

## Dancing With God

*Let them praise His name with dancing and make music to Him with tambourine and lyre. – Psalm 149:3 HCSB*

During the Holocaust, a group of young Jews in the Nazi death camp Auschwitz were about to be taken to the gas chamber. The prison guards had stripped them of all their earthly possessions, leaving them to stand naked in a huddled group in a bare room as they waited for death. The Nazis had even removed any gold fillings from their teeth!

But one of them suddenly remembered that it was Simchat Torah, a day when Jews celebrate the writing of the first five books of the Bible. They determined that regardless of their circumstances they would rejoice in God, celebrating His presence and the great gift of His Word.

When the Nazis came to lead the Jews to their death, they found their victims dancing with joy in a circle around that gloomy room!

Joyful praise does not come naturally to a sinful people. That is why God felt it necessary to command it<sup>1</sup>. We are not instinctively grateful. In our flesh we are prone to immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these<sup>2</sup>. All these sins demonstrate a narcissistic bent. We feel, deep in our hearts, that we are not that bad and that we SHOULD get some of the good things in life.

The people who can truly dance with God are those who come to the altar beating their chests in remorse for their sin<sup>3</sup>, who are willing to back protestations of humility with real acts of contrition and restitution<sup>4</sup>, and who then pass that received grace on to others<sup>5</sup>.

What does it mean to “dance with God”? We are used to hearing about “walking with the Lord” or “resting in the Lord”, but this kind of language is unfamiliar to many Christians. Yet recognition of God’s grace has driven many biblical saints to literally, physically dance<sup>6</sup>. As someone who is often in a wheelchair and even on his best day, has the rhythm of a galumphing hippo, I am certainly not advocating that everyone should physically dance as a means of worship. Though that is a possibility, what I am talking about is that inner joy that wells up like a continuous stream<sup>7</sup>, regardless of our circumstances, and leaves us simultaneously satiated and yet longing for more. To quote St. Bernard,

*We taste Thee O Thou Living Bread,  
And long to feast upon Thee still:  
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead  
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

To rejoice in the presence of God, to constantly reminding ourselves of His goodness and mercy and to be so thirsty for Him that all other appetites fail – that is what it means to dance with God.

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<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:4; 3:1; 2:18

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 5:19-21

<sup>3</sup> Luke 18:9-14

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:24

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 18:21-35

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 15:20; 2 Samuel 6:14-15

<sup>7</sup> John 4:14