

THE REJECTED STONE AND THE UNSTOPPABLE MERCY OF GOD

Christ Victorious, Welcomed, and Exalted Forever

Psalm 118

MAIN IDEA: Psalm 118 declares that the Lord's covenant love triumphs through rejection and suffering, culminating in the exaltation of the rejected Stone—Jesus Christ—who brings salvation, joy, and eternal victory to all who trust Him.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT: Psalm 118 stands at the climax of Israel's worship and at the crossroads of redemptive history. It is the final psalm of the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113–118), traditionally sung during Passover as God's people remembered His mighty deliverance out of slavery in Egypt. Written as a psalm of thanksgiving, it reflects a time when Israel had been brought through distress, opposition, and near defeat, only to experience the Lord's saving power. Yet this psalm looks beyond any single historical rescue. Its language, imagery, and structure press forward toward the coming Messiah. The New Testament repeatedly returns to Psalm 118 because it finds its fullest meaning in Jesus Christ—the rejected stone who becomes the cornerstone, the King welcomed with cries of "Hosanna," and the Savior whose victory turns suffering into joy. As we open Psalm 118, we are not merely listening to Israel's song of deliverance—we are stepping into a Spirit-inspired testimony that points us unmistakably to Christ and invites us to rejoice in the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

CHRIST IN THE PSALMS: Psalm 118 gathers everything we have seen. The suffering of Psalm 22. The reigning King of Psalm 110. The victorious Messiah welcomed and exalted Jesus is: The Rejected Stone, The Saving King, and The Foundation of our hope.

1. GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE AS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL PRAISE (vv. 1–4)

A. **REINFORCED TRUTH:** God's Covenant Love Never Changes (v.1)

- Israel, the priesthood, and all who fear the Lord are called to testify.
- God's hesed (faithful, covenant love) is the anchor of worship.

B. **NT CONNECTION:**

- **John 3:16** — God's enduring love culminates in Christ.
- **Romans 8:38–39** — Nothing separates believers from this love in Christ.

C. **APPLICATION:**

- *Gratitude should be a habit, not a reaction.*
- *Worship flows from remembering who God is, not just what He does.*
- *When circumstances change, God's faithful love does not.*

2. THE LORD AS THE DELIVERER OF THE AFFLICTED (vv. 5-18)

A. **EXPLAINED TRUTH:** Trust in the Lord Surpasses Human Strength (v. 5)

- The psalmist contrasts human opposition with divine protection.
- Repeated emphasis: "The Lord is for me" (vv. 6–7). Suffering does not negate God's favor—it often deepens it.
- Deliverance is attributed solely to God's power. God's deliverance often comes *through* discipline, not apart from it (v. 18).
- *"It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humanity."* (v. 8)

B. **NT CONNECTION:**

- **Hebrews 13:6** quotes Psalm 118:6; our helper/deliverer is the Lord Jesus.
- **Acts 4:10–12** — Salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone, the Cornerstone.

C. **APPLICATION:** Where do you instinctively run when life presses in?

Faith grows when trust shifts from self to God. God rescues not to make us comfortable, but faithful

3. THE REJECTED STONE BECOMES THE CORNERSTONE (vv. 19–24)

A. **CONTRASTING TRUTH:** Rejection Becomes God's Means of Salvation (v. 22)

- A processional movement toward the gates of righteousness (vv. 19–20). The plural form of gates likely refers to the Eastern Gates of the temple, which had two sections. V. 22 pictures Jesus' death and resurrection.
- What humans reject, God exalts. God builds His kingdom through what the world despises. Verse 24 celebrates God's sovereign work in history. The day mentioned is likely a feast day.
- A cornerstone bears the weight of a building and serves as the standard for orienting and leveling the rest of the structure. The rejected king has been restored to a place of prominence as the chosen cornerstone. Ex: Lk 20:17.

B. **NT CONNECTION:**

- **Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10-11** — Jesus applies v. 22–23 to Himself to put his generation's rejection of him in the broader light of redemption history.
- **Acts 4:11** — Peter declares Jesus as the rejected Stone.
- **1 Peter 2:4–7** — Christ is the cornerstone of salvation.

C. **APPLICATION:**

- *Do not be discouraged. God's purposes are not thwarted by rejection.*
- *Faithfulness may be costly—but it is never wasted.*
- *Rejoicing is an act of trust in God's sovereign design.*

4. THE ARRIVAL OF THE KING WHO SAVES (vv. 25–27)

A. **FULFILLED TRUTH:** God's Salvation Comes Through His Chosen King (v. 25):

"Lord Save Us!"; see also John 12:13.

- "Hosanna" is a plea for salvation. The King enters in God's name. Verses 25–26 were used by the people who were entering Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday to honor Jesus. Sacrificial imagery points toward atonement.

B. **NT CONNECTION:**

- **Matthew 21:9** — Crowds quote Psalm 118 at Jesus' triumphal entry.
- **John 12:13** — Jesus is welcomed as the **saving King**. (Lk. 19:39, Mk. 11:9-10)
- **Irony:** The same crowd later rejects Him. They want an earthly king like the nations and not a heavenly kingdom entered by repentance/faith (Jn 18:36).

C. **APPLICATION**

- *It's possible to praise Jesus without submitting to Him. That's not allowing Him to be Lord of your life. True faith receives Christ as Savior and Lord.*
- *Salvation demands allegiance, not admiration.*

5. THE PROPER RESPONSE: GRATITUDE, PRAISE, AND TESTIMONY (vv. 28–29)

A. **REINFORCED CONCLUSION:** God's Faithful Love Deserves Lifelong Praise (v.28)

- The psalm ends where it began: *thanksgiving*. Personal gratitude flows into public praise. God's faithful love frames the entire psalm.

B. **NT CONNECTION:**

- **Colossians 3:16–17** — Gratitude (in Jesus' name) defines Christian worship.
- **Hebrews 13:15** — Continual confession of Jesus Christ ("fruit of the lips") is a sacrifice of praise by the redeemed in Christ.
- **APPLICATION:** *Thanksgiving is evidence of a redeemed heart. Praise is both personal devotion and public witness. The Christian life is lived between gratitude and glory.*