

**Give Thanks to the Lord our Redeemer**

Psalm 108

Pastor Jason Van Bommel

**A Song. A Psalm of David.**

<sup>1</sup>My heart is steadfast, O God!

*I will sing and make melody with all my being!*

<sup>2</sup>Awake, O harp and lyre!

*I will awake the dawn!*

<sup>3</sup>I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples;

*I will sing praises to you among the nations.*

<sup>4</sup>For your steadfast love is great above the heavens;

*your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.*

<sup>5</sup>Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!

*Let your glory be over all the earth!*

<sup>6</sup>That your beloved ones may be delivered,

*give salvation by your right hand and answer me!*

<sup>7</sup>God has promised in his holiness:

*“With exultation I will divide up Shechem  
and portion out the Valley of Succoth.*

<sup>8</sup>Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;

*Ephraim is my helmet,  
Judah my scepter.*

<sup>9</sup>Moab is my washbasin;

*upon Edom I cast my shoe;  
over Philistia I shout in triumph.”*

<sup>10</sup>Who will bring me to the fortified city?

*Who will lead me to Edom?*

<sup>11</sup>Have you not rejected us, O God?

*You do not go out, O God, with our armies.*

<sup>12</sup>Oh grant us help against the foe,

*for vain is the salvation of man!*

<sup>13</sup>With God we shall do valiantly;

*it is he who will tread down our foes.*

## **Intro: Why is Life So Hard Sometimes?**

Do you ever wonder why life is so hard sometimes? Sometimes things that seem like they should be easy are really hard. Going on a family vacation should be an easy and fun experience, right? It should be relaxing and fun and a good stress reliever. So, do you ever come back from your vacation feeling like you need a vacation? Things go wrong. Kids squabble with each other. We lose our tempers. The ride takes longer. Stuff breaks. And that's vacation.

Work can be hard – miscommunication, unmet expectations, unspoken expectations, unfulfilling tasks, mundane routine, impossible challenges. Marriage can be hard. Home ownership can bring stresses of maintenance and repairs that wreck your budget. Neighbors can be difficult. Traffic can be a headache. People can be . . . well, people.

I don't mean to be a downer and make it sound like it's all bad. Life is filled with countless moments of real joy and wonderful beauty. We are all far more blessed than we know, and sometimes life is hard because we're blind to how incredibly blessed we are. We miss the thousand things that go right, the thousand things we enjoy without thinking about them, and we focus an inordinate amount of energy on the relatively few things that go wrong.

I don't know about you, but for me, the hardest things about life are my disappointments with my own heart. My own character is not what I know it should be. There are times when the fruit of the Spirit feels like a life test I'm not passing – I'm not as loving or joyful, as patient or peaceful, as kind or good or faithful or gentle as I should be. I'm so selfish. I lose my temper too easily. I want things my way. I covet and crave what other people have, and I grumble and complain about what I have.

So, why is life so hard? It's because life is a war, not a vacation or an adventure. This world is not our home; life in this world is a journey through a wilderness filled with hostile enemies toward our true home. And some of the worst hostile enemies live right within our own hearts. Remember when the Israelites were journeying through the desert wilderness for 40 years? What were the greatest obstacles and challenges they faced? They faced hostile armies, but the greatest obstacles came from themselves – their forgetfulness, their lack of faith, their grumbling, their cravings, their challenging of Moses' leadership, and their disobedience of God's commands.

So, can we get victory over our enemies and experience the joy of the Lord's presence and provision in our wilderness journey toward our eternal home? Yes, we can, and Psalm 108 will help us learn how.

Psalm 108 is an interesting psalm. It's a Psalm of David. David wrote 73 of the 150 psalms, but most of them come in Books 1 & 2 of the psalms, which cover the first 72 psalms (David wrote 53 of these 72 psalms). After Book 2, David wrote just 20 of the remaining 78 psalms. Psalm 108 itself is made up of parts of two other psalms of David. The first part of Psalm 108, verses 1-5, is taken from the last part of Psalm 57, verses 7-11. The last part of Psalm 108, verses 6-13, is taken from the last part of Psalm 60, verses 5-12.

Psalms 57 & 60, which are the sources for Psalm 108, come from David's life. Psalm 57 was written in the Cave of Adullam, where David was hiding from King Saul, who was pursuing him. Psalm 60 was written during the early years of David's reign, when he was fighting battles to settle and establish his

kingdom. King Saul had been defeated by the Philistines at the end of his reign, and then Israel had been torn apart by civil war, so David had to fight to establish his kingdom and secure it from enemies all around. Psalm 60 reflects those early battles.

It seems that Psalm 108 was put together years after David, during Israel's return from exile, as they were settling the land. Psalm 107 celebrates the return from exile. Israel had suffered a 70-year Babylonian exile, driven from the Promised Land. Psalm 107 celebrates God's goodness in redeeming His people and re-settling them in their land, but then Psalm 108 recognizes the reality that, as the land was being re-settled, the people of God were surrounded by enemies, threatening their very existence.

Charles Spurgeon calls Psalm 108, "*The Warrior's Morning Song*, with which he adores his God and strengthens his heart before entering upon the conflicts of the day." This is a great understanding and application of this psalm, as a way of preparing our hearts for battle with thanksgiving and joy in the morning.

### **A. Resolve to Praise the Lord, vv. 1-5**

Psalm 108 begins with a firm resolve to praise the Lord and give Him thanks –

*<sup>1</sup>My heart is steadfast, O God!  
I will sing and make melody with all my being!*

*<sup>2</sup>Awake, O harp and lyre!  
I will awake the dawn!*

*<sup>3</sup>I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples;  
I will sing praises to you among the nations.*

*<sup>4</sup>For your steadfast love is great above the heavens;  
your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.*

*<sup>5</sup>Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!*

David expresses a firm resolve, a steady determination. If we look down to verse 11, we can see that things are not going well. Yet David knows he has nowhere else to look, and so he looks to the Lord. By expressing his firm resolve in a song of prayer to the Lord, he is, in essence, asking God to make his heart steadfast and to strengthen him in his resolve to glorify God.

Notice that, while David is surrounded by enemy nations, hostile to God and to him, his desire is to give thanks to God among them, to sing God's praises among them. His heart's desire is not focused primarily on his own victory or comfort but on the glory of God among the nations of the world, even enemy nations that surround the people of God.

Do we go out into the world focused on how we can give thanks to God and glorify Him among the people around us throughout our day?

The reason for David's resolve to give thanks and sing praise? The good character of God –

*“For your steadfast love is great above the heavens;  
your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.”*

If we think something is really praiseworthy, then we want to praise it. If we know how good God has been to us, then we will want to give Him thanks. Here, David is focused on two aspects of God’s character – His steadfast love (hesed) and His faithfulness or truth. God is committed to loving His people and keeping His covenant promises to us, and He is steadfast, faithful, truthful – reliable.

David’s determination to give thanks and praise the Lord leads Him to praise –

*<sup>5</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!*

### **B. An Earnest Plea, v. 6**

Having fixed his heart on the Lord and having given Him praise, David then pleads with God, expressing the central plea of Psalm 108, which is repeated in different words in verse 12 –

*<sup>6</sup> That your beloved ones may be delivered,  
give salvation by your right hand and answer me!*

David’s request is loaded with deep significance. This is so much more than simply, “Give us victory in battle today, Lord.” Or “Bless our army as we go out and fight today.”

The heartbeat of man has two notes: In nursing school, I learned their names – lub and dub. The human heartbeat is lub-DUB, lub-DUB, the sound of a four-chamber heart and its four valves closing in two pairs: The " **lub**" (which is the softer sound) is the sound of the tricuspid and mitral valves closing. The " **DUB**" (which is the louder sound) is the sound of the aortic and pulmonary valves closing.

Well, the heartbeat of God has two sounds as well – the glory of His name and the good of His people, and we hear the two parts of this heartbeat in verses 5-6 –

*<sup>5</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth!  
<sup>6</sup> That your beloved ones may be delivered,  
give salvation by your right hand and answer me!*

David was called a man after God’s own heart, not because he was sinless or even morally upright, but because he understood the heartbeat of God – “*Let Your glory be over all the earth! That Your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by your right hand*”

Many Christians seem to think that the heartbeat of God is something like. “*Be good. Be nice.*” Or maybe “*Be safe. Be happy.*” Or years ago, it might have sounded like, “*Be respectable. Be clean.*”

The glory of God – the exaltation of His name and the spread of His fame throughout all the earth – and the real, eternal good of His people – their salvation, deliverance from their enemies, most especially

from the chief enemies of sin and death – This is the driving passion, the kingdom agenda, the relentless heartbeat of God.

Will we shape our prayers to align with God’s heartbeat? Will we align our priorities with God’s priorities?

David specifically asks, “Give salvation by Your right hand.” In OT-speak, the right hand of the Lord is a reference to Jesus, who sits at God’s right hand as King of kings and Lord of lords. So, David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is praying for God to save His people by Jesus Christ, and this prayer is repeated twice in the Psalms, in Psalm 60 and in Psalm 108.

### **C. God’s Powerful Promise, vv. 7-9**

In response to David’s remarkable prayer, God answers and speaks a wonderful word of promise, though it is confusing to our ears –

*<sup>7</sup> God has promised in his holiness:*

*“With exultation I will divide up Shechem  
and portion out the Valley of Succoth.*

*<sup>8</sup> Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine;*

*Ephraim is my helmet,  
Judah my scepter.*

*<sup>9</sup> Moab is my washbasin;*

*upon Edom I cast my shoe;  
over Philistia I shout in triumph.”*

Shechem was centrally located in Israel, a very important meeting point. The Valley of Succoth was on the other side of the Jordan River, but still part of Israel. These places had been invaded and harassed by enemies, but God is promising to secure them for His people. This is OT-speak for God promising to give the full inheritance to His people.

Verse 8 is God re-affirming His ownership of His people. Gilead here is probably another name for the Tribe of Gad. Gad, Manasseh and Ephraim are all northern tribes within Israel, and Judah is a southern tribe, the royal tribe, the tribe of King David and of Jesus, and they are all claimed by God as His own. God is saying that all of His people are His and precious to Him.

Verse 9 addresses three key enemies of God’s people: *Moab, Edom, and Philistia*. God is expressing His commitment to triumph over His and His people’s enemies. The washbasin was used by the lowest household slave to wash the feet of the master and his guests. This role in the household was usually taken by a slave conquered in war. Casting your shoe on someone is still today a mark of insult and rebuke in the Middle East.

What we should draw from verses 7-9 are the three key spiritual truths:

- I. God will most assuredly give the full inheritance to His people.

2. God will never disown His people.
3. God will fully and finally conquer all His and our enemies, for the glory of His name and for our eternal good.

These three wonderful Gospel promises have been repeated by God over and over again in His word, and they are vital for our strength and joy in the battles of life. They are promises we wait for still, and God will fulfill them and answer them beautifully and perfectly when Jesus comes again. In the words of I Corinthians 15:50-57 –

*<sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

*<sup>55</sup> “O death, where is your victory?*

*O death, where is your sting?”*

*<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

#### **D. Our Only Hope, vv. 10-13**

Having heard God’s promise in verses 7-9, David renews his petition to the Lord with increased urgency and with specific application to the enemy he is facing –

*<sup>10</sup> Who will bring me to the fortified city?*

*Who will lead me to Edom?*

*<sup>11</sup> Have you not rejected us, O God?*

*You do not go out, O God, with our armies.*

*<sup>12</sup> Oh grant us help against the foe,*

*for vain is the salvation of man!*

*<sup>13</sup> With God we shall do valiantly;*

*it is he who will tread down our foes.*

The great fortified city of Edom David has in mind is probably Petra, a rock city built into the side of a cliff. This capital of Edom could only be approached by a miles-long passage through a deep canyon with

sheer cliffs on either side. In places, no more two horses at a time could pass side-by-side. This meant that a small band of men, armed and determined, could defend the entrance of Petra from a large invading force. Petra thus represents the impossible enemy stronghold, the impregnable fortress, the unconquerable obstacle.

David is concerned because the Edomites will continue to harass Israel until Petra can be defeated, and he knows they cannot defeat Petra on their own. Israel's defeats under Saul, their protracted civil war, and several successful raids on Israel by Philistines and Edomites has David convinced that God has rejected His people, that He no longer goes out with their armies to fight against the enemy.

We may feel dejected and rejected, defeated and hopeless at times. We may feel like God has forsaken us, that He no longer comes to our aid.

David is absolutely right to confess that human help is useless is facing down such formidable foes. We, too, face such formidable foes that all human help is vain. David does not make the mistake so many other kings of Israel made and that so many believers make today in thinking that human help can effectively defeat our true enemies.

Yet David is not hopeless. He concludes with resounding confidence. Why? Because of what God has spoken in His holiness in verses 7-9. Because God has declared that all of Israel belongs to Him and is precious to Him, and that He will defeat all of Israel's enemies, and that He will secure all of His promises for His people, this gives David his confidence to know that *"With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes."*

### **Where Do You Turn for Salvation?**

Okay, so how does this help us?

Well, life is hard, right? Yes, life is good and we are blessed and we have much reason to be thankful, but still life is hard. Life is, in fact, a war, and we face real enemies every day.

We face the lies of the world that insists that God is either dead or irrelevant to our lives, that believing in Him is foolish and probably means you're stupid. We face the assaults of our flesh and its selfishness, cravings, and general ugliness. We face the enemy of our souls who whispers doubts and lies to us, who tempts us through the world and our flesh. We face discouragement, doubt, sin, shame, loneliness, distractions, frustrations, and more.

So, how does Psalm 108 help us?

First of all, by calling us to begin each morning strapping on our armor for battle with a steadfast resolve to praise the Lord and give thanks to Him, calling on Him to establish us and strengthen us in that resolve. We need to begin each day saying to God, "No matter what happens today, You alone are Lord God Almighty and my Heavenly Father, and You alone are worthy of praise and thanksgiving, So, I will give thanks to You and I will praise You today. Strengthen me toward that end, Father."

And then it helps to actually praise God – to sing praises to Him, to give thanks to Him, to remind ourselves of how good and wonderful He is.

As we fix our hearts on the Lord to give Him thanks and praise, we need to also fix our thoughts on the eternal good and salvation of His people, His beloved ones.

And we need a global perspective as we do all of this – for the nations are His inheritance and the world needs to hear His Gospel and give Him praise.

This kind of morning mindset adjustment helps us look above ourselves and beyond ourselves, and that kind of perspective shift is freeing and empowering.

Then, we also need to hear what God says, to read His precious promises in His word, to hear Him declare His kingdom promises and purposes.

You might suspect this is just a fancy way of saying that we need to begin our day in prayer, praise and Bible reading, and it is – but with a focus and a purpose. We need to begin our day worshipping, thanking, resolving, seeking, and setting our minds and hearts on the Lord and His glory and kingdom.

If we know that life is warfare, we'll know this is not optional. I'm not talking about checking something off our list so we can feel really religious and spiritual. I'm talking about the daily bread and daily help we need – *“for vain is the salvation of man!”* and yet *“With God we shall do valiantly; it is He who will tread down our foes.”*