

“Reasons for Praise – Part 3”
Psalm 68
(Preached at Trinity, May 29, 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. As we seen Psalm 68 is a psalm of praise and 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. As I’ve 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.
3. So far we’ve looked at six reasons why our hearts should be lifted up in praise:
 - A. **Verses 5-6** – Because of God’s great mercy to the desolate and afflicted God is full of compassion particularly towards His elect – He is worthy of praise
 - B. **Verses 7-8** – Because of the wonderfulness and terribleness of God in marching before His people. Christ is the great Captain of our salvation and worthy of all praise.
 - C. **Verses 9-10** – Because of the sustaining grace God gives to His redeemed people God is pleased to pour out His provision upon His people. He delights to give us good things. He is worthy to be praised.
 - D. **Verses 11-12** – Because of the promised victory God has pledged to His people – ultimately fulfilled through the Gospel. The glorious promises of the Gospel are being published throughout the world. God is worthy to be praised.
 - E. **Verses 13-14** – Because of the way God protects His people when they are in their most vulnerable condition. Even in our weakness we are protected by the infinite love of Christ. He never sleeps, never slumbers, never takes His watchful eye off of us. He is worthy to be praised.
 - F. **Verses 15-16** – Because His church is the most glorious Kingdom in the world As Bashan rose high above the valleys the Church rises up above all. It stands as a beacon in this world of darkness. Zion’s King shines with radiant beauty. Christ makes the church His holy habitation and will remain with her forever. He is worthy to be praised. “Praise ye the Lord!”
4. Tonight I want to continue this wonderful excursion into some of the infinite reasons God is worthy to be praised. As we’ve seen, the Book of Psalms is a Book of Praise. The final psalm, Psalm 150 closes with:
Psalm 150:6 – “Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”
We should make praise our great priority. May God enflame our hearts once again tonight as we consider reasons why God is worthy of all praise.

5. While we can find Christ in many of the psalms, most are not explicitly messianic. To be explicitly a messianic psalm there must be some portion of it used of Christ in the NT. Such is the case with parts of **Psalm 68**. In our passage tonight we find direct reference to it in the NT.

I. **Verses 17-18** – God is worthy to be praised because of Christ our King.

This has multiple facets pointing to Christ the King

- Because Christ, the King of the Church has all power and authority at His disposal
 - Because Christ, having ended the work of redemption, has ascended gloriously
 - Because Christ is sending down gifts to his church and ruling it.
- A. Because Jesus Christ has all power and authority – **Verse 17**
1. The KJV's translation "angels" is unjustified. The word is not in the text. The word points to a repetition or multiplying.
NAS **Psalm 68:17** – "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands"
 2. The picture is that of comparison/contrast – the nations of the earth boast their power in the strength of their armies. This is true of the US. When this was written it was measured by chariots. The power of God is infinite. David describes it using words that multiply thousands upon thousands—an endless number.
 3. Although the word "angel" is not in the text, the translators of the KJV were surely not in theological error:
 - a. David adds:
Psalm 68:17 – "the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*."
 Moses spoke to Israel:
Deuteronomy 33:2 – "And he said, "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them."
 - b. The words of Christ:
KJV **Matthew 26:53** – "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"
 - c. The writer of Hebrews described innumerable angels assigned to heavenly Jerusalem – which is the church:
Hebrews 12:22 – "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,"
 4. Jesus is the Lord of an innumerable host. He is Lord Sabaoth. It is equal to the title "Lord of Hosts" found 235 times in the OT. It describes the Commander of an innumerable army.
Psalm 24:10 – "Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory."

5. Jesus is the omnipotent Lord. The all powerful Potentate who stands to conquer all of His enemies
NAS **Isaiah 1:24** – “Therefore the Lord God of hosts, The Mighty One of Israel declares, “Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries, And avenge Myself on My foes.”
 6. This Almighty King is worthy to be praised. This was the great cry witnessed in Isaiah’s vision.
Isaiah 6:3 – “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.”
- B. Because Christ accomplished His work and was raised up on high
Psalm 68:18 – “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive”
1. Jesus freed His people from the captivity of sin and Satan
 2. Jesus as our mighty conqueror came and rescued us
 - a. This is the essence of Ephesians 4:8
NAS **Ephesians 4:8** – “Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.”
KJV **Ephesians 4:8** – “he led captivity captive”
 - b. The picture is of Jesus marching victoriously into the Holy City leading forth his victorious people.
 - c. He shall not lose a single one – they are His reward – God has pledged it. Jesus has accomplished it by His mighty power
- C. Because Christ abundantly distributes His gifts to His church
1. David says God *receives* gifts
Psalm 68:18 – “thou hast received gifts for men”
 - a. The picture is of conquered nations paying tribute
 - b. Those who enter our Lord’s Kingdom gladly and most willingly give up all they have in the name of Christ
 - c. David adds that even the most rebellious are thoroughly conquered by Christ and gladly surrender to Christ
Psalm 68:18 – “*for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*.”
 2. Paul uses this passage but makes a slight change
Ephesians 4:8 – “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”
 - a. The Hebrew can be translated “received for” which is the way the KJV translates it. Christ received gifts which He then distributed to His church.
 - b. Christ makes plentiful distribution to His church
 3. Jesus both receives and gives to the church
 - a. The chief gift, of course, is Christ Himself – John 3:16
Isa 9:6 – “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given”

- b. Jesus spoke of another gift as He spoke to the woman at the well – the Holy Spirit

John 4:10 – “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”

John 7:38-39 – “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive”

- c. Paul lists among Christ’s gifts as those who give themselves to feeding our Lord’s people

^{NAS} **Ephesians 4:11-12** – “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”
Spurgeon: “Ministers are *received for*, and are *given to*, you by Christ. As men, and as sinful men, ministers are as nothing, and wish not to make anything of themselves; but, as the gifts of Christ, it becomes you to make much of them.”

You make much of them by hearing them and praying for them.

4. Jesus is worthy to be praised in His wondrous work for His church.

II. Verses 19-20 – Because of God bears our burdens and delivers us from death

A. “Blessed *be* the Lord”

1. It literally means to kneel
2. It is an expression of praise – God is worthy to be praised

B. God bears the burdens of His people

1. The KJV reads:

“Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*”

- a. If you are reading the KJV the phrase “with benefits” is in italics which tells us it isn’t a part of the Hebrew text
- b. The word “loadeth” refers to carrying a load or bearing a burden so the KJV translators took the word “load” to mean that God must be loading us with something, namely benefits.
- c. Rather, the text is probably saying that it is God that is bearing *our* load or burden.

2. This is the way most translations handle the text

^{NAS} **Psalm 68:19** – “Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden

^{ESV} **Psalm 68:19** – “Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up”

^{NIV} **Psalm 68:19** – “Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens”

3. In this difficult psalm, once again, the KJV is not theologically wrong for God daily loads us with His rich benefits.

- a. God continually opens the windows of heaven and showers us with His goodness.
Psalm 103:1-5 – “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: ³ Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; ⁴ Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; ⁵ Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things*; so *that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.”
- b. But this probably isn't what this verse is saying.
 Spurgeon: “Our version contains a great and precious truth, though probably not the doctrine intended here. God's benefits are not few nor light, they are loads; neither are they intermittent, but they come "daily; "nor are they confined to one or two favourites, for all Israel can say, *he loadeth us with benefits.*”
4. But this passage is teaching us the rich blessing that God is continually bearing our burden. Jesus is carrying our burdens
 - a. Christ delivered us from the burden of the Law. He met all of the Law's demands. He had delivered us from the rigor of the Law. The Law no longer has the power to condemn us
Matthew 11:28-30 – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”
 - b. Christ delivered us from the burden of sin. We are no longer enslaved by sin.
Romans 6:6-7 – “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.”
- B. The God of our salvation has delivered us from the curse of death
Psalm 68:19 – “the God of our salvation”
NAS Psalm 68:20 – “God is to us a God of deliverances; And to God the Lord belong escapes from death.”
 1. No matter how strong our enemy God is able to deliver us
 2. He is even able to deliver us from our final enemy, death
1 Corinthians 15:25-26 – “For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”
 3. God is worthy to be praised who bears our burdens and delivers us from all our enemies.

Conclusion:

1. Christ permeates throughout the psalms, even those that are not explicitly considered messianic psalms.
2. God is worthy to be praised for all of His infinite blessings through Christ Jesus our Lord.