

Pillar Passage – Ps 98
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Oct. 14, 2021

Hello and welcome to another Pillar Passage. Today we look at Psalm 98.

This Psalm is comprised of 3 stanzas of verse. Verses 1-3 describe a call to praise God for His salvation, because He has done marvelous things.

Verses 4-6 are a response to the first stanza. This is response of praise to make a joyful noise to the Lord with every musical instrument that we can think of. Then in the final stanza, there is a response to the first response. A response of all the earth. All the earth responding in joy to the salvation of the Lord. So, let's look at these three.

There's a call to praise, again in verse 1, because God has done marvelous things. The psalmist is saying that these things are so marvelous that it requires a new song. Because in His power, He has worked salvation. He has made known His salvation. He has done it by revealing His righteousness in the sight of all the nations.

We don't know the occasion that was originally written, but certainly these things get picked up throughout the rest of scripture, which we will look at in a minute. This theme is actually touching on the center theme of all of creation: the revealing God righteous in the sight of all the nations.

The reason why He did this and why they are so full of praise is that He did this out of steadfast love and out of faithfulness. When God sets His love on a people, it is steadfast. God never stops, never waivers in His love. He is faithful; faithful to the house of Israel; faithful to His promise to Abraham—that his offspring would be like the stars in the sky and the sand of the seashore—and He is faithful to His promise to David. It is possible this song was originally produced—written—for a new Davidic King that came to the throne. Because God promised David that David would never lack an offspring of his on his throne.

Whatever it is, the psalmist, from his perspective here—says here, that all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God, so we should praise Him for it. While we can say that he sees this from his perspective, there will come a time when God's salvation will be seen—truly—to all the ends of the earth.

Let's keep looking to the first response, this is verse 4-6, with every musical faculty that we have this salvation is worth praising. Because God is working out His power, this salvation deserves to be responded to with musical celebration. It is interesting, isn't it, how this impulse to celebrate with music carries down through every generation. Even today, in one of our sporting events when the team wins you sing the fight song, or song *Celebration* by Cool and the Gang comes on over the loudspeakers. There is something within us that is designed to

praise with song as if resonating with the deep magic of the whole universe (as C. S. Lewis would put it) in praise.

The call here is to make praise with a joyful noise—to make a cacophony. Note, that what this implies is it's not perfect. It's not tidy. This is—in a sense—messy because it's joyful. It is a noise, *because* it's joyful. Because it's joyful, it's not neat and tidy. It's the sort of thing kids do for their parents. It's what this Father's children do in child-like response to His magnificent salvation working. When they see it, we can't help but praise Him like little children.

Then in verse 7-9, in response to this, the creation joins in, in the praise. Now it says here all that fills the earth then responds to the praise of men. This section, verse 7-9 is responding to verse 4-6, which is responding to the initial call of God acting in His salvation. God acts. God acts in salvation by His sovereign mercy; by His steadfast love; by His unstoppable faithfulness. And we respond to His working with praise. Our praise does not create His working. Our praise is in response to His working.

Then it says, all the earth, all that fill it, all the world then responds to our praising. Even the inanimate things (verse 8) that we think are dead, in fact are not dead—they are waiting. They are waiting for something. They are waiting for release. They are waiting for the sign when they too can join in and even the rivers will clap their hands, and the hills will sing for joy together before the Lord.

Why is this? The reason may surprise us. But then when we think about this, it should not. The reason is (verse 9) because “for God comes to judge the earth.” What is good; what is praiseworthy about that? Because He will judge the world with righteousness. He will judge the world with righteousness, and He will judge the peoples with equity—with complete righteousness, with complete fairness. No one will be able to say God is not being fair. But through this judgement, something glorious happens, because—either way—all rebellion against Him will be fairly dealt with. It will be judged, and it will be wiped away from the earth. The burden that the earth now carries of the sins of men will be dealt with—justly. It will be dealt with, either around our own necks, or it will have already been dealt with around the neck of Christ. Around the neck of Christ, by faith in His death of the cross in our place as our substitute for our sin being handled around our necks. Instead, He acts as our substitute on the cross and we apprehend—we obtain—what He did on the cross by faith.

Either way, God will judge the world in righteousness; in equity. When the judgement happens, and those who trusted in Christ are robed and revealed in glory, at that time all creation will be released from the curse of Adam. Then all the earth will give up its futility. Then what it was always designed to be—what it was always meant to be—it will become. Creation will become.

In all of this, we may look at a few more passages from Scripture. The first is; we may ask ourselves, where exactly did God do this? What do you mean, revealing His righteousness?

Paul picks this up. This is from Romans chapter 3 where Paul says, “Now the righteousness of God—you remember in verse 2 all the praise here is because God has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. Where? The righteousness of God has been manifested—or revealed—not through the law. Not by keeping the law, though the law and prophets always bore witness to it. They always predicted it. The righteousness of God is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ. For whom? For all who believe in Him. There is no distinction. God will be equitable. There is no distinction for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Everyone deserves judgement, so no one is justified or—literally this word is the verb form of righteous—no one is *righteoused*; except by His grace as a gift. Through the redemption—the release from slavery—that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward to the cross as a propitiation—as a way that would satisfy God’s judgement. He did this by His blood. Again, it is to be received—not by good works—but by my faith. All of this was to show—to reveal—God’s righteousness. Because, God is a very forbearing God. In His divine forbearance, He had passed over former sins. He didn’t just wipe us out. It was to show His righteousness at the present time so He might be shown just—equitable—He might just the world (verse 9) with righteousness. He was that He might be *just* in His judgements and at the same time the justifier, the “righteousifier”, of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How was this done before the nations? Well it was done before the nations, because all the nations were there in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was in the hands of Rome.

So the prophecy of Isaiah of 52—which leads into the famous prophecy that leads into the prophecy of Isaiah 53—came through them as many were astonished at You. His appearance was so marred—when it was high and lifted up—so marred, beyond human semblance. We couldn’t even tell. He was barely human. But by His blood, He sprinkled many nations. Kings, then throughout history have shut their mouths because of Him. They were humbled before Him, because the thing they have not heard, they now understand. They now understand, the arm of the Lord—as was said in verse one, the right hand and His holy arm—the arm of the Lord revealed His righteousness in Jesus. I encourage you to continue reading Isaiah 53, the great prophecy of Jesus.

Then Paul picks up the themes of the last stanza of our psalm. The themes of creation waiting turn to praise in Romans 8. In verse 18, Paul says this, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us. Then he says this, “For the creation, itself, waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.” The revealing of them in glorious righteousness. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of the curse of Adam. The curse that God placed on Adam when God, ‘the ground will not yield to you the fruit as it should. But you will—by the sweat of your brow—yield fruit from it.’” So creation itself has been subjected to futility—not willingly—but because of Him who subjected it; because of God’s purposes in a hope—a sure hope—that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption—the corruption that came from man’s sin—and would obtain the freedom. Of what? ‘The freedom of the glory of the children of God.’

When the children of God receive their glory, and they receive their freedom from all sin to live in perfect righteousness; when we are robed in the glorious righteousness of Christ perfectly; and we are robed in His glory; and we obtain the freedom of His grace, so will the creation be released for that curse as well. Up until this point, creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. Not only creation, but we do too. We who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we groan inwardly. We groan inwardly because we have tasted of the goodness of God, but we know there is more coming. So we wait eagerly for this moment when our adoption is complete; the redemption of our bodies—when are bodies are completely glorified.

Now it is in this hope that we were saved. Heaven is not yet. Heaven is still to come. Then once we receive this redemption of our bodies, then the creation itself will be completely released and it will *roar*. All that is in the earth will be filled with joy and even the hills themselves will sing for joy with the people of God together—as be fits the praise of His glorious grace.