

Today we are starting a series on Book 5 of the Psalms.

The Psalter is divided into five books.

This is not just a scholarly opinion –

 this is how the inspired authors/editors who compiled the Psalms
 have organized this songbook.

The Psalms are not just a random compilation of poems.

They were very carefully put together –

 and the order and structure communicates a lot!

The five books are as follows:

 Book One is Psalms 1-41

 Book Two is Psalms 42-72

 These two books focus on the Davidic Kingdom.

 Most of these Psalms are “Psalms of David” –

 and probably most of them are actually by David

 (since we know from the book of Samuel

 that David wrote many songs).

 But when a Psalm says “of David” –

 that doesn’t necessarily mean “by David” –

 it could mean “for David” “to David” “about David.”

 But Books 1-2 presuppose a situation when the Davidic king
 is sitting on the throne.

 If you know Psalms 1-72, that doesn’t mean that everything is happy!

 Many of the greatest laments in the Psalter

 come in those books – think of Psalm 22 –

 “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

 Or Psalm 42 –

 “Why are you downcast, O my soul?”

 Or Psalm 70 –

 “Make haste, O God, to save me!”

 But books 1-2 sing about what life is like when the King is on the throne.

In Book 3, that all changes!

 Psalms 73-89 are songs about the Exile –

 a time when there was no Davidic king –

 a time when God’s people were scattered and helpless.

 Book 3 ends with Psalm 89 –

 a Psalm that asks *How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever?*

How long will your wrath burn like fire?...

Where is your steadfast love of old,

which by your faithfulness you swore to David? (89:46, 49)

Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) then reply by *demonstrating* God's faithfulness.
God is King.
The LORD reigns!
His kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalms 104-106 conclude Book 4
with a series of historical Psalms
that recount the history of God's people from Creation to the Exile.

Many have noticed that Psalm 107 fits well with this pattern –
as Psalm 107 is all about *return* from Exile.

Just like Psalm 89 (at the end of Book 3),
Psalm 106 (at the end of Book 4)
states the *problem* that still remains:

“Save us, O LORD our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise.”

Book 4 recognizes that the *exile isn't over yet* –
we have seen the hand of God in the midst of the exile –
so we *know* that the LORD reigns –
that his rule is over all things.

But we are still waiting...

And so Book 5 begins with Psalm 107 –
a song that answers Psalm 106 –
Psalm 106 ended

“Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.”

Psalm 107 begins:

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for his is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble
and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.”

And then, as we saw this morning,
the four stories of Psalm 107 all speak of the LORD's deliverance –
and calls the people of God to “thank the LORD for his steadfast love.”

Psalm 108 can be seen as a case study of Psalm 107.
Remember what we saw this morning in Psalm 107 –

“Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to the city to dwell in;
hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.
Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.
Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!
For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.”

But what if you don't see it?
Even after the Exile,
Judah was a small, weak, helpless nation!

In the same way, while Jesus has won the great victory over his and our foes –
we still find ourselves wondering “Has God rejected us?”
But Psalm 108 reminds us that salvation belongs to the LORD –
and his steadfast love and faithfulness truly endures forever!

A Song. A Psalm of David.

Psalm 108 is *A Psalm of David* –
which, as we have seen before, does not necessarily mean that it is *by David* –
it could mean “for David” “to David” or “about David.”

But Psalm 108 is even more interesting
because it consists of two previous Psalms that have been stitched together!

Verses 1-5 are taken from Psalm 57.
Verses 6-13 are taken from Psalm 60 –
and with some very light editing, they are joined together and given new shape here.

But this is *not* simply a cut and paste job!
The Psalmist is using mostly the same words to say something more –
something new.

Psalm 108 takes words that were written *during the Davidic Kingdom*
(from Book 2 of the Psalms) –
and applies them and interprets them for the post-exilic church.
As such, this is an important lesson for *us*
in how we ought to apply and interpret the Psalms!

1. “My Heart Is Steadfast” – David and Christ (v1-4)

We have often seen in the Psalms of David that the Psalms of David
often distinguish between “I” and “we.”
The “I” being the Davidic king – and the “we” being the people of God.

This is very clear in Psalm 108 – which has a strong Davidic “I” in verses 1-4
and when God hears the Davidic King, he saves his beloved *ones* – his people.

And this comes out even more clearly at the end of the Psalm
when the 1st person plural is used “grant *us* help.”

If we take seriously what earlier Psalms have said about God’s promises to David –
then we *must* believe that later Psalmists continued to believe those promises!

As we saw this morning, the *wise* will believe and trust in God’s steadfast love.
Even if they cannot see how or when God will do what he has promised!
God has said that he will restore David’s throne.

God had told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves for 400 years –
before the promises would finally come to pass.
Well, that means if God has promised to restore David’s throne,
then he *will*.
David’s throne went vacant in 586 B.C.

It was nearly 600 years before Jesus was born –
and yet, the faithful were still waiting patiently –
crying out to God – *trusting* that God would do all that he had promised!

So we shouldn’t be surprised to find wise, faithful Psalmists singing songs of David
during the Exile!

So the “I” here in the Psalm is the voice of David – or perhaps better,
the voice of the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our singer is a wise man.
The conclusion of Psalm 107 had told us
“Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things;
let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.”

Our singer is convinced of God’s steadfast love and faithfulness –
and so opens by declaring:

*108 My heart is steadfast, O God!
I will sing and make melody with all my being!*

I am steadfast because I *know* that God is faithful.

And so I want everyone and everything else to praise God with me!

² *Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn!*

The musical instruments are not playing yet – and they should be!
The sun is not shining yet – and it should be!!

We often speak of people rising with the sun –
because dawn usually wakes *us up* –
but this is so important that the Psalmist says “I will awaken the dawn”!

I will arouse all of creation in order to give thanks and praise to God!

³ *I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples;
I will sing praises to you among the nations.*

But here in Psalm 108 we are moving beyond Israel to the nations!
God’s purposes in redemption are to bring salvation to the ends of the earth,
and so the Davidic king will sing not only to “my brothers” –
but even “among the nations.”

I want you to think about what the Son of David is doing here:
He is giving thanks to the LORD among the peoples –
He is singing praises to God among the nations.

The Davidic King sings praises to the LORD among the nations.

Notice the location:

Not just “in the temple” – or “in the sanctuary” –
but “among the peoples...among the nations.”

The songs of praise that were taught in the temple (the Psalms)
will be sung by the Davidic King before all the nations.

Hebrews 2 takes a similar passage from Psalm 22 (another Psalm of David)
and Hebrews 2 says that the “Davidic I” – the first person speaker of Psalm 22
is the voice of Jesus:

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” (2:12)

In the same way, the first person singular of Psalm 108 –
is none other than our Lord Jesus – the Son of David –
who declares the praises of God among the nations.

We often think of singing praise as a part of worship –
but here it is just as much a part of evangelism!
Nowadays we tend to identify evangelism with being ‘hip’ and ‘cool’ –
doing edgy things that connect with our “culture” –
but you don’t see Jesus and the Apostles acting ‘hip’ and ‘cool.’
Paul makes the point that the gospel of the cross is a stumbling block to Jews

and foolishness to Gentiles –
so we shouldn't be worried that people find our gospel (or our methods)
odd.

But also notice the *content* of the Son of David's song:

⁴ *For your steadfast love is great above the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.*

The key words in verse 4 are *hesed* and *emeth*.

Steadfast love and faithfulness.

Commitment and truthfulness.

His praise to God focuses on *who God is* –

It's not just that God did something great for *me* – personally –

God is faithful.

His steadfast love – his commitment – his covenant loyalty –

is great –

and not just ordinary “great” – but “above the heavens great.”

His faithfulness – his truthfulness – is also great.

You can rely on God's word up to the sky and back!

Why is this important?

Psalm 108 is trying to draw you out of yourself for a moment.

Look about you – look above you –

take a glimpse at the cosmic dimensions of things!

In the grand scheme of things – who are you?

You and I are just a blip –

we are like the grass – here today and gone tomorrow.

We will never – in this life – be able to see the full significance of our lives.

To a certain extent, the question “why did God let this happen?”

cannot be fully answered in this life.

Instead we need to see who God is!

The LORD's steadfast love is great above the heavens.

Why is that important?

Because in verses 5-6...

2. The Son of David Prays – So That We May Be Saved (v5-6)

⁵ *Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!*

Let your glory be over all the earth!

⁶ *That your beloved ones may be delivered,*

give salvation by your right hand and answer me!

What's interesting is that verse 5 comes from Psalm 57 –

but verse 6 comes from Psalm 60!
And yet in their new configuration,
verses 5-6 clearly belong together.

Why do we need to focus on God's *hesed* and *emeth* –
why should God's steadfast love and faithfulness be at the center of our vision?

Because God's steadfast love and faithfulness to *Jesus* is what will determine what happens to us!
Why does the Davidic voice pray "be exalted, O God, above the heavens!"?
Why is it important that God's glory be over all the earth?

Well, as the Son of David prays in verse 6 – *answer me* –
so that your beloved ones may be delivered.

If God is faithful to his promises to the Son of David –
if God shows his steadfast love to the Davidic King –
then salvation will come to all of God's beloved ones!

3. God's Promise: I Will Triumph (v7-9)

⁷ *God has promised in his holiness:*^[b]

*"With exultation I will divide up Shechem
and portion out the Valley of Succoth.*

⁸ *Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;
Ephraim is my helmet,
Judah my scepter.*

Verses 7-9 then recount God's promise –
which he made "in his holiness" –
a term which can mean "in his sanctuary" –
or could refer to how God swears "by himself" – or by his holiness.

Either way,
the point is that this is a reliable promise from God himself!

Verses 7-13 come verbatim from Psalm 60 –
a Psalm from Book 2 of the Psalter –
from the time when the Davidic King was on the throne.

In Psalm 60, these verses function to remind God of his holy promise to David.
In Psalm 108, they do the same thing – but now *hundreds of years later* –
when God's people might wonder – is this *still true*?

Because in David's day, all this land was part of David's Kingdom.
But for centuries now, these places are mostly under foreign rule.

Shechem is on the west side of the Jordan – in the land of Manasseh.
The Vale of Succoth is on the east side of the Jordan – in the land of Gilead.

These are the first two places where Jacob came,
when he returned to the promised land, after his sojourn in Aram.

God's point is that both the west side and the east side of the Jordan are his.

Gilead is mine (the east side of the Jordan).
Manasseh is mine (the west side of the Jordan).
Ephraim is my helmet (the northern part of the land);
Judah is my scepter (the southern part of the land).

But that was a long time ago!
By the time of Psalm 108,
the Davidic King has not ruled Gilead, Manasseh, or Ephraim for over 400 years!

But God has promised in his sanctuary.
And God is faithful.
His steadfast love endures forever.
If he has promised,
then he will do it!

Sometimes we read the OT and we think,
“Wow – look at all those mighty deeds that God wrought in their days!
I wish we had some of that!”
But if you think about it,
most of the people who lived during OT times
never saw the “mighty deeds.”
Most of the people in OT times lived during those 400 years in Egypt –
or during the centuries when the kings squabbled over Israel –
or the years after the Exile –
when things weren't really back to the way they should be!

They remember God's holy promises and wonder – when will it ever happen?

We need to remember that Jesus is king.
Jesus is our banner – the one whom God has held up as the signal of hope.
Have you been trampled by the world?
Have you been under the assault of the devil?
Have you forgotten whose kingdom this is?

Remember that God has spoken in his holiness – in his holy sanctuary –
“Mine is Gilead; mine Manasseh” –
and not only that, but mine is all the earth!

Verse 9 then turns to God's attitude toward the surrounding nations:

⁹ *Moab is my washbasin;
upon Edom I cast my shoe;
over Philistia I shout in triumph.*”

Moab is my washbasin (literally, ‘pot for washing’).
Upon Edom I cast my shoe.

Throwing your shoe at someone has always been an insult in the middle east
(as George W. Bush discovered when a reporter threw his shoe at him!).
But the idea of throwing your shoe has more to do with dominance than with pure insult.
You are claiming a certain supremacy when you throw your shoe at them.

“Moab is my washpot” is not a negative.
Moab is not my scepter – that’s Judah.
Moab is not my helmet – that’s Ephraim.
But Moab is my washbasin – where I clean up after battle.

Over Edom I toss my shoe – and so Edom will come under the rule of the kingdom of God.

And David raises the victory shout over Philistia.
That’s not just a matter of defeating and destroying the Philistines.
It is *subduing* the Philistines – which may even have an evangelistic component.

And that’s not as far-fetched as it may sound.
After all, remember how many *Gittites* are in David’s administration!
Gittites are from Gath.
And Gath was the city where Goliath was from.
You might wonder why Goliath’s people followed David!
Didn’t David kill Goliath?!!

Yes, but Goliath had sworn that if an Israelite champion killed him,
the Philistines would submit to Israel.
While it seems obvious that most Philistines did not honor Goliath’s word,
it would appear from the text of the book of Samuel,
that there were some – perhaps even many – Philistines,
particularly among the Gittites –
who followed David.

We know from human history that factions regularly break off from one group,
and ally with their erstwhile enemies
in order to bring down the “wrongful” rulers of their country.
We know from 1-2 Samuel that such a faction of Gittites existed.

If David has many Philistine supporters,
perhaps it suggests an internal split among the Philistines,
some of whom have rallied to David’s banner,

so that David's triumph brings joy to his Philistine allies.

So in Psalm 60, David addressed his tired, shell-shocked army,
as he sings to them of God's promises,
he reminds them their triumph will result in the well-being of the nations.

David cites the divine promise from the sanctuary
as the reason why God should now go with his army to Edom.
Remember your promises, O Lord!

And now, after the Exile, the Psalmist draws on that language again –
because we still need to remember God's promises!

We also live in between the promise and its fulfillment.
Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against his church.
Jesus promised that he would be with us unto the end of the age.

As we go into battle, fighting against the world, the flesh and the devil,
we go, knowing that the triumph of Jesus in the life of each person we meet,
will be good for them!

They will shout for joy when King Jesus finally conquers them,
and subdues them to his will!

The final stanza pleads with God to help now as Israel marches toward Bozra,
the fortified city – the capital of Edom.

And this, again, is a curious prayer to bring forward from David's day
to the Exile.

4. David's/Jesus' Prayer: Grant Us Help Against the Foe (v10-13)

¹⁰ *Who will bring me to the fortified city?*

Who will lead me to Edom?

¹¹ *Have you not rejected us, O God?*

You do not go out, O God, with our armies.

¹² *Oh grant us help against the foe,*

for vain is the salvation of man!

¹³ *With God we shall do valiantly;*

it is he who will tread down our foes.

If God is to throw his shoe over Edom,
then David needs God to lead him to Edom!

That made sense in David's day.

But after the Exile, what is this doing?

Well, the problem – if anything – is *worse* than in David's day!

As the Davidic King says in verse 11:

¹¹ *Have you not rejected us, O God?
You do not go out, O God, with our armies.*

Remember how it was when a single stone struck Goliath in the forehead,
and all the Philistines turned tail and fled!?

But now it has been hundreds of years –
our enemies have won –
quite frankly, we don't seem to be getting anywhere!

And the problem is that God appears to have rejected us.
“You do not go out, O God, with our armies.”
The King is supposed to go out with the army and lead them in battle.
If you recall, David himself got into all his trouble when he stayed behind!
But now God is staying behind –
and if God does not go with them,
then Israel's armies lose...

Do you know that feeling?
When you are trying to battle against the world, the flesh and the devil –
and it feels like God has abandoned you.
I'm struggling – I'm fighting –
but God isn't showing up!

Day after day – month after month – year after year –
the same old fight, and you don't seem to be getting any closer!

Psalms 108 helps you to think about how to voice that to God!
You can say, “God, you haven't been there for me!”
So long as you *also say*:

¹¹ *Oh, grant us help against the foe,
for vain is the salvation of man!*
¹² *With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes.*

Faith recognizes that sometimes we do not experience God's presence.
It's not that we doubt God's steadfast love and faithfulness.
We just aren't experiencing it right now!
We are recognizing that by ourselves, we are helpless!

Even together – the whole lot of us – are helpless!

We've worked hard to develop strong fellowship at MCPC –
but not even that is sufficient to save us!

Vain is the salvation of man.

That is why we must always cry out to God!
“Oh, grant us help against the foe!”

I may be your pastor – God may have called me to shepherd you and care for you.
But I cannot defeat your enemies!

My job is to remind you who can.

*With God we shall do valiantly;
it is he who will tread down our foes.*

When God goes before us –
then our enemies flee!

And that is what God has done in Jesus Christ!
The eternal Son of God has come in our flesh –
he has become the Son of David –
the Seed of the Woman who crushes the serpent's head.

And because God has done this in Jesus,
therefore we have confidence that he will continue what he has begun!

As Paul said to the Romans,
The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20)

We must march out to battle –
a weak and pitiful looking army, though we be!
We must march because that is what God uses –
not our strength and power;
not our might in battle –
but our faith – believing that God will do what he has promised,
and so therefore we will be where God tells us to be!