

PSALM 118

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he had, after many a story, weathered his point at last, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom and his exaltation to it his were typical. To him, it is certain, the prophet here bears witness, in the latter part of the psalm. Christ himself applies it to himself (~~see~~ Matthew 21:42), and the former part of the psalm may fairly, and without forcing, be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterwards sung at the feast of tabernacles. In it,

- I.** David calls upon all about him to give to God the glory of his goodness (v. 1-4).
- II.** He encourages himself and others to trust in God, from the experience he had had of God's power and pity in the great and kind things he had done for him (v. 5-18).
- III.** He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne, as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ (v. 19-23).
- IV.** The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself, triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom (v. 24-29). In singing this psalm we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.

~~see~~ PSALM 118:1-18

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It appears here, as often as elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God. He loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience. In these verses,

I. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it, from their own experience of it (v. 1): *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is not only good in himself, but good to you, and his mercy endures for ever*, not only in the everlasting fountain, God himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy, which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen *vessels of mercy*, who will be everlasting monuments of it. Israel, and the house of Aaron, and all that *fear God*, were called upon to *trust in God* (^{<HB>}Psalm 115:9-11); here they are called upon to confess that *his mercy endures for ever*, and so to encourage themselves to trust in him, v. 2-4. Priests and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song; if they can say no more, let them say this for him, that *his mercy endures for ever*, that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly *fear the Lord* shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron.

II. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might thence fetch both songs of praise and supports of faith, and both ways God would have the glory. David had, in his time, waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness. Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon for the magnifying of God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who, when they are lifted up, care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions; but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was *in distress* (v. 5), greatly straitened and at a loss; there were many that *hated him* (v. 7), and this could not but be a great grief to one of an ingenuous spirit, that strove to gain the good affections of all. *All nations compassed me about*, v. 10. All the nations adjacent to Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David, when he had newly come to the throne, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, etc. We read of *his enemies round about*; they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated (v. 11): *They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about*, which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and, for a time, prevalent, in their attempts

against him, and when put into disorder they rallied again and pushed on their design. *They compassed me about like bees*, so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious; they came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings; but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loses her life with her sting, *Animamque in vulnere ponit* — *She lays down her life in the wound*. Lord, how are those increased that trouble me! Two ways David was brought into trouble: —

(1.) By the injuries that men did him (v. 13): *Thou* (O enemy!) *hast thrust sore at me*, with many a desperate push, *that I might fall* into sin and into ruin. *Thrusting thou hast thrust at me* (so the word is), so that I was *ready to fall*. Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sorely at us by his temptations, to cast us down from our excellency, that we may fall from our God and from our comfort in him; and, if Go had not upheld us by his grace, his thrusts would have been fatal to us.

(2.) By the afflictions which God laid upon him (v. 18): *The Lord has chastened me sore*. Men thrust at him for his destruction; God chastened him for his instruction. They thrust at him with the malice of enemies; God chastened him with the love and tenderness of a Father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God, the author of it, designed for his profit, that by it he *might partake of his holiness* (³²⁰Hebrews 12:10, 11); howbeit, men, who were the instruments of it, meant not so, *neither did their heart think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy*, ³⁰⁰Isaiah 10:7. What men intend for the greatest mischief God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say whose counsel shall stand. God will sanctify the trouble to his people, as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs; and he will guard them against the trouble, as it is the enemies' thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus. Many there were that *hated him*, hated him without a cause. *They compassed him about*; Jews and Romans surrounded him. *They thrust sorely at him*; the devil did so when he tempted him; his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself *chastened him sorely*, bruised him, and put him to grief, that *by his stripes we might be healed*.

2. The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress.

(1.) God heard his prayer (v. 5): “*He answered me* with enlargements; he did more for me than I was able to ask; he enlarged my heart in prayer and yet gave more largely than I desired.” *He answered me, and set me in a large place* (so we read it), where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy myself, and room to thrive; and the large place was the more comfortable because he was brought to it out of distress, ^{<300>}Psalm 4:1.

(2.) God baffled the designs of his enemies against him: They are *quenched as the fire of thorns* (v. 12), which burns furiously for a while, makes a great noise and a great blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened. Such was the fury of David's enemies; such is *the laughter of the fool*, like the *crackling of thorns under a pot* (^{<200>}Ecclesiastes 7:6), and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, any more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied. They thrust sorely at him, but *the Lord helped him* (v. 13), helped him to keep his feet and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies would, long before this, have been our ruin if God had not been our helper.

(3.) God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death (v. 18): “He has *chastened me*, but he has not *given me over unto death*, for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies.” To this St. Paul seems to refer in ^{<400>}2 Corinthians 6:9. *As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed*. We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sorely, immediately to despair of life, for God sometimes, in appearance, *turns men to destruction*, and yet *says, Return; says unto them, Live*.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ. God *answered him, and set him in a large place*. He quenched the fire of his enemies; rage, which did but consume themselves; for *through death he destroyed him that had the power of death*. He helped him through his undertaking; and thus far he did not *give him over unto death* that he did *not leave him in the grave*, nor *suffer him to see corruption*. *Death had no dominion over him*.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

(1.) It encouraged him to trust in God; from his own experience he can say, *It is better*, more wise, more comfortable, and more safe, there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, *to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man*, yea, though it be *in princes*, v. 8, 9. He that devotes himself to God's guidance and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power, and goodness, has a better security to make

him easy than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

(2.) It enabled him to triumph in that trust.

[1.] He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him and interest in him (v. 6): “*The Lord is on my side. He is a righteous God, and therefore espouses my righteous cause and will plead it.*” If we are on God's side, he is on ours; if we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us (v. 7): “*The Lord takes my part, and stands up for me, with those that help me.* He is to me among my helpers, and so one of them that he is all in all both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself nor could any friend I have in the world help me.” Thus (v. 14), “*The Lord is my strength and my song; that is, I make him so (without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my strength, both for doing and suffering, and in him I solace myself as my song, by which I both express my joy and ease my grief), and, making him so, I find him so: he strengthens my heart with his graces and gladdens my heart with his comforts.*” If God be our strength, he must be our song; if he work all our works in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the strength of his people when he is not their song; they have spiritual supports when they want spiritual delights. But, if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for, he be our strength and our song, he has become not only our Saviour, but our salvation; for his being our strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

[2.] He triumphs over his enemies. Now shall his head be lifted up above them; for, *First*, He is sure they cannot hurt him: “God is for me, and then *I will not fear what man can do against me,*” v. 6. He can set them all at defiance, and is not disturbed at any of their attempts. “They can do nothing to me but what God permits them to do; they can do no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God; they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depending creature, whose power is limited, and subordinate to a higher power, and therefore I will not fear him.” *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* ⁻²⁵¹²⁻Isaiah 51:12. The apostle quotes this, with application to all Christians, ⁻⁸³¹⁶⁻Hebrews 13:6. They may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, *The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me;* let him do his worst. *Secondly*, He is sure that he

shall be too hard for them at last: “*I shall see my desire upon those that hate me* (v. 7); I shall see them defeated in their designs against me; nay, *In the name of the Lord I will destroy them* (v. 10-12); I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them, and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by warrant from him, and with an eye to his glory, not confiding in myself nor taking vengeance for myself.” Thus he went forth against Goliath, *in the name of the God of Israel*, ¹⁰⁷⁵1 Samuel 17:45. David says this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and *made a show of them openly*.

[3.] He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory, and his life. *First*, Of his comfort (v. 15): *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous*, and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and movable; here we have no city, *no continuing city*. But these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them; for in the house where religion rules, 1. There is salvation; safety from evil, earnest of eternal salvation, which *has come to this house*, ²⁸⁹Luke 19:9.

2. Where there is salvation there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called *the joy of salvation*, for in that there is abundant matter for joy.

3. Where there is rejoicing there ought to be *the voice* of rejoicing, that is, praise and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families, to the glory of God and encouragement of others. *Secondly*, Of his victory: *The right hand of the Lord does valiantly* (v. 15) and *is exalted*; for (as some read it) *it has exalted me*. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them and therefore victoriously. For what difficulty can stand before the divine valour? We are weak, and act but cowardly for ourselves; but God is mighty, and acts valiantly for us, with jealousy and resolution, ²⁶⁵Isaiah 63:5, 6. There is spirit, as well as strength, in all God's operations for his people. And, when God's right hand does valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises. *Thirdly*, Of his life (v. 17): “*I shall not die* by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, *but live and declare the works of the Lord*; I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me, and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God,

looking upon that as the end of my preservation.” Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose than to *declare the works of God*, for his honour and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking and that the *good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand*.

PSALM 118:19-29

THE EXALTATION OF THE MESSIAH

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applies it directly to the chief priests and scribes, and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, ^{<4011>}Acts 4:11. Now observe here,

I. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, v. 19-21.

1. The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him *that cometh in the name of the Lord: Open to me the gates of righteousness*. So the temple-gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to come nigh, as the sacrifices there offered are called *sacrifices of righteousness*. Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances must become humble suitors to God for admission. And when the gates of righteousness are opened to us we must *go into them*, must enter into the holiest, as far as we have leave, *and praise the Lord*. Our business within God's gates is to praise God; *therefore* we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him.

2. He sees admission granted him (v. 20): *This is the gate of the Lord*, the gate of his appointing, *into which the righteous shall enter*; as if he had said, “The gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome. *Knock, and it shall be opened unto you*.” Some by this gate understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God and our praises are accepted; he is *the way*; there is no coming to the Father but by him (^{<6146>}John 14:6), he is the *door of the sheep* (^{<6109>}John 10:9); he is the gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter, and *come into God's righteousness*, as the expression is, ^{<1627>}Psalm 69:27. The

psalmist triumphs in the discovery that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened.

3. He promises to give thanks to God for this favour (v. 21): *I will praise thee*. Those that saw Christ's day at so great a distance saw cause to praise God for the prospect; for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old-Testament saints for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their salvation.

II. The prophecy itself, v. 22, 23. This may have some reference to David's preferment; he was the stone which Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the headstone of the building. But its principal reference is to Christ; and here we have, 1. His humiliation. He is *the stone which the builders refused*; he is *the stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, ^{<203>}Daniel 2:34. He is a stone, not only for strength, and firmness, and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a *precious stone* (^{<406>}1 Peter 2:6), for the foundation of the gospel-church must be *sapphires*, ^{<251>}Isaiah 54:11. This stone was *rejected by the builders*, by the rulers and people of the Jews (^{<408>}Acts 4:8, 10, 11); they refused to own him as the stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their building without him; they *denied him in the presence of Pilate* (^{<403>}Acts 3:13) when they said, *We have no king but Caesar*. They trampled upon this stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they stumbled at it. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God.

2. His exaltation. He *has become the headstone of the corner*; he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief corner-stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief top-stone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the pre-eminence, as the *author and finisher of our faith*. Thus highly *has God exalted him, because he humbled himself*; and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the foundation of our hope, the centre of our unity, and the end of our living. *To me to live is Christ*.

3. The hand of God in all this: *This is the Lord's doing*; it is from the Lord; it is with the Lord; it is the product of his counsel; it is his contrivance. Both the humiliation and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus were his work, ~~4:23~~ Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28. He sent him, sealed him; his hand went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did his Father's will; and this ought to be *marvellous in our eyes*. Christ's name is *Wonderful*; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels *desire to look into*, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it, who owe our all to it. *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness*.

III. The joy wherewith it is entertained and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

1. Let the day be solemnized to the honour of God with great joy (v. 24): *This is the day the Lord has made*. The whole time of the gospel-dispensation, that *accepted time*, that *day of salvation*, is what the Lord has made so; it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted; and so,

(1.) Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath: *It is the day which the Lord has made*, has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished from other days; he has made it for man: it is therefore called *the Lord's day*, for it bears his image and superscription.

(2.) The duty of the sabbath, the work of the day that is to be done in his day: *We will rejoice and be glad in it*, not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the *head of the corner*. This we ought to rejoice in both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who, having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

2. Let the exalted Redeemer be met, and attended, with joyful hosannas, v. 25, 26.

(1.) Let him have the acclamations of the people, as is usual at the inauguration of a prince. Let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy,

Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord! This is like *Vivat rex — Long live the king*, and expresses a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. *Hosanna* signifies, *Save now, I beseech thee*.

[1.] “Lord, save me, I beseech thee; let this Saviour be my Saviour, and, in order to that, my ruler; let me be taken under his protection and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, ^{<172B>}Psalm 72:3. Let me have victory over those lusts *that war against my soul*, and let divine grace go on in my heart *conquering and to conquer*.”

[2.] “Lord, preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and *send him prosperity* in all his undertakings; give success to his gospel, and let it be *mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds* and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his *kingdom come, his will be done*.” Thus *let prayer be made for him continually*, ^{<172B>}Psalm 72:15. On the Lord's day, when we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. When Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem he was thus met by his well-wishers (^{<411B>}Matthew 21:9): *Hosanna to the Son of David; long live King Jesus; let him reign for ever*.

(2.) Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, v. 26.

[1.] Let them bless the prince with their praises: *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Jesus Christ is *he that cometh — ho erchomenos*, he that was to come and is yet to come again, ^{<611B>}Revelation 1:8. He *comes in the name of the Lord*, with a commission from him, to act for him, to do his will and to seek his glory; and therefore we must say, *Blessed be he that cometh*; we must rejoice that he has come; we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to, call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, ^{<146B>}Psalm 45:2. We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, “Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thy own.” We must bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive

them for his sake, ^{<2517>}Isaiah 52:7; ^{<630>}John 13:20. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church, for the ripening of things for his second coming, and then that he who has said, *Surely I come quickly, would even so come.*

[2.] Let them bless the people with their prayers: *We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.* Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed to pronounce a blessing, in his name, upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, ^{<618>}Ephesians 6:24. We assure you that in and through Jesus Christ you are blessed; for he came to bless you. “You are *blessed out of the house of the Lord*, that is, *with spiritual blessings in heavenly places* (^{<618>}Ephesians 1:3), and therefore have reason to bless him who has thus blessed you.”

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, v. 27. Here is,

(1.) The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ: *God is the Lord who has shown us light.* God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he has promised and perfecting what he has begun, ^{<618>}Exodus 6:3. *He has shown us light*, that is, he has given us the knowledge of himself and his will. He *has shined upon us* (so some); he has favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his countenance; he has given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. *The day which the Lord has made* brings light with it, true light.

(2.) The duty which this privilege calls for: *Bind the sacrifice with cords*, that, being killed, the blood of it may be sprinkled *upon the horns of the altar*, according to the law; or perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere) to *bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar* while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significancy here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but *living sacrifices* (^{<618>}Romans 12:1), to be bound to the altar, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound *with cords to the horns of the altar*, not to start back.

4. The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, v. 28, 29.

(1.) He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him in his own heart and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant-relation to him and interest in him: *“Thou art my God, on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me and art owned by me; and therefore I will praise thee.”*

(2.) He will have all about him to give thanks to God for these glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord. In him it is that God *is good* to man and that *his mercy endures for ever*; in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes this psalm as he began it (v. 1), for God's glory must be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of all our addresses to him. *Hallowed by thy name, and thine is the glory.* And this fitly closes a prophecy of Christ. The angels give thanks for man's redemption. *Glory to God in the highest* (~~☞~~ Luke 2:14), for there is *on earth peace*, to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, ~~☞~~ Luke 19:38. *Peace in heaven* to us through Christ, and therefore *glory in the highest.*