



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever seen at the end of the original Star Wars movie when they are giving medals to Han and Luke, but not to Chewbacca? For some reason that always bothered me. Anyway, they have just had this huge victory. They blew up the Death Star. And how do they celebrate? Everybody comes together to have a big military celebration. There's cheering and award giving. Lots of smiles. I love that scene.

It's possible that Psalm 118 is a little like that. This whole psalm likely served as the liturgy for a thanks processional. So, this was the script for a religious ceremony that the Israelites took part in to say thanks to God. Potentially, it was connected to praising God for a military victory. So, a king likely led the nation in these words of thanksgiving for the victory God had provided. Hopefully, today, we will be able to give thanks together for some of the things God has done in your life.

THE WORD

The first few verses of the Psalm are likely a responsive reading led by the king. So, let's start by doing this as a responsive reading. I'll read the first parts and you respond with "His love endures forever."

READ: Psalms 118:1-4

1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

2 Let Israel say: "His love endures forever."

3 Let the house of Aaron say: "His love endures forever."

4 Let those who fear the Lord say: "His love endures forever."

This was a way to start all the people of God in celebration together. A triple repetition like this was a common feature in liturgical songs. Those three groups mentioned: Israel, house of Aaron, and those who fear the Lord, well, there a lot of overlap there. This was a way to emphasize the idea that all the people of God need to give thanks. So, in our context it might say "Let the church say", "let {INSERT THE NAME OF YOUR CHURCH} say", and "let those who fear the lord say".

Let's see some of the things that the author of the Psalms is thankful for:

1. GOD'S PRESENCE

In the next verses the Psalmist used first person pronouns. So, it's likely the king would say this part which lays out all the reasons that Israel is thankful. So, this is the king's song of thanksgiving for the victory that God gave them. There are several things listed that the king was thankful for.

READ: Psalms 118:5-9

5 When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord; he brought me into a spacious place.

6 The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

7 The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies.

8 It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans.

9 It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.

One of the first things the king thanked God for was God's presence. He said, "the Lord is with me." The king found comfort, help, refuge, confidence in the presence of God. God is not just some far away Creator; He is an intimate God that is involved in our lives and cares about us. As I come up against the difficulties in my life, enemies and hardship and anguish and fear, God is with me to lead me through them. And I should be thankful for it.

But are you in His presence? Are you spending time with Him? He wants to be near you to provide comfort, help, courage. But are you letting Him into your life? He wants to be intimately involved and I am so thankful He does.

2. GOD'S VICTORY

What else do was the king thankful to God for in this ceremony?

READ: Psalms 118:10-16

10 All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.

11 They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.

12 They swarmed around me like bees, but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the Lord I cut them down.

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