

# Psalm 118

## “Our God, the Committed Loving One”

### Introduction:

When I say commitment what do you think of? Some of you immediately thought of your wedding day where you made a commitment to love and cherish your spouse for life. Others of you may have thought of a time when you heard your parent say, “Let your yes be yes.” Some of you may remember a time when you signed a sports scholarship committing to play for a college team. There are several things we commit too. We commit to buying cars and houses. We commit to joining fraternities, sororities, political parties, and other clubs. No matter who you are or where you have been we all know what it means to be committed.

What do we learn about our commitments?

That often times we are not very good at keeping them regardless of what we have been taught. We have failed to love our spouse in all circumstances like we committed to do. We have said yes to someone before; only to back out at the last minute. If you had a sports scholarship in college, maybe you stopped playing the sport and backed out of your scholarship. We all have committed to purchasing cars and houses and before we can finish our payments we sell them and get something newer. We are creatures who know what it means to commit but all in all we are not that great at commitment ourselves.

Well, in Psalm 118 we learn that there is one who is good at keeping his word. There is one who remains committed. God is committed and he never backs out on his commitments. We really see that played out practically in what is known as the Halal Psalms. In fact, tonight in Psalm 118 we see the Psalmist is calling people to worship God because he has personally experienced God’s commitment to always love his people.

Before we go any further I want to explain to you what the word Halal means because I believe it adds necessary depth to the love of God towards us in Christ Jesus. The word Halal is the Hebrew word that means too praise or to be boastful in something. There are five Psalms that the Jews sang or recited at the passover festival. In fact Jesus sang these very Psalms with his disciples in the upper room following the Lord’s Supper just before he left to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Halal Psalms start in Chapter 113 and end in Psalm 118. These are the songs that focus on Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and they were written to praise God for his faithfulness to save them.

Keep this in mind as we cover this Psalm tonight: the week of Jesus’ death was the week of Passover and his final celebration before the cross was with his disciples as they took the supper and sang these songs.

Matthew 26:30 says, “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Furthermore, my desire for us as we leave this text tonight is that we would leave believing that **God is worthy of our praise because he displayed His eternal love for us through Jesus.**

(v.1) starts off the chapter saying, “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His steadfast love endures forever”

The Hymn starts with a command to the Israelites to give thanks to God based on who He is and how he displays His goodness. Who is God? He is Good. How do we know He is good?

His steadfast love endures forever.

The Psalmist starts this chapter by unveiling what is essentially true about God’s nature. This is why in Genesis 1 God was able to look at everything and declare “it is Good.” But remember at the end of chapter 1 after creating man in his own image he said “It is very good” The mark of His image displayed in a perfect world took creation from “good” to “very good” further emphasizing that Israel served the God who is by His very nature good in all that he is and all that he does.

Therefore, anything God invest into this world is an outpouring of His good nature. God reveals His goodness to the world in many ways. His goodness is revealed through Him opposing sin. His goodness is revealed through showing sinners mercy. His goodness is revealed in the beauty of creation. In particular, in Psalm 118, His goodness is revealed to Israel and to us today through His never wavering and never ending love towards His people. If you were an Israelite there was nothing more comforting than placing your faith in the enduring love of God.

Every act of God’s deliverance for them was an act of His enduring love

In fact, Psalm 136 is the Psalm of God’s steadfast and enduring love.

In all 26 verses of that chapter the Psalmist declares that the steadfast love of God endures forever. But this isn’t just a saying for them. This isn’t church lingo— God is worthy of their praise because as for them, they have experienced His love through His promise keeping. So the Psalmist calls out three parties to praise the LORD: He says,

“Let Israel say... Let the House of Aaron Say... Let those who fear the LORD say, the steadfast love of the LORD endures forever.”

This call to praise God is a call to all the redeemed to remember God's faithfulness and enduring love to deliver them from slavery and sin. This includes us today.

**Application:**

Before we move forward with the remainder of this text I must ask— have you considered the steadfast and enduring love of God towards you? Have you experienced it? If you have experienced it then turn to the LORD and praise Him as one who has been delivered from sin. If it were not for God's enduring love none of us would be here, yet he displayed his love for us that while we were still sinners he sent Jesus, who knew no sin to be sin so that we may be called the righteousness of God!

Praise the LORD! Your steadfast love endures forever.

However, for some of you those words may be difficult to utter. You have experienced great loss recently. You have experienced pain that is unimaginable. You have received bad news or can't seem to overcome sins in your life and you keep waiting on deliverance and you keep waiting on relief but it doesn't seem to come.

Brother or sister if that is you please hear me: God's love for you has not wavered. It has not moved. His word says he draws near to the brokenhearted so I encourage you in your hurt; press into the LORD, continue to seek his face and the God of love will reveal Himself to you when you need Him most.

I know what I'm saying is easier said than done. That is why I want to take a moment a simply pray for those who may feel this way.

**Prayer:**

Father, your word says you are good and that your love for us is steadfast and never ending. For many of us we have experienced your love in abundance—thank you for your faithfulness towards us and allowing us to experience the strength and depth of your love towards us. But Father there are some in this room or who are listening to this sermon and they cannot bring themselves to join us because of hurt, pain, and/or sin... for reasons unknown to us they are in a dry season of life and in need of a new cup filled with your love. God we ask that by your goodness you would grant them relief from their hurt and allow them to experience your unfailing love once again. Remind them of the hope we have in Jesus, that one day, because of your goodness we will be set free from all our sorrows and sins and we will find ourselves in your eternal love. We thank you for our difficult seasons because we know you are working it out for our good because you love us so much. Help us all be able to say together, "your steadfast love endures forever." Amen.

The remaining verses in the text I have broken up into 5 sections with 5 points that demonstrate God's enduring love

## **1. God is with us. (v.5-7)**

We know that God is with us because we see in the text that his love endures for us personally.

### **Illustration:**

One movie I enjoyed watching growing up was the movie Ghostbusters. For those of you who have not seen the movie it is a comedy film where three friends “who are parapsychologist start a ghost catching business in New York City.”<sup>1</sup> In the movie they needed to advertise their new business so they created a commercial and in the commercial they played a song and the lyrics go like this

“If there is something strange in your neighborhood—who you gonna call?  
Ghostbusters! If there is something weird and it don’t look good—who you gonna call?  
Ghostbusters!”

I think you get the picture... If ghosts are giving you distress, if you need to take refuge from your haunted house, if you think your life is endangered you need to call Ghostbusters and they will be there for you. In a very real way, the Psalmist in this chapter gets to His personal testimony of God’s love and he says “In my distress I called on the LORD and he answered me and set me free.”

The word distress in Hebrew is the same word used in Psalm 116:3 it depicts terror and anxiety in the face of potential suffering.

Psalm 116:3 says, “The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.”

So let's be clear, there is real fear that the Psalmist is expressing but you will notice in both Psalms that there is no one else they would rather turn to than God almighty! Isn't it comforting to know that in our greatest hours of need we have a God who hears us when we cry out to him? The God of the universe, filled with deep love, lends his ears to us and meets us in our distress and sets us free from our anxieties and fears.

Praise be too God for His steadfast love endures forever.

### **Application:**

Brother or sister in Christ, if you find yourself with great anxiety and great distress I urge you to call on the LORD first and call on Him often.

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30 says, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia Ghostbusters Movie Description

This is Christ promise to you, if you come to him with your distress he is faithful to hear you and take your burdens upon Himself and replace it with peace; the same peace that the Psalmist experienced in verses 6-7. He says, “the Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do to me? The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.”

When God meets us in our distress he replaces our feelings of terror with expressions of confidence and peace.

Now that the LORD is with the Psalmist he ask “What can man do to me? I have God! Who will triumph over Him?”

## **2. God is for us (v.8-13)**

When you read v.8-9 you get this sense that the Psalmist has experienced the pain of trusting in others more than he trust in God.

And so from it seems that from a place of experience he declares, “It is better to take refuge in the LORD...”

Simply put, God has not and will not fail me but men will. Princes will. Presidents will. Parents will. Spouses will. Friends will.

The place for refuge is not in men or politics but secure refuge can only be found in God.

He then in v.10-13 gives this rapid fire response to his declarations and says, everyone surrounded me but in the name of the LORD I. CUT. THEM. DOWN.

It echos Paul’s letter in Romans 8:31, when he says “If God is for us who can be against us.” I love how the the Psalmist describes his enemies in v.12; he says, “they surround me like bees”

### **Illustration:**

When I was around 5 or 6 years old I was deathly afraid of horseflies, bumblebees, and any bug that could fly and sting me. I can remember this one instance when I was playing in the yard and a group of bees began flying around me, however in my mind it seemed like a swarm was ready to attack me. My mom was inside and I remember shouting for her to come and save me from this swarm. I was paralyzed with fear and though she tried to encourage me to walk across the yard to her I could not get inside to safety until she came to me and brought me with her.

I can remember my mom walking towards me and when she got to me, she placed my head under her arm and shielded my eyes from the swarm. All of a sudden I was no longer scared of the flying bees. Furthermore, I believed that her presence meant that if a bee attempted to sting me she would protect me from it by swatting it away and killing it. Now, I was walking but my moms presence next to me gave me the assurance of safety and victory.

In the same way, the Psalmist is saying that His enemies swarmed Him but he did not fear because the LORD was his refuge. With the Lord on his side v.12 says His enemies “went out like a fire among thorns” That is to say that they were quickly dismantled and destroyed in their attempt to overcome the Psalmist. Even when the Psalmist falls, v.13 says “the LORD helped me.” Much like my mom delivered me from the danger of the swarm of bees Yahweh has delivered the writer of Psalm 118 from His enemies by securing him and helping him.

### **3. God delivers us. (v. 14-18)**

v.14 starts this praise of deliverance by quoting Exodus 15:2 saying, “The Lord is my strength and my song.” Here, the writer reveals both his dependency and joy in God’s deliverance. It is possible that as he is writing this he is thinking of both personal deliverance as well as Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

In both cases when he says God is his strength he is proclaiming that in their weakness they have no other foundation of hope other than God. The dependency of relying on the LORD’s strength also brings them great joy which is why he sings. As we have seen tonight— the enduring love of the LORD does not lose and so we sing with joy because our God has victory.

But not only does God give him strength and joy but he also gives him salvation (v.14), righteousness (v.15), and (v.16) victory over all his enemies. (v.17) teaches us he doesn’t even fear death because he is certain that God will deliver him from it all! Even when the LORD disciplines him in (v.18) he has no fear of death because the he has found refuge in God and that means that he has also found life in God.

#### **Application:**

What would this world be like if every Christian walked around with confidence like this in the LORD? Church we can have this confidence. We can have it because God is our refuge. God is our salvation. God does keep us from death. This is such a wonderful song the Jews sang at Passover because in it we see that those who are covered by the securing hands of God will not taste death but experience life.

I want to urge you then live your life dependent on the LORD because you know that he is with you and that through Christ he delivers you. Remember That Christ is our sacrificial lamb whose blood was poured over the doorpost of our hearts so that we would not taste the sting of death. Christ has shown that he is for us by sending us His Son who has delivered us from the penalty of sin. Praise the LORD because his steadfast love endures forever!

### **4. God has established the way for us. (v.19-27)**

(v.19-27) begins to shift from individual testimony to more of a corporate prayer. The Psalmist does cry out to God saying “Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.” But by verse 24 it shifts to plural call for all to recognize that God has made a way of righteousness for His people. Look at verse 24. It says, “This is the day that the LORD has made; let US

rejoice and be glad in it.” So no longer is he talking about his individual salvation but now he is talking about the LORD saving the nation of Israel.

Then in verse 25-27 the nation is praying for God to deliver them. More than likely they prayed to be delivered out of Egypt from their oppression. That would make sense given that these are songs that, for centuries, were sung by the Jews during Passover. And as a sign of their thanksgiving from the LORD they offered a sacrifice that was hung on an alter for them. Now, I believe that everything that has happened in this Psalm really happened to the Psalmist and to God’s people.

But if you remember: I told you at the beginning of the sermon to keep Jesus and His disciples singing this hymn on the forefront of your mind as we study this text.

The reason I asked you to do that is because I believe that this Psalm also communicates to us a very real message of God’s ultimate plan to save His people in and through Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you—as Jesus is singing this song with his disciples 24 hours before his crucifixion what was going through his mind? As he looked into the eyes of the men he would soon die for what was he thinking? The disciples have no clue at the moment but here Jesus is singing a hymn that he would soon fulfill. Let me read back through some of these sentences and I want you to imagine Jesus standing with his disciples singing this Psalm

“Out of my distress I called on the LORD”

“The LORD is on my side, I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

“I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.”

“It is better to trust the LORD than man and princes.”

“I shall not die, but I shall live”

“This is the gate of the LORD, the righteous shall enter through it.”

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

“Bind the festal sacrifice with cords up to the horns of the alter.”

“The steadfast love endures forever.”

Don’t you see!! The disciples sang this song in memory of the passover. Jesus sang this song as the fulfillment of the passover. The disciples sang this song to remember that the steadfast love of God endures forever. Jesus was singing this song knowing that he was about to apply God’s eternal love to them. Jesus was the one in distress in

the garden of Gethsemane who cried out to the Father while sweating blood. Jesus was the one who did not fear what man could do to him. Jesus was the one who triumphed over the ones who hated him. He was the one who trusted God alone. He was the one who conquered death and lives today! Jesus is the one in John 10 who says “I am the gate that leads to righteousness” Jesus was the rejected stone that is now the cornerstone of His church. Jesus is the one who was bound to the cross by nails and lifted up as our willing sacrifice. And Jesus is the one who displays the heart of God for sinners now and forevermore!

It was always Jesus! OH give thanks to the LORD for His steadfast love endures forever!!! Oh give thanks to the Lord for Jesus. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to sing this song with his disciples? Oh to see the compassion in his eyes as he prepares to die in their place—in our place!

Let us not be people who forget why we worship! Let us not be a people who forget God loves us. God help us be a people who see that your steadfast love endures forever! Because here is the thing... if this is true then we can no longer be passive in our faith. If God shows his love for us in this way then we cannot stand idly by— we must do something with this truth.

#### **5. God has placed an opportunity before us. (v.28-29)**

In (v.28) the Psalmist concludes his song by proclaiming that this type of love compels us to do something.

#### **Illustration:**

When Andrew and I went to T4G in April I had a chance to meet a teenager who was serving at the conference. I met him first through my brother, Jacob who is currently discipling this ninth grader and at the end of the week me and John, the teenage boy got a chance to talk while Andrew was in the book store. He approached me and at first we talked about my brother and the book of the Bible they are studying together and then I asked him, “Hey John, what’s your story? How did you come to know Christ as your Lord and Savior.”

He told me that while he lived in a Christian home, disciplined by godly parents. He said he had a foundational knowledge of who Christ was and said from a young age that he believed in Him. He told me that the church he attended had a band that was loud, lots of people, but as far as community goes—he had not yet experienced that. Some time ago his family moved to Louisville, Kentucky and they began attending a church that was smaller than the one he attended before.

The music was okay but nothing too spectacular, but after a year of attending that church he said, “I experienced God’s love through the church and realized that I can no longer just believe in Jesus—I must commit to him.” I asked him, “what do you mean by that?” And He said these words, which many would say is beyond his years, “I had no problem with believing in Jesus. That was easy, but to experience His love

and to see it played out in His people I knew my life had to change. I could no longer passively believe in Jesus—I had to commit to Him.” The conclusion of Psalm 118 finds itself in the same place. The Psalmist gets to the end of his recollection of the love and faithfulness of God and He says, “This type of love requires commitment”

So he tells us, this love that he received has compelled him to commit or respond by giving thanks and extolling the name of the LORD. No doubt these are two commands we can follow too.

### **Application:**

1. **Give thanks to the LORD.** The Psalmist says “You are my God, and I will give thanks to you!” Take a moment in your day, right now, tomorrow, whenever you consider it... take a moment to thank God for the love and salvation you have received from Him.

Follow the Psalmist example and begin to list all the ways that God has shown you favor. At the end of each favor just say “thank you.” Thank God when you wake up, when you go to sleep, when you see your spouse, when you read your bible, when you eat your food. Thank God because everything you have been given is an expression of the depth and the breadth and the width of God’s love for you.

2. **Extol the Lord.** To extol means to praise something or someone with great enthusiasm. It means that our worship on Sunday morning and Sunday night ought not be passive.

We ought to be enthusiastically worshiping the LORD because of the love he has shown us in and through Jesus Christ. Its okay to lift your hands and sing. Its okay to be eager to share the good news of Jesus with your one. Its okay that you aren’t able to contain the love and emotions you have inside you for Christ.

When you realize this news is meant for you to receive and believe then you can turn to the LORD and praise him like a dead person who was brought back to life. You can praise him because he has displayed deep deep deep love for you and invites you into his home.

All in all we have reason to give thanks and extol the name of Jesus because what we have learned tonight is that God displays his love for us by being with us, being for us, by delivering us, by establishing the way to righteousness for us, and by laying before us an opportunity to make his name known through our thanksgiving and enthusiastic praise. The question is, will we be a church who is committed to God like he is committed to us?