

INTENTIONAL THANKS CHANGES THINGS

Psalm 95:1-2 ... "Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving. Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms."

Today's verse would be an excellent prelude to worship in our churches. In fact, it was exactly that in David's time who wrote it as a call to worship. Singing and shouting praises to God is a great warmup for church worship. Please note also, the reference to the "Rock" and salvation. Rock is capitalized, making it one of Christ's formal names.

You have more control over your circumstances and trials than you think. It is true that God sometimes allows hardship into our lives to help us trust him more, to develop a more intimate relationship with him, and to put us back on the path of God's will from which we often stray. You know from experience that if you stay in bed all day you will not feel better about yourself or the work that you must do. While you lie there in bed you will think of all the things that you should be doing, and that will discourage you. If you are facing hardships, such as not enough money to pay your bills, worry will not solve the problem. In fact, the more you worry, the more discouraged you will become.

If you get out of bed and accomplish some tasks you will feel better about your circumstances. If you find a job and pay off some of your bills, you will lose some of your discouragement. God has a special deal for you. If you will do what you can to help yourself, God will do the rest. He has equipped you to work and serve. But if you are unwilling to do what you can, you cannot avail of God's ability to take care of the rest, and your frustration and despair will grow until you feel you will break.

Despair is not necessary and it kills many people. Your best defense against it is to thank God for what he has done in your life. This requires you to make an intentional decision to momentarily ignore the hardships, and to focus on the goodness of God. You may not have enough money, but you can thank God for your health. If you are sick, you can thank God for a place to rest while you recover. If you do not have a place to rest, you can thank God for your mind. If your mind is clouded with confusion, you can thank God for salvation. When you choose to ignore the difficulties and to praise God for his blessings, you fill your heart with promise, which squeezes frustration and despair out. It is like an empty cup. You can be sad because your cup is not full of coffee, or you can fill your cup with water and no longer face an empty cup. Praise and thankfulness eliminate the space once held by hopelessness.

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