

An Encore of Praise

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Verse: Psalm 108
Preached on: Tuesday, November 3, 2020

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, on this day when most people's attention are diverted to other matters, I'm very grateful to gather together with you to consider God's word as the enduring, eternal, transcendent matter that is alone worthy of occupying a human mind, and I invite you to turn to Psalm 108 with that thought in mind as we have the opportunity this evening to step out of the world, as it were, to step out of the nature of current events and contemplate the eternal realities of the character and the actions of God. And the character of God as we see in this Psalm and in every page of Scripture, really, is that God is a God of loyal love toward his people, and that God is a God of infinite sovereign power. He has the ability to accomplish his will without regard to human opposition or human events, and because he has that power and because he is a God of loyal love to his people, it means that his people dwell in a place of perfect security and an ability to call upon their God in order to save them and deliver them from all manner of earthly and eternal ills. We see that preeminently in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we contemplate the reality that Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, we see his sovereign power over sin and Satan and even over death itself. Christ conquered Satan. Christ conquered sin. Christ conquered death as shown by his resurrection on the third day after he was placed in the tomb. And so when we talk about the sovereign power and the sovereign love of God, we see it preeminently in our Lord Jesus Christ, and we see how thoroughly God saves us, how thoroughly God loves us even to the point of pouring out his righteous wrath against our sin, to pour that out on his Son so that we might be saved is just the epitome, it is the ultimate recognition of the sovereign power and the sovereign loyal love of God. And so whenever we are tempted to get wrapped up in the things of this world, we need to step back and look at the cross of Christ and remember what it reveals to us about who God is. God is preeminently holy. The cross was ultimately an act of divine justice as justice was satisfied as Christ bore the penalty for our sins against God.

You know, sometimes people ask, people wonder, people suggest that God should rather than sending Christ to the cross, why didn't he just simply forgive our sins, wipe them off the books without having to go through the messy ordeal of Calvary? And the answer to that is that God's justice had to be satisfied. Justice demanded payment for our sins and Christ supplied that payment for us, and God could no more sovereignly overturn his justice in the name of a false forgiveness than he could overturn sovereignly his own love for his people. And so God is always consistent with himself, his justice was upheld at

the cross, love and mercy and justice kissed each other at Calvary, and we are the grateful recipients of the love and work of Christ on our behalf.

And so that's kind of a New Testament perspective to bring us into our Psalm tonight, Psalm 108, which gives us a different perspective on the nature of God, and I want to read these 13 verses as a way of introducing the text here this evening. Psalm 108, "A Song, a Psalm of David."

1 My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul. 2 Awake, harp and lyre; I will awaken the dawn! 3 I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples, And I will sing praises to You among the nations. 4 For Your lovingkindness is great above the heavens, And Your truth reaches to the skies. 5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, And Your glory above all the earth. 6 That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer me! 7 God has spoken in His holiness: "I will exult, I will portion out Shechem And measure out the valley of Succoth. 8 Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter. 9 Moab is My washbowl; Over Edom I shall throw My shoe; Over Philistia I will shout aloud." 10 Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom? 11 Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us? And will You not go forth with our armies, O God? 12 Oh give us help against the adversary, For deliverance by man is in vain. 13 Through God we will do valiantly, And it is He who shall tread down our adversaries.

Now before I get into the text itself, I just want to point out a couple of things as we think about these words of Scripture from a New Testament perspective, and thinking about them as sinners who came to Christ crying out for forgiveness, crying out for mercy in our sin, and there's a genuine reality that takes place when the Holy Spirit works in a heart. Sin is no longer a matter of trifling matter, it's not a matter of mild indifference or something that bothers us slightly. When a man is convicted of sin, he is overwhelmed in his heart about the reality of his guilt against a holy God and it grieves him. Jesus said that, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." It's a spiritual reality that is being described and there is a genuine grief over the reality of our sinfulness that marks a true Christian and that in one way or another marks someone who comes to Christ in the first instance for his salvation, and what we see is the character of God given to us in this Old Testament text but we see how it extends out to the greater realities revealed in the New Testament about Christ.

So in verse 6, for example, well, going in verse 5 to get the full context, "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, And Your glory above all the earth. That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer me!" Well, what is the repentant soul doing that calls out to God? I think of the tax collector in Luke 18 pounding his chest, "God, be merciful to me the sinner!" What is the convicted sinner doing except asking God to save him by his power and by his grace? With nothing in his hand, nothing

coming with an empty hand and a bankrupt spirit and a guilty accusing conscience, coming to God and saying, "God, deliver me from this awful condition that I find myself in! I am guilty of sin and I have sinned against You, against You, You alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in thy sight!" in the language of Psalm 51:4.

And so calling out to God for deliverance like that, and then going on to verse 12, for example, here in Psalm 108, praying for help against the adversary for deliverance by man is in vain. "God, I cannot save myself! God, You must save me or I will be eternally lost!" And that's the cry of the genuinely converted heart, and I emphasize that tonight, beloved, because it is, you know, the reality is as J. C. Ryle says in one of his chapters in, I believe in "Old Paths," you know, he says that there are few that will be saved; you know, that there are not many that will be saved but comparatively few and that was the language of Jesus as well in Matthew 7 when he said that the gate is narrow that leads to eternal life, and broad is the way that leads to destruction. And it's important for me as a pastor to try to keep this in front of our minds on an ongoing basis. I don't know if I do a very good job of it or not, but just to be mindful and to impress upon your own hearts that these are things that we should not take lightly or take for granted, that they necessarily belong to us. Now I'm not trying to undermine the assurance of those who are genuinely Christians but I just want to point out the spiritual realities of true salvation so that you would not simply be going along in some kind of moralistic sense actually deep in your heart, having a sense of self-righteousness because you're not as bad as the next guy that you might compare yourself to. I can say those things from experience because that's what I used to be like and it's a very bad and dangerous place to be outwardly professing the name of Christ but inwardly being satisfied with a sense of your own self-righteousness either because you've done certain things or you haven't committed certain sins that other people have. We see in this Psalm this sense of crying out for help from God, crying out to him in need.

Look at verses 10 and 11 with me. I'm really treating this text much differently than normal, I guess. But David cries out, "Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom?" And there's just this sense of crying out to God for mercy in a sense of utter helplessness. And it's that broken spirit, it's that sense of helplessness that I want to lay out before you as one of the marks of the genuinely converted heart. This is what the Holy Spirit produces is someone who is genuinely broken over sin, who has abandoned all sense of self-righteousness, and desires nothing more but exclusively desires the mercy of God and has a compelling sense that God must be merciful or I will be lost forever.

Now look, this is no secret and it shouldn't even be controversial for us to just acknowledge to ourselves that that's not the mark of everybody that we know, and so somewhere, someplace, someone is missing it and I don't want that to be any of you. And so I just lay these things out to you based on the word of God and commend them to you in the hopes that the Spirit of God would awaken some and open minds, that a hard-hearted resistant spirit toward conviction of sin and a self-willed determination to go your own way in life and to do whatever you want without regard to the reproof of God's word or the reproof of God's people, friends, that is a very bad place to be. That is just a very

desperately bad place to be because the mark of a genuinely converted heart is one that's tender to sin, tender to the conviction of the Spirit of God, and tender toward a desire for holiness and want to manifest that, and Psalms like Psalm 108 help us to see the spirit of it even if it's in this Old Testament context.

Let's look at the Psalm now. Psalm 108 is ultimately a song of triumph. David is praising God in this song and he is trusting God to destroy his adversaries and to give him help against the enemy, and he's confident in the sovereign power of God. In verse 3, for example, he says, "I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples, And I will sing praises to You among the nations." This is the God over the nations, whose name must be acknowledged there. And in verse 5, "Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, And Your glory above all the earth." God, so great, so infinite in his majesty that the heavens themselves cannot contain him. God's glory so great that it surpasses all of earthly perception.

And if you look over in Psalm 113, which we'll get to, ah, a few months down the road because we have a lot of things intervening between now and then, but looking at Psalm 113, you see the similar preoccupation with the transcendent glory of God. Psalm 113:3. Go in verse 2 just so you see the context. "Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forever. From the rising of the sun to its setting The name of the LORD is to be praised. The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high?"

Now in a day like this, you know, there's only been 15 days like this in my lifetime, there's only been 15 days of a Presidential election in my lifetime so these are pretty rare days, pretty rare day for us to be able to gather together, and it seems like so much is at stake, blah, blah, blah. Well, beloved, beloved, we need to step back and remember and to view these things through the lens of the transcendent glory of God. He exists outside of time. He is separate and above his creation. He is separate and above the human race and above human history and it's that God that we come in his name tonight, it is that God that we worship, it is that God who holds the nations in his hands and directs them to the accomplishment of his will. Now look, if you believe that and you must if you believe the Bible, if you are a Christian at all and you believe Scripture at all you must believe those things about the surpassing greatness and glory of God, if you believe those things, then it utterly alters your perception and your understanding and your response to everything that happens around you in the course of your lifetime.

And so Psalm 108 is preoccupied with this glory of God over the nations and over the earth, and there's a consequence to that, there's an implication to that that is undeniable and unavoidable and is central to any biblical worldview whatsoever. It means this, that God's exalted position of which we have just been speaking, God's exalted position means that he has the power to prevail over all earthly opposition and earthly people, he has the power to prevail over them and he will. God will accomplish his will. Ephesians 1:11 says, "He works all things after the counsel of His will." Whatever tonight and tomorrow and the coming days bring, somehow God is working out that which he had previously determined to happen and God has a purpose for whatever comes, God will be

with his people to bless them and protect them no matter what, and so it is our responsibility and privilege and prerogative as believers to know these things and to respond in faith to whatever comes to us in life, and to humbly trust our God to be this god of loyal love to us. Just like he was to Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. Just like he was to David and Solomon. Just like he has been to his people as he was to the apostles, as he was to Paul, as he was to the martyrs and to the church for the past 2,000 years. Listen, God is going to be good to his people no matter what and God is in control of whatever happens no matter what, and if we believe that, then it completely overturns and changes the way that we respond to the passing events of life. So Psalm 108, David is speaking from that kind of perspective. God's exalted position means that he has the power to prevail, and his loyal love means that he will certainly deliver his people to safety no matter what. No matter what.

Now there's an interesting feature about Psalm 108. Psalm 108 is a unique compilation of two earlier Psalms. It's apparent that David has drawn upon other Psalms that he has written in order to produce Psalm 108. We won't bother to go through these parallels, I'll just point it out to you for now. In the first five verses of this Psalm very closely reproduce Psalm 57:7-11, and the remaining verses of Psalm 108 are a parallel, a close parallel to Psalm 60:5-12. And so it appears that what David did was that he took portions of those Psalms and combined them into this Psalm for a new occasion. Those Psalms were marked by certain aspects of complaint, David left those out, that which was found in Psalm 57: and 60. He adapts the praise sections from those two prior Psalms into a new Psalm of faith.

Now even in that, even that little bit of observation tells us something about the word of God and it's this, is that Scripture has, the same Scripture can have fresh and new application as new occasions arise for us to read and to understand it. David took this prior work that he had done, combined them and applied it to the situation that he was facing, whatever the occasion was for this Psalm. David drew upon prior work that he had done and adapts it and so in some ways this is an encore presentation of two prior Psalms. And if you like to write titles at the top of your page if you're taking notes, I've titled tonight's message, "An Encore of Praise." An encore of praise. David draws upon something and adapts it again for future use.

Well, let's break it into those two sections. The first section from Psalm 57, the second section from Psalm 60, we'll break it along those lines, and in the first section we see David's praise as he opens up this Psalm and in light of everything that we've said here tonight, it would be fitting for us to just state this one thing and let that go. We won't do that but that's how important what the opening theme is of the Psalm. David opens the Psalm with a commitment to praise. He is spiritually committed to praising God and he expresses that in verse 1. He says,

1 My heart is steadfast, O God; I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul.

And so his heart is undivided. His heart is pure in the sense that it is unmixed with doubt and distrust. His praise, his trust, his faith is pure and he's brought it together in a way that he says, "I am going to be steadfast before You."

Now should be in light of everything we've said here this evening, there should be this sense where we find ourselves being drawn and saying, "Yes, in light of everything that I know about Christ and the cross and the eternal life that's been given to me, I want to push out doubt and I want to unify my heart around this steadfast commitment to sing praises to God with my soul." And the repetition, he says, "I will sing." Look at it there in verse 1, "I will sing, I will sing praises, even with my soul." The repetition emphasizes his resolve to do this. Circumstances will not deter him. The fact, as we will see that he is facing adversity, does not detract him, does not stop him from giving God this full-hearted, full-throated praise that is expressed here in Psalm 108.

You've heard me say over the years from time to time anyway, that the most important preacher in your life is you. It's not me. It's not some radio preacher. It's not someone from your past. You are the most important preacher in your life because you are the one who must address your heart and to address your own soul and say, "These things are true and I will live as though they were true. I'm going to respond as though they were true." The way that far too many people who claim to be Christians respond to the kinds of things that we've been talking about here tonight, they respond like this, they say, "Yes, I know all of those things are true but..." And as soon as they say "but," I know I'm wasting my time with the whole rest of the conversation because they're saying, "Well, yes, God is sovereign and God is loving and Christ did all of that, but..." And I immediately just want to stop the conversation and say, "What do you mean, 'but'? How are you introducing a contrast to sovereign love and sovereign power? You're saying 'but' to introduce something to oppose that." "Well, but you don't know my situation. But you don't know how hard it's been for me. But you don't... But, but, but, but, but." That's not faith talking. Faith does not say "but" in that context. Faith uses a completely different word, faith uses the word "therefore." Faith uses the word "therefore" and says, "Yes, I believe that God is sovereign. I believe that He's a God of loyal love to His people. I believe that Christ died on the cross for my sins. I believe that He has loved me with an everlasting love. I believe that I have eternal life and I believe that He will deliver me safely into heaven and He will never ever leave me nor ever ever forsake me." And then the next word that comes out of the mouth of faith is this, "Therefore I will not be afraid. Therefore I will trust Him. Therefore I will look forward to the future with confidence no matter what happens because I understand that God is like that and He is like this to me. He's like this to all of His people therefore I will trust Him no matter what. If the mountains fall into the sea, if the ground trembles under my feet, if friends forsake me and foes assail me, that doesn't change things. God is like that and therefore I will trust Him and I will stir up my heart to believe in Him and to respond with a steadfast love and faith of which He is preeminently worthy."

You know, look, I don't consider that to be anything earthshaking or even difficult or complex. You know, in the terms of biblical revelation, this is just Christian Faith 101. This is what we do and it would help us all if we were far more quick to say "therefore"

rather than being quick to excuse our unbelief and our anxious thoughts and our complaining spirit. You know, when these things are clear in your mind and these things are clear with the help of the Holy Spirit as we talk about them here, we should be able to look at these things and understand with our mind and let it seep into our heart that anxiety and distrust and a grumbling complaining spirit have no place in light of the things that we profess to be true and which are true because they're revealed truth in the word of God. You see, these things just have implications that go everywhere to every moment of life. Whether it's a routine day or whether it's a Presidential election, it doesn't matter.

This is how we are to respond to the God who saved us and David from that position of resolve, look at what he does and this is where the idea of "therefore" comes in, and this is how you respond then. David says in verse 2,

2 Awake, harp and lyre; I will awaken the dawn!

To say he will awaken the dawn is to say that, "I am going to engage my mind and my emotions in worship and in prayer." This Psalm, Psalm 108, as you look at it, David is not going through an external lifeless ritual here in his praise and in his worship. This is not something cold and mechanical that he is doing. He is throwing his whole man into it. That is what God calls for from his people, to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind. There is a whole-hearted engagement in what is being said. He says, "I'll wake up the day with my music, with my loud praise." David casts aside sluggish indifference so that he can pray in a proper way and he says, "I'll rise before daylight to begin the day with praise."

And what's he going to do? What's his praise look like? What is the content of which he speaks? Verses 3 and 4,

3 I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the peoples, And I will sing praises to You among the nations.

"Gather all of the people of the world in front of me, O God, and I'll gladly say these same things with an audience or without them. And why do I praise You?" Verse 4,

4 [Because] Your lovingkindness is great above the heavens, And Your truth reaches to the skies.

"God, how could I do anything other than respond to You with this full-hearted approach of worship? Your loyal love cannot be measured. You know, I look up into the heavens and I look, I peer into the galaxies and Your love is greater than that, Your faithfulness to Your people, Your goodness to Your people is bigger than that is. In other words, it's infinite. It is surpassing. It is so great that to use the heavens as a comparison to the fullness of Your loyal love is an inadequate basis to make an analogy because Your love, Your faithfulness to Your people transcends that realm. And likewise also Your truth," there at the end of verse 4.

God is loyal to his people. God is true. Scripture goes so far as to say it is impossible for God to lie. There are certain things God cannot do. God cannot lie. God cannot change. He keeps his promises without fail. And as we meditate on that, we understand that that means that has implications for the way that we respond to him, that we don't return to him half-hearted praise and half-hearted trust that is mixed with much doubt and anxiety and unbelief.

Look over at the book of James 1. I'm glad that this text came to my mind. James 1:5, and here I want you to see the reason I'm coming to this text is to show the nature of the united, the pure heart, the unmixed heart. Verse 5, "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." That's who God is, he does it gladly, he does it generously. But the one who is asking, verse 6, "he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." David in Psalm 108 is not a double-minded man. David's heart is steadfast. He has meditated and contemplated God in a way that leads him to that conclusion.

And so sometimes what you need to do, my beloved friends, my Christian brothers and sisters, sometimes what you need to do probably more often than we might think is the thought is, well, if you have a problem you ought to pray about it. Well, I'm not going to discourage people from praying but really if you've got a problem that is preoccupying your mind, the first thing that you should do is not pray, the first thing that you should do is meditate on the character and the loyal love and the great power of God and his faithfulness to his people because if you meditate on that, you will pray differently and you will pray more powerfully and you will pray more confidently than if you just rush in having nothing but your preoccupation with your human problems on your mind. That's just undeniable.

And so we meditate, we think on who God is and we pray in response to that. You see, David, look at it here again in verse 3 and notice his method here as he prays. David says, "I'll give thanks to You, I'll sing praises to You among the nations." Then he says, "for." He says, "There is a ground, there is a basis upon which I will praise You like this." Now watch what that means, beloved. Just think through what that means. David in the sequence of his thought, verse 4 actually comes first in his sequence of thought. He has recognized the loyal love of God, he has meditated on the truth of God, and that becomes the basis upon which he will give thanks and sing praises to him. Let me remind you David is talking this way in the midst of adversity as we see at the end of the Psalm. This is in the midst of adversity that he's praying this way. He's not waiting until things get better to trust God. You know, it doesn't really take much faith, it's not a big display of righteousness to trust God when everything's going well. The godly trust God and learn to trust God in the midst of the adversity.

And so David's heart is steadfast because of who God is, the surpassing excellence of God evokes his praise. God is unchangeably loving, unchangeably faithful, and so David

voices this praise that he has been committed to and he says in verse 5 in such lofty language,

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, And Your glory above all the earth.

Adversity tends to drive us in our carnal flesh to self-pity. What I want you to see, what I want you to pursue, what Scripture, more importantly, calls you to pursue is that it can be different. Adversity can awaken you to praise God and to trust him and David expresses that confidence in the remainder of the Psalm.

And so knowing that God is a God who cares for his people and provides for him, all of this generates the trust in David to ask now for help in his affliction. Look at verse 6,

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, And Your glory above all the earth. 6 [So] That Your beloved may be delivered, Save with Your right hand, and answer me!

You see, David asks for help just as James speaks about asking for wisdom, he asks for help, he is expressing trust and dependence on God in his adversity but it's a trust of confidence, it's a request rooted in confidence rather than in blind desperation and fear and anxiety. "God, get me out of this!" No, "God, be exalted above the heavens and as You are, deliver me in my situation here." The difference is stark and it's a difference to pursue in your spiritual life. You know, and I think that we, you know, the reality of our flesh and the reality of our Christian life is that this is something that we spend a lifetime pursuing and developing and growing in, and we have to go back and learn the lesson again and again as new adversity strikes us. But you know, I just think it's really important for us to have a clear picture set before us of the greatness of God, the goodness of God, the grace of God and say that is worthy of a heart response in me that trusts him and depends upon him and is confident in him no matter what's happening around me. It's the confidence that, you know, I want to have on my deathbed. It's the confidence I want to have when I put my head on my pillow tonight. Not so much that I would experience peace in the midst of the things, although that's nice to have, it's nice to have peace in your heart and to be untroubled by adversity around you, but part of the reason that we pursue this is because we understand that that resting contented heart is what God is worthy of in response to who he is to his people. "God, You deserve, You are worthy of a contented trusting heart from me in response to Your saving love in my life." And the true believer wants that, pursues it, it's a priority.

And so David from a position of confidence asks there in verse 6, "Save with Your right hand and answer me!" Now as we've seen in the past, God's right hand is a metaphor for his power. You know, a right-handed person, that's his strong hand. We act and we do through our hands. What David is saying, "God, use Your power to help us win a victory that we cannot attain on our own." So David has learned to let his adversity humble him and to teach him to depend on God more fully.

And so, let's just think together for a moment. Think about what reality is here. This world is fallen and things as we all know too well, things do not always go our way. Sometimes it's hard and it's difficult and it's even discouraging. Well, when that happens, we don't just collapse into a puddle of water and stay there, we let the adversity remind us of who our God is and to turn in trusting prayer asking him for help. Not in a sense of a last resort kind of help but in a confidence that God will care for us and it could be no other way because that's the kind of God he is to his people.

You see this confidence in the second half, point number 2 here. We saw David's praise, now we see, point 2, we see his confidence, and in response to David's prayer for deliverance God responds in verses 7 through 9 and then in the last remainder of the Psalm David expresses his confidence in what God has said. And these next couple of verses, verses 7 and 8, have a lot of geographic references that we'll try to touch on without getting too bogged down. God responds now to David's prayer from the first six verses. He says in verse 7,

7 God has spoken in His holiness: "I will exult, I will portion out Shechem
And measure out the valley of Succoth. 8 Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is
Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter.

Now if you look into the Old Testament and if you look at a Bible atlas, you can see that these are geographic references that are being made that refer to different parts of the land of Israel that God gave to his people when he led them out of Egypt. Shechem and Succoth were actually places that Jacob, the patriarch Jacob settled on in opposite sides of the Jordan River. If you'll look at Genesis 33 for just a moment, Jacob, of course, not a part of the exodus out of Egypt and so there's a lot of history being compressed and condensed into this short passage, but in Genesis 33:17, I'm just showing you this so you can see what David had in his mind as he wrote it. Jacob having done some wandering of his own, "Jacob journeyed to Succoth," verse 17, "and built for himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore the place is named Succoth." Verse 18, "Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city." And so what we see here from this just to see what these geographic references are, is that Jacob found a dwelling place in these two regions, and what David is saying and what God is referring to as we go back to Psalm 108:7, what God is saying is that he provided a dwelling place for Jacob and in the midst of David's need God will provide a dwelling place, a safe place for him as well.

And in verse 8, "Gilead is Mine, Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter." What God is pointing to is this, Gilead was an Israelite territory to the east of the Jordan River. Manasseh, if you'll look at your Bible maps perhaps in the back of your Bible, Manasseh straddled the river. On the west side Ephraim and Judah were primary tribes. Ephraim was a large area of land that protected the nation like a helmet. Judah, the scepter. I know we're going through a lot here, just stay with me here. Judah is the scepter which symbolizes God's rule. A king held a scepter as a symbol of his rule and his sovereignty. David the king came from the tribe of Judah.

Now what's being said here with all of these geographic references compressed into one place, what's being said here as we look at these different aspects, these different places where the people of God dwelt? All of this is making a simple statement, is that God is the God of Israel. God provided a dwelling place and provided safety and provision for his people and God says, "These belong to Me. I am sovereign over My people in these realms and I care for them and I provide for them." This is what God is speaking in response to David's prayer when he says, "Save with Your right hand and answer me!" God's response is, "I provide for My people. I establish them and therefore I will do the same thing for you."

And that's the positive side, on the negative side God addresses the enemies of his people. Verse 9, three nations here. He says,

9 Moab is My washbowl; Over Edom I shall throw My shoe; Over Philistia I will shout aloud.

These were enemies and God is showing David, reminding David of how he deals with his enemies. He calls Moab a washbowl. Pretty graphic. In those days a servant would bring a basin for the master to use either for his bathing or as a toilet. Menial labor, a very low place before the master. What God is saying is that, "My plan for the enemies in Moab, I'm going to humble them. They're just a washbowl to Me. They may be strong from a human perspective but I will humble them."

He throws a shoe at Edom in a picture of derision. You may remember, some of you may remember that there was a time when President George Bush was overseas and someone threw a shoe at him, nearly hit him. I'm sure you can find the video of it on YouTube. But in the context of the culture, it was a statement of utter derision and disrespect. God here is saying that he'll throw a shoe, that he has no regard for Edom.

And over the third and final nation, Philistia, the Philistines, God says, "I'll shout aloud over them in triumph."

All of these things, beloved, expressing the sovereignty of God, his sovereign power to establish his people and cast down his enemies, that's the whole point here and this is what God says in response to David's prayer, "Save me with Your right hand." God makes these statements about his sovereignty on behalf of his people and against their enemies. And so what David does is he recognizes God – watch this – God rules over his people in love and he confounds their enemies in justice, and with that being said, David now turns to prayer in verse 10. He asks a rhetorical question here. He's not asking for information. He says,

10 Who will bring me into the besieged city? Who will lead me to Edom?

He says, "God, You must lead us, You must go forth for Your people or the battle is in vain. You must lead us into battle here and give us success or we will fail." He is

pleading in humility for God to help him and apparently from verse 11, this was a time where they were experiencing adversity as a nation because he says in verse 11,

11 Have not You Yourself, O God, rejected us? And will You not go forth with our armies, O God? 12 Oh give us help against the adversary, For deliverance by man is in vain.

He says, "God, our recent experience – watch this – our recent experience tells us not to presume on Your grace because we have been in a position where it seems as though You've rejected us and our adversaries for the moment are prevailing against us. And so, God, based on Your sovereign care, Your sovereign power for Your people, I am asking You to help us as we go forth against them, and recent experience tells us not to presume on Your grace." And that brings greater urgency to the request for help.

Verse 12, look at it again with me, "Oh give us help against the adversary, For deliverance by man is in vain." You know, sometimes I think we fail in prayer at the simple fact that we don't actually ask. James says that in chapter 4 of his book, doesn't he? You don't have because you don't ask, and sometimes we just get into this frame of mind where we're just agitating over the things that are troubling us and never getting down to serious prayer, having meditated on the loyal love of God, meditating on his power and bringing our heart to a steadfast place where we then ask for God's help rather than simply walking around in an anxious frame of mind. I'm preaching to myself as much as I am to you, you know, just so you know. Stepping on my own toes here. That's alright.

But having made the request, look at how he concludes here in verse 13. He's made his request and here's his conclusion. After establishing his praise, after the principles of God's sovereignty are clearly established, after he has asked for the help that he needs, he comes to this concluding confidence that is the final note, is the high point, is the climax of this Psalm. He says in verse 13,

13 Through God we will do valiantly, And it is He who shall tread down our adversaries.

David prays that God would help. He confesses that no man can save and yet as a servant of God, as a child of God, as the anointed king of Israel, he comes knowing that having prayed in faith God will honor his prayer and answer and help against the adversaries. That's the confidence that he ends on.

So beloved, we see in an enduring pattern for us in this particular day in which we live and in our times of personal challenge. What we see is that there is abundant strength available to us in Christ and we avail of that strength in humble request to him.

Let me remind you of what we read earlier, James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all generously and without reproach and it will be given to him." Jesus said it this way in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and

you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." You see, it's not just that God is sovereign and faithful in all of these things, it's that somehow in a way that is beyond our ability to fully comprehend, God actually answers prayer, God actually responds to prayer in a way that alters the course of events. Somehow his sovereign decree includes the prayers of his people timed in a way so that God unfolds his work in a way that makes it obvious that he heard the prayers of his people. This is who God is and it's what he does and he answers the prayers of his people, otherwise the words of Jesus are meaningless. Why would he tell us to ask if it was not actually going to be given? Why would he tell us to seek if we were not going to find? Why would he tell us to knock if it was not going to be opened to us? At some point, beloved, we just have to believe the word of our Lord and take him at face value, that he loves us, that he hears our prayer and he answers us, and if it seems like things aren't changing, then we just learn patience and persevere until he does, until he helps us.

And so as we pray, we call to mind who our God is. We've laid it all out. Time forbids me to rehearse it even further. Just be encouraged tonight as we close, God is a God who helps his people. God helps his people. God helps the humble, seemingly humanly speaking, insignificant people. God cares for the needy. And if Christ died for us, surely he will give us all that we need beside. And so with humble trust in our Lord, our hearts can be steadfast in praise and I call upon you to respond to him that way tonight of all nights.

Let's pray together.

Father, as we close this time together tonight, with David we say our heart is steadfast, O God. You're exalted above the heavens. Your loyal love is great. Your truth reaches to the skies. No ifs, ands or buts about it. Because those things are true, dear Christ, therefore this evening we give thanks to You, and as a nation makes a decision about its future, Father, that recedes in importance in our minds and we simply find ourselves at the close here tonight simply singing praises to You among the nations. Let the nations have their activities and their leaders and all of the things that people pursue on this earth, Father. We see something better, we see something higher, we see something eternal, we see something great and transcendent and it's You and our hearts are drawn to You, our hearts trust in You. And so come what may, O Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we echo the words of this Psalm that You might be exalted above the heavens and Your glory above all the earth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.