

The Bible clearly affirms you need a savior from the great troubles and enemies that threaten you. The human heart is adept at appointing various kinds of heroes to save us, and many are God's merciful gifts to us. But there is only one God-appointed Hero Who deserves our worship, praise, and thanks.

Introduction: There is obviously an insatiable appetite the world over for heroes. Well, who is your hero? What is your hero to you? All serve as a kind of savior from one particular trouble or another.

I. Eyes Off Man (Your distress and how to handle it)

A. Don't trust in man (friends, foes, self) (vv. 5-9)

No one can call himself a believer in Christ and be united in profession to His Church without a fundamental renouncement of trusting in man. Yet we still need to be reminded, again and again. The psalmist King has a clear-eyed view of what man can do for him. To trust in man (friends) or even princes (friends with power and influence) for help in distress is to stand on sinking or shifting sand. Jesus also took his eyes off man when He was being praised and followed (Jn 2:23-25). This principle (eyes off man) logically follows from what the King knows man can do to him as his enemy.

B. Do trust in God (*ezer*-helper) (vv. 5-9)

The Hebrew word translated "helper" is *ezer*. God as *ezer* is a strong helper (vv. 6-7). As this psalm teaches, God the *ezer* is a mighty warrior. When God created Eve as Adam's "helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18), she was appointed Adam's *ezer*. When men and women trust in God, they both become fearless and confident, and humble and dependent at the same time.

II. Eyes Wide Open (Your opposition and how to think of it)

A. Deliverance

1. Divine sovereignty (vv. 13-17). Reformed Christians readily give God credit for deliverance because we understand rightly that "salvation belongs to the Lord" (Jon 2:9; Rev 7:10). But sometimes we forget, or at least minimize, the ways God works deliverance through His appointed means. Sometimes through the work of a deliverer (a hero) like Moses, Joshua, Samson, David, Deborah, Esther, Mary. Other times through you.

2. Human responsibility (vv. 10-12). We tend to get a little uncomfortable with the parts of the Bible that draw attention to our part in deliverance. Don't overlook what the psalmist says about his own valiant efforts. In the King's own words: "In the name of the LORD I cut them off!" Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are compatible. God even means that evil, suffering, and the opposition of your enemies works for your good.

B. Discipline (chastisement from the Lord) (v. 18)

At the most basic level, the King realized it was ultimately God Who was actively working through his opposition, not just passively using evil like rescuers respond to a flood and bring good out of it. The King knows God is sovereign, that nothing happens outside the purpose of His will, and that God does nothing to him that is not for his own good. The Hebrew verb for discipline is *yasar*, but the pattern of the verb in this verse alters the meaning to "chasten." So the sense is, through adversity and opposition, God has disciplined the King for his spiritual growth by enrolling him in the "school of hard knocks." This is tough training, a discipline with teeth (Heb 12:11)!

III. Eyes On the King (Your salvation and how to share in it)

A. The Chastised and Righteous One (vv. 18-21)

Remember Psalm 118 is an OT song looking back in faith and looking forward by faith. It has the feeling of unfulfilled expectation because no OT king ever perfectly fit the pattern of this hero. The

King has been sufficiently chastised by God, and has triumphed over his enemies with the Lord's strong help. Now he approaches the temple to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. The Priests meet the King and all those following the victorious hero. First the King speaks, requesting entrance (v. 19). Next the Priests announce the requirement (v. 20). Then the King speaks, thanking God for saving him and thus vindicating his righteousness (v. 21). The idea is the wicked died but only the righteous shall live to recount the Lord's deeds and give thanks. But which of Israel's kings was not "given over" to death? Which king was only chastened as a righteous man but never disciplined as a sinner? Which king was ever qualified to enter the gates of the righteous to give thanks to the LORD?

B. The Rejected Stone and Cornerstone (vv. 22-23)

Then the Priests reply with those famous words quoted numerous times in the NT (v. 22). The King is the "stone" who his enemies rejected, but through His victory the King has become the cornerstone. The Priests speak approvingly. The humble has been exalted! Next, Israel replies, giving God glory and credit for the King's marvelous victory (v. 23). But again, which of Israel's heroes was so humbled and exalted? Which King was rejected by His enemies yet became the cornerstone of an indestructible house—the Lord's house which is his Church, his Temple?

C. The Day of Salvation (vv. 24-25)

The play continues. The Priests rejoice in this day of deliverance, a day made and orchestrated by God (v. 24). And then Israel rise up behind their hero, praying to God for salvation and success (v. 25). But what day in redemptive history can truly be described like this day? A day when all nations surrounded the King who could say a single enemy attacked him (vv. 10, 13). A day when the King will never again be given over to death. What day could possibly be described in such terms except the Day of Victory, the Day of Life, the Day of Resurrection?

D. The Sacrifice of Thanks (vv. 26-28)

The first line of verse 26 belongs to the Priests. They bless the King: the Chastened, Righteous Deliverer who comes in the name of the LORD. Then Israel speaks the second line of verse 26, returning the blessing to the Priests. All eyes are still on the King. The Priests speak next to confirm the LORD God as the source of blessing, and then give instructions for offering the thanksgiving sacrifice on the altar (v. 27). Finally the King speaks the closing words of the liturgy, giving thanks and enthusiastic praise to God. This King is a beautiful, clear-eyed picture of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. For He is the Blessed King Who comes in the name of the LORD (Lk 19:38). He is God's Light that shines upon His people (Jn 8:12). He is the perfect sacrifice of thanksgiving as He lived His whole life as a thank offering to God. If all this is true of Jesus our King, then why did the Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday feel like rain on a parade?

Conclusion: So what does this mean for you? Keep your eyes on the script and play your part well. You are not the hero. King Jesus is. He is the God-appointed hero Who delivers you from every enemy—His and yours. He is your strong helper (*ezer*) Who chastises you for your good, building you up to make you fearless and confident, and humble and dependent at the same time. That's how trusting in the Lord, the Savior-Hero, transforms you. On Palm Sunday, Psalm 118 calls All Those Who Fear the LORD to respond in faith: "His steadfast love endures forever."