

*To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song.*

Book 2 of the Psalter has its share of the darker Psalms –  
so it's about time we came to a song of Praise!

Books 1-2 of the Psalter presuppose the Davidic monarchy.  
Most of these psalms are Psalms of David,  
and they appear to have been written for a context where David (or his son)  
is sitting on the throne.  
Many of them are darker – speaking of how things are *not* right –  
but none of them appear to come out of the darker night of the exile.  
The problems that they face are all problems that can be solved  
in the context of God's steadfast love to David.

As we have seen, Book 2 opens with several psalms of the Sons of Korah (Psalms 42-49).  
There are dangers and difficulties that face the people of God,  
but the Son of David sits on the throne, and so God's kingdom – God's city – will endure.

And we saw that this applies to us rather clearly –  
because Jesus is the Son of David who sits on the throne,  
and so therefore we know that God's kingdom, God's city *will* endure!

Psalm 50 is then the hinge –  
a Psalm of Asaph that transitions from the confident tone of the Sons of Korah  
to the darker tones of the “biographical” Psalms of David.  
Psalms 51-65 are all Psalms of David –  
and most of them are connected with particular events in his life.  
Many of them have moments of thanksgiving and rejoicing,  
but all of them include the darker themes of suffering, enemies, and death.

Except Psalm 65.

Psalm 65 is a joyous bolt of praise that illuminates the darkness of the last 14 Psalms,  
reminding us that sometimes God *does* bring joy and happiness  
in the midst of this evil age!

Psalm 65 remembers that there are problems:  
the iniquities and transgressions of verse 3 remind us of Psalm 51;  
the “roaring of the seas and the tumult of the peoples” in verse 7  
remind us that enemies and foes have not disappeared.

But God is the one who *atones for* – and therefore *forgives* our sins –  
and God is the one who *stills* the roaring of the seas,  
and thus becomes the *hope* of all the ends of the earth.

None of the powers that oppose us – the world, the flesh or the devil – can withstand him.

Therefore in spite of the last fourteen Psalms –  
and because of the God to whom we have been singing for the last fourteen Psalms! –  
we will sing praise!

So tonight I want you to turn away from the darkness and bask in the glory of Jesus!

### **1. Praise to the God of Our Salvation (v1-8)**

#### **a. We Praise You in Zion (v1-4)**

65 Praise is due to you,<sup>[a]</sup> O God, in Zion,  
and to you shall vows be performed.

The first part of verse 1 could be woodenly translated,  
“praise waits for you, O God, in Zion” –  
the word translated “due” in the ESV  
can mean “to be silent” or “to wait” or “to wait in silence.”

It is the word used at the beginning of Psalm 62,  
“For God alone my soul *waits in silence*.”

We tend to think of praise as something “noisy”!  
But I think Luther was on to something when he translated this (in German)  
as “You are praised in silence.”

We live in a noisy world where everything is busier and busier –  
where the noise and commotion makes us think that we are productive,  
when in fact, we are just busy.

Think about what it means for praise to be *due* to God in Zion.  
It means that it is not yet happening.  
It is waiting, in silence, for God in Zion.

In the context of all the trials and troubles that we have undergone in the last fourteen Psalms,  
we now declare that praise waits in silence for God in Zion.  
Even as my soul waits in silence for God alone,  
so also praise waits in silence for God to come to Zion.

Hengstenberg (vol. 2, pp. 314-15) wisely says that,

“silence-praise is praise which is bound up with silence,  
has silence for its consequence,  
or has the effect of allaying that tumultuous agitation, that distressing excitement,  
which prevails in the soul  
till it has attained to a living knowledge of the glory of God;  
against this, his praise, which quiets all the tumult of the soul,  
is the only effectual remedy;  
the more a man praises God, the more quiet does his soul become.”

And thus,

“to you shall vows be performed.”

We have promised you, O God, that when you come to Zion –  
when you refresh your people –  
we will pay our vows at your holy place.

You see the apostle Paul doing this in the book of Acts –  
redeeming his vows when he comes to Jerusalem for the feast.

And so we come, as Hebrews 12 tells us,

*to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,  
and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,  
<sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven,  
and to God, the judge of all,  
and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,  
<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,  
and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. (12:22-23)*

Indeed, that’s what verses 2-4 are all about.

God hears our prayers, atones for our sins, and brings us near to himself.

**i. You hear our prayers (v2)**

<sup>2</sup> *O you who hear prayer,  
to you shall all flesh come.*

Notice the universal scope of David’s statement.

God is characterized as the one who hears prayer.

If you come to God and lay your petition before him, he will hear you.

But then, in verse 3, David gets very specific:

**ii. You forgive our sins (v3)**

<sup>3</sup> *When iniquities prevail against me,*

*you atone for our transgressions.*

I think sometimes we tend to think only of “sin.”

The Bible uses the language of sin, transgression, and iniquity.

If only one word is used, then it can be used generically to mean “sin.”

But when they are used together, there are often shades of meaning.

Iniquity tends to nuance towards the “guilt” side of things.

The noun for iniquity “avon” is rooted in a verb meaning “to twist.”

So iniquities are those bent/twisted/perverted things that we do.

Transgression tends to nuance towards the “rebellion” side of things.

Let me translate woodenly to show you:

“things [or words] of iniquity prevail over me,  
our transgressions you yourself cover [atone for]”

The problem here is that sin – iniquity – is too strong for me.

I cannot defeat it.

I cannot overthrow it.

I am guilty before God and I know it.

But God covers our iniquity *and even* our transgressions.

Iniquity is a power that I cannot defeat,

but transgression – that’s my own rebellion.

And God himself covers over our transgressions.

He atones for them.

In David’s day it was through shadows – the offerings in the temple.

And in Christ God has once-for-all atoned for our transgressions.

Martin Luther rightly says:

“Now he has so gloriously celebrated that which was not so abundant at that time,  
as it was afterwards in Christ:

but we should sing this verse more joyfully, and exult without any intermission,

if we have the heart to understand, and the eyes and ears to see and hear!”

God has now brought Jesus as the *one* whom he has chosen to dwell in his courts.

And therefore *we* are satisfied with the goodness of God’s house:

**iii. Blessed is the one you bring near to dwell in your house (v4)**

<sup>4</sup> *Blessed is the one you choose and bring near,  
to dwell in your courts!*

*We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house,  
the holiness of your temple!*

Jesus is the blessed one –  
but because he is the blessed one,  
therefore we who are united to Christ share in his triumph.

I want you to see the progression of verses 2-4:  
God hears the prayers of all flesh,  
God atones for our transgressions (in spite of the fact that iniquity prevails over us),  
God chooses and brings near his Blessed One to dwell in his courts,  
and so *we* are satisfied with the goodness of God's house, the holiness of his temple.

Truly, Salvation is from God alone.  
Remember Psalm 62?  
For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.  
He only is my rock and my salvation (v1-2; repeated in v5-6)  
On God rests my salvation and my glory (v7).

Now here in Psalm 65,  
a song that begins with the same theme of praise in silence,  
David gives praise to the “God of our salvation.”

**b. The Ends of the Earth Praise You (v5-8)**

**i. You answer us with righteousness and awesome deeds (v5)**

<sup>5</sup> *By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness,  
O God of our salvation,  
the hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the farthest seas;*

The same universal themes of verse 2 emerge again here in verse 5 –  
but again, universal themes rooted in a particular story.

Just as in verses 1-2, where all flesh shall come to the God whose praise rests in Zion,  
so now, the hope of all the ends of the earth is the God of Israel's salvation –  
the God who answers Israel with awesome deeds.

Many think that the “awesome deeds” refer to the Exodus –  
and undoubtedly they are included –

but God's fearful deeds have been displayed in all generations.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ continues to display God's power in every generation,  
as the resurrection of Jesus Christ goes forth in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit  
upon every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

I know that sometimes we as American Christians  
can think of ourselves as the “center” of God’s plans;  
but, in fact, we are “the ends of the earth.”  
We are “the farthest seas.”

The center of God’s plan is Zion.  
And while Zion has a physical connection with the earthly Jerusalem,  
even in Psalm 65 you can see the heavenly overtones.  
“your courts...your house,...your temple” may have strongly earthly connections –  
and yet David knew just as well as his son  
that no earthly temple could contain the living God.

Indeed, if David is the author, then there *was* no earthly temple when this Psalm was written!  
(though, as we’ve seen, the ascription “of David”  
could mean “about David” “for David” “by David” “concerning David” –  
so we don’t really know who wrote this Psalm).

But God’s awesome deeds are not simply the Exodus.  
God’s awesome deeds are all his works of creation and providence,  
as we see in the following verses.

Who is this “God of our salvation”?  
Who is the “hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas?”

He is:

**ii. You are the one who made the earth and the seas (v6-7)**

<sup>6</sup> *the one who by his strength established the mountains,  
being girded with might;*  
<sup>7</sup> *who stills the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples,*

As you look at the structure of Psalm 65,  
it might appear that Psalm 65 is backwards.

It starts with praise for salvation and then moves to praise for creation/providence.  
We normally think in terms of how God’s revelation in creation  
points us towards the more wonderful revelation of redemption.

But Psalm 65 turns everything around.  
When we praise God for our salvation – and our nearness to the living God –  
then creation and providence –

the very harvest itself – becomes a picture of redemption.

Verses 6-8 show this explicitly.

In verse 6, God is the one who by his strength established the mountains,  
being girded with might.

Remember back in verse 3 – when “iniquities prevail against me”?

The verb is gabar (to be mighty, or to prevail).

Now, when it says that God is “girded with might”  
it uses the noun, geburah (might or strength).

This is the reason why God is our hope.

Because he is girded with strength.

He is the mighty one who is mightier than our sins –  
he is mightier than the creation itself!

And in verse 7, the Psalmist applies God’s power over creation  
to God’s power over the nations:

<sup>7</sup> *who stills the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples,*

I have often told you that the OT uses the seas as a picture of the raging of the nations.

Psalm 65:7 is one of the most explicit examples of this!

When Jesus says to the waves of the Sea of Galilee,

“Peace, be still,”

he is asserting his power over creation,

but at the same time, he is revealed as the God of salvation –

the one who stills the roaring of the seas – the tumult of the peoples.

And notice the reason for this display of his mighty power:

**iii. You make morning and evening shout for joy (v8)**

<sup>8</sup> *so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs.*

Verse 8 connects back to verse 6.

“By awesome deeds” – in verse 6, parallels with “are in awe” in verse 8.

Those who dwell at the ends of the earth tremble in awe at the “awesome deeds” –  
the signs that God displays.

I want you to think about what it means to live at the ends of the earth.

What is beyond the ends of the earth?

We're used to thinking of the earth as a globe.  
But ancient Israel did not.  
The ends of the earth would refer to the most remote inhabitable lands.

Those who dwell at the ends of the earth live on the border of the wilderness –  
or the edge of the sea.

Beyond the ends of the earth are the uninhabitable regions of desert and ocean.

Very few (if any) Israelites had ever been there.  
But the crossing of the Red Sea and Israel's wilderness wanderings  
came close.  
And throughout Israel's history,  
there were times when David or his son was on the throne  
but *in my experience*, I do not see the mighty deeds of God.

And so (as we saw a few weeks ago), Psalm 61:2 cried out,  
“from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint.”

Now Psalm 65:8 sings back with resounding confidence:  
“those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs.”

What sort of signs are included?

I would suggest that the second half of verse 8 illustrates this:

*You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy.*

If you live in a mechanistic universe,  
then the dawning and setting of the sun are not “signs” –  
they are universal laws.

But if you live in a world created by the God of our salvation,  
then the dawning and setting of the sun are signs –  
daily exhibitions of God's awesome deeds –  
that leave us in awe at his majesty.

But while we (who dwell at the ends of the earth) are in awe at God's signs,  
we should note that *we* are not the ones shout for joy in verse 8.

That honor and privilege belongs to the going out of the morning and the evening.  
God causes the outgoing of the morning and the evening to give a ringing shout.  
There are different kinds of shouting in Hebrew.  
Some words are used for exclamations of pain or surprise.



But this one is used for shouts of joy and celebration.  
As the sun rises, and the morning goes forth,  
it shouts for joy –  
declaring the coming of the LORD in his glory.  
And as the sun sets, and the evening goes forth,  
it once again shouts for joy –  
declaring the faithfulness of the LORD in yet one more day.

When you see the sunset, remember that it is shouting for joy to its maker!

## **2. Praise to the God of the Harvest (v9-13)**

Verses 9-13 then turn the focus to the harvest.

God is the God of our salvation –  
the one who has atoned for our transgressions  
and brought us near to himself.  
And God is the God of creation –  
the one who shows forth his mighty power  
in the heavens, the earth, and the seas.

And God is also the God of the Harvest.

If verses 6-8 focused on the three realms of creation (heavens, earth, and seas),  
then verses 9-13 focus particularly on the earth –  
the realm of man's dominion – and particularly on the agricultural rhythms of life.

### **a. You water the earth and provide grain (v9-10)**

<sup>9</sup> *You visit the earth and water it,<sup>[b]</sup>  
you greatly enrich it;  
the river of God is full of water;  
you provide their grain,  
for so you have prepared it.*

<sup>10</sup> *You water its furrows abundantly,  
settling its ridges,  
softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.*

Verses 9-10 speak of *God's* action in watering the earth.

Notice the language of “visiting” in verse 9.

“You visit the earth and water it.”

When scripture speaks of God “visiting” someone,

the idea is generally that of “inspecting” or “testing”

either for blessing or for judgment (Gen. 21, Ex 3, Is 26:14, Psalm 17:3).

When God visits his people, something big is going to happen!

Of course, in a Psalm like Psalm 65, the outcome is blessing!

And here, the blessing is on the land.

The river of God is full of water.

Is this the Jordan River?

No, the word translated here as “river” is the word for “channel”  
generally used of manmade canals.

It is also used in Psalm 46:4 –

“there is a river whose streams [or channels] make glad the city of God.”

(Think of the water chariots in the temple which symbolized the living water  
that would flow from our Lord Jesus Christ to the nations!)

Because when God’s river flows, there is grain in abundance!

You cannot divorce the spiritual from the physical in this Psalm.

God had said that the Promised Land would be an abundant land –  
when Israel loved and obeyed the LORD.

But it would be a barren land –

when Israel rebelled and disobeyed and turned to other gods.

And so the Psalmist sings of the delightful land that God has blessed  
because of his covenant faithfulness:

“You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty;

your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.”

Notice the reversal in this Psalm from the chaotic roaring of the waters in verse 7  
to the gentle showers of verse 10.

What God does in nature signifies what he does in human history.

The nations rage against the LORD and his anointed in Psalm 2.

But now, as we come to the end of the Davidic Psalms in book 2 of the Psalter,  
the nations are giving praise to God

(and, to foreshadow where we will end in Psalm 72,

they will humble themselves before the LORD’s anointed king!).

**b. You crown the year with your bounty (v11-12)**

<sup>11</sup> *You crown the year with your bounty;  
your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.*

<sup>12</sup> *The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
the hills gird themselves with joy,*

There are some great phrases in verses 11-12.

“your wagon tracks drip with fatness”!

(think of Psalm 63:5 – “my soul will be satisfied with fat and rich food” –  
that’s the image here.)

Normally, the wagon path is barren soil.

Jesus even told a parable about the seed that fell on the path –  
the birds came and ate it!

Well, Psalm 65 will have none of that.

There is no barren soil in Psalm 65!

As the wagon of the Lord passes through Israel,  
even the ruts of the wagon paths overflow with abundance.

Likewise, even the pastures of the wilderness drip (overflow).

Now when it says “wilderness” – don’t think of the American wilderness  
(the idyllic pastures of Yellowstone).

Rather, think desert.

The wilderness is a hard, barren land.

The pastures of the wilderness are almost as barren as wagon paths!

But they too are now dripping with abundance –  
and so therefore the hills gird themselves with joy.

Just as morning and evening shouted for joy in verse 8,

so now the hills gird themselves with joy,  
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
and the valleys deck themselves with grain –

they shout and sing together for joy.

Hengstenberg points out that: “Every thing helps to praise the fatherly goodness of God.

What he does in the temporal matters, is, at the same time,

a pledge and symbol of the care with which he watches his people in spiritual matters,  
to which every thing admits of being applied.” (p. 321)

**c. Meadows and valleys shout and sing for joy (v13)**

<sup>13</sup> *the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
they shout and sing together for joy.*

I want you to see something:

while the whole of verses 9-13 are about nature (there is no reference to man),  
yet man is everywhere in the background;  
the meadows are clothed with *flocks* (domestic animals),  
and the valleys are decked with *grain* (cultivated plants).

This is a celebration of God's faithfulness in bringing the harvest.

But if you think about what this is doing here –  
at the end of a Psalm that began with God  
hearing prayer, forgiving sin, and bringing us near to himself –  
a Psalm that spoke of how God subdued the roaring of the seas  
and the tumult of the peoples –  
then you see that the harvest here foreshadows the eschatological harvest.

And that harvest is you.

Paul says that Christ is the firstfruits –  
he is the one who was raised up and brought near to the Father  
in his ascension to the right hand of the Majesty.  
And we now have been raised in him.

And so we should sing praise to him –  
as John Brown of Haddington put it:

“While I sing, let praise wait, in my soul, for the Lord;  
and let me pour out my heart before him.  
Under a deep sense of guilt and pollution,  
let me believe his unbounded forgiveness, and sanctifying influence.  
Let me come even to his seat, and enjoy ravishing fellowship with him.  
Let all my confidence be fixed on him;  
and, even in the blessings of providence,  
let me discern the exceeding riches of his grace” (p. 157)

Lord's Supper