

Psalms Chapter 14 the Hallel -- Psalm 118

by A.B. Simpson

Psalm 118 is a Messianic Psalm that contains a summary of the whole work of redemption and the conflict and victory of Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 118:1

Topics: "Praise and Worship", "The Victory of Christ"

Description

A.B. Simpson explores the profound significance of Psalm 118, highlighting its importance to Martin Luther, who found solace and strength in its verses during times of distress. The sermon emphasizes the themes of praise, faith, conflict, and victory, illustrating how the psalm encapsulates the redemptive work of Christ and the believer's journey through trials. Simpson draws attention to the call for all to praise the Lord for His enduring mercy and goodness, the depiction of spiritual conflict, and the ultimate victory found in Christ's resurrection. He concludes with a vision of the Church's hope in the coming of the Lord and the necessity of a consecrated life in communion with God. The message encourages believers to enter into the fullness of salvation and to live a life of praise and service.

Transcript

This was Luther's favorite Psalm. He says respecting it: "This is my Psalm which I love. Although the whole of the Psalms and the Scripture, which is my only consolation in life, are also dear to me, I have chosen this Psalm particularly to be called and to be mine; for it has often deserved my love, and helped me out of many deep distresses, when neither emperors, nor kings, nor the wise and prudent, nor the saints could have helped me." Indeed, no better panorama of the great Reformer's conflicts and victories can be found than these graphic verses. They "compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; . . . for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

But the Psalm has higher claims than those that associate it with the great Reformer.

It was the last Psalm of the Hebrew Hallel, the closing refrain of that great sacred oratorio which the Hebrews chanted at their great festivals, and it is most probable that it was the very hymn which Jesus sang as He went from the upper chamber to the Mount of Olives. It contains a summary of the whole work of redemption and the conflict and victory of Christ. Its Messianic character is established by the frequent references to it in the New Testament by Christ Himself and His apostles, and it is indeed a picture of His

own inner life in the sufferings and conflicts of Calvary. Let us briefly glance at some of these expressions.

I. A PRELUDE OF PRAISE

The whole house of Israel is summoned to praise the Lord; then the house of Aaron; then the whole company of them that fear the Lord. They are called to praise Him because He is good, and because He is merciful, and His mercy endures forever. His goodness is the outflow of His love, and His mercy is the special direction of that love to the unworthy and sinful. But for His mercy His goodness never could reach us, an unworthy and fallen race. But His mercy endures forever, and even sinful men may rejoice in its fullness and claim its richest blessings.

II. A CONFESSION OF FAITH

It is the utterance of a trust that looks from man to God, from the highest princes and the mightiest human names to the Almighty Himself. God usually calls His people to the spirit of praise and of faith first, and then He lets the pressure of conflict fall upon us to prove the sincerity of our confession and the reality of our trust. And so, after these bold claims of faith and notes of praise, we have

III. THE PICTURE OF CONFLICT

It is a desperate conflict. It is the conflict of a soul with innumerable spiritual forces and malignant foes that seem like clouds of bees filling the air, and fiery thorns scorching him with their consuming breath. It is the conflict of Christ in the dark hour of His sorrow and suffering. It is the conflict of the great suffering hearts of brave, true men in all ages, during which the soldiers of faith have followed the great Captain of their salvation, and, like Him, been made perfect through suffering.

IV. THE SHOUT OF VICTORY

It is also the shout of victory. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. . . . I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD." It is the triumph of Jesus over death and the grave. It is the victorious shout of His Church militant as she follows in His triumph.

V. THE OPEN GATES

Next, we have the open gates of righteousness and salvation. "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD into which the righteous shall enter." This is a picture of an opened salvation through the Savior's cross. This is the shout of accomplished redemption and full salvation. This is the cry of Stephen amid the pains of martyrdom: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This is the far-off echo of the sacred litany: "When You by the sharpness of death had borne our sins, You opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

VI. THE RESURRECTION DAY

The glorious resurrection day, and the day of grace. "This is the day which the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." This may well describe any day of glorious victory, but it especially refers to the resurrection day; to the day when Jesus burst the fetters of the tomb, and made for us the Lord's Day forever the day of days, because it commemorates the greatest of all the facts of Christianity, the resurrection of the Lord. This is the cornerstone of our precious hopes. This is the foundation of the

Church. This is the greatest principle of Christianity. The Lord is risen, and we are risen with Him.

VII. THE PENITENT'S PRAYER

"Save now, I beseech You, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech You, send now prosperity." Literally this means Hosanna! This was the cry which became so familiar in the streets of Jerusalem, that the very children took it up and rang it out on the air as their little prayer to Jesus, in defiance of the hate of scribes and Pharisees.

In its place in the Psalm it describes the salvation of the Gospel as it follows in its natural order the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Oh, how often has this cry gone up during the Christian ages, and how often has it been answered by the love and mercy of God until Hosanna has been changed to Hallelujah!

VIII. THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

"The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." This is a proverbial expression, but Christ Himself has applied it to His own rejection by man and His election by God as the cornerstone of the Church.

It is just as true of Christ's people. "God has chosen the weak things of the world . . . and things which are despised." The most beautiful window in Europe was made by a little apprentice boy with the thrown-away fragments of his master's workshop. One day that master saw the wonderful mosaic of light and color which the little hands had wrought together; and when he learned who had made it, he took him in his arms and said, "You have surpassed your master and made for yourself an imperishable monument of genius out of worthless fragments." So God is taking the world's rejected ones, and, by and by, the universe will gaze upon the New Jerusalem with rapturous wonder as it shall shine above the glory of the sapphire and the ruby, the tints of the rainbow, and the light of a thousand suns.

IX. THE COMING OF THE LORD

The climax of all will be the coming of the Lord. "Blessed be he that comes in the name of the LORD." Our Savior has given us the true application of this verse in His own solemn parting words to Jerusalem, after His sorrowful appeal to them for whom He so often had longed and labored. He said as He left the temple: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, You shall not see me henceforth, until you shall say, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

We know when that day shall be, the day of His personal coming, and the return of His ancient people to their true Messiah. And so the verse is a promise of His advent. This is our blessed hope. This is the pole star of redemption. This is the future of Christian hope and aspiration. And this is the imminent, overshadowing reality for which hushed hearts are waiting today in all the Church of God.

X. THE ABIDING PLACE AND CONSECRATED SERVICE

The Psalm does not close without a picture of the deeper inner life of the saint. "We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which has shown us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Surely, this is the picture of consecration and union with God. This is the life into which redemption leads us. The language here is borrowed from the tabernacle. The house of the Lord is the inner abiding place. The light which God has shown us is the Shekinah glory that shines above the mercy seat. The sacrifice is that living consecration which we make as we enter in, and which, as we

enter more closely in, we make more perfectly. Have we come into this sacred place? Do we know this abiding life? Are we dwelling under the shining of the Shekinah? Are we bound to the horns of the altar by the cords of love and self-surrender? Can we sing

"I have come with my guilt to the altar of God;

In the laver of cleansing I'm washed from my sin,

And now, to the innermost presence of God,

To the holy of holies I am entering in.

"In my blood-sprinkled robes I can stand without dread

Where the lamps of the Lord o'er the cherubim shine.

I am feasting my soul on the heavenly bread;

I am breathing the odors of incense divine.

"I have passed through the veil to that sacred abode

Where His glory the Savior reveals to His own,

And now, in the innermost presence of God,

I am dwelling forever with Jesus alone."

Oh, it is not until we enter in that we know the fullness and blessedness of salvation. Looking at yonder tabernacle from the outside, it appeared a very common thing -- an old tent covered with badger skins. But looking at it from within, it was resplendent with the dazzling glory of light and gold and gems of rarest beauty.

You cannot know Christ until you come into the bosom of His love. You cannot truly serve Him or bless others until you reach the center and can say, "We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD." Then no sacrifice seems hard. Then you can say, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Then the life becomes a chorus of joy and praise, a glad, eternal Hallel, echoing evermore: "You are my God, and I will praise You: You are my God, I will exalt You. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endures forever."

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