

We are not certain what prompted the writing of this Psalm, but what we may observe that it certainly has application to Israel nationally and people individually. We may notice from the use of the personal pronouns “I” “me” and “my” that this is a personal Psalm.

Martin Luther, the famed Reformer, took it personally. In fact, he wrote on his study wall: “The 118th Psalm is my Psalm, which I love. Without it, neither emperor nor king, though wise and prudent, nor saints, could have helped me.”

Psalm 118 is a Psalm of praise and hope. It is a Psalm that can bring joy when surrounded by dark times and deep trouble. It is a Psalm of thanksgiving for all of the many blessings God pours out on His people. The point of the Psalm is this:

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE TO GIVE THANKS AND PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS AND MERCY FOR WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE CALL ON HIM IN TIMES OF TROUBLE AND DESPAIR, HE WILL DELIVER THEM.

In **verse 1**, there are two words we want to point out. The first is “good” (tov) which means to be good in the sense of always being great and excellent at the best level (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 319-320).

The second word “lovingkindness” (hesed) is one that means God is eager to demonstrate His grace and mercy to those who are pitiable and miserable (*Ibid.*, pp. 293-294). This word shows up many times in this Psalm (**v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 29**).

Now the point of this is that when God’s people are hurting and in trouble, God eagerly delights in doing what is the best thing for Him to do in being gracious and good to His people. God stands ready to help those who worship Him and cry out to Him.

Now we will analyze the Psalm in two main sections:

SECTION #1 – The challenge to give thanks to God. **118:1-4**

This is, as one writer said, a “full blown summons” for all kinds of people to praise God and thank God, no matter what the outward circumstances or situations. **God is ALWAYS gracious and good to His people.**

In these verses there are three groups of people who are challenged to give thanks to God because He is a God who always does good at the best level for His people, and for the fact that He is a God whose mercy is everlasting.

Group #1 - The nation Israel is to give thanks to God for His everlasting mercy. **118:2**

If any nation should be able to thank God for His everlasting mercy, it is Israel. Her very existence is due to the grace and goodness of God.

Group #2 - The Aaronic priests are to give thanks to God for His everlasting mercy. **118:3**

If any group of religious leaders should be able to thank God for His everlasting mercy, it is His priests.

Group #3 - Those who fear God are to give thanks to God for His everlasting mercy. **118:4**

This would refer to those who are not part of Israel, who truly believe in God and fear God. They too can praise God and give thanks to God because He is always gracious and always good.

Now we would classify all three groups as believers: The people of Israel, the priests of Israel, and all who fear the LORD would fall into this category.

There is no hint here that the non-believer is in any way connected to this. The truth is God's mercy is not everlasting to the non-believer and He is not about doing all good things for the non-believer. God delights in doing gracious and good things for His family.

Those who know the Lord can always give thanks to God for His everlasting mercy and grace.

SECTION #2 – The practical reasons why believers can give thanks to God. **118:5-21**

Psalms is a book that clearly emphasizes the importance of crying out to God in times of trouble. There are several reasons why we may always give thanks to God:

Reason #1 - Because when we call to God in distressful situations, He will answer. **118:5**

Nothing will make a believer more distressed than his own sin and every sorrowful, sin-stricken individual needs to take a serious look at this verse. If one will cry out to God in his distressful state, God will answer and will lift that one up to a larger state. That one will end up greater than before.

Reason #2 - Because God is for us and we need not fear any man. **118:6**

We not only have Divine protection, we have Divine favor. The Apostle Paul picked up on this very verse in the context of N.T. Grace Age salvation (Romans 8:31).

Reason #3 - Because God helps His people by rising up others to help His people. **118:7a**

God will sovereignly use different people to help His people and when they do, He will bless them. This is true nationally pertaining to Israel and this is true individually pertaining to us.

Reason #4 - Because God will enable His people to be satisfied in what they see happen to those who hate them. **118:7b**

When we cry out to God concerning our enemies, we can leave them to God because God has ways of taking care of them in ways totally satisfying to us.

Reason #5 - Because God is our refuge. **118:8-9**

Do not miss this key point. God is our refuge. He is a better refuge than any man (**118:8**). He is a better refuge than any political leader (**118:9**). It is far better to trust in God than in any human political leader in this world. It is far better to trust in God than in any earthly political alliance. God's people can know that God is our refuge.

Reason #6 - Because God will cut off all surrounding enemies. **118:10-12**

The image presented in these verses is one of being surrounded by enemies like bees surround a hive. When the numbers of enemies are against you and overwhelming, God is able to cut them off and eliminate them. Notice the end of **verse 12**, God does this because of His name. In other words, the name of the Lord is on the line with His people. They are His property and God can be trusted to protect His property.

Reason #7 - Because God helps us when we are falling. **118:13**

Sometimes we get pushed into things. Sometimes we fall. Enemies are out to trip us up and cause us to fall. God is there to help us in those very moments.

Reason #8 - Because God is our strength. **118:14a**

Our strength is never in ourselves, it is in the Lord. We are not strong; He is.

Reason #9 - Because God is our song. **118:14b**

God is the One who can put happiness and joy back into the life even when that life has suffered a major setback.

Reason #10 - Because God is our salvation. **118:14c**

Do you see this? God is our salvation. We cannot save ourselves. No other person or relationship can save us. God is our salvation.

Reason #11 - Because God brings joy and blessing back to our life and home. **118:15-16**

The right hand of God is the hand of His favor and blessing. God valiantly delivers His people and brings joy back into the life and home. He valiantly delivers His righteous people. He exalts those who have been humbled.

Reason #12 - Because God grants us life and not death. **118:17-18**

These verses are important to Israel nationally and to us individually. This is a national statement that Israel will never be exterminated. Israel will always live. Israel will always be a witness to the world that she is the work of God. She may be disciplined and chastised, but she will not be exterminated. Think of the number of political powers who literally would love to exterminate Israel; but none of them have been able to do it.

We too may make a great application of this. God may discipline us, but He still lets us live. Why? Because God will not let His nation be destroyed.

There is an amazing story about John Wycliffe. In the 1300's he spoke out against the Pope and against the Roman Catholic Church. When he was about 60-years-old, he got very sick because of various attacks and some representatives of the Roman church went to his bedside with the idea that they would hear his repentant confession. They asked Wycliffe to confess because of all of the injuries he had caused them with his verbal attacks. Wycliffe had his servant raise him up and he said, "I shall not die but live and I will declare how evil you are." The Roman monks ran from his room and Wycliffe got better.

One thing we do see from **verse 17** is that it is our job to "tell of the works of the Lord," specifically in how He has delivered us from sin and death and given us life

Reason #13 - Because God will open the gates of righteousness for His people. **118:19-21**

One commentator observed, take these words literally. There will literally come a time when God will open the gates for His people and let His people enter into His righteous kingdom forever. Notice that the gates are gates of righteousness. One needs perfect righteousness to go through this gate. Since we do not have perfect righteousness, we need the righteousness of one who has it. That one is Jesus Christ.

The invitation to enter the gate is open now. The gate of grace salvation is open right now. God has opened this gate through His Son's death, but there will come a day when this gate will be closed. But for those who have believed on Jesus Christ, the gates will open.

Reason #14 - Because God has given us a chief cornerstone in order to save us. **118:22-27**

We know from Acts 4:11, I Peter 2:5-8 and from Ephesians 2:20 that this cornerstone is none other than Jesus Christ. There are 11 Christological facts brought out about Jesus Christ.

(Fact #1) - Jesus Christ was rejected. **118:22a**

(Fact #2) - Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. **118:22b**

Even though He was rejected, He is the only one who can build a relationship with the Holy God.

(Fact #3) - Jesus Christ as a marvelous provision is completely God's work. **118:23**

This grace plan was all designed by God. It is His work and His provision for us. It is not our work for God; it is His marvelous grace work for us.

(Fact #4) - Jesus Christ's day is a day of gladness and rejoicing. **118:24**

Now the day being referred to is the time when Jesus Christ came into this earth, died on a cross and rose from the dead. This day is a day of rejoicing.

(Fact #5) - Jesus Christ is the only one who can save. **118:25a**

Those who recognize the value of the marvelous provision of God found in Jesus Christ ask the Lord to save them.

(Fact #6) - Jesus Christ is the only one who causes prosperity. **118:25b**

Those who want God to prosper them with growth and prosperity in their relationship with Him, ask God for it. Now the prosperity primarily has to do with people coming into a right relationship with God and by growing in their knowledge of God.

(Fact #7) - Jesus Christ is the blessed one who comes in the name of the LORD. **118:26a**

Jesus Christ is the blessed One who comes to this earth and He is God.

(Fact #8) - Jesus Christ is the one worshipped in the house of the LORD. **118:26b**

Those that are right with God will have worshipped the Lord in the house of the Lord.

(Fact #9) - Jesus Christ is God. **118:27a**

Do not miss this flat out statement of Christ's deity. **The cornerstone who was rejected is God.**

(Fact #10) - Jesus Christ is the One who has given light. **118:27b**

Do not miss this. God is the One who gives light. It has always been this way. He is the One who gives one the ability to see the value of Jesus Christ and come to salvation. The sovereignty of God comes into play here.

(Fact #11) - Jesus Christ is the sacrifice. **118:27c**

The sacrifice will not be celebrated as the mediatorial sacrifice (which it was), but as a memorial sacrifice (which it will eventually be). Jesus Christ will show Himself to have been the sacrifice.

In **verses 28-29**, the writer ends by making three statements:

- 1) Jesus Christ is “my God.”
- 2) He will give thanks to Jesus Christ who is his God.
- 3) Jesus Christ is my God and he extols Him.

One day all in the world will give thanks to God for Jesus Christ because He is good and His mercy is everlasting.