
PSALM 118: 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his loving kindness endures forever.

A general exhortation to praise God for his mercy, Psa 118:1-4. The psalmist, by his own experience, encourages the people to trust in God, and shows them the advantage of it, Psa 118:5-9; then describes his enemies, and shows how God enabled him to destroy them, Psa 118:10-13. The people rejoice on the account, Psa 118:15, Psa 118:16. He speaks again of the help he received from the Lord; and desires admission into the temple, that he may enter and praise the Lord, Psa 118:17-19. The gate is opened, Psa 118:20. He offers praise, 21. The priests, etc., acknowledge the hand of the Lord in the deliverance wrought, Psa 118:22-24. The psalmist prays for prosperity, Psa 118:25. The priest performs his office, blesses the people, and all join in praise, Psa 118:26, Psa 118:27. The psalmist expresses his confidence, Psa 118:28. The general doxology, or chorus, Psa 118:29.

Most probably David was the author of this Psalm, though many think it was written after the captivity. It partakes of David's spirit, and every where shows the hand of a master. The style is grand and noble; the subject, majestic.

Dr. Kennicott, who joins this and the hundred and seventeenth Psalm together, considers the whole as a dialogue, and divides it accordingly. The whole of the hundred and seventeenth he gives to the psalmist as part the first, with the first four verses of the hundred and eighteenth. The second part, which is from the fifth verse to the twenty-first inclusive, he gives to the Messiah. The third part, from the twenty-second verse to the twenty-seventh, he gives to the chorus. And the fourth part, the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses, he gives to the psalmist. Of the whole he has given an improved version.

Bishop Horsley is still different. He considers the hundred and seventeenth Psalm as only the exordium of this. The whole poem, he states, is a triumphant processional song. The scene passes at the front gate of the temple. A conqueror with his train appears before it; he demands admittance to return thanks for his deliverance and final success, in an expedition of great difficulty and danger. The conqueror and his train sing the hundred and seventeenth Psalm, and the first four verses of the hundred and eighteenth, as they advance to the gate of the temple, in this manner - The hundred and seventeenth Psalm, Chorus of the whole procession. The first verse of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm, A single voice. The second, Another single voice. The third, A third single voice. The fourth, Chorus of the whole procession. Arrived at the temple gate, the conqueror alone sings the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses. The eighth and ninth are sung by his train in chorus. The conqueror, again alone, sings the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses. His train, in chorus, sing the fifteenth and sixteenth. The conqueror alone sings the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth verses. The twentieth is sung by the priests and Levites within, in chorus. The twenty-fifth by the conqueror alone within the gates. The twenty-sixth, by the priests and Levites in chorus. The twenty-seventh, by the conqueror's train in chorus. The twenty-eighth, by the conqueror alone. The twenty-ninth, by the united chorus of priests and Levites, and the conqueror's train, all within the gates. "Now," the learned bishop adds, "the Jewish temple was a type of heaven; the priests within represent the angelic host attending round the throne of God in heaven; the Conqueror is Messiah; and his train, the redeemed." On this distribution the bishop has given a new version. The simple distribution into parts, which I have given in the contents, is, in my opinion, the best. Ingenious as Dr. Kennicott and Bishop Horsley are, they seem to me too mechanical. This is the last of those Psalms which form the great hallel, which the Jews sung at the end of the passover.

PSALM 118: 2 Let Israel now say that his loving kindness endures forever.

Verse 2

Let Israel now say - Seeing the hand of the Lord so visibly, and the deliverance gained, that God's mercy endureth for ever.

PSALM 118: 3 Let the house of Aaron now say that his loving kindness endures forever.

Verse 3

The house of Aaron - The priesthood is still preserved, and the temple worship restored.

PSALM 118: 4 Now let those who fear the LORD say that his loving kindness endures forever.

Verse 4

That fear the Lord - All sincere penitents and genuine believers. See the notes on Psa 115:9-11 (note).

PSALM 118: 5 Out of my distress, I called on the LORD. The LORD answered me with freedom.

Verse 5

I called upon the Lord - I am a standing proof and living witness of God's mercy. Take encouragement from me.

PSALM 118: 6 The LORD is on my side. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

PSALM 118: 7 The LORD is on my side among those who help me. Therefore I will look in triumph at those who hate me.

Verse 7

The Lord taketh my part with them that help me - Literally, The Lord is to me among my helpers. Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. Literally, And I shall look among them that hate me. As God is on my side, I fear not to look the whole of them in the face. I shall see them defeated.

PSALM 118: 8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD, than to put confidence in man.

Verse 8

Better to trust in the Lord - Man is feeble, ignorant, fickle, and capricious; it is better to trust in Jehovah than in such.

PSALM 118: 9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD, than to put confidence in princes.

Verse 9

In princes - Men of high estate are generally proud, vainglorious, self-confident, and rash: it is better to trust in God than in them. Often they cannot deliver, and often they will not when they can. However, in the concerns of our salvation, and in matters which belong to Providence, they can do nothing.

PSALM 118: 10 All the nations surrounded me, but in the LORD's name, I cut them off.

Verse 10

All nations compassed me about - This is by some supposed to relate to David, at the commencement of his reign, when all the neighboring Philistine nations endeavored to prevent him from establishing himself in the kingdom. Others suppose it may refer to the Samaritans, Idumeans, Ammonites, and others, who endeavored to prevent the Jews from rebuilding their city and their temple after their return from captivity in Babylon.

But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them - Dr. Kennicott renders אִמִּילָם amilam, "I shall disappoint them;" Bishop Horsley, "I cut them to pieces;" Mr. N. Berlin, repuli eas, "I have repelled them." "I will cut them off;" Chaldee. Ultus sum in eos, "I am avenged on them;" Vulgate. So the Septuagint.

PSALM 118: 11 They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me. In the LORD's name I indeed cut them off.

PSALM 118: 12 They surrounded me like bees. They are quenched like the burning thorns. In the LORD's name I cut them off.

Verse 12

They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns - I shall refer to Dr. Delaney's note on this passage. The reader has here in miniature two of the finest images in Homer;

which, if his curiosity demands to be gratified, he will find illustrated and enlarged, Iliad ii., ver. 86. - Επεσσευοντο δε λαοι. Ηϋτε εθνεα εισι μελισσων αδινων, Πετρης εκ γλαφυρης αιει νεον ερχομενων, Βοτρυδον δε πετονται επ' ανθεσιν ειαρνοισιν, Αι μεν τ' ενθα αλις πεποτηται, αι δε τε ανθα Ώς των εθνεα π ο λ λ α νεων απο και κλισιαων Ηΐονος προπαροιθε βαθειης εστιχωντο Ιλαδον εις αγορην. - The following host,

Poured forth by thousands, darkens all the coast.
 As from some rocky cleft the shepherd sees,
 Clustering in heaps on heaps, the driving bees,
 Rolling and blackening, swarms succeeding swarms,
 With deeper murmurs and more hoarse alarms:
 Dusky they spread a close embodied crowd,
 And o'er the vale descends the living cloud;
 So from the tents and ships a lengthening train
 Spreads all the beach, and wide o'ershades the plain;
 Along the region runs a deafening sound;
 Beneath their footsteps groans the trembling ground.

Pope

The other image, the fire consuming the thorns, we find in the same book, ver. 455: - Ηϋτε πυρ αιδηλον επιφλεγει ασπετον υλην, Ουρεος εν κορυφης· εκαθεν δε τε φαινεται αυγη· Ώς των ερχομενων, απο χαλκου θεσπεσιοιο Αιγλη παμφανωσα δι' αιθερος ουρανον ικεν.

As on some mountain, through the lofty grove,
 The crackling flames ascend and blaze above;
 The fires expanding, as the winds arise,
 Shoot their long beams, and kindle half the skies;
 So, from the polished arms, and brazen shields,
 A gleamy splendor flashed along the fields.

Pope.

The arms resembling a gleaming fire is common both to the psalmist and Homer; but the idea of that fire being quenched when the army was conquered, is peculiar to the psalmist.

PSALM 118: 13 You pushed me back hard, to make me fall, but the LORD helped me.

Verse 13

Thou hast thrust sore at me - In pushing thou hast pushed me that I might fall.

But the Lord helped me - Though he possessed skill, courage, and strength, yet these could not have prevailed had not God been his helper; and to him he gives the glory of the victory.

PSALM 118: 14 The LORD is my strength and song. He has become my salvation.

PSALM 118: 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous. "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.

Verse 15

The voice of rejoicing - Formerly there was nothing but wailings; but now there is universal joy because of the salvation - the deliverance, which God has wrought for us.

PSALM 118: 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted! The right hand of the LORD does valiantly!"

Verse 16

The right hand of the Lord is exalted - Jehovah lifted up his right hand, and with it performed prodigies of power.

PSALM 118: 17 I will not die, but live, and declare the LORD's works.

Verse 17

I shall not die - I was nigh unto death; but I am preserved, - preserved to publish the wondrous works of the Lord.

PSALM 118: 18 The LORD has punished me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

PSALM 118: 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness. I will enter into them. I will give thanks to the LORD.

Verse 19

Open to me the gates - Throw open the doors of the temple, that I may enter and perform my vows unto the Lord.

PSALM 118: 20 This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous will enter into it.

Verse 20

This gate of the Lord - Supposed to be the answer of the Levites to the request of the king.

PSALM 118: 21 I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me, and have become my salvation.

Verse 21

I will praise thee - He is now got within the gates, and breaks out into thanksgivings for the mercies he had received. He is become my salvation - he himself hath saved me from all mine enemies.

PSALM 118: 22 The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

Verse 22 , Psa 118:23

The stone which the builders refused - See a full elucidation of these two verses in the notes on Mat 21:42 (note).

PSALM 118: 23 This is the LORD's doing. It is marvellous in our eyes.

PSALM 118: 24 This is the day that the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it!

Verse 24

This is the day which the Lord hath made - As the Lord hath called me to triumph, this is the day which he hath appointed for that purpose. This is a gracious opportunity; I will improve it to his glory.

PSALM 118: 25 Save us now, we beg you, LORD! LORD, we beg you, send prosperity now.

Verse 25

Save now, I beseech thee - These words were sung by the Jews on the feast of tabernacles, when carrying green branches in their hands; and from the הושיעה נא hoshiah nna, we have the word hosanna. This was sung by the Jewish children when Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem. See Mat 21:9 (note), and see the note there, in which the word and the circumstance are both explained.

PSALM 118: 26 Blessed is he who comes in the LORD's name! We have blessed you out of the LORD's house.

Verse 26

We have blessed you - The answer of the Levities to the king.

PSALM 118: 27 The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.

Verse 27

God is the Lord - Rather יהוה אל El Yehovah, the strong God Jehovah.

Which hath showed us light - ויאיר לנו vaiyaer lanu, "And he will illuminate us." Perhaps at this time a Divine splendor shone upon the whole procession; a proof of God's approbation.

Bind the sacrifice with cords - The Chaldee paraphrases this verse thus: "Samuel the prophet said, Bind the little one with chains for a solemn sacrifice, until ye have sacrificed him and sprinkled his blood on the horns of the altar." It is supposed that the words refer to the feast of tabernacles, and חג chag here means the festival victim. Several translate the original "keep the festival with thick boughs of the horns of the altar." In this sense the Vulgate and Septuagint understood the passage. David in this entry into the temple was a type of our blessed Lord, who made a similar entry, as related Mat 21:8-10.

PSALM 118: 28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you. You are my God, I will exalt you.

PSALM 118: 29 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his loving kindness endures forever.

Verse 29

O give thanks unto the Lord - This is the general doxology or chorus. All join in thanksgiving, and they end as they began: "His mercy endureth for ever." It began at the creation of man; it will continue till the earth is burnt up.