

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School
Placerita Baptist Church
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by
William D. Barrick, Th.D.
Professor of OT, The Master's Seminary



Psalm 118 — *Hosanna!*

1.0 Introducing Psalm 118

- Psalm 118 is the sixth and final psalm of the Egyptian Hallel sung before and after the Passover meal in the Jewish community.
 - ✓ Jesus and His disciples sang this psalm following the Last Supper prior to going out to the Garden of Gethsemane. Read its words carefully in light of what this psalm signified to Jesus Himself at that time.
- New Testament writers cite Psalm 118 a number of times:

Psalm 118	New Testament
v. 6	Hebrews 13:6
vv. 22-23	Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11
v. 22	Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7 cp. Ephesians 2:20
vv. 25-26	Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; John 12:13
v. 26	Matthew 23:39; Luke 13:35; 19:38

- A number of Huguenot martyrs (including the last one in 1762) sang portions of this psalm as they were led to the scaffold where they were executed.
- Psalm 118 was Luther's favorite psalm.

2.0 Reading Psalm 118 (NAU)

**118:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.**

118:2 Oh let Israel say,
“His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

118:3 Oh let the house of Aaron say,
“His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

118:4 Oh let those who fear the LORD say,
“His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

- A 118:5** From *my* distress
B I called upon the LORD;
B' The LORD answered me
A' *and set me* in a large place.
- 118:6** The LORD is for me; I will not fear;
What can man do to me?
- 118:7** The LORD is for me among those who help me;
Therefore I will look *with satisfaction* on those who hate me.
- 118:8** It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in man.
- 118:9** It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in princes.
- 118:10** All nations surrounded me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
- 118:11** They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
- 118:12** They surrounded me like bees;
They were extinguished as a fire of thorns;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.
- 118:13** You pushed me violently so that I was falling,
But the LORD helped me.
- 118:14** The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.
- 118:15** The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
- 118:16** The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.
- 118:17** I will not die, but live,
And tell of the works of the LORD.
- 118:18** The LORD has disciplined me severely,
But He has not given me over to death.
- 118:19** Open to me the gates of righteousness;
I shall enter through them,
I shall give thanks to the LORD.
- 118:20** This is the gate of the LORD;
The righteous will enter through it.
- 118:21** I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me,
And You have become my salvation.
- 118:22** The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief corner *stone*.
- 118:23** This is the LORD'S doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.
- 118:24** This is the day which the LORD has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.



- 118:25** O LORD, do save, we beseech You;
O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!
- 118:26** Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD;
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.
- 118:27** The LORD is God, and He has given us light;
Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.
- 118:28** You are my God, and I give thanks to You;
You are my God, I extol You.
- 118:29** **Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.**



3.0 Understanding Psalm 118

3.1 Outline

- I. The Request to Give Thanks to the LORD (vv. 1–4)
- II. The Reason for Giving Thanks to the LORD (vv. 5–18)
- III. The Realization of Giving Thanks to the LORD (vv. 19–28)
- IV. The Response to Giving Thanks to the LORD (v. 29)

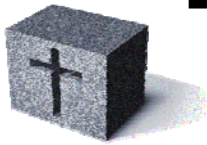
3.2 Notes

- **vv. 1–4, 29** “His lovingkindness is everlasting”
 - “Give thanks to the LORD” (vv. 1, 29) is the equivalent of “Praise the LORD,” which marks the preceding psalms of the Egyptian Hallel.
 - An inclusio marks off the entire poem with verses 1 and 29, joined with a fourfold repetition with which the psalm begins (vv. 1-4).
 - ✓ This is the focus with which the Egyptian Hallel concludes: the everlasting, steadfast, loyal covenant love of Yahweh.
 - ✓ Psalms 106, 107, 117, and 136 highlight the same concept.
 - See Jeremiah 33:10-11 (worshippers reciting Psalm 118:1).
 - ✓ Compare Ezra 3:10-11. Jews sing this psalm when observing Hanukkah, which celebrates the rededication of the Temple in the second century B.C. after its defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes.
 - A similar grouping of “Israel,” “the house of Aaron,” and “those who fear the LORD” occurs in Psalms 115:9-11 and 135:19-20.
 - ✓ The merism expresses totality — all of God’s people are included.
- **v. 5** “distress . . . a large place”
 - Literally, “from narrowness [constriction] . . . a broad [roomy] place.”
 - ✓ Deliverance from the stress and pressures of many enemies (vv. 10-12) is a relief.



- ✓ We might depict that relief as similar to what a spelunker experiences when he squeezes through a narrow tubular exit from a cave and then steps out into a broad plain.
- ✓ Later in the psalm the psalmist expresses this contrast as “I will not die, but live” (v. 17). It was a matter of life and death.
 - The psalmist employs a chiasm to focus on this contrast between the constricted space of stress and the open space of relief and freedom.
- **vv. 6–7** “the LORD is for me”
 - The repetition is a gentle reminder of the way the poem begins. The LORD’s loyal love is clear testimony that He is on the psalmist’s side.
 - Hebrews 13:6 cites this text, utilizing the Septuagint’s “my Helper” in place of “for me.”
 - See Psalm 56:4 and 11 and Romans 8:31-39.
- **vv. 8–9** “It is better to . . . than to . . .”
 - A double comparative declaration emphasizes the contrast between trusting God and trusting man.
 - In our English Bibles, these two verses are the middle verses with 15,586 verses before verse 8 and 15,586 verses after verse 9.
- **vv. 10–12** “surrounded me”
 - A fourfold repetition aids in depicting the dire straits into which the psalmist had found himself.
 - “In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off” occurs three times, placing emphasis on the fact that the psalmist can respond to his enemies with the LORD acting on his behalf.
 - ✓ “Cut them off” is literally “circumcise them.” This might be a pun playing on the concept of Gentile (uncircumcised) enemies.
- **v. 13** “You pushed me violently”
 - “You” is best taken as the psalmist directly addressing his enemies.
- **v. 14** “strength . . . song . . . salvation”
 - It is the Lord who provides the psalmist with the strength he needs in distressful circumstances.
 - In addition to strength, the Lord’s help enables the psalmist to sing for joy. Some of that joyful singing is a song of victory (see v. 15).
 - Ultimately, it is the Lord Himself Who delivers the psalmist from his distress — He saves.
 - Compare Exodus 15:2, one of several echoes of the “Song of the Sea” that Moses and Miriam sang after the Red Sea crossing.
- **vv. 15–16** “The right hand of the LORD”
 - Yet another triplet enables the hearer and reader of the psalm to understand that the psalmist’s deliverance was due to the Lord’s own works (cp. v. 17).
 - Compare Exodus 15:6.

- **v. 17** “I will not die, but live”
 - “God was using this trial for his own good to severely discipline, develop, and deepen him.” — Steven J. Lawson, *Psalms 76–150*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2006), 229.
 - Hymn writer William Cowper (“There Is a Fountain” and “O for a Closer Walk with God”) prized this verse very highly. Cowper suffered lifelong from fits of depression.
 - Martin Luther had this verse inscribed on the wall of his study.
 - John Wycliffe cited this verse from his sick bed, when his enemies surrounded him and urged him to confess his sin before dying.
 - Donald Grey Barnhouse served as a fighter pilot in World War I. When asked about whether he was afraid to fly in the open biplanes, he responded with this verse, which he rephrased as follows: “Ours is not to fly and die, Ours to live and testify.” — James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 3:967.
- **vv. 19–20** “gates of righteousness . . . gate of the LORD”
 - Righteousness characterizes the gates of the Temple (or Tabernacle?), because only the righteous were to enter those precincts (cf. Ps 15).
- **v. 22** “the chief corner *stone*”
 - In the New Testament, this text is cited in Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; and 1 Peter 2:7.
 - The metaphor presents the element of surprise when that which has been rejected becomes the foundational element of the building.
 - ✓ The reference could be to a cornerstone connecting and upholding two walls or to a keystone connecting an arch.
- **vv. 25-26** “do save . . . Blessed is the one who comes”
 - “Do save” in Hebrew is *Hosanna*. This is the phraseology employed by those who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9-10; John 12:13).
- **v. 27** “He has given us light”
 - This is an allusion to Numbers 6:25 where the same root word occurs in “shine.”
- **v. 27** “Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar”
 - Some translations employ “branches” (RSV, NRSV, NIV, JPS, NJB) for “cords” here.
 - ✓ In Jewish tradition on the Feast of Tabernacles the worshippers formed a procession to adorn the altar with branches of myrtle, willow, and palm together with citrus fruits (see Lev 23:40).



- The better view, however, is that the animals were to be bound with cords and brought to the altar.

- v. 28 “You are my God . . . I extol You”: cf. Exodus 15:2

4.0 Singing Psalm 118

O Praise the Lord, for He is Good

(Tune: “I Sing the Mighty Power of God” or “There Is a Fountain”
or “My Faith Has Found a Resting Place”)



1 O praise the Lord, for He is good,
Let all in Heav'n above
And all His saints on earth proclaim
His everlasting love.
In my distress I called on God;
In grace He answered me,
Removed my bonds, enlarged my place,
From trouble set me free.

2 The Lord with me, I will not fear
Though human might oppose;
The Lord my Helper, I shall be
Triumphant o'er my foes.
No trust in men, or kings of men,
Can confidence afford,
But they are strong, and sure their trust,
Whose hope is in the Lord.

3 Though nations compass me about,
Like swarming hosts of sin,
Yet in the Name of God the Lord
I shall the victory win.
The Lord has helped and kept me safe
When foes were fierce and strong;
The Lord my Savior is become,
He is my strength and song.

4 Salvation's joyful song is heard
Where'er the righteous dwell;
For them God's hand is strong to save
And doeth all things well.
I shall not die, but live to tell
The wonders of the Lord;
He has not giv'n my soul to death,
But chastened and restored.

— Author unknown

He Has Made Me Glad

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart,
I will enter His courts with praise!
I will say this is the day that the Lord has made,
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

He has made me glad! He has made me glad!
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
He has made me glad, He has made me glad.
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

Written by: Leona Von Brethorst
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Give Thanks

Give thanks with a grateful heart;
Give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His
Son. (repeat)

And now let the weak say, “I am strong.”
Let the poor say, “I am rich,
Because of what the Lord has done for us.”
(repeat)
Give thanks.

Written by: Henry Smith
© 1978 Integrity Music; CCLI# 20285

5.0 Praying Psalm 118

- Your steadfast love is everlasting, Lord. [vv. 1-4, 29]
- O God, help me to trust You more. [vv. 6-9]
- Father, help me tell of Your works as long as I live. [v. 17]
- You are my God — I give all praise and thanks to You. [v. 28]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 118

- Our salvation is God's work alone.
- “Thanksgiving is to be thanks-living.” — Steven J. Lawson, *Psalms 76–150*, 231.