

Psalm 117-118

The 117th Ps is the center Ch of your bible; it's not the center Vs of the bible but it is the Ch that's in the center of your bible. Though the Ch distinctions and Vs divisions aren't inspired it's still interesting to realize that right in the middle of the bible is a passage that calls upon all the earth to praise the Lord for His steadfast love; His unrelenting faithfulness; His kindness and truth that endures forever.

It's a psalm that makes an appeal *for* praise and gives us a reason *to* praise. It's also the shortest Ch in the bible, it's not the shortest Vs in the bible but it is the shortest Ch being only 2 Vs in length.

Vs 1-2

More than a couple things here that we could isolate and contemplate, we note most obviously the call to praise the Lord both at the opening and the closing of the psalm like two bookends with all this substance in between them.

We have the *what*, the *who* and the *why* all packed together in less than 30 words which comprise this psalm (closer to 20 in the Hebrew). As for the what we've already mentioned it, the exhortation is to "praise the Lord." The word means to "boast" it speaks of giving "glory" the idea being that in our giving God praise we're giving glory *to* Him and in reality we're bragging *on* Him, boasting *of* Him. We're ascribing greatness to His name, celebrating who He is and the things He's done.

But equally eye catching is the "who" that's being exhorted/commanded to give God praise; notice, "all you Gentiles!" "Laud Him (or praise Him) all you peoples!" This psalm looks beyond the borders of Israel into all the world, it's the quintessential missionary psalm. He's the God of all, the Creator of all therefore He should be receiving the *praise* of all.

It was God's plan concerning Israel from the very beginning; they were to be a light unto the Gentiles; they were to be a demonstration of the beauty of salvation that Gentiles might be drawn to the Lord and learn what it means to walk *with* the Lord. Isa 49:6, "*It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.*" But somewhere along the way they lost the directive, the objective and began to see themselves as the elite and the Gentiles as the off scouring of the earth. They began to isolate themselves and with draw from the world around them who needed to know the love and mercy of God.

Often times when we consider that we think, "How could they do that, that's so wrong!" Yet we don't stop to consider our own position, we like to spend time around the body (and that's great we can never get too much of that) yet if it's to the neglect of extending to others an opportunity or an invitation to come and be a part of what's going on, or giving them the hope of the gospel how do we differ?

Jesus has called us to make disciples of all nations and when you consider the call on the global scale I'm not convinced that the church has do too great with that charge. Jesus called us the "light of the world."

So before we hurl too much *condemnation* we'd do well to do some introspective *evaluation* of our own fulfillment of the call that Christ has placed on *our* lives.

Paul used this Vs in Romans Ch 15 as a proof text demonstrating that it's always been on God's heart to bring the Gentiles into the kingdom of God; that Jesus wasn't just the *Jew's* Messiah, but He was in fact the *world's* Messiah; and that the Gentiles would glorify/magnify God for His mercy. There's only one God over all therefore all should give God praise.

Why? We've seen the "what," we've noted the "who," the "why" is found in Vs 2.

Vs2

Notice again how the author includes Jews and Gentiles as the recipients of God's great love, or merciful kindness, or steadfast love (depending on which translation you read); it could've also been translated "favor" which of course is the NT equivalent of "Grace". To me that's interesting because be that the case this Vs calls upon us to praise God for His everlasting grace and truth toward us. Remember these words? "*And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" John 1:16-17

Jesus speaks truth into our lives, He shoots straight and tells us how it is, He lets us know where we're erring and what needs to be corrected if we're to bear fruits worthy of repentance. Yet He also gives grace, forgives us, restores us, and renews us; we're to praise the Lord for His merciful kindness is great toward us and the truth of the Lord endures forever.

But again the author says, "These things are for us," that is for the Jews *and* the Gentiles; we're all in this thing together; God's mercy and God's truth is for us all.

Now there where it says that God's merciful kindness is "great" toward us; that word *great* literally means to "prevail" or "overwhelm." The idea being that it overwhelms or prevails against anything in its path. It carries the idea of Rom 8:38-39 "*For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" God's love, His mercy and His grace are "great" toward you, they prevail over and against anything that would seek to stand in their way.

The truth of the Lord endures forever, it doesn't vacillate like a weather vane twisting and turning to meet the pressure of each opinion, it's not political; it's pure. God has said that we are sinners, that will always be true, that we need a Savior, that will always be true; that what Christ has accomplished upon the cross is sufficient to cleanse us of all sin and make us righteous in His sight, that will always be true. His truth endures forever.

Isaiah said it like this, “*The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.*” Isa 40:8 What was true for Adam is true for us, what was true for Moses is true for us, what was true for Paul the apostle is true for us; truth endures to all generations and will be true forever. We can trust in it, act upon it; it’s a reason to give God praise. Heaven and earth will pass away the word of the Lord shall by no means never pass away. Hallelujah!

Psalm 118

Sandwiched between the shortest Ch in the bible and the longest Ch in the bible is the 118th psalm. This is the final of the Hallel psalms, or the psalms of Thanksgiving/praise that would be read/sang around the various feasts of ancient Israel. As a matter of fact many believe that this is the psalm that Jesus sang when in Matt’s gospel we read that having partaken of the Last Supper, “*And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*” Matt 26:30 Whether or not that’s true we can’t know for sure but it’s certainly plausible and definitely applicable.

It’s a psalm of thanksgiving and praise for deliverance; deliverance from distress, danger, death and disgrace.

Vs 1-4

You know it seems sometimes that portions of the psalms repeat like a broken record but the reality is that we need to be thankful that the mercy of the Lord endures forever! Having *received* God’s mercy, having been *renewed* by God’s mercy we should *rejoice* over God’s mercy! The bible declares that, “*Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*” Lam 3:22-23 Can you imagine what it would be like if God’s mercies were new or fresh every day? If you could exhaust them or if they somehow diminished over time; what if God said, “My mercies shall endure for a few thousand years and after that I will execute my justice on all souls.”? He would be completely just in showing no mercy at all, in limiting His mercy to a certain threshold of tolerance and only for a specified period of time. But He has proclaimed to you and me that His mercies shall endure forever! His mercy is everlasting.

So what are we to *do* about it? Vs 1, “Give thanks to the Lord; for He is good.” BTW that’s something else we need to let really permeate our inner being. “The Lord is good.” It’s one of those anchor points that we latch onto when things that aren’t so good are seeming to tear into our lives; and we’re tempted to lose sight of that fact. We wonder why if God is so good how could this be happening to us? We forget that God deals with us through the eyes of the eternal; we don’t like the heat that’s found in the refiner’s fire, but when we’re in that place and there are things going on that we don’t understand it’s imperative that we always retreat to that which we *do* understand.

“I don’t understand *this*, but I do understand that God is good, that God loves me, that He’s given His Son *for* me, that He has thoughts of peace and not of evil *toward* me; I know that He’s for me and not against me, that He’ll never leave nor forsake me. That He won’t allow me to be tried or tested beyond what I’m able to bear through His grace and by the power of His Spirit. These are the kind of things we retreat to when we’re in the midst of something we don’t understand; we fall back on what we *do* understand. “The Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting.”

Vs 1 is something we should “*do*” “Give God thanks.” Vs 2-4 is something we should “*declare*” that His mercy is everlasting. It’s one of those things that we boast *of* and brag *on* concerning God. We praise God for His mercy.

Vs5-6

Deliverance from distress, couple things we want to talk about here for just a minute. #1 So as to state the obvious we need to realize that we do well to call on the Lord when we’re in distress. When you’re in a tight place, feeling “hemmed in” in on every side, we’re to call upon the Lord. God hears the cry of His people, His heart goes out to the hurting, those who are in distress and duress, God desires you to draw near *to* Him, to be strengthened *by* Him.

Now the way He answers you, or moves through you and your situation may vary; sometimes He’ll do for you what He evidently did for the psalmist; He’ll destroy the difficulty, He’ll take away the turbulence or tribulation.

There was Hezekiah surrounded by the Assyrian army. He cries out to God, calls on God and God sends a single angel through the midst of the camp killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. The next morning those who remained awoke to dead bodies all around them and needless to say they fled. Other times rather than removing the difficulty or distress *from* you, He will give sufficient strength *to* you so that you might bear up under whatever trial may be upon you. As it pertained to Paul's "thorn in the flesh" he pleaded with God over and over and over again that He would take it *from* him. Yet God said *to* him, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" 2 Cor 12:9 So Paul resolved in his heart, "*Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*" 2 Cor 12:9-10 They were both in distress yet God answered them in different ways.

When Jesus was in the Garden He sought the Father that He might take this cup from Him, but God didn't deliver Him in that way, but rather He strengthened Him to bear up under the trial. But the point remains the same, pray your way through the tough times.

Vs6

This is one of those Vs that sound great when we're in a climate controlled environment in relative comfort.

But the reality is that man can cause a tremendous amount of damage to us, man can inflict incredible amounts of suffering upon us and man can ultimately kill us. But that's a temporal perspective; the bible calls upon us to have an *eternal* perspective; and as it pertains to eternity man can do nothing to me. Man cannot have so much as a single ounce of impact upon as it pertains to my eternity. That's why Jesus said, "*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*" Matt 10:28 In other words the motivating factor behind us doing what we do is to be not the things that are at best temporary, but rather those things that pertain to eternity. We're to maintain the eternal perspective.

Paul tells us in 2nd Cor that the afflictions of this world are but for a *moment*, but what they're working *in* us, what it's working *for* us is a far more exceeding and *eternal* weight of glory. What is your life? It's but a vapor that appears but for a moment and then vanishes away, it's difficult for us to receive but a lifelong trial is but a flash in the pan of eternity. So the reality is that if God is on your side, there's really nothing that man can do to you, nothing of any eternal consequence whatsoever.

Vs7-9

Again the Vs divisions aren't inspired but for those of you interested in such things Vs 8-9 are the central Vs in your bible. What does the center of your bible say? "It's better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man, it's better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes. Even those people with power to get things done, who have the authority to speak and see it come to pass; this is another one of those exhortations that sound really good but can be so difficult to carry out.

How many times we feel like we're not sure God is going to come through for us, but when some guy or some gal says, "I'll take care of that for ya" we think, "<sigh> now I can sleep easy!" We have a tendency to put our trust in man, but man will let you down; they tell you they will be there and maybe they never show. They tell you they can take care of something and leave it in a worse mess than when they got there. If you put your trust in man you're destined to be disappointed. We're to trust *in* and receive strength and assurance *from* the Lord.

Just think if Jesus would've thought, "I'll be ok as long as Peter, James and John stay with me, as long as Thomas believes in Me, as long as Philip and Nathaniel don't leave me" He'd have never completed the work of the cross, because everyone of those guys would let Him down that night. Oh not in the sense that he would be disappointed in them, it's impossible to disappoint the Lord (ever think about that) He knows everything. How can it disappoint someone when you make a decision they knew you were going to make before you ever made it? How can you be let down when you already know?

But in the sense that they didn't stick by Him, they forsook Him and fled from Him, disavowed any affiliation with Him.

It's simply a lesson we all learn, if you trust in man, if you're looking to me, if you'll follow Christ as long as so and so is by your side you'll never make it. Because man will let you down, we're flawed from the factory, trust in the Lord. The bible says, "*Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish. Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the Lord his God,*" Psalms 146:3-5

Vs10-18

Again we see the exaltation of the Lord due to His salvation, His deliverance from danger and even death. God has delivered you, He's delivered me from the power of sin and death, He is your strength and has become your salvation. Does the voice of rejoicing resound in your home? Do you ever just cruise around in your home praising God, singing praise and worship to Him because you're just so overjoyed and in love *with* Him?

Of course the "right hand" of the Lord speaking of His strength and His power, that He exercises power valiantly and righteously, He is exalted in His power greatly.

Now Vs 18 brings up an important point, the chastening of the Lord; don't confuse God's chastening with God's punishment. God may punish or penalize His enemies, but whom the Lord *loves* He chastens, or disciplines, God will chasten His children, not to punish them, but to purify them. You're not paying a penalty; that was taken care of upon the cross, but you will be dealt with in a disciplinary fashion. Punishment is negative, discipline is positive, "*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*" Heb 12:11 God may chasten us severely, but it's so that we might yield a better reward for eternity.

Vs19-26

Now if Vs 22-26 sound familiar it's because they've been picked up and applied to Christ both by Christ and by the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul. Of course we see all 4 of the gospel writers apply portions of this psalm to Christ as well during the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem.

Israel as a nation rejected Jesus Christ and because of that Jesus said that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to others who would bear fruit accordingly which as a reference to the birth of the church and the age of the Gentiles.

Of course there in Vs 25, this was something they were shouting out when Christ rode into Jerusalem as they shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” The word Hosanna being the equivalent in the Greek to the Hebrew here which translates, “Save now.”

The idea was that they were seeing the coming of their King and they were crying out that He would deliver them, that He would save them even now. When we sing, “Hosanna in the highest” it carries the same idea. “Jesus we know You’re coming soon, we’re crying out to You that You might come to us expediently, deliver us quickly, save us speedily, gather Your people to Your side; Oh Lord save us soon.”

Of course the day that the Lord has made is the day of deliverance; the day Jesus rose from the dead is the day we were delivered from the power of the grave, we will rejoice and be glad in it...

Vs27-29

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for these Psalms of praise and thanksgiving, may we never tire of the exhortation to give You praise, to exalt Your name, to ascribe glory and honor to You. Because God You are worthy of so much more than we could ever offer; we praise You for Your everlasting mercies, we thank You for your steadfast/faithful love, You are our strength and our portion forever; teach us praise You more...

Psalms 118:22-29

Jesus Christ is seen in this psalm — His triumphal entry (vv. 25-26), His rejection (v. 27), His death and resurrection (v. 17), and His exaltation as God's chosen Stone (vv. 22-23). Perhaps verse 24 hints at the Lord's Day, the day of resurrection, as "the new day" of the new creation made possible by His atoning work. It is important that we see Jesus Christ in every experience of life, for then these experiences will help us grow in grace and become more like the Savior.