

Psalm 118:1–29 — A Psalm of Thanksgiving, Confidence, and Prophetic Hope

(The Final Hallel¹ Psalm, traditionally sung during Passover)

Verses 1–4 — A Call to Give Thanks

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!

For His mercy endures forever.

Let Israel now say, “His mercy endures forever.”

Let the house of Aaron now say, “His mercy endures forever.”

Let those who fear the Lord now say, “His mercy endures forever.”

The psalm begins with a repeated refrain: God’s mercy never ends. This is not just poetic—it’s a call to all: Israel, the priests, and every God-fearing individual. God’s goodness is not fleeting or conditional. His faithful love remains constant regardless of our circumstances. That’s something to declare aloud and often.

Personal Application:

When doubts arise, repeat this truth: *“His mercy endures forever.”* Let this truth shape your heart in seasons of hardship and in joy. Make it your response in worship, your anchor in prayer, and your outlook on life.

¹ A Hallel Psalm is part of a special collection of praise psalms—Psalms 113–118—that were traditionally sung or recited during Jewish festivals, especially the Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles, and Hanukkah.

Key Details about the Hallel Psalms:

- ◆ Meaning of “Hallel”
 - “Hallel” comes from the Hebrew word הָלַל (hallel) which means “praise.”
 - These psalms are called the “Egyptian Hallel” because they focus heavily on God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt, particularly in Psalm 114.
- ◆ The Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113–118)
 - These psalms were sung during the Passover meal, especially after the fourth cup of wine.
 - Psalms 113–114 were usually sung before the meal.
 - Psalms 115–118 were sung after the meal—meaning Jesus likely sang Psalm 118 with His disciples right before heading to the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).
- ◆ Themes of the Hallel Psalms:
 - God’s power and faithfulness (Psalm 113)
 - Deliverance from Egypt (Psalm 114)
 - Trust in the Lord over idols (Psalm 115)
 - God’s remembrance of His people (Psalm 116)
 - Corporate praise and worship (Psalm 117 – the shortest psalm)
 - Messianic hope and triumph (Psalm 118)

Why It Matters:

The Hallel Psalms are not just historical—they’re deeply prophetic, especially Psalm 118, which anticipates Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His role as the rejected cornerstone (Psalm 118:22). When Jesus sang these psalms during the Last Supper, He was proclaiming His role in the very salvation they celebrated.

Verses 5–9 — Confidence in the Lord’s Presence

*I called on the Lord in distress;
The Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.
The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.
What can man do to me?
The Lord is for me among those who help me;
Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me.
It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in man.
It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in princes.*

When life closes in—when we feel boxed in by fear, grief, or opposition—God brings us into a “broad place,” a space of spiritual peace and freedom. The psalmist finds strength not in men or leaders, but in the presence of the Lord.

Personal Application:

Have you ever trusted in people who let you down? God never does. While people may forget, overpromise, or abandon, God stays true. Put your full confidence in Him—not in your job, friends, or even leaders. He’s the only one worthy of your ultimate trust.

Verses 10–14 — Victory in the Name of the Lord

*All nations surrounded me,
But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.
They surrounded me,
Yes, they surrounded me;
But in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.
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 pushed me violently, that I might fall,
But the Lord helped me.
The Lord is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.*

The enemy might feel overwhelming—like a swarm of bees—but God’s name and power bring deliverance. The psalmist declares that even though he was pushed to the edge, God upheld him.

Personal Application:

Don’t fear overwhelming odds. In moments of weakness, remember: “*The Lord is my strength.*” He doesn’t just give strength—He IS your strength. Make Him your song and your salvation, even before the battle ends.

Verses 15–18 — Rejoicing in Righteousness and Correction

*The voice of rejoicing and salvation
Is in the tents of the righteous;
The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.
The right hand of the Lord is exalted;
The right hand of the Lord does valiantly.
I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the Lord.
The Lord has chastened me severely,
But He has not given me over to death.*

Even after trials and God’s loving correction, the psalmist recognizes that God’s discipline isn’t meant to destroy—it’s meant to restore. He lives to declare God’s works.

Personal Application:

If you’ve ever gone through a season of divine correction, know this: God disciplines His children because He loves them. He doesn’t write us off when we fall. He refines us, strengthens us, and gives us new purpose—to declare His works and praise His name.

Verses 19–21 — Entering the Gates of Righteousness

*Open to me the gates of righteousness;
I will go through them,
And I will praise the Lord.
This is the gate of the Lord,
Through which the righteous shall enter.
I will praise You,
For You have answered me,
And have become my salvation.*

This section possibly speaks prophetically of the Messiah’s entrance into Jerusalem—the triumphal entry through the eastern gate. The “gate of the Lord” welcomes the righteous who walk in His ways and enter by His provision.

Personal Application:

Jesus said, “*I am the door*” (John 10:9). Through Him we enter into fellowship with the Father. Let your life be marked by praise as you walk through the gates of righteousness—not because of your own works, but because He opened the way.

Verses 22–23 — The Rejected Stone Becomes the Cornerstone

*The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the Lord’s doing;
It is marvelous in our eyes.*

This is a clear prophetic reference to Jesus Christ, rejected by Israel's leaders but now the foundation of the Church. What man cast aside, God exalted.

Personal Application:

God has a way of taking what's rejected—people, plans, or even seasons of brokenness—and turning them into something central and beautiful. Don't be discouraged when the world rejects what God approves. His plans are always "marvelous in our eyes."

Verse 24 — A Day for Rejoicing

*This is the day the Lord has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Though commonly applied to any day, this verse refers specifically to the day of Messiah's arrival—His triumphal entry. Still, every day is a gift from God and reason to rejoice.

Personal Application:

Each day is handcrafted by God. Rejoice in it—not because every circumstance is good, but because He is good. Start your day with gratitude, trusting that God has made this day for His purposes.

Verses 25–27 — The Cry of Hosanna and the Sacrifice

*Save now, I pray, O Lord;
O Lord, I pray, send now prosperity.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!
We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.
God is the Lord,
And He has given us light;
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.*

This messianic portion was fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem and the crowds cried, "Hosanna!" But the same Messiah would become the sacrifice, bound and offered for our redemption.

Personal Application:

Praise Jesus not only as the coming King but as the willing Sacrifice. He was bound to the altar of the cross—by love, not nails. Let that truth stir deep devotion in your heart.

Verses 28–29 — Ending Where It Began: Thanksgiving

*You are my God, and I will praise You;
You are my God, I will exalt You.
Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever.*

This psalm ends the way it began—with thanksgiving for God's goodness and everlasting mercy. That's the bookend of true worship.

Personal Application:

Let thanksgiving define your relationship with God. He is your God—personally, faithfully, and eternally. Choose gratitude, not just when things go your way, but because His mercy endures forever.

Summary Reflection:

Psalms 118 is more than just a song of victory—it's a prophecy of Messiah, a testimony of deliverance, a meditation on trust, and a declaration of God's faithful love. In your moments of triumph or in times of distress, let this psalm guide your heart back to worship. If the Lord is your strength and your salvation, you can face anything with confidence.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

Let this psalm become part of the soundtrack of your walk with God.