



## Psalm 118 - A Song of Victory

### Introduction

This joyful song of thanksgiving closes the Egyptian Hallel. The psalm calls on all of God's people to praise the Lord for his steadfast love, and then moves to what seems to be a personal testimony of God's rescue from distress, and then to a liturgical occasion at the Lord's house, which involves the whole people again.

The psalm describes a festive procession into Jerusalem after some great deliverance. The original occasion is hard to identify. It could be the rebuilding of the temple or the walls of Jerusalem. In later times it was sung at the Festival of Tabernacles as well as Passover. It was evidently recited by the crowds when Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday; refer to Matthew 21:9, Mark 11:9, and Luke 19:38. And Jesus may imply that it will be sung again at his Second Coming; refer to Matthew 23:39. It was the last psalm Jesus sang at the Last Supper with his disciples before they left for Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30), and vv.25-26 of Psalm 118 are often still recalled in prayers at the Lord's Supper.

The liturgical section inclines most scholars to think that the psalm was originally composed for some special ceremony, such as laying the foundation of the new temple: **<<and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, 'For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever towards Israel.' And all the people responded with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid>>** (Ezra 3:11), in which the song is similar to v.1; or it may relate to the dedication of the new temple; refer to Ezra 6:16-22. In any case, that connection would make the 'I' giving the personal testimony of each member of the congregation, identifying himself with the trials of the whole people. God's many acts of deliverance show that his steadfast love endures forever and is not limited to one generation.

**Psalm 118 is the last of the five Hallel Psalms, sung in Jesus' day as part of the Passover ritual. When Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26 reveal that Jesus sang a**

hymn with his disciples at the last supper, it refers to these Hallel Psalms. As Jesus sang the words 'his steadfast love endures forever', he did it with complete knowledge that the endurance of God's mercy would be tested to the utmost in the work to come at the Cross.

### Psalm 118:1-4 - Let Everyone Give Thanks to the Lord.

The opening section calls on the congregation to <<*give thanks to the Lord, for he is good*>>. Each group among the people, i.e. Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who fear the Lord should recite this marvellous truth: God's steadfast love endures forever. Refer to Psalm 136 for a similar repetition of this phrase.

- 1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his steadfast love endures for ever!
- 2 Let Israel say,  
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'
- 3 Let the house of Aaron say,  
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'
- 4 Let those who fear the Lord say,  
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'

### Psalm 118:1-4

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. Many of the psalms call upon God's people to thank him. Psalm 118 opens with an emphatic call, indicated by the word 'O'. God's goodness is so great and apparent that it deserves emphatic thanks. Spurgeon added, "This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not. Those who only praise God because he does them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to him because he is good."

His steadfast love endures for ever! Psalm 118 begins and ends with this declaration. It is a statement of fact and of gratitude, noting that God's *hesed* - his loyal, covenant love, his loving kindness - will never be taken from his people. In the psalms this phrase has almost a liturgical quality to it. It is used 34 times and is an appreciative declaration of God's people, praising the great loving kindness or covenant love of God.

Derek Kidner observed, "Other psalms confirm the familiarity of this call to worship (Psalms 106:1 and 136:1), and show the opportunity it gave to cantor and congregation to rehearse the great acts of God together (Psalm 136:1-26);" and, "An authentic glimpse of such a scene is preserved in Jeremiah 33:11,

where God promises to restore his people's fortunes, and 'there shall be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness ... the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord: Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever!'" And Spurgeon contributed to the debate, "The word endures has been properly supplied by the translators, but yet it somewhat restricts the sense, which will be better seen if we read it, 'for his mercy for ever.' That mercy had no beginning, and shall never know an end."

Let Israel say. The psalmist invited the people of Israel, the priests of the house of Aaron, and even Gentiles who honoured God, i.e. those who fear the Lord, to join in the emphatic chorus, his mercy endures forever.

The house of Aaron was the specific family within the tribe of Levi that supplied the priests: <<*Then bring near to you your brother Aaron, and his sons with him, from among the Israelites, to serve me as priests – Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar*>> (Exodus 28:1), and: <<*Then Moses said to Korah, 'Hear now, you Levites! Is it too little for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to allow you to approach him in order to perform the duties of the Lord's tabernacle, and to stand before the congregation and serve them? He has allowed you to approach him, and all your brother Levites with you; yet you seek the priesthood as well! Therefore you and all your company have gathered together against the Lord. What is Aaron that you rail against him?'*>> (Numbers 16:8-11).

Those who fear the Lord. By the time of the NT, Gentiles who adhered to the synagogue were called God-fearers: <<*He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly*>> (Acts 10:2 NIV), and: <<*So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak: 'You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen'*>> (Acts 13:16). Although the OT expected that Gentiles would come to fear the Lord, as indicated in King Solomon's prayer: <<*for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm – when a foreigner comes and prays towards this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling-place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built*>> (1 Kings 8:42-43), there is no evidence from either the OT or the Apocrypha, the intertestamental books, that this term had taken on its specialised sense early enough for the psalm to use it. The term describes Israel as a community bound to the Lord by covenant, and perhaps especially designates those members with true piety. At the same time, the term is wide enough to include all who worship the Lord – even if they are neither from the house of Aaron nor from ethnic Israel –

and once Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world began attending synagogues, they could see themselves addressed here.

The thought of calling those who fear the Lord - God-fearers, Gentiles who honoured the God of Israel - to trust God must have sounded especially sweet to Jesus on the night of the last supper, knowing how great the harvest among the Gentiles would soon be: <<*Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting*>> (John 4:35).

#### Psalm 118:5-7 - I Called, and He Answered.

The personal testimony part of the psalm begins by recounting an instance in which the individual called on the Lord and the Lord answered them and set them free. God's answer shows that he is on the side of those who believe in him and ensures that they shall look in triumph on those who hate them, those who brought about the psalmist's distress.

- <sup>5</sup> Out of my distress I called on the Lord;  
the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.
- <sup>6</sup> With the Lord on my side I do not fear.  
What can mortals do to me?
- <sup>7</sup> The Lord is on my side to help me;  
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

#### Psalm 118:5-7

Out of my distress I called on the Lord. The never ending mercy of God was shown when the Lord answered the singer's cry of distress. God answered by setting the psalmist in a secure, broad place where he could confidently stand. This can also be understood as setting the person free from their woes. It is wonderful to think of Jesus confidently singing these words with his disciples on the night of his betrayal and arrest, and before his suffering and crucifixion. Like no one else ever, Jesus would call on the Father in a time of distress and see God's faithful answer.

With the Lord on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me? The never ending mercy of God was shown by God's open favour and help to the one who called upon him: <<*Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*>> (Joel 2:32a). Knowing God was on his side he could live free from the fear of man, knowing what can mortals do to me? Hebrews 13:6 urges its Jewish Christian readers to apply this verse to themselves, especially as they are tempted

to fear what man can do to them, which is why they considered returning to 'ordinary' Judaism; refer to the comment made on Psalm 110:4.

Spurgeon pointed out, "He does not say that he should not suffer, but that he would not fear: the favour of God infinitely outweighed the hatred of men, therefore setting the one against the other he felt that he had no reason to be afraid."

The Lord is on my side to help me. Hundreds of years before Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, the psalmist understood the principle of: <<***If God is for us, who is against us?***>> (Romans 8:31b). He therefore had nothing to fear, even from those who hate him.

### Psalm 118:8-9 - The Lord Is a Sure Refuge.

The experiences of God's help show that it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man, particularly in princes, i.e. in merely human power, which the enemies of v.7 seem to trust in: <<***Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help***>> (Psalm 146:3).

<sup>8</sup> It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to put confidence in mortals.

<sup>9</sup> It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to put confidence in princes.

### Psalm 118:8-9

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in mortals. The psalmist knew it to be true, no doubt learned through the experience of bitter disappointments. Neither the common man nor even princes among men could help the way God can. It is better to trust him!

Spurgeon suggested many reasons why this is true:

- It is better because it is wiser.
- It is better morally, fulfilling the duty of the creature to the Creator.
- It is better because it is safer.
- It is better in its effect, lifting us up instead of bowing us down.
- It is better in its outcome.

Jesus knew this by his own experience as each of his disciples forsook him at the Cross, and even leaders who were sympathetic to him, such as Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, did not give their help to him in his suffering and crucifixion. Only John and the women disciples stood by Jesus at the Cross: <<***Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his***>>

*mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home>> (John 19:25b-27).*

Than to put confidence in princes. Adam Clarke commented, "Men of high estate are generally proud, vain-glorious, 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;" and Spurgeon added, "They are noblest in rank and mightiest in power, and yet as a rule princes are not one whit more reliable than the rest of mankind. A gilded vane turns with the wind as readily as a meaner weathercock."

### Psalm 118:10-13 - The Gentiles Surrounded Me, and the Lord Delivered Me.

This section recounts a particular distress in a battle. All nations surrounded the psalmist when they should have joined him in worship; refer to Psalm 117:1. And they would even have killed him had the Lord helped him, and in the name of the Lord, i.e. acting as his representative, the psalmist cut them off.

- <sup>10</sup> All nations surrounded me;  
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
- <sup>11</sup> They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;  
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
- <sup>12</sup> They surrounded me like bees;  
they blazed like a fire of thorns;  
in the name of the Lord I cut them off!
- <sup>13</sup> I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,  
but the Lord helped me.

### Psalm 118:10-13

All nations surrounded me. In the pattern of Hebrew poetry the idea is repeated for emphasis. The singer knew what it was to be trapped by enemies who swarmed like bees: <<*The Amorites who lived in that hill country then came out against you and chased you as bees do. They beat you down in Seir as far as Hormah*>> (Deuteronomy 1:44). Jesus can be envisaged singing these words, knowing that only a few hours later he would be truly surrounded by those who

would mock, torture, and kill him – with, no doubt, a multitude of nations surrounding him.

**In the name of the Lord I cut them off!** The psalmist understood that the power for victory was not in himself but only in the name of God. He would be rescued as **the Lord helped** him: <<*When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, ‘It is the king of Israel.’ So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out, and the Lord helped him. God drew them away from him*>> (2 Chronicles 18:31), and: <<*Show me a sign of your favour, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame, because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me*>> (Psalm 86:17).

#### **Psalm 118:14-16 - We Sing Glad Songs of Salvation.**

The deliverance of vv.10-13 leads to celebration in the camp of God’s people. Verse 14 uses the victory song of Exodus 15:2, which is similar to Isaiah 12:2, and vv.15-16 describe what one can hear in the camp after the battle.

- 14 The Lord is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.
- 15 There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:  
‘The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
- 16 the right hand of the Lord is exalted;  
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.’

#### **Psalm 118:14-16**

**The Lord is my strength and my might** or song. Quoting Moses’ song: <<*The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him*>> (Exodus 15:2), the singer did not only understand that God could bring strength and a song, but that Yahweh himself became their strength and the song of those who put their trust in him. Going even further, the psalmist understood that Yahweh had become his salvation. Yahweh is these things for his people. When the Lord is a person’s strength, it means that he is their resource and their refuge. Believers look to him for their needs, and are never unsatisfied. When the Lord is their song, it means that he is their joy and their happiness. They find their purpose and life in him, and he never disappoints. When the Lord is their salvation, it means they put their trust for help and deliverance in none other. He is their rest and rescue. With all this truth, it emphasises the importance of seeking God himself when they need strength, a song, or salvation. Often they seek the things themselves, sometimes as even detached from God himself. To seek God and to receive him is to receive all these profound gifts.

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous once they received God's wonderful rescue. God's people give voice to their joy. It would be wrong for those who have received so much to be silent about it.

The right hand of the Lord does valiantly. Repeatedly for emphasis the singer praises the right hand of God, recognising it as the hand of skill and strength: <<*Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power – your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy*>> (Exodus 15:6). God will not use lesser measures to rescue his people.

### Psalm 118:17-18 - Though the Lord Disciplines Me, I Will Not Die.

The experience of deliverance, and the security that the faithful have in God, lead to the reflection: <<*I shall not die, but I shall live*>>. The next line also clarifies for each member of the congregation why God would extend life: that I might recount the deeds of the Lord; refer to the comment made on Psalm 116:8-11. The situations of danger were not God's rejection of the singer but his severe discipline, aiming to bring the singer to see more clearly that in him the singer is secure.

- 17 I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the Lord.
- 18 The Lord has punished me severely,  
but he did not give me over to death.

### Psalm 118:17-18

I shall not die, but I shall live. The psalmist was confident that God would keep him from death in the present crisis. As Jesus sang this song at the last supper with his disciples, he could proclaim this confidently – that death would keep no hold upon him, but he would live, and recount the deeds of the Lord. According to Matthesius, Luther had this verse written against his study wall.

The Lord has punished me severely. The singer understood that God had a training and corrective purpose in allowing the present crisis, but God would not allow it to destroy him, but be of benefit. These words had great meaning for Jesus before the Cross, where he would endure the Father's purposeful suffering, yet not be given over to death: <<*For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again*>> (John 10:17).

### Psalm 118:19-27 - Let Me Enter the Gate of the Lord's House.

The next section seems to picture the singers in a liturgical procession, approaching the gates that lead into the temple courts, i.e. the house of the Lord, and the festal sacrifice and the altar.

- 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the Lord.
- 20 This is the gate of the Lord;  
the righteous shall enter through it.
- 21 I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.

### Psalm 118:19-21

Open to me the gates of righteousness. The psalmist probably had in mind a triumphal entry into the holy city. With those gates open, he would go through them, full of praise to the Lord. Or it might be that the gates of righteousness are the gates of the temple, through which the worshippers enter in order to give thanks to the Lord.

In the song Jesus sang, he proclaimed his entrance into the ultimate reality of heaven, of which Jerusalem was only a representation. After his completed work on the Cross, after his deliverance from death in resurrection, he would be received in glory at the ascension.

Spurgeon commented, “Alas, there are multitudes who do not care whether the gates of God’s house are opened or not; and although they know that they are opened wide they never care to enter, neither does the thought of praising God so much as cross their minds. The time will come for them when they shall find the gates of heaven shut against them, for those gates are peculiarly the gates of righteousness through which there shall by no means enter anything that defiles.”

This is the gate of the Lord. Now the singer is pictured actually passing through the open gate, declaring God’s great works for the righteous. The righteous refers to God’s own people because they have God’s righteous laws in accordance with Deuteronomy 4:8, especially the faithful, who keep those laws.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. These words are similar to those of David: <<*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*>> (Psalm 27:1), and of the prophet: <<*Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation*>> (Isaiah 12:2). Refer back also to the comment made on v.14.

22 The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.

23 This is the Lord's doing;  
it is marvellous in our eyes.

### Psalm 118:22-23

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. It is not known what personal experience of the psalmist might lay behind these words. Perhaps it was purely a prophetic statement, because it certainly was fulfilled in the work of Jesus. This is a strong and important statement in the NT understanding of the person and work of Jesus. Jesus quoted this of himself in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, and Luke 20:17. Peter quoted it of Jesus in Acts 4:11. Paul alluded to this verse in Ephesians 2:20 and Peter also alluded to it in 1 Peter 2:7-8. No text in the OT is quoted more in the NT.

These verses use an image from ancient building practices, perhaps suggested by the newly built temple itself. The chief cornerstone is probably the large stone at the corner of the building's foundation, although some think it is the keystone or capstone of an arch but the very similar expression in Isaiah 28:16 makes the foundation interpretation more likely.

The stone that the builders rejected. It was true of Jacob, Joseph and David – each rejected, then raised high. It was most certainly true of Jesus:

- They did not approve of his origin: <<*They replied, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee'*>> (John 7:52).
- They did not approve of his lack of formal education: <<*The Jews were astonished at it, saying, 'How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?'*>> (John 7:15).
- They did not approve of his disregard for religious traditions: <<*But some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?'*>> (Luke 6:2).
- They did not approve of his choice of friends: <<*When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?'*>> (Matthew 9:11).

The builders are the wise and knowledgeable, and they have rejected some particular stone as unsuited for this purpose. They were wrong in their judgement. The psalm is likening Israel and perhaps particularly the person who had suffered to such a stone; the imperial powers had thought little of Israel, but God had chosen his people to be the cornerstone of his great plan for the world.

Spurgeon observed, “Still do the builders refuse him: even to this day the professional teachers of the gospel are far too apt to fly to any and every new philosophy sooner than maintain the simple gospel, which is the essence of Christ: nevertheless, he holds his true position amongst his people, and the foolish builders shall see to their utter confusion that his truth shall be exalted over all.” And again, “Now he is the bond of the building, holding Jew and Gentile in firm unity. This precious corner stone binds God and man together in wondrous amity, for he is both in one. He joins earth and heaven together, for he participates in each. He joins time and eternity together, for he was a man of few years, and yet he is the Ancient of Days. Wondrous cornerstone!”

This is the Lord’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. The psalmist spoke here on behalf of those redeemed by the Lord and whose life and future is built upon that chief cornerstone. They rejoice in God’s marvellous work, despite the rejection of the builders.

This is the Lord’s doing, i.e. it is not a mere human accomplishment. The NT writers use this text to indicate that the powerful figures who rejected Jesus, especially the Jewish leaders, were no wiser than the world powers that thought so little of Israel.

The exaltation of Jesus from the Cross to the resurrection to the right hand of God on high is the work of God alone. Who lifted Jesus high again, exalting him above all?

- Not the religious leaders – they rejected him.
- Not the Roman leaders – they crucified him.
- Not the Jewish multitudes – they chose another.
- Not the majority of the disciples – they cowered in fear.
- Not his influential followers – they buried him.
- Not the devoted women – they were beset by grief.
- Only the Lord himself could lift Jesus high.

Spurgeon added, “What astonishment will then take hold upon those who refused his righteous claims. Then will they know that this is the Lord’s doing; though it will be terrible in their eyes. All intelligent beings, even down to the blackest devil of hell, shall at the second advent of our Lord be obliged to confess that the stone which the builders refused has become the head stone of the corner.”

<sup>24</sup> This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

## Psalm 118:24

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. When Jesus quoted v.22, which is recorded in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, and Luke 20:17, he did so in response to the praise and hosannas given to him at what is commonly called the triumphal entry. Since Psalm 118 is prophetically connected with that event, the day mentioned here can be prophetically understood as the day Jesus formally entered Jerusalem as Messiah and King: <<*Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*>> (Zechariah 9:9).

This is the day in literal terms, however, probably refers to the festival day that occasioned the psalm.

It is true in a general sense that the Lord makes every day, and there is reason to rejoice and be glad in every day. Yet specifically, the day the Lord made to rejoice and be glad in was the day Jesus entered Jerusalem with hosannas welcoming him as Israel's saviour. If on that day human voices failed to rejoice and be glad, Jesus said that the very stones would cry out their praises and hosannas; refer to Luke 19:40.

There is also reason, based on the chronology of Sir Robert Anderson, to believe that the particular day of the triumphal entry was prophesied in Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks: <<*Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place. Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time. After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed*>> (Daniel 9:24-26). Anderson's chronology is controversial and rejected by many, but as John Walvoord noted, "No one today is able dogmatically to declare that Sir Robert Anderson's computations are impossible."

<sup>25</sup> Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!

O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

## Psalm 118:25

Save us, beseech you, O Lord! The context of the open gates (v.29) and the coming into the city, as well as the repletion of Psalm 118 gives the sense that

these are words from different speakers or parts of a chorus. This Hebrew expression *hoshi'ah na'*, when transliterated into Greek, becomes *hōsanna*; refer to Matthew 21:9 and 21:15, Mark 11:9-10 and John 12:13. With the Hebrews salvation is a wide word, comprising all the favours of God that may lead to preservation.

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

### Psalm 118:26

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. The main point of this ceremony of song is to welcome God's deliverer through the open gates into the holy city. This deliverer received blessing from the singers as he approached the house of the Lord. The crowds used these words in their shouts at Jesus' triumphal entry: <<*As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!'*>> (Luke 19:37-38), indicating that they thought it was a special occasion. Jesus used it in speaking to Jerusalem; because of her resistance to God, its house, probably the temple, was desolate, and they would have to greet Jesus with these words if she was to 'see' him properly: <<*See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord"*>> (Luke 13:35).

Therefore, the psalmist provides a strange prediction that was fulfilled precisely. This deliverer is welcomed with open gates (v.29) and hosannas (v.25) and blessings (v.26). Yet he is and was the same chief cornerstone that would be rejected (v.22). Exactly according to the words and spirit of Psalm 118, Jesus was welcomed as deliverer and Messiah on Palm Sunday, and rejected and crucified only a few days later, when the hosannas turned to shouts of 'crucify him' (John 19:6).

<sup>27</sup> The Lord is God,  
and he has given us light.  
Bind the festal procession with branches,  
up to the horns of the altar.

### Psalm 118:27

The Lord is God, and he has given us light. There is a brief but important focus on Yahweh as the true God, above all idols.

**Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.** In view of the greatness of Yahweh and the light he gives, the sacrifice is willingly given. This was fulfilled in a way that the psalmist likely never expected – that the deliverer of the previous verses would himself be the sacrifice, bound to an altar. Hebrews 13:10 makes reference to the sacrifice of Jesus at an altar, probably speaking of the Cross: *<<We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat>>*.

### **Psalm 118:28-29 - I Will Give You Thanks and Praise.**

With these closing words the individual members of the congregation pledge themselves to the song in which they invited each other to join in v.1.

<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God, I will extol you.

<sup>29</sup> O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

### **Psalm 118:28-29**

**You are my God, and I will give thanks to you.** These words are taken to be in the mouth of the deliverer who arrived through the open gates. He rightly surrendered himself to God, filled with praise in view of the ultimate triumph: *<<O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water>>* (Psalm 63:1). The voice of Jesus singing this praise and exaltation of God echoed through the upper room as evidence of his submission and obedience.

**O give thanks to the Lord.** Psalm 118 began with exuberant and heartfelt praise, and it ends with the same – recognising once again the goodness of God at the end of it all. If Christians start with praise they are in a much better position to end with praise, despite all they may go through.

**For his steadfast love endures for ever.** Jesus himself believed in and received this unending mercy, and proclaimed it in song with his disciples in the upper room. The same mercy, that loyal love, covenant love, and loving kindness that never ended for him is also given to his people. Spurgeon commented, “What better close could there be to this right royal song? The psalmist would have risen to something higher, so as to end with the climax, but nothing loftier remained. He had reached the height of his grandest argument, and there he paused.”