

Good morning! Derek Prince once remarked that Christians rarely rise very much above the spiritual level of their leaders - and I believe it, because I have often seen this to be true. There are exceptions - lots of them - but the sad truth is that most Christians I have met haven't any great ambition to have a deeper relationship with God than the people who lead them. That's probably because they think that's what a relationship with God looks like. This morning, let's take a few moments to consider that as we read today's passage together:

May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy. [And then God answers:] "I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy."

Psalm 132:9,16

This passage refers to two distinct groups of people, the priests and the saints. In the Bible, the priests are those who are responsible for spiritual instruction, for spiritual leadership. The saints are the congregation; God's people who look up to the priests and are led by the priests and instructed by the priests. Interestingly, in today's passage we read that the condition of the priests is the determining factor for the condition of the people. The psalmist prays, "*May your priests be clothed with righteousness; then your saints will sing for joy.*" Then God responds to this, saying, "*I will clothe her priests with salvation and her saints will ever sing for joy.*" We can understand from this that when the leaders of God's people are clothed with salvation and with righteousness, then God's people demonstrate (in this case by singing) that they are experiencing joy. In other words, being a leader of God's people carries a heavy weight of responsibility! If the people are to have the kind of joy, liberty and blessing that God wants them to have, then their leaders must pursue righteousness. The word *righteousness* means *rightly-related to God*. If you are leading God's people in any way, you have a responsibility to dig into God, to cultivate your relationship with Him. You cannot rely on interesting books or the good teaching you received twenty years ago---you must press in. If you are a leader, let me encourage you, this morning, to do this. Focus on prayer; focus on reading the scriptures; focus on being rightly related to God. If you do, you will get to know God better and your people will know God better...and you will all sing for joy!