



WBC Verse for the Year 2020

'The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness'
(Lamentations 3 verses 22-23)

Psalm 118

A summary, with some things to reflect on.

A video of this is on Youtube <https://youtu.be/lyhAulQ4hm8> or our website - wychwoodbaptist.org.uk/resources/midweek-reflections/

We're concluding our look at this short selection of psalms (113-118) which were used at yearly passover celebrations. This week we are in Psalm 118, a hymn of thanksgiving for deliverance from the enemy. It is a psalm of victory, of vindication. There are differing views on whose deliverance and victory is first in view here. The Exodus? Canaan? A King's victory in battle? Return from Exile? Arguments abound for each. What is clear, is that it has in mind a particular act of deliverance, hence its use at the yearly passover celebrations. Ultimately, it becomes a song of the deliverance and victory we receive through Christ.

READ: PSALM 118 verses 1-4

His love endures forever!

The psalm opens with a liturgical call to praise - to (verse 1) *'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures for ever.'* As we saw a couple of weeks ago in Psalm 115, the threefold references to Israel, Aaron and God fearers was commonplace in liturgy. From God's people, to the Priests who interceded for them, to non Israelite Jewish

converts. All are called to an opening song of thankfulness to God for his goodness demonstrated in his enduring love. Love which can be relied upon, as it is love which lasts forever!

READ: PSALM 118 verses 5-9

The LORD is with me. It is better to take refuge in Him.

As we move into verse 5, the psalmist leads us into the reasons for such thankfulness. The Lord has heard his cry of anguish, and has answered by setting him free from it.

In response we have two repeated refrains - *'The LORD is with me,'* (vv 6-7) and *'It is better to take refuge in the LORD'* (vv 8-9).

As the LORD responds to his cries in anguish, by delivering him from them, the response is trust in God's presence - that taking refuge in him is the answer. There is no need to fear - *'what can man do to me?'* (verse 6). The answer - nothing! God is the source of triumph against his enemies (verse 7).

So ... *'It is better to take refuge in the LORD'* than any man - than any prince, any other authority figure (vv 8-9).

READ: PSALM 118 verses 10-14

The LORD is my strength, my song, my salvation.

The psalm develops the nature of the psalmists predicament, his source of anguish. One which reveals triumph received against all odds, through the LORD's presence - in the power of his name.

Notice it says *'All the nations'* surrounded him (verse 10). The psalmist here, likely speaking as representative of Israel, perhaps a King in battle - but with a personal tone of himself being surrounded. All other nations oppose, he is surrounded on every side. It's like a bee swarm against him - and yet *'in the name of the LORD I cut them off.'* (vv10-12). The threat is real, but short lived - dying out *'as quickly as burning thorns'* (verse 12).

How? Who ensured this victory? It was the LORD. He was the source of help. His strength had ensured the victory. He has provided salvation, and so is subject of the psalmists' song of praise (vv 13-14).

READ: PSALM 118 verses 15-18

I will proclaim what the LORD has done.

Shouts of joy resound at the victory of the LORD. Notice how the psalmist keeps his attention on the LORD as the source of victory.

Verses 15-16 emphasise how *'the LORD's right hand has done mighty things.'* Exodus 15 (vv6,12) echo's this language of God's *'right hand'* a reminder of his deliverance of his people from Egypt - an appropriate reminder as this song is sung at the Passover celebration. To emphasise God's right hand is to emphasise his strength and power.

The psalmist rejoices in God's mighty, powerful act of redemption (verse 15). It is God's power at work which is the reason the psalmist *'will not die but live'* (verse 17).

Notice how the psalmist recognises there is a lesson to be learned through his anguish. He acknowledges (verse 18), the LORD's severe chastisement. Yet in his great mercy, the LORD has not given him over to death, but saved him from it.

So, in response - the Psalmist lifts high the LORD's acts (verse 16). Rejoicing in, and proclaiming what the LORD has done (verse 17).

READ: PSALM 118 verses 19-27

Rejoice and be glad in the LORD our Cornerstone.

Verse 19 leads us in a procession into the courts of the LORD, in which only *'the righteous may enter.'* (verse 20). On entering the gate, all thanks and praise goes to the LORD for his salvation.

The LORD has ensured that the stone once rejected (a reference to the psalmist or Israel), has become (verse 22) the capstone (stone over a door) or cornerstone (strengthening the corner walls). This, the psalmist acknowledges, is all of the LORD. He has brought about this day of rejoicing (verse 24).

Having brought about salvation, the psalmist prays for that work of salvation to continue (verse 25). He acknowledges how blessed the one is who comes in God's name. How the LORD has shined his light on his people (verse 27). So they are to respond in procession to the alter, for their thanksgiving offering.

READ: PSALM 118 verses 28-29

You are my God, I will exalt you.

So to the final doxology of the psalm. In response to his deliverance, which allows the psalmist to enter where only the righteous may go - the psalm ends with a personal declaration of praise and honour.

'You are my God, and I will give thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.' (verse 28). This is the psalmists' God - he will exalt Him. For *'he is good; his love endures forever'* (verse 29).

REFLECTION

Spend some time re-reading the passage, and thinking about the following

His love endures for ever

Spend some time giving thanks to God for his enduring love to you.

The Lord is with me. It is better to take refuge in Him.

Remind yourself of the refuge, the protection you have in God.

The LORD is my strength, my song, my salvation.

Give thanks for the victory which God has provided for us.

The ultimate deliverance we have in Jesus.

I will proclaim what the LORD has done

Do you proclaim to others the salvation you have in Christ?
Bring someone who needs that deliverance before the LORD

Rejoice and be glad in the LORD our Cornerstone

Reflect and rejoice in how you have been made righteous before God and can enter his presence, because of Jesus.

Pray for God's ongoing work of salvation in others.

You are my God, I will exalt you

Acknowledge your personal relationship with God. Exalt Him!

What else strikes you about this passage?