manner in which he kept his promise to Abraham (105); and the restoration of his people (106).

And in the middle of all this is Psalm 100 and its affirmation that the LORD is good; that his lovingkindness is for ever; that his faithfulness is to all generations.

1. The worship God is due (vv. 1-2,4) → *I am satisfied*

"While Gen. 1-2 could not have generated the Westminster Confession's definition of humanity's chief end as 'to glorify God and enjoy him forever,' Ps. 100 could have done so" (Goldingay, p. 134).

(v. 1) "This verse claims the world for God" (Kidner).

"How far [service] reaches is shown in Romans 12:1, where nothing short of a living sacrifice counts as 'worship'" (Kidner).

"Praise and prayer go stale in isolation, and activity goes sterile" (Kidner).

"Fear and joy do not exclude one another. Fear becomes the exalted Lord, and the holy gravity of His requirements; joy becomes the gracious Lord, and His blessed service" (Delitzsch, p. 105).

"The summons to manifest this joy...springs up out of an all-hopeful, world-embracing love, and this love is the spontaneous result of living faith in the promise that all tribes of the earth shall be blessed in the seed of Abraham, and in the prophecies in which this promise is unfolded" (Delitzsch, p. 105).

(v.4) "The simplicity of this invitation may conceal the wonder of it, for the *courts* are truly *his*, not ours..., and His gates are shut to the unclean (Rev. 21:27). Yet not only His outer courts but the Holy of Holies itself are thrown open by 'the new and living way', and we are welcome. This in itself is cause enough for praise" (Kinder).

Yahweh is named 4 times: "The psalmist has done everything within the capacity of art to rivet attention beyond all else upon the name" (James L. Mays).

2. The relationships God sustains (v. 3) → *I am his*

"To *know* is to have firm ground underfoot, the prerequisite of praise (cf. 40:2f.), and this knowledge is ours by gift; indeed by command. In the brief space of this verse we are first reminded who God is...; then whence and whose we are; and finally in how favoured a relation we stand to Him" (Kidner).

"...in *ipse fecit nos et ipsius nos sumus* there is also a rich mine of comfort and of admonition, for the Creator is also the Owner, His heart clings to His creature, and the creature owes itself entirely to Him, without whom it would not have had a being, and would not continue in being" (Delitzsch, p. 106).

"Israel is Jahve's work (יְהוָה), Isa. xxix. 23, lx. 21, cf. Deut. xxxii. 6, 15, not merely as a people, but as the people of God, who were kept in view even in the calling of Abram" (Delitzsch, p. 106).

This Psalm is *Israe!* singing – it is the people of God who say, "He made us." And that was how they understood their origin. At the time of the Exodus from Egypt, God made the nation of Israel. And to underline the fact, Moses used the language of the Genesis creation week in his account of the Red Sea. He makes mention of light and darkness; and of the wind – and the Hebrew for "wind" is the same as the Hebrew for "spirit", which makes us think of the Spirit of God hovering over the face of the deep. And most pointedly Moses speaks about the dry land which appeared for the Hebrew people to pass over on – the same word used for the appearing of dry land in Genesis 1.

"Yahweh – he is God!" Thus "Praise is relentlessly polemical" (Brueggemann). Theologically, this is the Psalm's central affirmation.

3. The character God displays (v. 5) → *He is good*

"If the Psalm began by broadening our horizon, it ends by lengthening our view and expectation" (Kidner).

"The mercy or loving-kindness of God is the generosity, and His faithfulness the constancy, of His love" (Delitzsch, p. 106).

"The last word in Ps 100 ('his faithfulness') affirms the enduring faithfulness of Yahweh (note the occurrence of 'faithfulness' in Ps 89:2, 3, 6, 9, 25, 34, and 50 – it is probably of no special significance, but it is interesting to note the sevenfold use of 'faithfulness' in Ps 89 and the sevenfold summons to praise Yahweh for his enduring 'faithfulness' in Ps 100)" (Tate, p. 536).

This is where the Ps. arrives – but it is from here that we depart working our way back through his character to his relationships to our satisfaction in him.