

His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

Freddy Fritz / General

Thanksgiving Psalms / Thanksgiving Psalm; Trust; Glorify; Thankfulness; Experience; Victory; Calamity; Steadfast Love / Psalm 118

Psalm 118:1-29 gives us several practical instructions about praising God for his steadfast love.

Introduction

What was Martin Luther's favorite psalm?

You may say, as I thought, that it was Psalm 46. After all, Martin Luther wrote the great hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," based on Psalm 46.

But, if you said that Psalm 46 was Martin Luther's favorite psalm, you and I would be wrong.

Martin Luther's favorite psalm was Psalm 118. In the preface to his sixty-page exposition of the psalm, Luther wrote:

This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter and all of the Holy Scriptures are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore, I call it my own. When emperors and kings, the wise and the learned, and even saints could not aid me, this psalm proved a friend and helped me out of many great troubles. As a result, it is dearer to me than all the wealth, honor, and power of the pope, the Turk, and the emperor. I would be most unwilling to trade this psalm for all of it (Luther, *Selected Psalms III*, 45).

We do not have time to explore this beautiful psalm in detail, but I hope to give you a bird's eye view.

Let me make a few brief introductory comments about Psalm 118.

It is one of fifty anonymous psalms. We don't know who wrote it, making it difficult to determine when it was written.

It is the last of six psalms known as the "Egyptian Hallel" psalms.

“Hallel” means “praise,” so the Egyptian Hallel psalms praised God for his redemption from Egypt in the Exodus to the temple in Jerusalem on Mount Zion.

The six psalms making up the Egyptian Hallel, Psalms 113 to 118, were sung during the Passover meal.

The first two, Psalms 113 and 114, were sung before the Passover meal, and the last four, Psalms 115 to 118, were sung after the Passover meal.

So, Psalm 118 was the last psalm that Jesus sang with his disciples on the night he celebrated the Passover Meal before his arrest, betrayal, and crucifixion.

Psalm 118 is located between the shortest psalm (117) and the longest psalm (119) in the Psalter.

Psalm 118 may have been used when the temple's foundation was laid in the days of Ezra.

Psalm 118:22 mentions the cornerstone of the temple, and Ezra 3:10–11 says:

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord,

“For he is good,

for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.”

And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

Psalm 118 was used for public worship, particularly when celebrating the Passover Meal.

Commentator Warren Wiersbe, whose outline I am following, writes:

The pronouns “I” and “me” in verses 5–21 refer to the nation of Israel and not the psalmist. But the psalm speaks to all believers in every age and gives them four practical instructions (Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Exultant*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series [Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004], 97).

Scripture

Let us read [Psalm 118:1-29](#):

**¹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!**

**² Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”**

**³ Let the house of Aaron say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”**

**⁴ Let those who fear the LORD say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”**

**⁵ Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me and set me free.**

**⁶ The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.
What can man do to me?**

**⁷ The LORD is on my side as my helper;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.**

**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.**

**¹⁰ All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!**

**¹¹ They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!**

**12 They surrounded me like bees;
they went out like a fire among thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!**

**13 I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but the LORD helped me.**

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

**15 Glad songs of salvation
are in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly,
16 the right hand of the LORD exalts,
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!”**

**17 I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.**

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

**19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.**

**20 This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.**

**21 I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.**

22 The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing;

it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD!

O LORD, we pray, give us success!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God,

and he has made his light to shine upon us.

Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,

up to the horns of the altar!

²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

you are my God; I will extol you.

²⁹ Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

for his steadfast love endures forever!

Lesson

[Psalm 118:1-29](#) gives us several practical instructions about praising God for his steadfast love.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Thank the Lord in Every Situation (118:1-4)
2. Trust the Lord in Every Crisis (118:5-14)
3. Glorify the Lord after Every Victory (118:15-21)

4. See the Lord in Every Experience (118:22-29)

I. Thank the Lord in Every Situation (118:1-4)

The first practical instruction about praising God for his steadfast love is to thank the Lord in every situation.

In verse 1, the psalmist says, **“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!”**

Each of the following three verses also says, **“His steadfast love endures forever”** (vv. 2-4).

In addition, Psalm 118 closes with these exact words in verse 29, **“...for his steadfast love endures forever!”**

Giving thanks to the Lord is one of the purposes of the Hallel Psalms.

The psalmist wanted the people to know that in all places and at times and in all communities, they were to **“give thanks to the Lord.”**

Why?

“For he is good, [and] his steadfast love endures forever!”

The people of **“Israel”** were to thank the Lord for all the blessings and privileges he had bestowed on them (see Romans 9:1-5).

The religious leaders, **“the house of Aaron,”** were to thank the Lord for the great privilege of serving him in his sanctuary.

And all **“those who fear the Lord,”** God’s people, were to thank the Lord for giving them faith and repentance.

My dear brother and sister in Christ, you and I should thank the Lord, for, as Paul said, God “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3).

God is always good.

His steadfast love endures forever!

No calamity or crisis can change God's goodness and love.

II. Trust the Lord in Every Crisis (118:5-14)

The second practical instruction about praising God for his steadfast love is to trust the Lord in every crisis.

In 537 BC, the people of God were in captivity in Babylon. That is why the psalmist said in verse 5, **“Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me free.”**

So, 50,000 people were allowed to return to Judah.

The people laid the temple's foundation in 536 BC, but the surrounding nations interfered, and the work stopped until about 520 BC.

The surrounding nations did not want the Jews to get established in Jerusalem and Judah, and so they opposed the rebuilding of the temple and the fortification of Jerusalem.

The psalmist captures the attitude of the people in verses 6-7, **“The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The Lord is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.”**

Work resumed in 520 BC, and the temple was completed and dedicated in 515 BC.

“The Lord” is mentioned eleven times in verses 5-14. **“The Lord”** is mentioned in every verse one of these verses.

He is the one who protected the people of God from their enemies and enabled them to complete their work in challenging circumstances.

The people of God learned to trust in the Lord, not in people and politicians; as verses 8-9 say, **“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.”**

As a side note, these verses 8-9 are the center verses of the entire Bible.

Verses 10-13 emphasize the Lord's protection of his people.

Verse 14 explains why the Lord can be trusted in every crisis: **“The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”**

This is the song that the people of God sang when he delivered them from Egypt (see Exodus 15:2), when he enabled them to rebuild the temple and city, and when the redeemed people of God sang in every crisis.

My dear brother and sister, you may be going through a crisis now. You are facing a significant challenge.

It may be a health issue, it may be a relationship, it may be loss of earnings, it may be a loss of a job, or it may be something not mentioned.

Let me encourage you to trust the Lord in every crisis.

III. Glorify the Lord after Every Victory (118:15-21)

The third practical instruction about praising God for his steadfast love is to glorify the Lord after every victory.

After the temple and the Jerusalem walls were dedicated, the people glorified God for his work in restoring the city.

So, the people sang verses 15-16, **“Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous: ‘The right hand of the Lord does valiantly, the right hand of the Lord exalts, the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!’ ”**

In verse 17, the people sang, **“I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.”**

Martin Luther had Psalm 118:17 written on his study wall. He called it “a masterpiece,” adding:

He [the psalmist] so immerses himself in life that death is swallowed up by life (1 Cor. 15:55) and disappears completely because he clings with a firm faith to the right hand of God. Thus, all the saints have sung this verse and will continue to sing it to the end.... So far as the world is concerned, they die. Yet their hearts say with a firm faith: “I shall not die, but live” (Luther, *Selected Psalms III, 87*).

Thus, the psalmist writes in verse 21, **“I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.”**

Is this not the song on every believer’s tongue?

God answers us when we call out to him. He has become our salvation.

And so we can glorify him after every victory.

Thank the Lord in every situation, trust the Lord in every crisis, and glorify the Lord after every victory.

IV. See the Lord in Every Experience (118:22-29)

And the fourth practical instruction about praising God for his steadfast love is to see the Lord in every experience.

During Ezra's time, the temple was rebuilt.

During the construction, there would have been enormous stones: large, small, good, and poor.

Perhaps one that had been overlooked and rejected turned out to be the stone that became the temple's cornerstone.

So, verse 22 says, **“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”**

Let me comment on the word for **“cornerstone.”**

In some Bibles, it is rendered as a “capstone” (*NIV*).

At seminary, the word came up in a Greek class.

In some instances, “capstone” and “cornerstone” seemed to be used interchangeably. Having just been in the construction industry, I was familiar with a “cornerstone” and a “capstone.”

I remember arguing my case to the professor and the rest of the class that a “capstone” is a stone that is the finishing stone on top of a structure, like on top of a parapet or wall.

On the other hand, a “cornerstone” is a stone placed at the corner of a building, and the entire structure is aligned with it.

It is the most important stone in the whole building because if it is out of alignment, the entire building is out of alignment.

That is why the word is **“cornerstone”** and not “capstone.”

The Apostle Peter made it clear that the **“cornerstone”** that was rejected by the Jewish people was Jesus, as he said in Acts 4:11, “This Jesus is the stone that you rejected, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.”

By his death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus has become the church's cornerstone, binding believers from all nations into one holy temple in the Lord (see Ephesians 2:19-22).

In verse 25a, the people of God sang, **“Save us, we pray, O Lord!”**

The Hebrew for **“save us”** is “hosanna.”

The people sang this when Jesus came into Jerusalem on what we now call “Palm Sunday” (see Matthew 21:9).

Matthew also records that they sang verse 26a, **“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”**

Psalms 118 points us to Jesus—his triumphal entry on Palm Sunday (vv. 25-26), his rejection (v. 27), his death and resurrection (v. 17), and his exaltation as God's chosen cornerstone (vv. 22-23).

Seeing the Lord in every life experience is essential, so these experiences will help us become more like Jesus.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the concept of praise in Psalm 118:1-29, let us praise God for his steadfast love.

So, let us thank the Lord in every situation, trust the Lord in every crisis, glorify the Lord after every victory, and see the Lord in every experience.

As we do so, we will praise God for his steadfast love and continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.