

“Give Thanks to the Lord – Part 1”  
Psalm 118  
(Preached at Trinity, September 30, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Psalm 118** is the last of the six psalms that make up the Egyptian Hallel, the series of psalms sung annually at the Passover celebrating God’s abiding presence when His people called upon Him for deliverance. This is probably the song our Lord and the disciples sang at the close of the Last Supper  
**Matthew 26:30 KJV** - "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."
2. **Psalm 118** is a rare jewel among the psalms. It was Luther’s favorite psalm:  
*“This is my Psalm, my chosen Psalm. I love them all; I love all holy Scripture, which is my consolation and my life. But this Psalm is nearest my heart, and I have a peculiar right to call it mine. It has saved me from many a pressing danger, from which nor emperor, nor kings, nor sages, nor saints, could have saved me. It is my friend; dearer to me than all the honours and power of the earth”*
3. It is the most quoted psalm in the NT. It is the only psalm quoted by all four of the Gospels. It is wonderful Hebrew poetry rich in parallelism which would have made it glorious to sing.  
By way of aside, **Verse 8** is the middle verse of the Bible.
4. The author could likely be David as he describes his glorious victories over his enemies.  
**Psalm 118** is classified as a thanksgiving psalm; the tone of thanksgiving overshadows the entire psalm. It opens and closes with, "O give thanks unto the LORD"  
More than anything else **Psalm 118** is a Messianic psalm foreshadowing the ultimate victor, the ultimate conquering King, the King Jesus Christ.  
Among the wonderful verses quoted in the NT:
  - The shout of the people as Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem: **Psalm 118:26 KJV** - "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD"
  - When Peter stood before the Sanhedrin charging them with the murder of Jesus he quoted this psalm: **Psalm 118:22 KJV** - "The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner."
  - Jesus also quoted **Verse 22** in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants and Peter quoted it in **1 Peter 2**.
5. There is no consensus among expositors as to the division of the psalm. I’ll divide it into five parts:
  - The psalmist describes the endless love of God – **Verses 1-4**
  - The psalmist describes his unwavering confidence in God – **Verses 5-9**
  - The psalmist describes being surrounded by fierce enemies but of God’s deliverance – **vs 10-18**
  - The psalmist describes his entrance into the gates as victor – **Verses 19-27**
  - The psalmist describes his final Doxology of praise – **Verses 28-29**

6. My purpose in preaching this psalm will be that our hearts will be consumed once again with gratitude as we consider the wondrous work of Christ in our own salvation. The stone which the builders rejected is OUR Head.  
**Psalm 118:23 KJV** - "This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes."
  7. I don't suppose we'll be able to cover it in a single sermon. May God bless us as we savor it.
- I. The psalmist describes the endless love of God – **Verses 1-4**
- A. The psalm opens with a call to thanksgiving
    1. **Verse 1** echoes throughout Scripture  
**Psalm 107:1 KJV** - "O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever."  
It is found in 1 Chronicles 15; 2 Chron. 5; 2 Chron. 7; Psalms 106, 107, 118, 136
    2. Thanksgiving flows forth abundantly from the redeemed. We are overwhelmed by the goodness of God, by His mercy and grace.
    3. The problem of lost humanity is they fail to recognize the goodness of God. They are not thankful for His rich blessings.  
**Romans 1:21 KJV** - "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
    4. They think they deserve all of the good things they enjoy, as if it is their right. And they complain loudly when good things do not come.
    5. A person only comes to Christ when he sees himself as unworthy of God's blessings. He will only submit to God when he sees Him as worthy of all glory and worthy of praise and service.
    6. Remember, the Hebrew word for "thanks" and "praise" is the same- תַּדַּוּ  
**Isaiah 25:1 KJV** - "O LORD, thou *art* my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful *things*; *thy* counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth."
  - B. The psalmist reminds us of two attributes of God that causes us to explode with praise and thanksgiving – His goodness & love
    1. We also saw this in **Psalm 100**  
**Psalm 100:4-5 KJV** - "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name. <sup>5</sup> For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting"
    2. The goodness of God is abundant upon the earth. To meditate upon His goodness fills our heart with thanksgiving which in turn fills us with praise and worship.
      - a. God works infinite goodness in each of our lives—but we don't praise Him just because of the goodness He works *in us*. We praise Him because He is good. God is worthy of praise because of His infinite worth.
      - b. Spurgeon: This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not. Those who only praise God because he *does* them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to him because he *is* good.

- c. God alone is good. Any goodness you see in man is a reflection of God's goodness in them—it is His grace alone. It is because of God's goodness that man isn't as evil as he could be.
  - d. Jesus made this clear to the Rich Young Ruler  
**Matthew 19:17 KJV** - "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God*"  
 "Why do you call me good and not call me God?"
3. And then we consider his particular care of His elect. His **אֱהָבָה** love is everlasting—enduring and unending.
- a. Love is one of the attributes of God  
**1 John 4:8** – “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”  
**1 John 4:16** – “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”
  - b. God is the very embodiment of love. God's love is boundless love  
**Ephesians 3:17-19 KJV** - "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,  
<sup>18</sup> May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; <sup>19</sup> And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
  - c. While God demonstrates his love upon all creation in general he reserves a particular love for His own. It is as a fatherly love to His children. It is for us that He sent forth Christ  
**1 John 4:9-10** – “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”
- C. This exhibition of praise and thanksgiving is universal – We saw this pattern in **Psalms 115**. It is almost as if the Psalmist is saying, “Everybody now . . .”
- 1. **Verse 2** - "Let Israel now say"  
 This refers to the lay people
  - 2. **Verse 3** – "Let the house of Aaron now say"  
 This refers to the priests
  - 3. **Verse 4** – "Let them now that fear the LORD say"  
 This refers to God-fearers in general – Israelite converts
  - 4. Let everyone praise the Lord.  
**Psalms 150:6 KJV** - "Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD."
  - 5. If our hearts are not filled with praise and thanksgiving we must fall on our faces in repentance. We must plead for God to enliven our hearts.

II. The psalmist describes his unwavering confidence in God – **Verses 5-9**

A. **Verse 5** is a simple statement, “I prayed, God heard.”

" I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me"

1. There is no sweeter statement regarding prayer. We pray, God hears.
2. This was the great statement of confidence in **Psalm 116**  
**Psalm 116:2 KJV** - " Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live."
3. We don't pray enough. We don't pray with confidence and expectation. We don't pray magnifying the name of God.  
**Psalm 118:28 KJV** - " Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee: *thou art* my God, I will exalt thee."  
**A** - Adoration  
**C** - Confession  
**T** - Thanksgiving  
**S** – Supplication/petition

B. The fruit of his prayer

1. Deliverance – **Verse 5**  
"set me in a large place" – a single Hebrew word referring to a wide expanse – NIV – “Spacious place”
  - a. Our distresses can seem like a giant vise clamping down, an enclosed box smothering us. Adversity is sometimes like that. It comes from all sides at once with no place to escape.
  - b. God sets us free. We breathe freely. We go from bondage to freedom. We go from anxiety to peace.
2. Confidence instead of fear – **Verse 6**  
"The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?"
  - a. David also spoke this declaration of confidence in **Psalm 56**  
**Psalm 56:11 KJV** - "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me."
  - b. This is the declaration of all who trust in God  
**Hebrews 13:6 KJV** - "So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."  
**Romans 8:31 KJV** - "What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?"
  - c. But how few actually believe it? How many pray as though they actually believe it?  
Calvin: “All make this acknowledgment, and yet there is scarcely one among a hundred who is fully persuaded that God alone can afford him sufficient help.
3. See also **Verses 8-9** – we are able to see the weakness of earthly help
  - a. This doesn't mean we shun all earthly help. God often raises up others to defend us so that we do not fight alone.  
**Psalm 118:7 KJV** - "The LORD taketh my part with them that help me"  
(1) This is one of the great comforts of the church. We love one another. We pray for one another. We defend one another.  
(2) Did not Paul's friends lower him down the wall in a basket?

- b. But our confidence isn't ultimately in man or upon any earthly means. How guilty we are of trusting in the means rather than upon God?  
 God continually shows Himself mighty towards those who trust Him  
**2 Chronicles 16:9 KJV** - "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him."  
**Joshua 1:9 KJV** - " Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest."
- c. If God is for us, if God is fighting on our behalf where else would we turn?  
**2 Chronicles 20:15 KJV** - " Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's."
- d. May we sing this great praise towards God continually  
 Hallelujah, praise Jehovah,  
 O my soul, Jehovah praise;  
 I will sing the glorious praises  
 Of my God through all my days.  
 Put no confidence in princes,  
 Nor for help on man depend;  
 He shall die, to dust returning,  
 And his purposes shall end.

Man is foolish – God is most wise

Man is sinful – God is perfect in every way

Man is weak – God has infinite power

Man is mortal – God is everlasting to everlasting

Man is unfaithful – God is always faithful and steadfast

Man is selfish – God loves His own and works on their behalf

Whom do you trust?