

“Thank You Lord!”

Psalm 118

This morning we look at the last Passover song, Ps. 118, part of the ‘Egyptian Hallel’ (Ps. 113-118) which Jesus and His disciples would have sung at their last Passover together. This last Psalm is a victory song, a song of thanks to God for delivering His people out of a deathly predicament. There are no details to what actually took place but that’s intentional on the Holy Spirit’s part because then the song fits for any difficulty God rescued Israel or His people today from.

We’ve seen how the songs ranged from speaking of God’s goodness to stoop down and rescue His people (113), how God not only did great things in Israel’s past but He can still bring life out of that which is dead (114), that the promises of God stand true to bless us and give us joy in His presence, even though at the moment we may be experiencing persecution or difficulties (115), that God has the power to save His people from the clutches of death (116) but also that God’s desire for Israel wasn’t just to save Israel but the nations of the world (117).

We’ve been particularly focusing on how these psalms spoke of Jesus (who was singing them Himself). He who stooped down to help us by becoming a human. He who died and came back to life to offer us the same hope. He who hours away would suffer on the cross and die, yet still called us to trust in God knowing that we serve the Only living God who actually sees, hears and understands us completely. He who cried out to God for deliverance from death and God met His need – resurrection. And He who came to die for the sins of the world, not just Israel.

As the Passover concluded they end on a high note, a song of victory and praise to God. It was probably needed because of the sober talk from Jesus about someone betraying Him and the bread being His broken body and the cup represented His blood and that He wouldn’t drink it again until His kingdom was coming. Of all the songs however, Ps. 118 is the most Messianic. It is the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. Jesus used vv. 22-23 to allude to Himself just days before His last Passover and His death.

This is classified as a Thanksgiving psalm so we’re going to frame it as our way of saying thanks to God for what He’s done in our life, particularly as it relates to Jesus’ resurrection. So important is it to thank God that the Psalmist begins and ends his song with the command to thank the Lord

For His Never-Ending Faithfulness **(Ps. 118:1-14, 29)**

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.

This exact phrase occurs 11 times in the Old Testament; three in Chronicles, once in Jeremiah and 7 times in the Psalms. The second line “*His love endures forever*” is repeated in all 26 verses in Ps. 136. Much like Hosanna is a command to praise God, so s give thanks. It is not optional. That might seem strange or even arrogant, except that when it comes to God it is warranted and appropriate.

The word “love” here is our favourite Hebrew word, *hesed*. It refers to God’s covenant faithful commitment to His people. God is good and is committed to us no matter what.

He will never fail on His promises. He will not abandon us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Even, as the psalm points out, when our circumstances are not good. Yet the Bible still commands us to give thanks to God no matter our situation. Phil. 4:6-7,

Phil. 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thes. 5:16 Be joyful always; ¹⁷ pray continually; ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

To say this is God's will means this is what God always wants us to do. It's mentally invigorating by the way. When we begin with thanksgiving it reduces our tendency to complain. If that's not our practice to express thanks as we begin prayer or begin our day and we're often too reactionary and respond negatively too quickly, then let's be more proactive and ask God to help us first be thankful for the things we have more than what we don't, for the good relationships and circumstances we have first before we dwell on the negative relationships and circumstances. And to meditate on God's goodness and heseed love toward us, knowing that there is never a moment in our life where God is not with us or actively involved in everything we do. *Thank you, Lord for your never-ending faithfulness.*

The psalmist thanks God first and then he explains his predicament:

⁵ In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free.

¹⁰ All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off.

¹¹ They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off.

¹² They swarmed around me like bees, but they died out as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off.

¹³ I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me.

And interspersed in these verses are confident affirmations of God's power in rescuing him.

⁶ The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

⁷ The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.

⁸ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.

⁹ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

¹⁵ Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous:

"The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!

¹⁶ The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"

The writer learned again that God alone saves us. That His power is made perfect in our weaknesses. The writer was in a bad place. Enemies surrounded him like bees. He cried out to God. In crying out to God he put his trust in God. He may have tried man's help first; even princes (man and prince are contrasted as the least to the greatest); but God helped him. And he trusted God because he dealt with his enemies in the name of the Lord. and, he properly gives the glory to God. So, let's thank the Lord,

That Trusting in Him Alone Saves Us
(Ps. 118:5-16)

Remember how this psalm is more Messianic than even the first 7 Hallel psalms. Here's Jesus singing this song about His enemies surrounding Him. He relied on no human resources. He trusted in God's ability alone to save Him. The writer of Hebrews quotes v.6 in Heb. 13:6, reminding his Jewish Christian readers who were undergoing persecution to trust God and remember that even if one is killed for their faith, means that they enter God's presence.

We often look to man-made solutions to many of our problems before we go to God. And maybe sometimes we are able to solve them with our own skills and resources. But then we can miss out on giving God the glory since we didn't call on Him and ask for His help.

Jesus, of course, made no attempt to stop the crucifixion. He wasn't tempted to get down from the cross when He was sarcastically and verbally abused to prove He was the Messiah. Peter summarized it well in 1 Pet. 2:23

²³ When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly. ²⁴ He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed

When you read Peter's letters you really see how he finally put it altogether. With the Holy Spirit's help, he began to see how Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection were so clearly predicted in Scripture even though at the time he couldn't see it. Here's Jesus singing prophetically about His own suffering and His own future victory an hour or two before His arrest and how God would save Him and get Him through all this, yet the disciples didn't get it at the time. Because they hadn't learned to trust God alone yet. Even when Jesus sang v. 14, "*The Lord is my strength and song and He has become my Yeshua.*" The more salvation is the Hebrew word for Jesus.

Yet not much different than the disciples, are we? We get upset with God and worry too much because we haven't learned to trust God alone as we should. We don't fully trust His right hand will do valiantly for us. That He alone can deal with our enemies. That He can rescue us from the predicaments that we find ourselves involved in.

The rest of the psalm becomes even more Messianic. The psalm is often attributed to one of Israel's kings, a son of David. No doubt he would have led his army in a battle against nations and from vv.19-29 he is leading a victory parade to the temple where God is praised for the victory he secured.

Unlike this earthly son of David, king, who sang,

¹⁷ I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done. ¹⁸ The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

Jesus did die by taking our punishment on the cross according to the Father's will but death was not the end for Him. And for those of us who have placed our trust in Jesus alone, we thank God especially today ...

That Death is Not the End for [Us] Your People **(118:17-24)**

Vv.17-18 remind us that even as a Davidic king suffered and Jesus suffered,

We will all experience difficulties in life (vv.17-18)

Not all life threatening as this one was, but some are very severe. And God is not unaware of them; He uses them to mature us. When you study Scripture, when we go through a passage verse by verse, we come to verses we may not like but have to come to terms with:

¹⁸ *The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.*

The next psalm has some other great verses to put on our fridges,

⁶⁷ *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.* ⁶⁸ *You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.* ⁶⁹ *Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep your precepts with all my heart.* ⁷⁰ *Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law.* ⁷¹ *It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.*

Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 3:12

¹² *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

The disciples of course were unaware that hours away was their greatest trial. The One they had put all their hope in, the one they believed would bring in the kingdom and solve all their problems would be arrested, crucified and killed. Yet, all those things would still come true, they just had to trust God alone. And 3 days later Jesus rose from the dead. And now the psalmist sings about God's victory as he approaches the city gate and makes his way toward the temple where he will make a sacrifice and give thanks to the Lord!

The good thing about having difficulties as a child of God means at some point God will step in and help us. And when He does,

We get to share God's victories with others (vv.19-21)

We can't have victories if we never had any battles. When we cry for help, when God's right hand delivers valiantly, like this son of David king we praise God-in the presence of His people- what He has done. *V.21, I will give thanks because He answered me.* Why do we share prayer requests? So, when God answers we share that with others. Why? Because most likely they have prayed and are waiting on God for answers and we remind them that God is also with them; that His enduring love is still there. Again, we have Jesus singing v.21 that God became His Yeshua (salvation).

And the victories God gives are described as

Marvelous things He's done (vv.22-24)

But these marvelous things are not always what we thought they were. And here's the most Messianic verse in the Psalm, one that Jesus used Himself days before His death, when tested by the religious leaders.

²² *The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone;* ²³ *the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.* ²⁴ *This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

The capstone or chief cornerstone is the one that everything else sits on and is connected too. Jesus said this of Himself. In saying this to the religious leaders He was saying 'You guys keep

stumbling over Me, yet I am the perfect stone which God chose to build His kingdom.’ Like a builder looking for the perfect block to start the building with but he keeps stumbling over it while looking for something different.

God likes to surprise us with how He works in our lives, doesn't He? What we thought was bad He turns to good. What we thought was the wrong thing turned out to be exactly what we needed. And **that's what we're supposed to rejoice in!**

This is the day that the Lord has made refers to the upside-downness of the cross! How Jesus had to die so we could live. How Jesus had to suffer for our sins so that we could be forgiven. How we have to die so that we can live. The world rejects this way but God says it's the only way and it is marvelous in our eyes. That's why we thank Him for Good Friday and Easter Sunday. And because of the resurrection we thank Him

That Our Future is Secure **(Ps. 118:25-29)**

If verse 25 sounds familiar, it's because this was one of the verses the crowds quoted when Jesus, the Son of David rode victoriously into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Hosanna, means 'save us'. They sing 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord' and they pray a blessing from God's house. Ironically, Jesus would come to God's house and overturn the moneychanger's tables and not receive any blessing from the spiritual leaders.

Here the psalmist declares that God has made His light shine upon us through the victory of the son of David king. The king now comes to the altar to make a sacrifice because of God's deliverance. Ironically, Jesus the final Son of David becomes the sacrifice Himself that makes new life and forgiveness available through Him. And v.28 sound like it could be about the Davidic king as much as it is about God,

²⁸ *You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.*

And we end where we started, giving thanks to the Lord for He is good, His lovingkindness endures forever.

So, the Passover meal ends singing a song of victory. Before the night is over, the stone the builders rejected is crucified and dies. Yet 3 days later the right hand of God does valiantly and rescues Jesus from death's grips by raising Him from the dead. And now – Hosanna – He can save us and we who have trusted Jesus Christ alone for our salvation sing everyday 'This is the day the Lord has made we will rejoice and be glad in it.

It's a very appropriate day to give thanks to God for the salvation His right hand has accomplished. And that's what makes us secure in Him. His lovingkindness never fails us. It endures forever. This is why we can trust Him in the temporary difficulties we face. Don't let your problems rob you of thanksgiving. It is a command. We are to do it because we need to do it. When we start with thanks it changes our perspective on our difficulties, our day, our families, our jobs, our life. The Lord is still our strength and salvation, 2000 years after Jesus rose, 2500 years after this psalm was penned and will be 25 million years after we have died. The Lord is God and He has made His light shine upon us. Thank You Lord.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivett@rideau.net