

Psalm 108 • Trusting God even when things look bleak

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Psalm chapter 108 is a Psalm of trust, trust in God. It also includes a shout of faith, faithful anticipation of the victory that the Lord is going to bring in the midst of difficulty and warfare.

I don't know how many of you are going through warfare right now of many different kinds, but this might be good for you.

One of the interesting things about this Psalm is that it actually mixes together verses from two previous Psalms that we've looked at. This covers some of the verses from Psalm 57 and it covers some of the verses from Psalm 60. And it puts them together in Psalm 108 and gives us maybe some insight in the fact that when they were putting together worship Psalms in the nation of Israel, they would actually borrow from previous works, and put them together in such a way as to almost create a new statement.

But it begins this way by saying. By the way, did I mention this is a Psalm of David? He says, *“My heart is steadfast, O God!” (ESV)* And what he means by that is I am determined, my heart is determined.

And he says, *“I will sing and make melody with all my being!”* And we've made mention many, many times in the Psalms of David, that particularly through the difficulties of life, David continued to be steadfast in his determination to praise the Lord in the midst of it.

We've brought that up and I suppose we'll continue to bring it up as long as we're here in the Psalms. And we say it over and over again, because we need to hear it. Because our hearts are so susceptible to our own painful circumstances in such a way that it just kind of rolls over us like a wave of the ocean.

And we don't continue to be steadfast in our determination to praise when we're going through hard times, and difficult seasons, and in times of warfare. We don't continue to have that heart that wants to praise the Lord. We want to be depressed. We want to be discouraged. But of course, those emotions are the opposite of faith.

Faith doesn't deal, doesn't get discouraged. Faith doesn't get depressed. We do right. But if we apply faith, there's going to continue to be a determination. And you see that in the writings of David. I am steadfast. He says, *"My heart is steadfast, I will sing and make melody with all my being!"*

And you're going to find out as we go into this Psalm, there are circumstances it going on in David's life and in the nation of Israel that would seem to countermand that determination.

Going along with his determination, he says, *"² Awake, O harp and lyre!"* And you guys know that David was a musician and worship leader and so he speaks of using those talents of music to begin to praise the Lord. And notice when he says he's going to do it. He says, *"I will awake the dawn!"* Which means I will start my day with praise, and that's a good time to begin to praise the Lord. I will awake the dawn. In other words, I will do it first thing in the morning.

³ I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations." Even among the unbelieving nations, David says, I will offer my praise. Nothing's going to stop me. Not even the unbelief of others.

And then he gives the reason why in verse 4, *"For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; (and he says) your faithfulness reaches to the clouds."* Obviously poetic language to describe the greatness of God's both love and faithfulness.

And so he says, *"⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!"* And that was David's prayer. Let the glory of the Lord *"be over all the earth."* That hasn't happened yet, by the way.

"⁶ That your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by your right hand and answer me!"

Verse 7, he says, *"God has promised in his holiness: (and then he begins to quote) "With exultation (meaning with shouts of rejoicing, with shouts of celebration) I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Valley of Succoth. ⁸ Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter."*

And then he begins to speak of some of the enemies of the Lord. *"⁹ Moab is my washbasin; (not terribly nice, he says,) upon Edom I cast my shoe; (which was an action that determined, well it had different meanings. It could mean ownership, like I own you, or it could be kind of a statement of derision. Or, I*

don't know, thumbing your nose, if you will. He says) *over Philistia I shout in triumph.*”

And then he says, “¹⁰ *Who will bring me (this is David now speaking again, Who will bring me) to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?*” He's talking about being led to Edom that he might conquer the enemies of the Lord.

The Edomites were unfortunately enemies many times of the Israelites. And when he talks about the fortified city here, he's referring to Petra which is now in Southern Jordan. But the word, Petra means rock. And Petra was known at the time, and you can actually still tour Petra today, but Petra was known as almost an impregnable fortress against any kind of enemies.

And so David is asking, who will lead me there? Who will lead me to victory against the impregnable forces of our enemies and so forth.

And then he asked this question in verse 11, “*Have you not rejected us, O God? You do not go out, O God, with our armies.*” And so here, David is acknowledging the difficulty of what they're facing and that is that the Lord is no longer going before them. He's no longer going out with their army. He's no longer giving them the ability and the power to be victorious over their enemies.

We don't know what situation David is writing about specifically during the time of David or the history of Israel, but there's something going on here that has led the Lord to withdraw Himself from attending them in military victory. And there might've been some sort of a defeat of some kind that precipitated this prayer.

But he ends it by making a couple of important statements, I think, for us to look at. And the first one is in verse 12 and this is what his prayer is, “*Oh grant us help against the foe, (and then he gives the reason why he's crying out to the Lord) for vain is the salvation of man!*”

Do you believe that tonight? It's a statement that's made boldly in the Word of God. “...*for vain...*” And of course that word means empty. For empty is the deliverance of man. Empty is the deliverance of man. In other words, if you're going to look to men for deliverance, you're going to be disappointed because it's empty. It's an empty thing.

And that's one of the things the Lord says to Israel through the prophet Isaiah. I think it's at the end of chapter 2, if I'm not mistaken. He talks about how, he says to the Israelites, or actually he's speaking to the Southern kingdom of

Judah, but he says, stop putting your trust in man who only has breath in his nostrils. That's all he has.

There's no breath of life in him other than what is actually going through his nostrils, and that can easily be taken away. The Lord says, stop putting your trust in him and it's the same message that is being given here in this Psalm. “... *vain is the salvation of man.*”

And then I love how this Psalm ends with one final burst of faith. In verse 13, he says, “*With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.*” And I hope you believe that too, because those two statements really need to be taken in tandem.

First of all, “*vain is the salvation (or deliverance) of man.*” And it is God who is going to tread down our enemies. Those are the two things we need to keep together in parallel, or we're going to get confused, and we're going to keep running back to man for answers.

And when I say running back to man, don't think I'm talking about going to others. You could be very well depending on yourself. If you're depending on yourself for a deliverance, you are doing what you shouldn't do.

And David would still say, “*vain is the deliverance of man.*” In your case, it would be vain is the deliverance of self. Right. And we honestly and naturally look to self when we're in trouble. So we try to figure, okay, what am I going to do? I got myself in a bad situation. What am I... I got to figure out what I'm going to do to get out of this situation.

And then our minds start to go through and think about how we can fix it. How can I fix this thing? And then we come up with all kinds of different plans and we'll try one and maybe that one blows up in our face. Well, I got to come up with something else.

And you see this in TV shows, and books, and stuff like that. People get into trouble and they say to each other, we'll figure something out. We always do.

And David responds to that by saying, “*vain is the deliverance of man.*” And it is the Lord who will tread down our foes. But so often we don't trust Him to do that. So often we just don't trust Him to take care of those situations.