

The Cornerstone of God's Choosing (Part 2)

Psalm 118:1-29

15 May 2022

Halifax, 10:30 AM

Introduction:

Two weeks ago, I started a new sermon series in the epistle to the Hebrews.

- Hebrews was written to urge believers to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, even when the people around us oppose us for doing so.
 - I chose to preach from this book at this time because as believers, we are experiencing more and more opposition from the world for our faith.
 - Like the believing Jews to whom Hebrews was written, we are increasingly pressured to draw back from wholly following Jesus.

Last week, I presented a song for us to sing as we undertake our study of Hebrews.

- It will be like a theme song we will use while I preach through the first two chapters; then I will give you another song.
 - The song is Psalm 118.
 - There is so much in this Psalm that I decided to do two sermons on it.

Listen carefully as I read it to you again this week.

- Psalm 118:1-19.

Psalm 118:1-29: Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy *endures* forever. ² Let Israel now say, "His mercy *endures* forever." ³ Let the house of Aaron now say, "His mercy *endures* forever." ⁴ Let those who fear the LORD now say, "His mercy *endures* forever." ⁵ I called on the LORD in distress; the LORD answered me *and set me* in a broad place. ⁶ The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? ⁷ The LORD is for me among those who help me; therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me. ⁸ *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. ⁹ *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. ¹⁰ All nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. ¹¹ They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me; but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. ¹² They surrounded me like bees; they were quenched like a fire of thorns; for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. ¹³ You pushed me violently, that I might fall, but the LORD helped me. ¹⁴ The LORD *is*

my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. ¹⁵ The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tents of the righteous; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly. ¹⁶ The right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly. ¹⁷ I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD. ¹⁸ The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death. ¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, *and* I will praise the LORD. ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD, through which the righteous shall enter. ²¹ I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation. ²² The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. ²³ This was the LORD's doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes. ²⁴ This *is* the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. ²⁶ Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. ²⁷ God *is* the LORD, and He has given us light; bind

the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. ²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. ²⁹

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy *endures forever.*

May the Lord add His blessing to the reading of His holy word.

Last week, we looked almost exclusively at one verse—verse 22—which says:

- **The stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.**
- This is the key verse in the Psalm.
 - This verse is referred to frequently in the New Testament—by Jesus, by Peter, by Luke, and by Paul.
 - These all make it clear that Jesus Christ is the rejected stone, that the builders who rejected Him are the corrupt leaders of the Old Testament church who delivered Him over to be crucified, and that God overruled them by raising Him up and making Him the foundation of the whole church.
 - This means everything for those who know themselves to be sinners and want to be reconciled to God.
 - God the Father sent Jesus to represent all the people that would ever be saved.
 - Representing us meant that Jesus came to take responsibility for our sins.
 - That is the reason the Father did not stop the corrupt builders of the church when they rejected Him and delivered Him up to the cross.
 - Though they meant it for evil, God purposed it for the salvation of the whole church.
 - Therefore, even though they had Him crucified, God raised Him up, showing that He accepted His offering for our sins.
 - If God had rejected Him the way the builders did, not one person could be saved; but God accepted Him as the offering for all His peoples' sins.
 - **“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”**

As I told you last week, the whole Psalm revolves around this verse.

- **Verse 22: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”**
 - This morning,
 - I want to begin by looking at the verses that come after verse 22 where, in singing this Psalm, we join with Jesus in praising the Lord for making Him the chief cornerstone of His church.
 - Then I want to look at what comes before verse 22 where, we sing with Jesus of the hope that He had when He was the rejected stone.
- So let's get to it, beginning with what follows verse 22.

I. When you sing this Psalm, see that you join with Jesus in praising the LORD for making Him the chief cornerstone.

A. In verse 23, sing to the LORD about how marvellous it is to you that He made Jesus to be the chief cornerstone.

- Verse 23, says **“this [this making of Him to be the chief cornerstone] is the LORD’S doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.”**
1. Think of just *how* marvellous it really is that God has accepted Him.
 - Jesus was representing the whole church when He went to the cross.
 - We are all guilty defiled sinners who deserve to be condemned.
 - That’s why Jesus was condemned when He represented us.
 - God the Father rejected Him because of our sin and cut Him off, but then He made Him the chief cornerstone of His redeemed people who are going to glory.
 - What could be more marvellous than that?
 - How could it be that we, sinners that we are, have now been accepted?
 - We who were destined for hell are now on our way to glory!
 - It was not a human court that accepted Him, it was God the Father!
 - He was satisfied with His offering for our sins and that makes it final.
 - He said, “It is enough, it is sufficient,” and no one can say otherwise.
 - There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus.
 - Who can bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.
 - God fully accepted us when He accepted the rejected stone as the chief cornerstone on which His church is built.
 2. Our Saviour is the one who rejoices most of all about this.
 - It was for the joy of securing our acceptance that He went to the cross.
 - He has a much greater sense of both the curse and the blessing than we do.
 - It is marvellous in His eyes because of His great love for us and because of His even greater love for the Father—to see us praising Him now and honouring Him who were once dead in our sins.
 - Let what is marvellous in His eyes be marvellous in your eyes!
 3. With Him, let us consecrate the day that He was raised up as a day to express our joy and praise.
 - Verse 24 says of the day of His acceptance, **“This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.”**
 - It was on the first day of the week that Jesus was raised—this is the day that the Lord has made—the day set apart to remember what He did.
 - On that day, Jesus met with His disciples to begin to joyful praise.
 - He returned a week later, again on Sunday, the first day of the week.
 - And it was on Pentecost, which always fell on Sunday, that He poured out His Spirit on us to keep us praising God for the gospel.
 - When we sing this Song, we affirm in this verse that this is the day that Lord has made—when the rejected stone was made the cornerstone of the church—and that we will rejoice and be glad in it.
 - See that you do this. See that you do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is.

- See that you are filled with joy and praise for the marvellous thing that God has done: **The stone that was rejected has been made the chief cornerstone.**
- B. In verse 25, see how we sing out for the LORD to save us now that He has made Jesus the chief cornerstone—
- It says, “**Save now** [now that you have made Jesus the cornerstone], **I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.**”
1. With Jesus the accepted stone, we realise that the foundation of salvation has been laid and we look to the Lord to save us, our children, and people from all the nations of the earth.
 - The foundation is complete. Jesus has been raised for the justification of all who come to God by Him—so we have boldness to pray.
 2. We are told that having finished His work, He now intercedes for us in heaven.
 - He prays for the salvation of every last one of His elect, and every last one will be saved.
 - With jubilation, we are to join with Him in praying for this salvation.
 - Hosanna—Save now, O LORD.
- C. In verse 26, we sing with joy of the blessedness of our Lord Jesus—of the excellence with which God has crowned Him as the chief cornerstone.
- The words are, v. 26: “**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!** [that’s Jesus] **We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.**”
 - What a change there is in the way we, as sinners, see Jesus once God opens our eyes!
 - The stone that we rejected we now adore as the most precious stone of all.
 - Like Peter said in 1 Peter 2:7: “**Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient...** His elevation as the chief cornerstone is an offense.
 - He is so blessed! God has given Him so much grace and so much good. He has made Him the Saviour of the whole world.
 - There is no one as blessed as He is.
 - **Blessed is He who has come in the name of the LORD.**
- D. In verse 27, we sing with yearning for Him to keep us praising Him.
1. We attest that it was the LORD who has opened our eyes to see this in the first place:
 - v. 27: “**God is the LORD, and He has given us light;**”
 - We were so blind in our sin. We could not see the glory of the stone we rejected. A crucified Saviour was offensive and foolish to us...
 - but God has caused the light of the glorious gospel of His Son to shine in our hearts. We have believed because **God is the LORD, and He has given us light.**
 2. When we have light, we are full of thanksgiving and praise for what God has done.

- Thanksgiving and praise are the sacrifices that God requires in the New Covenant—we give thanks and praise to God for accepting Jesus.
 - But you all know how quickly these sacrifices can depart from God’s altar!
 - We lose sight of the glory of Jesus our saviour and they dry up.
 - And so here in verse 27, we ask the LORD to tie our sacrifice of praise firmly to His altar so that it cannot get away!
 - Our words are: **“Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.”**
 - Bind it so that it cannot get away.
 - Enable us to see what we see now so that we will keep praising you.
- E. In verse 28 of the song, we promise that we will indeed keep praising Him.
- **v. 28: “You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You.”**
1. This is actually a vow that our Lord Jesus, the head of the church made from the cross according to Psalm 22:22 and Hebrews 2:12 when God answered Him from the cross.
 - As the Mediator who came as a man, He calls God His God, and He leads us in our praise to God.
 - He has taken responsibility to see that we continue to praise God—as the perfect man who is also God, He Himself leads us by example and commands us with authority and enables us with grace.
 2. If we are His people—those who have come to Him for salvation—His vows that His church will praise are binding on us—
 - That is the reason that when we sing Psalm 118, we also solemnly attest that we too will praise the LORD and exalt Him who made Christ the chief cornerstone.
- F. In the last verse of this song, verse 29, our Lord Jesus earnestly calls upon us (and we join with Him to call upon each other) to give thanks to God for His covenant mercy.
- The words are quite familiar because we find them all through the Psalms: **“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.”**
 - The word translated *give thanks* is the Hebrew word *yadaw* which means *to confess* the LORD, or to say what is true about Him and His gracious work...
 - It is very often translated by the word *praise* or *thank*.
 - The idea is that when we confess what is true about God, it will come out as praise and thanksgiving—because He is good.
 - We thank Him for His goodness to us and we praise Him for being so very good that He has made Christ, the rejected stone, the chief cornerstone by whom we have salvation.
 - We further confess that His *mercy* endures forever—
 - This word ‘mercy’ is *hesed*, which speaks of His covenant mercy, His faithful love, or steadfast love that never fails—His love that has gone so far as to send His Son to be our Saviour.

TRANS> So you see the delightful praise that rightly follows verse 22 where Jesus the rejected stone is made the chief cornerstone on which God’s people are built.

- Having seen what follows verse 22, let us now see what precedes verse 22.

- It is very instructive because here we see how Jesus responded when He was the rejected stone—before God made Him the chief cornerstone.
- Here we have Him being despised and rejected while He was on earth. Yes...

II. When you sing this Psalm, see that you join with Jesus in singing of the hope that He had before He was made the chief cornerstone—while He was the stone that was rejected by men—by the builders.

A. The confidence that Jesus expresses here should be the confidence that we all have if we belong to Jesus.

1. We will bear the reproach of Christ for as long as we are in the world.
 - The world mocks us. They ridicule us and call us foolish. They call us evil and reject us. Sometimes they even fine us, imprison us, and execute us.
2. But when this happens, we need to sing the way Jesus sang at such a times.
 - We need to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for His sake who suffered so greatly for our sake.
 - We need to rejoice in the fellowship of His sufferings...
 - We need to have the faith that He expresses here when He was rejected.

➤ Let's take a look at what is here.

B. This Psalm begins the same way it ends, with the call to praise God: **“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*”**

- We have seen how these words speak of the simple confession that God is good and that His covenant love or mercy endures forever...
 - This is not so easy to do when we are under severe affliction, but that is when we need to hold to this confession the most!
- 1. Verses 2-4 go on to insist that all Israel, from the priests to the people, would join in the confession that the LORD is good and that His mercy endures forever.
 - This shows that the whole church in every age is to praise God in this way.
 - The repetition shows us that this is important and suggest that it is difficult.
- 2. If you do not learn to hold on to this confession in your mouth and in your heart, you will wilt when persecution comes.
 - Think about it.
 - What happens when you begin to question God's goodness and covenant faithfulness?
 - You begin to grumble at God for what He is putting you through.
 - You begin to dispute with Him about what He has called you to do.
 - It is so wicked and disrespectful to our God, especially when He has been so extremely gracious and merciful to us.
- 3. In my earlier days, I did not grasp the importance of this.
 - Now that I have been an ordained minister for 25 years, I realise that as soon as I lose sight of the incredible goodness and steadfast love of God toward me,

- I will become weary and discouraged in my service to Him, and prone to fall into temptation—be it frustration, anger, indifference, covetousness, gossip—you name it...
 - And I see that this is also true of those I minister to.
 - There are some who never seem to be able to truly confess with their mouth and their heart that the Lord is good and that His mercy endures forever—they have a terrible time going on for the Lord.
- C. Ah, but what readiness you will have to serve Him wholeheartedly when you keep His goodness and faithfulness before you—as Jesus our Lord does in verses 5 to 21.
1. Like Jesus, you will call on God in your distress and experience His deliverance.
 - Verse 5: **I called on the LORD in distress; the LORD answered me *and set me in a broad place.***
 - You will be able to catalogue times when you have done this—when the Lord has set you free as one who was hemmed in and then released.
 2. Like Jesus, when you remember that God is good and merciful, you will not be afraid of people.
 - You will confess, verses 6-7: **The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? ⁷ The LORD is for me among those who help me; therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me.”**
 3. Like Jesus, when you remember that God is good and merciful, you will trust in Him to deliver you instead of men—even great men who are princes.
 - You will say, verses 8-9: ***It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. ⁹ It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.”***
 4. Like Jesus, when you remember that God is good and merciful, you will be confident even when your enemies swarm around you. You will be sure that it will not be you, but they who will be destroyed in the end.
 - You will say with Jesus, verses 10-12: **All nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. ¹¹ They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me; but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. ¹² They surrounded me like bees; they were quenched like a fire of thorns; for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.”**
 - You will be able to testify to these enemies that, though they pushed you, or thrust against you, with great violence, the Lord delivered you... v. 13: **“You pushed me violently, that I might fall, But the LORD helped me.”**
 - You will confess as Israel did when they came across the Red Sea that the LORD is your strength and your song...
 - v. 14: **The LORD *is* my strength and song...** That is, He is the one who gives you resilience to stand even when surrounded by enemies and troubles—
 - And He is the one who gives you joy as your song so that you do not lose heart.
 - That is how He delivers you—
 - v. 14 (continued): **And He has become my salvation [or deliverance].**

- Often, it is not by actually stopping the enemies, but by being your strength and your song in the midst of the trouble.
5. Like Jesus, when you remember that God is good and merciful, you will be certain that God will deliver you with His might and power.
- His might and power is called *His right hand* in v. 15 & 16 where it says:
 - **The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tent of the righteous; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.** ¹⁶ **The right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.**
 - If you are unsure of His strength and His commitment and that He will indeed deliver you at last, you will not be able to stand... you will wilt under pressure.
 - But you have every reason to be certain of His deliverance.
 - When facing death, be assured that like Jesus, you will not die but live and declare what God has done.
 - In verse 17 & 18, Jesus says—as He faces the cross: **I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.** ¹⁸ **The LORD has chastened me severely, but He has not given me over to death.**
 - So it was that though He died on the cross, He was alive again declaring that the powerful arm of God who chastened Him severely had also raised Him up.
 - Here He anticipates this while facing His enemies in the world.
 - He knew that He would be telling us the good news of His resurrection.
 - We have no reason to fear death if He is our Saviour.
 - He has gone before us and we will go after Him.
6. Like Jesus, you will be certain that God will receive you as righteous (v. 19-21).
- a. In vv. 19-20, we see Jesus outside the gates of righteousness expecting to go in.
- As the bearer of our sin, He could not be received as righteous because we were not righteous.
 - But He trusted that through His saving work on the cross, He would be admitted through these gates—not for Himself only, but as the one who was bearing all of His people’s sins.
 - He was confident because He knew that God His Father was good and that His covenant mercy endured forever.
 - He knew that God had promised that, by the cross, He would redeem His people, so He stood before the gates of righteousness in behalf of all those that the Father had given Him, expecting to be admitted.
- b. In v. 21, Jesus declares triumphantly that God has answered Him and has let Him in.
- He says, **“I will praise you, for you have answered me, and have become my salvation [the deliverer of Me and of all My people].”**

- We share in this praise, as we have seen, but we also are to share in this hope while we are yet in this world.
 - We share in this hope that He had when we are rejected by men.
 - We know that though they reject us and call us evil, God will receive us in Jesus because He is God and His covenant mercy is forever certain.
- c. Praise God!
 - **The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.**