

Psalm 118

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[0 : 00] It's great to be with you. Let me ask the boys, what are your names? Caleb. Caleb and? Brody. Brody? Brody. Brody. All right. Okay. Do you guys know by any chance what the longest chapter in the Bible is?

Okay, I'll tell you. It's Psalm 119. Okay. It's got a lot of verses. How many verses? I can't even count. Let's see. It never stops. You know, it goes on and on.

Forever. Oh, 176 verses. That's a lot, isn't it? Okay. Another question. Do you guys know what the shortest Psalm is in the Bible? No. Okay. I'll tell you again. It's Psalm 117. Okay. So, 119, the longest one. 117, the shortest chapter in the whole Bible. It's only got two verses.

Do you know which chapter is exactly in the middle of the Bible? Psalm 118. Psalm 118. Well done, Caleb. Yeah. That is exactly right. And that's the Psalm we're talking about today. And it's a really important Psalm, actually, because it's quoted a lot in the New Testament.

Some Psalms are never quoted. This Psalm is quoted 13 times, which is quite remarkable. So, it is a bit significant, fairly significant, I would say. I would argue.

[1 : 22] And I love the Psalms because the Psalms just give you a song for every situation in life. Whether you're happy or sad, depressed, discouraged, joyful.

There's always a Psalm that fits situation. Recently, I've heard an interview where people asked Taylor Swift fans why they love Taylor Swift so much. And they said, well, she's got a song for every situation.

Now, we got 150 songs that fit every situation in life. Isn't that great? And today we look at Psalm 118. And we can't focus on the whole Psalm because it is quite long, 29 verses.

So, I will focus on the latter half of that. But that's fine, because that's the really good bit, okay? So, Psalm 118. It's part of a collection in the Psalms, which is called the Egyptian Hallel. What does Hallel mean? Hallel. It's part of a different word we know, right?

We know the word hallelujah. Hallel means praise. Hallelujah means praise God. Praise be to God. So, Egyptian Hallel. Why is it called Egyptian Hallel?

[2 : 34] It's called Egyptian Hallel because of the story that the Israelites experienced in Egypt, which we call the Exodus, when God freed them and brought them out of slavery.

So, whenever the Israelites would celebrate their festivals, their Passover feast, they would sing especially the Psalms of the Egyptian Hallel, which are, I think, four or five.

I didn't write it down, unfortunately. But Psalm 118 is the last one of this collection. And as I say, it is quoted in the New Testament, and it is important, because as we read this Psalm, you might have heard a few phrases that you have picked up in the New Testament or in other sermons before.

For example, the phrase about a cornerstone, or just the very first line where it says, Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever.

It's a very well-known psalm. And the psalm is kind of built up in a way that there is a bit of a liturgy in the beginning.

[3 : 45] What does that mean? It just means they have some form of worship. So, in the beginning today, Craig read the first verse of this psalm as a call to worship.

And that is exactly what the people who would sing this psalm would do as well, right? It's like, I'm not from the highlands, but if they sing psalms in Gaelic, they would usually give a line, right?

So that's a bit like what they're doing here in the first verse. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. Let Israel say, His love endures forever.

They're giving the line, and then all the people, they join in and praise God together. And as we read this psalm, we get a feeling that it is a festival procession, as it were.

There is one person leading a lot of other people through the gates into a city. And if you go and read the commentaries, what you will find is that a lot of commentators will say, this person who's leading all the other people into the city is probably some sort of king.

[4 : 58] And why do people think that? It's usually, they refer to verse 10, if you have the Bible in front of you. Verse 10 says, Now, if you are just a normal person, you wouldn't necessarily say that, right?

You wouldn't necessarily feel like all the nations have surrounded you. If you're a king, and you maybe went to war, and the surrounding nations came and surrounded you in war, then you would think, okay, I need help.

So, this language, it's a bit of a war language, a bit of a military language. So, people think there is this king who leads people into a city.

Why do we think it's a city? Because they talk about the gates of righteousness. This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.

Verse 20. Verse 19, it says, Open for me the gates of the righteous. I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. So, that is kind of the picture we get. A king leading people through the gates of righteousness, okay?

[6 : 11] Giving thanks to God for his deliverance. We will focus on verses 20 to 29. Because, as I said, we don't have super much time.

Robin told me to not preach for too long. So, I'll keep it to two hours if that's fine, okay? I'm just kidding. I'm just joking. And we will see three things in there, okay? We know that the Psalms are all about Jesus, right?

We know that Jesus says about himself, All the Old Testament is written about me. So, we know that the Psalm is about Jesus. So, there are three things we see in this Psalm, which I would like to highlight.

And the first one is, The stone rejected by the builders. What do I mean by that? Jesus is a stone rejected by the builders. Usually, when people ask, What is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? You wouldn't necessarily say, Jesus is a stone. That sounds a bit silly, doesn't it? But it's true. Jesus is a stone. Obviously, he's a human being. But he is a stone because the Bible says that he is the cornerstone that God builds his temple on.

[7 : 20] If you've been a Christian for a while, you will have heard that expression many times, right? And after reading the New Testament, we know that the cornerstone that is talked about here is about Jesus Christ, God's Son.

And it's a significant symbol. But what is it actually saying? What does that mean? In most of the passages that we read in the New Testament about the cornerstone, it talks about a temple.

The temple that God is building. The temple of the people of God. So, for example, in Ephesians 2, verse 20, it says that Christ Jesus himself is the chief cornerstone.

In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

That's quite remarkable. We are joined together in Christ as a community. And as we were singing the songs, I saw your little vision statement here.

[8 : 25] In Christ as a community for everyone. And that is very much what this passage in Ephesians 2 is talking about as well. So, we're learning a few things from this, right?

First of all, Jesus is the chief cornerstone of the whole building. And the building, the temple, is a synonym for the church. A cornerstone, does anyone know what a cornerstone is?

Any masons here? Okay, all right. I've got a cornerstone. I've got a drawing of a cornerstone here. Very good, yeah. So, a cornerstone is usually the first stone that is being laid, okay?

So, it gives the directions for all the walls. So, it needs to be perfectly leveled, right? It's the most important stone in the whole building, arguably. And in the Middle East, they would have special ceremonies ceremonies and rituals to celebrate the laying of a cornerstone.

Where I'm from, in Germany, there usually is a celebration when the roof is being built for some reason. I don't know why. And everybody goes and has a lot of food and drinks and is happy.

[9 : 32] But in the Middle East, they celebrate when the cornerstone is being laid because it is the most important stone of the building, which means you need a good stone.

You need a stone that actually works as a cornerstone. And in the Psalm, it says that the stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

So, there are some builders, we don't know who's meant by the builders right now, but they clearly thought the stone that they had is not suitable to be a cornerstone for that building.

And what that means is that people who are building the church, so in Jesus' day, it was the Pharisees, it was the religious leaders of the Jews, they wanted, well, they had different expectations of what the cornerstone would look like if we used that symbol.

They wanted someone who was strong, who was a warrior, who would free them from their oppressors, from the Romans. So, at Jesus' time, the Romans were in Israel and they were oppressing the Jews there.

[10:45] So, they wanted someone who's strong, with a sword, coming, you know, and building up an army and fighting the Romans. But what we get instead is something very, very different.

You get Jesus and he's not like a big warrior, is he? He doesn't ride into Jerusalem on a big horse, swinging a big sword, fighting all the Romans.

He does the opposite. He actually loves them. He actually doesn't even defend himself. But he goes to the cross and dies for them.

And that is simply not what people have expected. And you think it actually made them angry. You know, the stone that the builders rejected became cornerstone.

There's a big irony in there. There's a big irony in Christianity. You've just heard already that I said that Jesus is the cornerstone that God builds his temple on.

[11:50] And God did that. We read that in the New Testament. Read that in the Bible. God's church is built on Jesus Christ. And let me just ask you today something more personal.

How is that important to you right now? When you go to work tomorrow, when you go to school tomorrow, why is it important that Jesus is the cornerstone? Did you know that in 1 Corinthians 6, I think verse 19 it is, the Bible says that your bodies are actually temples of the Holy Spirit?

Which means all of us here are temples. Which means if the temple is built on a cornerstone, which is Jesus, all our lives are built on Jesus as the cornerstone.

And that's my question today. Is Jesus Christ the cornerstone in your life? Or of your life? Is he the guiding principle in everything you do?

Do you see God in prayer when it comes to big decisions? Do you apply his words, his wisdom, what he has done to your life when you are faced with temptations, when you are faced with big decisions, when you are faced with trials and difficult seasons in your life?

[13:09] Do you realize that your life is built on Jesus' love, on his work for you, in good times as in bad times? And do you praise him for that?

Do you praise him for the fact that you as a temple, as a reborn person, exist because you're built on him as the foundational cornerstone? Or do we simply say, well, it's just a stone in the wall, one of many?

It's fairly important, but it's not the most important stone because that is what the people in this psalm do, the builders who reject the stone. If we focus maybe on another verse, in verse 25, it's a small verse, it says, Lord, save us.

Lord, grant us success. Some of you will actually be able to tell me the Hebrew, the Hebrew translation of this verse because what this verse in Hebrew means is just one word, Hosianna.

And we sing that in songs all the time, don't we? Hosanna. Hosanna to the king, Hosanna to the son of David. It just means, pray and save us, we pray.

[14:27] Hosanna. So most of us will probably have heard that phrase before, which is cool. We are all basically theologians. We speak a little bit of Hebrew, right?

And that's my second point. Hosanna, save us, we pray. Jesus is not only the stone on which we build our lives, but he is the savior of our lives.

Jesus is the savior. I've described to you what this psalm is structured like, right? It's like a king who rides into the gates and people praise the king, people bless the king, people give God thanks for the deliverance.

Now, isn't there one scene that we can remember from the New Testament where Jesus rides into the gates of Jerusalem and what do people sing?

They sing, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, which is a quotation. They sing this psalm.

[15:32] They actually quote from this psalm as Jesus rides into Jerusalem in the very beginning of the Easter week. Jesus gets crucified on Friday, but on the Sunday before, Palm Sunday as

some call it, they actually sing these words from this psalm to Jesus, the true king.

And that's really fascinating, isn't it? The crowd sing, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest heaven. During the Passover week, they sing to the true king.

They sing to the true deliverer to save them from their sins and from their oppressors. And Jesus' actual name is in this little word, Hosanna.

Do you know what Jesus' actual name is? Because Jesus is the English version of the name. Have you ever heard of the Hebrew or Aramaic version? It's called Yeshua.

It's a bit like Joshua. It's the same name, actually. Yeshua. It just means God saves or God delivers. So, this guy, Jesus, Yeshua, whose name is God delivers, who actually is God, who comes in the name of the Lord, comes to deliver his people.

[16:51] The deliverer has come to deliver his people. So, this psalm originally is a psalm of praise for God's deliverance from the Egyptians, but now it's become a psalm of praise for the true deliverer and the deliverance of sin.

And the people sing, save us, we pray, deliver us. What does that mean to be saved? I read a little story the other day that I thought was very interesting.

It's about an evangelist who goes on the train. It's over a hundred years ago. I can't remember how long it was ago exactly. But this evangelist, he goes on the train and he sits in a compartment and there's another guy there.

So, he thinks, okay, that's great. I'm an evangelist. I can maybe start a conversation about the gospel. So, he starts talking to the other guy and after a while they start talking about faith and things go well.

The other person seems to know the Bible fairly well. and has heard of God before. So, the evangelist asks him, are you saved? And the guy who sits opposite him says, I have been saved, I am being saved and I will be saved.

[18:03] And the evangelist says, I don't think you understand. Are you saved? And the guy says again, I've been saved, I am being saved and I will be saved. The guy who sat opposite him was Charles Spurgeon, the great preacher of London, one of the greatest preachers of all times.

Of course, he knew what it means to be saved. But what does he mean when he says this? What he means is this, God has saved him through the work of Jesus Christ at the work, at the cross, sorry, when Jesus died for his people.

And God is saving him by making him more holy every day, by sanctifying him. and God will save him in a future sense. One day, when he will die, he will be with Jesus and one day a new creation in a new and better world.

Sometimes we call it in an eschatological sense, right? In something that will come, that will happen. We are saved by God's grace because we know what he has done for us, right?

We know he went to the cross for us. We know what he has done in the Old Testament for his people when he delivered people out of Egypt, when he freed them from slavery.

[19:22] And we know we will be saved in the future because of what he promises in his word. And we know that God always keeps his promises. He always keeps his words.

And when we read this psalm, we can also pray this prayer. Hosanna, save us, we pray, although we know we are saved. We have been saved.

And we will be saved. Deliverance was brought through Jesus, the true deliverer, the Savior. And then the second thing the people in Jerusalem are shouting as Jesus writes in is, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

We all know the difference between someone who comes with bad news and with good news, right? If your bank calls you to tell you you have no money left on your bank account, that's also good.

If the hospital calls you, probably that's also not good. It's probably going to be bad news. If the lottery tells you and says you have won, that's good news. We all won some money.

[20:26] If Robin Silsen calls you and says, Simon, you can preach at Winchborough, isn't that fantastic? That's good news as well, right? It really depends on who is calling.

is the name good or bad news? And Jesus comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

And he's bringing the best news possible. Because what he's about to do as he rides into Jerusalem, he's got his mind set on the cross. He knows what is going to happen in the next few days.

And there is a well-known commentator who writes about this psalm, and he says this, what those who took part in such a ceremony could have never foreseen, and he talks about the ceremony of the psalm, when they would usually recite the psalm at Passover.

He says, what those who took part in such a ceremony could have never foreseen was that it would one day enact itself on the road to Jerusalem. Jerusalem, unrehearsed, unliturgical, and with explosive force.

[21 : 35] In that week, when God's realities broke through his symbols and shadows, the horns of the altar become the arms of the cross, and the festival itself found fulfillment in Christ our Passover.

That's a bit of a lengthy quote and maybe hard to understand when you don't have it in front of you. But what he is saying is that this whole psalm is about Jesus, as he rides into Jerusalem.

And then in verse 27, there's a weird expression where it says, with bows in hand, join in the festival procession up to the horns of the altar.

And it's really, really difficult to translate that. The NAB translated in the way I just read it. But there is another possible translation. there's a little footnote actually in your Bibles as well.

If you look at the bottom of the page it says, bind the festival sacrifice with ropes. Okay. Now, I don't know if you know that or not. But when Jesus went to Jerusalem, as I said, he's got his mind set on the cross.

[22 : 45] He knows he will have to die in a few days. And when the Romans crucified people, we always talk about the nails in his hands or in his wrists, actually.

What we don't talk about is the ropes. People at the cross would have used ropes to bind them to the cross.

And if you read it in that light, it gets a very different meaning, doesn't it? The true king has come to Jerusalem to deliver his people.

not only to be the savior, not only to be the cornerstone, but the way that he accomplishes that is by being the sacrifice himself, by being the Passover lamb.

As Derek Kidner says, bind the festal sacrifice of courts up to the horns of the altar. His quote was this, the horns of the altar became the arms of the cross and the festival itself found fulfillment in Christ, our Passover.

[23 : 59] So, they would have usually celebrated this festival by sacrificing an animal. At Passover, you would sacrifice loads of animals. And Jesus comes and says, look, I'm actually the lamb.

I'm innocent. I've never done anything wrong, but I will die so that you can live, so that you are free, so that you can have forgiveness, so that you will have eternal life if you believe in me, if you trust in me.

And that is what happened. The whole psalm is about Jesus, the cornerstone, Jesus, the saviour, and ultimately Jesus, the suffering sacrifice, the king who came to be a sacrifice.

Behold the lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, such a well-known verse. And do you see the symbolism in all of this? The Jews, they would have known the Exodus story by heart, and many of us know the Exodus story by heart.

And the point of it is this, God has come to deliver, and now God has come to deliver again. God with us, Emmanuel, Jesus, Yeshua, God who saves, he has become the sacrifice, the Passover lamb.

[25 : 16] In 1 Corinthians 5, verse 7, Paul says this, Paul says, get rid of the old yeast so that you may be a new unleavened batch, as you really are.

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Jesus Christ is the new Passover lamb who has been sacrificed. The old is gone, the new is here. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, on which we know build our lives as well.

So, let me just ask you this again. Is he your cornerstone? Do you understand that he is your savior? Do you understand that nothing has changed in the last 2,000 years? That that is still a reality, and it's still true.

And we're here not just as a hobby, or it's something nice to do on a Sunday morning, but to worship the living king, the living sacrifice. Let me finish with this.

can you maybe turn your pages to Ezra chapter 3? So, Ezra chapter 3, it's a bit of a random place to go to, I know, but it will actually show you where the words for this psalm come from, first words. [26 : 28] So, in verse 10, we read this, when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments, and with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with symbols, took their places to praise the Lord, as prescribed by David, king of Israel.

With praise and thanksgiving, they sang to the Lord, he is good, his love towards Israel endures forever. And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

Isn't that amazing? The words that we just read in this psalm, that we sometimes sing in this psalm, actually came from this scene where they were building the temple. And who was it who was building the temple?

It was the people, but it was actually God who was building the temple. And he's doing the same thing today. And he's using us, and he's building us up as a temple, with Jesus as the Christ.

So let me pray. Father, we thank you so much for what you have done for us. We thank you that you have given us your son, Jesus, as the ultimate sacrifice, as the king who came not to use violence or swords or the strength of men, but actually loved people and was killed for it.

[27 : 55] And it's hard to understand that sometimes. so we ask for help, that you would help us understand that reality, to live in light of that, that we would be transformed by that truth, that we would become people like our king, Jesus, people who are citizens of his kingdom, people who are kind towards others, who love them radically, and who fight for the gospel, for your truth, Father.

I just pray that we would build our lives on the true cornerstone of Jesus Christ. I pray that you would help us to do that, not only today on a Sunday, but also in the coming days, in the coming weeks, that we would not be like the people in Israel who sang Hosanna to Jesus as he came to Jerusalem, but who said crucify on just five days later.

I pray that we would love you well every single day anew. Father, we thank you that you've forgiven us for all of our sins, that you are saving us, that you will save us, and that you have saved us.

I give thanks for all the people who are in here, and you see everyone in their circumstances, Father. I pray that you would give each and every one what they need right now, that you would minister to all of them, and bless them.

this church plant in Winchborough. We pray all of these things in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.