

“Reasons for Praise – Part 2”
Psalm 68
(Preached at Trinity, May 22, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The ancient Hebrews often referred to the 150 psalms as The Book of Praises. So it shouldn’t surprise us that the theme of praise permeates the psalms.
As we opened Psalm 68 we found a psalm of praise and celebration as David ascribes greatness to God. It finds as its context the celebration of God’s great hand upon His people as they traveled from Egypt to Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant going before them.
Psalm 68:4 – “Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.”
2. Psalm 68 is a most difficult psalm to unfold. There are parts that we don’t know the full meaning of.
Spurgeon said: “The Psalm is at once surpassingly excellent and difficult. Its darkness in some stanzas is utterly impenetrable.”
3. As I pointed out, there are numerous approaches one could take to this psalm in order to draw out its expository riches and expositors have differed widely but one wonderful approach is to simply divide it into the manifold reasons *why* God’s people should praise Him.
4. Last time we looked at the first three reasons why God’s people should praise Him.
 - A. **Verses 5-6** – Because of God’s great mercy to the desolate and afflicted
 1. Compassion is one of God’s attributes
Psalm 86:15 – “But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.”
 2. David describes God as, “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows”
 3. The greatest demonstration of God’s mercy to the afflicted is seen in His actions towards His elect. When we cry out to Him as a little child He turns His ear towards us as a compassionate and loving Father.
 4. God is worthy of all praise for His great mercy to the afflicted
 - B. **Verses 7-8** – Because of the wonderfulness and terribleness of God in marching before His people
 1. It was with great power that God went before His people
As God marched forth none could stand in His path.
 2. Such is also true of our great deliverance with Christ as our Mighty King, the Captain of our salvation.
 3. It was with great power that we were delivered from our bondage to sin and Satan.
 4. He continues to go forth with us as we march into battle. We follow Him as our King.
 5. God is worthy to be praised as the great Captain of our salvation.

- C. **Verses 9-10** – Because of the sustaining grace God gives to His redeemed people
1. God sustained His people through the wilderness
Psalms 68:9 – “Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain”
 2. God is pleased to pour out His provision upon His people. He is willing.
 3. This is a wonderful truth for us - God delights to give good things to us.
 4. God provides for us physically and spiritually
He sends showers of refreshment when we are weary
Ezekiel 34:26 – “And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.”
 5. God is worthy to be praised for His powerful sustaining grace.
4. Tonight I want to continue to look at the reasons God is worthy of praise.
There is no greater truth.
1 Chronicles 16:25 – “For great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised”
- I. **Verses 11-12** – Because of the promised victory God has pledged to His people – ultimately fulfilled through the Gospel
- A. Remember, this psalm celebrates God’s great hand upon His people as they traveled from Egypt to Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant going before them.
1. These verses describe particularly God’s hand upon Israel as they made their conquest upon Canaan. As their conquering King God was fulfilling His promises
 2. There are images of kings and armies fleeing and the dividing of plunder
 3. **Verse 11** implies God giving His Word promising the victory followed by the women publishing of the reports of the victories.
 - a. We can see this as Miriam sang praises to God after the Egyptians were overthrown.
Exodus 15:20-21 – “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. ²¹ And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”
 - b. We can also see a similar situation years later after David slew Goliath
1 Samuel 18:6 – “And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.”
 4. God as the great Commander of His people brought the kings beneath the feet of His people. They laid down their weapons in surrender. God’s people divided the spoil.
- B. There is glorious application of this for the church.
1. God has made glorious promises in His Word – the promise of the Gospel. That those who surrender unconditionally to His dominion forsaking their sin and trusting in His Son will find life and peace.

2. And God has pledged to bring His own under His dominion – every one that He has given to His Son will surrender to Him.
John 6:37 – “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”
John 6:39 – “And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”
 3. God has also promised that Christ will achieve ultimate victory
Philippians 2:10-11 – “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
 3. As God’s people we joyfully publish these Glad Tidings far and wide – that God has brought victory through Jesus Christ.
2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – “(For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;”
 4. God is saving men from the greatest to the least.
- C. God is worthy of great praise as we consider His great work in subduing sinners

V. **Verses 13-14** – Because of the way God protects His people when they are in their most vulnerable condition.

- A. This is one of the passages that is most difficult to interpret
 1. Spurgeon: “The Psalm is at once surpassingly excellent and difficult. Its darkness in some stanzas is utterly impenetrable.”
 James Montgomery Boice said of **Verse 13** – “It is probably best to confess simply that we do not know what this means. Someday we may, but in the meantime, we can be sure that its meaning was known to those for whom the psalm was first written.”
 2. It is understandable that there should be some difficulties in the psalms, some of which were written over 3000 years ago.
 3. The KJV records – “Though ye have lien among the pots”
 NASB – “When you lie down among the sheepfolds”
 NIV – “Even while you sleep among the campfires”
 4. Two possibilities seem most reasonable:
 - a. Boundaries were usually comprised of heaps of stones, broken bricks, and other rubbish. Stones were also used to support the pots used in ancient cooking. Thus the psalmist had in mind these boundaries made of rubbish. Job was seen sitting on such a heap of rubbish scraping his sores with broken pieces of pottery.
 The picture is of Israel appearing as rubbish—worthless.
 - b. The other image is that of Israel sleeping—either among the sheepfolds or in the midst of the campfires. The point is they were in a position that was most vulnerable to their enemies—that of helplessness.
 - c. The image is that of worthlessness, helplessness. Israel appeared as weak and of little value.

5. The second part of **Verse 13** is equally difficult—“ *yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*”
The refers to something that appears common but adorned as that which is precious, valuable.
 6. David seems to be saying that even when God’s people appear worthless, weak and vulnerable all is not as it appears. They are precious in God’s sight He cares for them as His precious treasure.
- B. This is glorious for us to consider
1. We seldom realize just how vulnerable we are
Luke 22:31 – “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat.”
1 Peter 5:8 – “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”
 2. Even in our weakness we are protected by the infinite love of Christ.
Romans 8:38-39 – “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
 3. There are times that we feel weak, poured out, exhausted, vulnerable – yet, God is always with us proving Himself mighty. He never sleeps, never slumbers, never takes His watchful eye off of us.
 4. Prosperity in our Lord’s Kingdom is never as it seems.
 5. God is worthy to be praised for His care for us, even when we appear most weak.

VI. **Verses 15-16** – Because His church is the most glorious Kingdom in the world

- A. The Hill of God of course points to Zion
1. David compares it to the hill of Bashan
 - a. The name Bashan means “fruitful”
 - b. Bashan was a district east of Jordan known for its fertility, particularly its oak forests. It was the territory given to the half tribe of Manasseh that did not enter Canaan.
 - c. The region of Bashan was also known for its high rugged mountains. The peaks of Mount Hermon on the northern fringe of the Bashan range are nine thousand feet above sea level.
 2. Compared to Bashan Mount Zion, which David chose for the site of his capital, was unimpressive rising only a few hundred feet above the surrounding valleys.
 - a. On outward appearance Zion should stand in awe of Bashan but David paints an image of Zion rising above Bashan.
 - b. The picture is of the towering peaks of Bashan envying Zion.
^{NAS} **Psalm 68:16** – “Why do you look with envy, O mountains with *many* peaks, At the mountain which God has desired for His abode?”

- B. Such is the Church – the glorious Kingdom of our Lord
1. Things are not always as they seem. God takes small things and raised them up to magnificence
1 Corinthians 1:26-29 – “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:²⁷ But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;²⁸ And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:²⁹ That no flesh should glory in his presence.”
 2. As Bashan rose high above the valleys the Church rises up above all. It stands as a beacon in this world of darkness
Psalm 50:2 – “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.”
 3. The church is the greatest of all kingdoms and has the greatest of all kings
 4. Zion’s King shines with radiant beauty – unspeakable glory
John 1:14 – “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”
 5. The inhabitants of the Kingdom of our Lord also shine with beauty. The Church shines with the radiance of her King.
Ephesians 5:26-27 – “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”
- C. Most glorious of all, God is pleased to make the Church His habitation.
Psalm 68:16 – “the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.”
1. God is to be praised because He has made His Church the greatest of all Kingdoms and the throne of Christ the greatest of all thrones.
 2. It is the place of His abode, the place of His great delight.
 3. God is worthy to be praised in the establishment of His church, the greatest of all kingdoms

Conclusion:

1. Let all the earth praise Him. Let every voice praise Him.
Psalm 107:8 – “Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!”
Psalm 117:1 – “O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.”
Psalm 150:6 – “Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”
2. Let all the inhabitants of the Kingdom of our great Lord praise Him.
Psalm 48:1 – “Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.”