

A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day. ^(NKJ)

¹ *It is* good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; ² To declare Your loving-kindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night, ³ On an instrument of ten strings, On the lute, And on the harp, With harmonious sound.

⁴ For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. ⁵ O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep. ⁶ A senseless man does not know, Nor does a fool understand this.

⁷ When the wicked spring up like grass, And when all the workers of iniquity flourish, *It is* that they may be destroyed forever.

⁸ But You, LORD, *are* on high forevermore.

⁹ For behold, Your enemies, O LORD, For behold, Your enemies shall perish; All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

¹⁰ But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil. ¹¹ My eye also has seen *my desire* on my enemies; My ears hear *my desire* on the wicked Who rise up against me. ¹² The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³ Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴ They shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing,

¹⁵ To declare that the LORD is upright; *He is* my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in Him.

Introduction: Psalm 92, “A Song for the Sabbath,” has several elements that are important to notice. We may observe six distinct features of Psalm 92.

The first feature is the title, “A Song for the Sabbath Day.” This psalm is located in Book Four of the Psalter (Psalms 90-106), which is characterized by the theme of comfort in God’s faithfulness.¹ It is the only psalm of the 150 with this inspired title. The Bible describes the Sabbath as an ordinance of God revealed in creation, redemption, and eternity.

In creation, God rested on the seventh day from His six days of making everything out of nothing (Gen. 2:2-3), and ordained it as a day of rest for humanity (Exo. 20:8-11).

In redemption, Israel marked the Sabbath as the day of their deliverance. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 5:15, “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”

In the New Testament, Jesus declared in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man,” not merely for the Jews. Under the authority of the risen Savior, the Apostles moved the Sabbath one day forward, from Saturday to Sunday. The change of day not only marked the resurrection, but also to mark the fact that no longer is the Sabbath observed by the people of Israel but is observed by the church, which Paul calls in Galatians 6:16, “the Israel of God.” The Israel of God is comprised of people from every nation or every tribe.² The day was changed and the Sabbath was preserved.

¹ W. Robert Godfrey, **Learning to Love the Psalms**, p. 157

² Liam Goligher, **A Song for the Sabbath**, 07/05/2020, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA, www.sermonaudio.com

As the Sabbath was a moral command of God from the beginning, so it remains a moral command of God. The New Testament passages that are often cited as teaching that all days are alike in the new covenant actually do not reject the Sabbath, but only the elaborate Jewish calendar of holy days. John writes in Revelation 1:10, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” He makes clear that in fact there is a holy day in the new covenant. The Lord’s Day is a special day belonging to the Lord. In the New Testament, the only day given any special attention is Sunday, the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.³ Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath has made the first day rather than the seventh day a holy day for His own. From the beginning of creation to Jesus, we looked forward to the rest that would come in the end. With the coming of Jesus, rest has been won in His resurrection, and so we as Christians begin our week with rest in Christ and worship of Christ.⁴

In eternity, this psalm expects the everlasting Sabbath rest for God’s people which is yet to come as stated in Hebrews 4:9, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” The pattern of one day in seven as a day both of rest and sacred assembly (Lev. 23) will overflow into everlasting rest and worship.

The second feature is the two divine names that identify God: LORD (or Jehovah), and Most High. We should notice that “LORD” occurs seven times in this Psalm -- the sabbatical number (verses 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13, 15).

The third feature is the themes of creation, providence, and redemption.

The fourth feature is the contrast of the righteous and the wicked.

The fifth feature is the central verse eight, and the chiasmic structure of this psalm. The most important statement is in the middle. On either side (verses 7 and 9) are statements about the wicked. Next are descriptions of the righteous (verses 4-6 and 10-14). At the beginning and ending worshippers praise God (verses 1-3 and 15).

The sixth feature is the single voice who sings in the first person. This psalm was prepared to be heard in the voice of the Lord Jesus. He leads corporate worship on the Sabbath in the adoration of the LORD, the Most High, for His exaltation in creation, redemption, and eternity.

The outline that we will use starts with the opening and closing verses. We move toward the center so that we conclude with the focus of this psalm in verse 8: “You, LORD, *are* on high forevermore.” This psalm exalts the Lord who is high and lifted up (Isa. 6:1). The praise of His people does indeed exalt and glorify the Lord. Even though our praise cannot actually make God greater or higher than He is, the Lord is pleased for our praise to exalt Him in our minds and hearts.⁵ The exaltation of the LORD may be summarized by four headings.

- A. The LORD is exalted in the magnificent revelation of Himself (vs. 1-3, 15)
- B. The LORD is exalted in the sustained flourishing of the righteous (vs. 4-6, 10-14)
- C. The LORD is exalted in the just destruction of the wicked (vs. 7, 9)
- D. The LORD is exalted in the eternal elevation of Himself (vs. 8)

Another way to express the four headings is: The Sabbath is a day to express God’s

³ John 20:19, 26; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2

⁴ W. Robert Godfrey, **Learning to Love the Psalms**, p. 173

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170

worship, to experience God's blessings, to expect God's cursings, and to exalt God's greatness.

A. The LORD is exalted in the magnificent revelation of Himself (vs. 1-3, 15), or *The Sabbath is a day to express God's worship*

The opening and concluding thoughts of Psalm 92 exalt the magnificent revelation of God in His person, His work, and His assembly, which leads worshippers to praise God.

This is not individual, personal worship. It is accompanied by musical instruments, which was public, temple worship. You must realize who God is and what He has made you. He has made you to worship Him.⁶

1. Excellence of praise in His person (92:1). This psalm begins, "It is good." In this context good means fitting, or right in itself. Also, it is good for me, that is, it brings real joy to my heart. It is fitting or right for me to give thanks to the Lord. It is the highest calling of a creature to confess to the Lord, and to sing praise to His name, who is Most High. The major part of the Sabbath day is to admire, praise, and celebrate God's work. To sing God's praise is to draw a clear demarcation between the church and the culture. When we gather as the church we declare that we belong to King Jesus, and that He is the Lord of His church. Giving thanks to God and singing praise to God are two crucial parts of worship.⁷

This psalm identifies the God we worship by two of His names: LORD and Most High. The upper case LORD is the divine name explained to Moses at the burning bush (Exo. 3:14). It is His covenant name "I Am" or "I Am Who I Am." This name reveals God as He who is, or He who has being, or He who exists. LORD is His near name. He has welded Himself to His people. He loves them. He is committed to them. He is imminent. The second name, "Most High," exalts the One who is above everything, who owns everything, who holds everything. He rules from a position of unparalleled, unapproachable, unimpeachable, unchallengeable sovereignty.⁸ He is transcendent.

2. Examples of praise in His work (92:2, 15). Two praise worthy elements of God's work in verse 2 are His loving-kindness and His faithfulness. Loving-kindness, or steadfast love, is God's stubborn determination to be true to His covenant and to be kind to your soul, no matter how long it takes Him, no matter how much it costs Him, and no matter what you deserve.⁹

God has loved His own from eternity and will ever continue to love and care for them. Because He loves them, He is always faithful to His promises. He is completely reliable and worthy of all praise. In verse 15, He is also perfectly holy in all His doings. God's character is a great comfort for His people in all circumstances and trials of life.¹⁰ Loving-kindness and

⁶ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Saturday – Psalm 92*, 02/06/2019, First Presbyterian Church Columbia, SC, www.sermonaudio.com

⁷ Liam Goligher, *A Song for the Sabbath*, *op. cit.*

⁸ Cf. Neil C. Stewart, *A Song for the Sabbath Day*, 10/24/2016, Christ Covenant Church, Greensboro, NC, www.sermonaudio.com

⁹ Sean Morris, *A Psalm of the Sabbath, A Psalm of the Savior*, 12/28/2014, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, www.sermonaudio.com

¹⁰ W. Robert Godfrey, *Learning to Love the Psalms*. p.171

faithfulness are paired four times in the Psalter.¹¹

John Calvin comments, “He would have us consider, in mentioning these, that not only is God worthy of praise, but that we ourselves are chargeable with ingratitude and perversity should we refuse it. We are the proper objects of his faithfulness and goodness, and it would argue inexcusable indifference if they did not elicit our cordial praise.”¹²

Notice the reference to morning and evening in verse 2. This refers to the morning and evening sacrifices in the temple.¹³ The rhythm of morning and evening worship was continued by the New Testament church until recently. For nineteen hundred years in almost every Christian tradition there has been morning and evening worship on the Lord’s Day. Worship began and ended every Sunday, except in extreme circumstances. The New Testament followed the practice of Old Testament worship.¹⁴

3. Exaltation of praise in His assembly (92:3). The response to God’s person and work are described in the context of Old Testament temple worship, which required a central sanctuary in Jerusalem, priests who descended from Levi, animal sacrifices, and musical instruments. John Calvin comments on the instruments: “The intention of them was to stimulate the worshippers, and stir them up more actively to the celebration of praise of God with the heart. We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people, as yet weak and rude in knowledge, in the spiritual worship of God. A difference is to be observed in this respect between his people under the Old and under the New Testament; for now that Christ has appeared, and the church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the Gospel, should we introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation.”¹⁵

Christians did not use instruments in their worship in the 2nd Century, or indeed for many centuries afterwards. The early Church looked on musical instruments as being part of Jewish or pagan worship, but not part of apostolic tradition of Christian worship.¹⁶

There are at least four distinct advantages of non-instrumental singing. The voice of God’s people does not compete with the musician. The centrality of God’s Word is not reduced with mood music. The power of God’s worship is not dependent on human performance. The attraction of God’s presence is not overshadowed by human accompaniment.

We are commanded to worship God with joy and gladness. If we are enjoying fellowship with God, we don’t need a command. For example, once there was a woman who married a churlish, rude, and demanding man. He made a list of twenty rules and duties that she must keep or he would punish her. For ten miserable years the woman kept the rules to the best of her ability. Then finally, God was gracious to the woman and took the wicked husband. In time, she found a good and kind husband. She loved being married to him. One day while she was cleaning the house, she happened to find that list from her former husband. To her amazement, she was doing all those rules and duties for her kind and loving husband. But she

¹¹ Psalm 40:10; 88:11; 89:33; 92:2

¹² John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, Vol. 3, p. 494

¹³ 1 Chronicles 16:40; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 13:11; 31:3; Ezra 3:3

¹⁴ Derek W. H. Thomas, *Saturday – Psalm 92*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ John Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. 495

¹⁶ N. R. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, Part One, p. 69

never thought about her work as duty or requirement. When we love our Lord as we should, we naturally express that love in thankful, joyous praise, and worship. We declare God's greatness in singing songs worthy of the Sabbath.¹⁷ In His person, His work, and His assembly, the LORD is exalted in the magnificent revelation of Himself. The Sabbath is a day to express God's worship.

B. The LORD is exalted in the sustained flourishing of the righteous (vs. 4-6, 10-14), or *The Sabbath is a day to experience God's blessings*

God is the audience of worship. Worship is intended to have an effect on us. It is to make us glad and to fill us with joy. What makes us glad and joyful are God's work (of creation, providence, and redemption) and God's works (as we see the series of events that He does).¹⁸

The Bible reveals that God created all things out of nothing. This establishes the distinction between uncreated Being (the eternal God) and created being (everything else). Creation is an external work of God. It points us away from itself, and it points us towards its Maker. As Paul states in Romans 1:20, creation declares God's eternal power and divine nature. Creation leads us to the God who is. Creation is the indivisible work of the holy Trinity.¹⁹

God is exalted in His works which reveal something of His thoughts (vs. 5). God is exalted in the flourishing of the righteous (vs. 12-14). The righteous are not compared to fleeting grass but are like long-lasting trees. A tree does not flourish because it is clever, working hard, or has free will. It flourishes because a gardener has planted it, watered it, and protected it. God is exalted in the blessings that He gives to His people.²⁰ The Sabbath is a day to experience God's blessings.

C. The LORD is exalted in the just destruction of the wicked (vs. 7, 9), or *The Sabbath is a day to expect God's cursings*

This psalm teaches us that God is exalted in the destruction of the wicked. In our sentimental age, we have become squeamish about the terrible judgment that awaits those who reject the Lord, but the Bible is clear from beginning to end that such a judgment is coming. That judgment will be just and will vindicate the holiness of God. When we praise God on the Sabbath for the coming judgment, we remember the importance of rejecting worldliness to pursue true godliness.²¹

Impatient man cannot understand why God should bear so long with those that fail to turn to Him and acknowledge Him. The springing up of the grass is a good comparison, for when it appears in the Holy Land in the spring, its growth is so surprisingly rapid. So often the success of the wicked may be phenomenal. On the other hand as the grass and all attendant vegetation soon perish with the coming of the hot weather, so the flourishing of the wicked has, so to speak, as its purpose, "that they may be destroyed forever." They flourish to die.

¹⁷ David J. Whitcomb, **A Song for the Sabbath**, 01/21/2018, Community Baptist Church, Greer, SC, www.sermonaudio.com

¹⁸ Liam Goligher, **The God Who Rescues**, 08/02/2020, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA, www.sermonaudio.com

¹⁹ Liam Goligher, **Faithful and True**, 07/12/2020, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA, www.sermonaudio.com

²⁰ Cf. Derek W. H. Thomas, **Saturday – Psalm 92**, *op. cit.*

²¹ W. Robert Godfrey, **Learning to Love the Psalms**, p. 170-171

What is desirable about a lot like theirs?²² The LORD is exalted in the just destruction of the wicked. The Sabbath is a day to expect God's cursings.

D. The LORD is exalted in the eternal elevation of Himself (vs. 8), or *The Sabbath is a day to exalt God's greatness*

What does it mean that God is exalted? God is the measurement of exaltation. Exaltation is measured by the standard of God's exaltation. Verse 2 records God's loving-kindness in the morning and His faithfulness every night. This is reverence of the One who is transcendent, who is wholly different from us. His glory demands our reverence. Today's worship is so man-centered. Worship is evaluated by what we get out of it. Our national anthem may as well be, "Oh, say can you see, what's in it for me." This psalm expresses the wonder of worship by being in the presence of One who is highly exalted. Worship is entering the presence of the holy and righteous God. Verse 15 concludes, "there is no unrighteousness in Him."²³

The One who is, the LORD, is the Most High. He is the One who is outside our capacity to conceive. Zophar the Naamathite rightly counseled Job, "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven -- what can you do? Deeper than Sheol -- what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth And broader than the sea" (Job 11:7-9). God is different in kind from all created reality.²⁴

"You, O LORD, are on high forever." This is the heartbeat of the psalm. This is the theological center piece of the psalm, the rock on which every other thing is built. In every conceivable sense God is on high. That is, He is above creation. He is above any neediness. He is above any causality. (Nobody caused Him.) He is above all powers. He is above reproach. He is above the use of earthly experience. He is above the possibility of change. He is forever, that is eternal. He is the great sustainer of the universe and of our faith. He inhabits the highest. He is mighty in the highest. He is God on high. He is not part of this temporal reality. He is transcendent although all of temporal reality finds its existence in Him.²⁵

An expression that the New Testament uses to describe the psalms is "the word of Christ." Paul writes in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" are the ancient titles of various Old Testament psalms. In the New Testament, Paul uses these titles as a three-term description of the Psalter and therefore as "the word of Christ." The word of Christ includes more than the Book of Psalms, but the Book of Psalms are included in the word of Christ. Red letter editions of the Bible ought to print every Psalm in red letters. The psalms are words spoken about Christ and spoken by Christ. Psalms are poems meant to be sung. In the Reformed tradition, until the middle of 19th century, Psalms were all that the

²² H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, p. 660-661

²³ Cf. Derek W. H. Thomas, *Saturday – Psalm 92*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ Liam Goligher, *Faithful and True*, *op. cit.*

²⁵ Liam Goligher, *Ponder Anew What the Almighty Can Do*, 08/09/2020, Tenth Presbyterian Church Philadelphia, PA, www.sermonaudio.com

church sang. When we sing the psalms we sing the word of Christ.²⁶

Jesus is saying here, because He is the speaker of this psalm, God's throne is stable, unchangeable, immovable, in contrast to the world which is in a constant state of flux. So much so that Jesus can say to us in verse 9, "For behold your enemies, they are doomed to destruction. All evil doers are scattered." "Behold" is not a future tense word but a present tense. From the perspective of eternity, God sees the punishment of the wicked now. God sees everything that happens in history now. Everything is present before God. He knows the history of everything in the eternal now.²⁷

God is exalted in the song of the Sabbath itself. As God is enthroned in the praises of Israel (Ps. 22:3), so He is exalted by the singing of His people (vv. 1, 4b). Here is a song that God inspired to be used in worshipping Him on the Sabbath. We must remember that God made the Sabbath for worship as well as rest (Lev 23:1-3). The Sabbath was and is a weekly reminder that we serve a reliable God who will destroy His enemies and will prosper His people even if they have to wait a long time to see it happen. Psalm 92 is a perfect Sabbath psalm because it helps us to worship and praise our God.²⁸

The Sabbath gives time to think; time to think of what God has done, and is doing; time to realize how perfectly His works answer to His word, and so to understand more fully His gracious purposes, and in confidence to wait.²⁹ The Sabbath is a day to exalt God's greatness.

Conclusion: The center of the psalm is that the Lord is on high forevermore. Remember this in times of trials or when you are afraid. Everything about us is going crazy. But God is on high. He is exalted. He is above all of this. He is our stability in the midst of chaos. He is faithful in our world of malice. He has determined history and will execute justice.³⁰

The psalmist sings and teaches us well that the Sabbath is a day to express God's worship, to experience God's blessings, to expect God's cursings, and to exalt God's greatness. The Lord Jesus sings and teaches us best about His exaltation in a song for the Sabbath.

Prayer: Merciful LORD, in the knowledge of whom lies life eternal, replenish us with Your grace and Holy Spirit, that we, considering Your marvelous works, which the wicked despise, may give ourselves continually to sanctify Your holy Name and Your holy day; and that we may so grow in all good virtues that, being true members of Your church, we may in the end see the exaltation of You, LORD, Most High, and the destruction of Your enemies and ours, when You shall deliver all them who put their trust in You, through Jesus Christ, Your only Son. Amen.³¹

Psalter Selections: 33A, 62A, 92A, 92B [BPS]

²⁶ Cf. Liam Goligher, **A Song of Thanksgiving**, 11/27/2014, Tenth Presbyterian Church Philadelphia, PA, www.sermonaudio.com

²⁷ Liam Goligher, **Ponder Anew What the Almighty Can Do**, *op. cit.*

²⁸ W. Robert Godfrey, **Learning to Love the Psalms**, p. 172, 173

²⁹ Frank D. Frazer, **Psalm Ninety-Two**, *Blue Banner Faith and Life*, Vol. 6, Num. 4, Oct.-Dec., 1951, p. 176

³⁰ Derek W. H. Thomas, **Saturday – Psalm 92**, *op. cit.*

³¹ *Prayers on the Psalms from the Scottish Psalter*, 1595 (Banner of Truth Trust), p. 105 [Edited]

It is good to sing Thy praises / And to thank Thee, O Most High,
 Showing forth Thy loving-kindness / When the morning lights the sky.
 It is good when night is falling / Of Thy faithfulness to tell,
 While with sweet, melodious praises / Songs of adoration swell.

Thou hast filled my heart with gladness / Thro' the works Thy hands have wrought;
 Thou hast made my life victorious, / Great Thy works and deep Thy thought.
 Thou, O Lord, are high exalted, / Reignest evermore in might;
 All Thy enemies shall perish, / Sin be banished from Thy sight.

But the good shall live before Thee, / Planted in Thy dwelling-place,
 Fruitful trees and ever verdant, / Nourished by Thy boundless grace.
 In His goodness to the righteous / God His righteousness display;
 God my rock, my strength and refuge, / Just and true are all His ways.³²

- 1 To render thanks unto the Lord / it is a comely thing,
 And to thy name, O thou most High, / due praise aloud to sing.
- 2 Thy loving-kindness to shew forth / when shines the morning light;
 And to declare thy faithfulness / with pleasure ev'ry night.
- 3 On a ten-stringed instrument, / upon the psaltery,
 And on the harp with solemn sound, / grave sweet melody.
- 4 For thou, Lord, by thy mighty works / hast made my heart right glad;
 And I will triumph in the works / which by thy hands were made.
- 5 How great, Lord, are thy works! each thought / of thine a deep it is:
- 6 A brutish man it knoweth not; / fools understand not this.
- 7 When those that lewd and wicked are / spring quickly up like grass,
 And workers of iniquity / do flourish all apace;
- It is that they for ever may / destroyed by and slain;
- 8 But thou, O Lord, art the most High, / for ever to remain.
- 9 For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, / thine en'mies perish shall;
 The workers of iniquity / shall be dispersed all.
- 10 But thou shalt, like unto the horn / of th' unicorn, exalt
 My horn on high: thou with fresh oil / anoint me also shalt.
- 11 Mine eyes shall also my desire / see on mine enemies;
 Mine ears shall of the wicked hear/ that do against me rise.
- 12 But like the palm-tree flourishing / shall be the righteous one;
 He shall like to the cedar grow / that is in Lebanon.
- 13 Those that within the house of God / are planted by his grace,
 They shall grow up, and flourish all / in our God's holy place.
- 14 And in old age, when others fade, / they fruit still forth shall bring;
 They shall be fat, and full of sap. / and aye be flourishing,
- 15 To shew that upright is the Lord: / he is a rock to me;
 And he from all unrighteousness / is altogether free.³³

³² Paraphrase of Psalm 92 in *The Psalter*, 1912 (**The Hymnbook**, #20)

³³ **The Psalms of David in Metre**, 1650, Psalm 92