

**Tuesday, September 20, 2022 ▫ Read Psalm 68:1–18**

*Questions from the Scripture text: Into whose hands was this Psalm entrusted (superscript)? Who wrote it? What is it? What does v1a desire Whom to do? What do v1b and v1c desire whom to do? What illustration does v2a–b use for what God does to His enemies? What illustration does v2c–d use for what happens to the wicked? Whose presence is like the fire? What new group does v3 introduce? What will they do before God? To what extent (v3c)? Now whom does v4 address? What does it command them to do? How does it describe Him? What Name are they to praise (v4c)? Again (cf. v3a, 3b, 3c), what are they to do before Him (v4d)? How does v5a describe Him? From where (v5b)? What does He do for whom in v6a? What does He do for whom in v6b? How does this contrast with those in v6c? How does v7 describe the wilderness wanderings? What events are described as the effects of the presence of Israel's champion/leader (v8)? How does v9 describe God's care for the promised land? What else was He doing in this (v10)? What great gift does v11 describe? How do v12–14 describe the conquest of the land? What places are jealous of Jerusalem and why (v15–16)? What are its defenses like (v17)? What has its King done (v18)? For what reason?*

**How great is the church's help and defense?** Psalm 68:1–18 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eighteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Israel's greatness is not in herself but in her King.**

**The current situation,** v1–3. This song is sung while there are still enemies of God. For those who have known their Bibles, this song has been sung and prayed in the hardest of times. But God is present, which has opposite results for the wicked (who perish in His presence, v2) and the righteous (who rejoice exceedingly in it, v3).

**The God Who makes the difference,** v4–6. Yah (v4) is the high King in His holy habitation (v5b). But His concern from high in the clouds (v4b) is the lowest among the people: the fatherless and widow (v5a), the solitary (v6a) and those who are bound (v6b).

**The Greatness of the Difference God Makes,** v7–14. How did the people make it through the wilderness? God went before them (v7)! What caused the heavens to drop manna (not rain, as our translation inserts in v8b) and Sinai to shake? The presence of our God (v8)! What caused the rain and fertility of the promised land? God's confirming care (v9)! In all of these great works, God acted according to His compassion for the least among His people (v10).

And how did the people conquer the promised land (v12–14)? Armies and their kings were put to flight (v12a), while Israel was like the mothers and wives who simply waited for their champion to bring them the finest spoil (v12b–13). Israel has no king; instead, she has God Who fights her battles for her!

But the center of the greatness is planted literarily between v8–10 and v12–14: the giving of the Word (v11). For, it is far greater that the people would be brought into fellowship with the living God than that they would be brought out of trouble from the enemy.

**The Greatest Difference God Makes,** v15–18. The final verses of the first half of the Psalm focus on this greatest of differences. For, God has not only given His Word to His people, but He has even chosen to dwell among them Himself (vv15–16). This is the ultimate plan of God (cf. Rev 21:3). His people are His true "Sinai" (v17).

But the One in Whom this difference is made is Immanuel—God with us (cf. Isa 7:14; Mat 1:23). He is the Word (v11), become flesh and tabernacled among us (cf. Jn 1:14). And He Who descended into the lower parts of the earth (cf. Eph 4:9; the virgin's womb, cf. Ps 139:13–15) is He Who ascended on high and led captivity captive (v18, cf. Eph 4:8). In Jesus, God Himself has ascended His throne as a Man, and by the gifts that He gives in His church, He builds us up into Himself. He Himself, and everlasting and perfect fellowship with Him, is His greatest gift!

What circumstances present you with urgent needs? What gift from God do you need far more?

*Sample prayer: Lord, You have made Your holy dwelling place among Your people. In order that we might be safe and happy in Your presence, You Yourself have atoned for our sin. And it is in Yourself that You have brought us near to Yourself. So, make us to rejoice in Your presence, we ask in Your Name, Lord Jesus, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP68B "When With Your People You Went Forth" or TPH68B "O Lord, Thou Hast Ascended"**

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Psalm 68, our portion is versus one through 18. These are God's words to the chief musician, a Psalm of David a song, let God arise, let his enemies be scattered. Let those also who hate him, flee. Before him a smoke is driven away. So drive them away as wax.

Melts before the fire. So let the wicked perish at the presence of God, but let the righteous be. Glad let them rejoice before God. Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Sing to God, sing praises to his name, extol him, who rides on the clouds by his name. Y'all and rejoice before him.

A father of the fatherless a defender of widows is God and His holy habitation, God sets the solitary and families. He brings out those who are bound into prosperity but the rebellious dwell and a dryland. Oh God. When you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, the earth shook the heavens.

Also dropped at the presence of God. Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel, you owe God sent plentiful. Rain whereby you confirmed your inheritance when it was weary your congregation dwelt in it you O God provided from your goodness for the poor, The Lord gave the word.

Great was the company of those who proclaimed it Kings of armies flee. They flee and she who remains at home, divides. The spoil though. You lie down. Among the sheep folds, you will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Zalman and mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan.

A mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan. Why do you fume with envy you mountains of many peaks? This is the mountain, which God desires to dwell in. Yes, y'all. I will dwell in that forever. The chariots of God are 20,000. Even thousands of thousands the Lord is among them.

As in Sinai, in the Holy place, you have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive, You have received gifts among men even from the rebellious that yahweh got might dwell. So for the reading of gods inspired and and Aaron tort well, the situation into which this psalm is written, is one which as far as earthly circumstances.

Go seems pretty bleak. God has enemies who are not scattered, but if that's what verse 1 is saying, you're asking for, they are currently gathered, they hate God and His people. His people are surrounded and faced down by a great and hostile enemy. But that is just the earthly circumstance, the eternal circumstance, the invisible circumstances, that we are in the presence of God.

And eventually, the Lord will make that presence known which for the wicked is a hell. But which for the righteous is a heaven. And so he says let God arise. Let His enemies be scattered. Let those also who hate him flee from before him as smoke is driven away.

So drive them away but then you see at the end of verse 2 as wax melts before the fire. So let the wicked perish at the presence of God, The presence of God is their destruction but the presence of God For the righteous as they're gladness, it's the same interaction rejects to position, maybe a better way of saying it.

The wicked or in the presence of God in verse 2. What happens? They get destroyed. They get melted but the righteous. What do they do? Before God, Let the righteous be glad let them rejoice before God verse 3. Yes, let them rejoice exceeding. So, all must ultimately realize that they are in the presence of God and God will make His presence fully known to us.

And so if you're standing before the wicked and you're quaking in their presence because they seem strong and they're very hostile and they want to destroy you. But you belong to the Lord, A because you belong to the Lord. It's really him. That they hate. It's really him that they attack.

You remember what he said? What the Lord Jesus said to Paul, on the way to, to Damascus. Saul Saul, why are you persecuting me? And so when the presence of the wicked is intimidating us, and and we are anxious or afraid or endanger what we need is to know the presence of God who is with us.

This is one of the things that you hopefully have been hearing as we read the testimonies of the covenant or especially as they are going to their deaths and what happens as they they come close to the day or even come close to the scaffold itself and and start climbing up to the platform upon which they are about to be executed, You don't hear fear and quaking.

And, and trembling and misery. What do we hear? We hear this increase of and it and Great testimony of the joy that they have. Why? Because they are welcoming the new reality that is coming more and more clear to them that they are already in the presence of their God, but be our entering into the most full experience of that presence of God.

And so what do they do? The righteous are glad they rejoice before. God, They were rejoice succeedingly. And so this is one of the reasons why whenever the covenanters had to take up defensive arms which are called by some historians rebellions, but we know better They did. So with joy, knowing either that God was about to scatter his enemies on that field, or that God was about to take them into his presence which also fostered, the cry.

Take the right. And spare the green, take those, who would be glad to depart this world and immediately enter your presence. But for any who would be melted as wax before the fire of your presence, spare them that they might be brought to faith in Jesus Christ. So that when they do leave this world, it will be with the same exceeding gladness as those who already now.

No Christ. So you see how how God himself and his presence is the the blessing, the benefit, the solution to the earthly circumstance. And we prepare for that by worship. Worship is a preparation for difficult circumstances on earth, just as much as it is, a preparation for heaven. Because it is the the knowledge of the presence of God and how good that presence will be, and how glad we will be in His presence that enables us to sail, on the rough waters of the difficulties of this life.

And so when we come to worship week by week and we are obeying verse 4, sing to God, sing praises to his name, extol him by his name yaw, which is of course, short for Yahweh and rejoice. Before him, We are giving our hearts gladness training and rejoicing training so that that joy which we will have finally and perfectly.

And everlastingly when we leave this life will be available to us in the theological knowledge of the presence of God. Even on a battlefield when we don't have necessarily the same experiential, knowledge of the presence of God, although his spirit can bring home to us in our experience, even in miserable circumstances, the knowledge of and the gladness of his presence.

And so worship is training for gladness, even even in difficult situations. And whom does he make us? Not to know him to be. Then a father of the Fatherless a defender of widows as God and His holy habitation. There was, There was, there weren't very many situations that were worse or more difficult than being a child.

Without a father are being a woman who had lost her husband and yet God was more. Then 10,000 fathers or 10,000 husbands to them. And so, the more we know him and not just his glory and himself, but his glory that he makes present to us as he comes to dwell.

Among us the bladder. We are the more secure we we are. God sets the solitary and families. He brings out those who are bound into prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in dryness, the reminder, even in the way that he gathered his people out of Egypt and he constituted them a people.

And not only did he give them tribes of inheritance that that they would be in. So that there would be even humanly speaking. The the extra care for the fatherless, the extra care for the widow at least according to God's design in Israel that you wouldn't have and any other culture.

Why? Because Israel was to be reflecting the character of their God. And even if Israel itself did not follow through on what God gave them, those who knew his word knew that, the reason that God had given those instructions, and those commandments is because he is that sort of God to us, He loves us and he takes care of us.

And so he sets the solitary and families, he brings out those who are bound but the rebellious dwell in dryness and you can imagine Egypt as after the Israelites were gone and what their land was like because they had just come through the ten plagues and there are their livestock were destroyed and all their vegetation were destroyed and it was just a dead desert.

Israel was going around in the wilderness and they had the manner and they had the presence of God and they were a people who had been gathered into into their tribes, Egypt was left in the Deaf, that God gave them and response to the rebellion. So he continues to describe how the way that he started the nation of Israel and bringing them out of Egypt and bringing them through the wilderness in the manner that he gave them in gathering them at Sinai, and giving them his his word in the way that he gave them the land when they came into the land and destroyed all the, all the kings of all the peoples of the land, how in all of these things, he was showing himself as our great defense himself as our great blessing, O God.

When you went out before your people when you marched through the wilderness and so we sometimes are often think of the wilderness wanderings and it's not wrong. The Apostle, didn't he say he put up with their ways for 40 years, That was a summary. And when you just when you think of the people, you think of grumbling and hunger and contention and those kinds of things.

But God was still redeeming this people. He was not, he did not despise to be associated with them and to lead them and take care of them, despite how glorious he is, and how good he is. Compared to help in glorious and wicked. They were and so he marched through the wilderness leading them.

The heavens also dropped at the presence of God. New King, James has supplied rain. But in the sequence here, this is before Sinai and it's probably not rain, it's probably Mana. The heavens. Also dropped at the presence of God. Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God. The God of Israel you owe God sent a plentiful rain whereby you confirmed your inheritance when it was weary.

And so the inheritance here being not just the people, but if you look at verse 10, your congregation dwelt in it, you owe God provided from your goodness. For the poor talking about how God has made had made the land of Canaan. A very fruitful land and when it rained, it wasn't just a meteorological event.

It wasn't just an accident of weather when it rained, it was God, giving life and giving abundance to his people in part because there are poor among his people. But they are poor among his people and so they are able to glean the corners of the fields. God providing so richly for the people, as a whole, that there's fullness and abundance, even without trying to squeeze every last grain out of the corners of the fields, and to the pork.

And that can come behind even though they own no land because the land is God's land, and it's run according to God's laws and God's reign has fallen to give God's blessing. And it's not just the landowners but even the poor for whom he has providing in all those things.

This is. So you see versus 9 and 10 together. Not just the power of the presence of God in destroying Egypt and putting the kings out of the land and so forth, but also the blessedness and the richness of the presence of God giving His people abundance wherever they are.

And the wilderness, they have bread, they come into the land. Even the poor are provided for verse 10. Of course, will get to this more in a moment in the last part of the passage, but his word as the most blessed provision, not only his word which he gives it Sinai, Not only his word which he gives by way of Moses and Aaron But even his word, which he gave the people to repeat to one another His words.

So for instance, in the song of Moses that he composed for them by the spirit, His word in the blessings and curses on Mount Ebal and Mount Garrett team his word which was used in the public worship so that the great multitude of the people as they pray prayers and things songs that God has given by Moses.

And we know of Psalms, for instance, that in their superscript, just identify themselves as having been written by Moses. And we know the congregation then would be singing the Word of God. And so you'd have multitudes and before they enter the land and the whole millions of people saying the word of God to another singing, the word of God to one another and the presence of God and His words spoken and sung.

If they had eyes to see it, if they had faith to see it, how great would be their blessedness at those times? Don't we when we come into the assembly and it's just a hundred or, you know, probably the most I think we've had 120 and we're well more than that during covet doesn't matter.

But we're it's but compares into the millions of Israel, a small group. But we're singing the word of God together and speaking the Word of God together and hearing the Word of God together and the Blessedness of being in the very presence of God himself, when the protection and the provision isn't just seen.

In terms of red but the very works. I've got. Well, you have the conquest and versus 12 through 14 and white as snow in Zalman, whether that's talking about the, the top of the mountain, or the flocks of sheep running around scattering, which looked like moving snow on the mountain.

But The kings of the earth are scattered By comparison to the doves of his people who are crowned and appointed with silver and gold. The Lord being the one. That's better to be a dove in Israel than a king anywhere else. That's that's the point of verses 13 and 14.

And so, what is the great mountain? What is the place of greatest power and greatest prosperity? And the geography of the promised land, it would have been this area on this side of the Jordan up in northern Gilead where there were mountains, that could look down upon Israel and there were fertile valleys in those mountains and they were always very easy to defend and also very prosperous to live in the the mountains of Bashan, the upper class women in the northern kingdom at one point are described as being super self-indulgent in the Prophet calls them, the cows of Bashan.

Well, the actual livestock cows of mission were very well fed. They had the fertile valleys and There were many of them etc. But of course it wasn't a compliment to call them the cows of Bashan in there in their ungodliness. And they're despite their earthly power and earthly prosperity because that's not the ultimate power, the ultimate prosperity.

What is the ultimate power? And the ultimate prosperity is having God himself, as your power, and God himself as your prosperity. And so it describes God here, having one has victory. The chariots of God are 20,000. Even thousands of thousands of millions. The Lord is among them. As in Sinai and the holy place, but Sinai was just a picture of something.

It was a four-runner of something. Greater and describes God returning from his victory. In verse 18, you have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive, You have received gifts among men. Even from the rebellious that Yahweh God might dwell there. And so the mountains of Bashan suddenly are these tiny little things by comparison.

They're the they're not a place of power but by comparison the mountain of God is infinitely, more path. Powerful. They're not a place to prosperity by comparison. The mountain of God is infinitely more prosperous. It is heaven itself and then Ephesians 4 comes along and it quotes Psalm 68 verse 18.

And it says this Psalm was most fulfilled when Jesus Christ having risen from the dead ascended into heaven and took his seat. And he gives his power and his prosperity by means of the gifts that he gives among men. And what are those gifts? Let's basically the word that you hear in in verse 11 Apostles prophets evangelists Pastor teachers who shepherd the people in the Word of Gods that they're not tossed to and fro theologically.

But that every part, every member of the body of the Lord, Jesus Christ is theologically stabilized and strengthened so that we can speak the truth to one another in love. And in that way, the Lord Jesus, the returned and victorious and ascended and enthroned, King builds, his people up into himself, so that we have our dwelling with him forever.

And so, yes, it is God in whom. There's all power and prosperity, but the way in which he has, most made himself known to us. There's all of our power. And all of our blessedness is in Jesus Christ, our resurrected and enthroned Savior. And the church may not be thought of as much by the world.

Those who sit on the mountains of Bashan, as it were, who have the earthly power, and the earthly prosperity, and despise the church, they looked down on it as something. Small and ridiculous and weak. They don't realize that in the resurrected and enthroned Christ. Working out his victory, in the church is an infinitely greater power, and blessedness than they have more than the they can imagine.

Because Christ is the great king above all gods and the great God above all kings, is the king of kings, and the Lord of lords and he dwells in his church better to be gathered in the chapel at the bottom of that hill than to sit and the in the throne to sit in the big chair and the Oval Office or on the throne and buckingham Palace, I don't know if they had a throne anymore but it's better to be gathered with the hiking and to be His people and his court to dwell with him and among him, he dwells.

It's bright. Our Father in heaven and our Lord. Jesus Christ, our King and Holy Spirit are God and help her how we thank you for your word. And for the reminder that worshiping you and rejoicing at your presence is training to know yourself as true power and to know yourself as true prosperity and true blessedness.

So that we will not be confused or ashamed or dismayed or anxious or despairing when we come into circumstances or face enmity and hostility in this world, but that we may cry out with this psalm that you would arise and that the wicked would be scattered and melt like wax and your presence.

And that we would rejoice succeedingly. And so we pray for the ministry of your spirit to us that you would make us to know more and more throughout this life. Your presence with us that you would stir up in our hearts, that fruit of your spirit, which is joy and exceeding rejoicing.

And especially in those times when you gather us to yourself in worship as we prepare for that, perfect and full, and final. And eternal experience of your presence when we rest from our works in this world. So help us. Father, we pray by your spirit. Who would apply to us your son and his name.

We ask it. Amen.