

Psalm 68 • God's Victory Parade

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Join me, please, if you would, at Psalm 68.

We were singing a lyric over and over again in that last song, which I absolutely love, by the way, which is, I know you love me. That's a great phrase. The question is, do we believe it? I think it's probably one of the biggest issues with people. We read all kinds of Scriptures about how God so loved the world. And we're... That's something we can deal with.

God loves the world; so much so that he gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him da da da da da. (John 3:16) But then when it comes to the issue of does God love me? That's another question altogether, isn't it? It's another issue altogether. And while we may be willing to quickly admit that, God is love, and God loves people and stuff like that. If we were asked in a moment of honesty, do you believe that God loves you? That's where the rubber meets the road.

And the reason I bring it up is because as we get into the Psalms again here tonight, it really proceeds... David's heart in the Psalms proceeds from the idea that he knows that he is loved. He knows that God loves Israel. He knows that God's mercy and grace are real things. They're not just theological curiosities. They are real elements that he can understand. Things that he can embrace. Things that he can lay hold of in his own life.

If we don't, if we don't ever come to the place of really embracing the idea that God loves us personally, I think we're going to struggle to be able to use the Word of God in a way that the Lord would have us to do. I think the Word is going to continue to be something out there for other people. And we might learn some interesting facts. We might even be able to say, Wow! I never knew that before and I've grown in my understanding. But how much are we appropriating on a personal? That's really the question.

As we get into Psalm 68, you'll notice that I put up on the screen that this is a victory hymn or song. It was composed by David. It was to celebrate some conquest, some victory. We don't really know exactly what the victory specifically was. But, he considered it the victory of the Lord.

And it, basically this Psalm... I'm hoping that what we can do through the course of this Psalm is that, I can make you aware of what's going on in this Psalm enough that you can say, okay, I think I get this now.

Because, I'll be honest with you, this is one of those Psalms where if you do a cursory reading of it, if you just were, you're reading through your Bible and you're just, you might read it and you'd pick up some things that it says. But you might come away going, hmm? I wonder what's really going on there? Because you see, we don't do victory parades anymore. Not the way they did. Can you imagine what that would be like?

Back in those days, the army would go out and they would fight against whoever the enemy happened to be. And in the time of victory, they would actually come back marching into the city. And they would bring captives along with them who they would display. Right? As their trophy of the victory. And there would be various levels to these victory parades. And not the least of which are the women, who are going in advance of the parade and shouting the victory; telling the people about the victory.

And then there would be the worshipers. And then there would be the young women singing and playing their tambourines. And then the musicians would bring up the end of the victory parade. And everyone is dancing and rejoicing and there's great jubilation. And they are focusing on the fact that God has given us the victory.

We don't do that. We don't do that anymore. Our army doesn't come back from... Well, we usually have these prolonged battles that go on for decades. And who knows if we even won at the end. And it's all, it's a different scenario.

But wouldn't that be something. Wouldn't it be something if we did victory, and not militarily; wouldn't it be something if we had a victory parade every time God gave us a victory? Wouldn't that be something?

I mean, think about it. Think about the things that you pray about. Think about the things that, the battles that, you go through as an individual. Things that you are laying before the Lord and you're saying, God, I need help in this situation. And then the Lord comes to your aid. And you find His life and deliverance on the other end of that situation, when you realize that the Lord has won a great victory in this thing. What do you and I do?

David is describing a great celebration that goes along with answered prayer. And he's going to recount victories from the past as well. And that's a critical part of understanding this thing as well.

I don't know if you get our daily thoughts that we send out on Calvary mail or on Facebook. But I was actually covering that very idea just this morning. The whole idea of recounting the victories of the Lord, recounting the blessings, recounting answers to prayer.

You and I have a tendency to pray and pray and pray and pray about things and really never go back and look up how the Lord particularly moved. How the Lord answered those prayers and what our response ought to be in the midst of those answers. What's appropriate. What is appropriate for an answer to prayer? What do you think? I mean, what do you think that a typical Christian ought to do when you get answered prayer?

Well, some people come to church and they say, hey, I have a praise report. Okay, we say and so and so, what's your praise report? Well..." And they tell a little bit and, I prayed about such and such and the Lord brought an answer. And just wanted to share that with you guys.

And everyone goes, yeah, praise the Lord. (unexcited tone) Like driving a car on flat tires. I mean, it didn't sound like a victory parade to me. Are we really giving the due, to the Lord for the answers in prayer that He has, He has brought our way?

This Psalm begins this way. It says,

"1 God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him!" (ESV)

I want you to pause there for just a moment. Because this statement that "God shall arise and his enemies be scattered," I don't know if that sounds familiar to you. But that's actually very similar to what Moses used to declare every single time the nation of Israel would set out from wherever they happened to be camping at the time. And when the Ark of the Covenant would be lifted up on the, on the shoulders of the priests. And they would begin to set out, Moses would actually say those words.

He would say, *"Arise, O LORD, and let your enemies be scattered and...(all) those who hate you (may they) flee before you."* Every single time. Isn't that

interesting? That's, by the way, recorded for us in the Book of Numbers in chapter 10, if you're taking notes of that sort of thing. (Numbers 10:35)

David begins this victory hymn that recites this victory parade, if you will, by really sharing the words of Moses, as they would set out in the prom, or in the wilderness.

And it goes on in verse 2. And he even begins to speak about how the enemies of the Lord flee away. He says,

"As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God!

3 But the righteous (giving the other side of it) shall be glad; and they shall exult before God; (and) they shall be jubilant with joy!"

David here begins with a strong declaration of God arising against His enemies. Scattering them in, just like smoke, he says, is scattered by the wind; just as wax is melted by a hot flame. And he says that this would also be the cause of rejoicing for the people of God. They'll be overjoyed. They'll be jubilant because the Lord has responded to their prayers and scattered the enemy.

And so in verse 4, what is David going to tell the people to do? Well, he's going to tell them to lift their voices. Verse 4, he says,

"Sing to God, sing praises to his name, lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; (His name is YAHWEH) exult before him! (Which is to erupt in jubilation.)

5 Father of the fatherless... protector of (the) widows is God in his holy habitation."

He says,

"6 God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land."

In these verses David begins to give us a little look at what a victory parade is like. It's a lot of singing and rejoicing and that's what he tells us to do. He says, hey, *"his name is the LORD."* Let's rejoice before Him. Let's exult with jubilation! And because he says, "He's the *"Father of the fatherless."* He's the one who takes care of widows."

He refers here to those who are too easily forgotten by society, but whom the Lord does not forget. He even speaks about those who are alone. Loneliness is a terrible thing. He says, those who are alone, He settles them in a home, not a house, but a home.

I had a young girl, who has written me over the years write to me. I think she's probably about 17, getting close to 18 now. But she started emailing me when she was 14. And she doesn't write me often, but just once in a while with either Bible questions or life questions.

And she recently wrote me and just said, I don't know what to do. I'm so lonely. I just feel so lonely. And that's a terrible feeling. It's a terrible... God knows who's lonely. God understands. And I encouraged her to begin to pray because, I asked her. I said, have you, have you asked the Lord, for a special friend? Someone who you could confide in and pray with and talk about the things of the Lord with? No.

She's like me, introvert and awkward. And so she said, I went to a youth group for a few times. And somebody reached out to me and started talking to me.

She said, a girl was nice to me there, but I don't know. I just didn't feel like I had anything... I was nervous about what to say and ended up not saying much of anything. And so that didn't really turn out...

And I feel her pain. I really do. God knows who those are, who are lonely. The Bible says here, he settles them in a home.

Now, as we get into verse seven and following, David is going to speak here about God's deliverance to the people of Israel. And this is where he's going to do what the Jews love to do. And you're going to see this over and over and over in the Bible. They're going to recall the past. That is just... You sit down with a group of Jews and you want them to get them to be quiet. Just start telling their story. I'm serious.

You remember in the Book of Acts when they were really, all upset and lathering, foaming at the mouth about Stephen? In fact, they ended up stoning him to death. But how did he get the whole crowd to quiet down? He started recounting their past. Now he did it in a way that painted them in a fairly negative light as always being rebellious against the Lord. But as he told the story, everybody just calmed down. (Acts 7:1-51)

When Paul, the Bible says that, Paul was being literally shielded by Roman soldiers at one point because the crowd was pressing in to kill him. And he asked permission from the centurion, can I speak to the people? And the centurion gave him permission. And he began to speak to them and tell his story and everybody calmed down. (Acts 21:39)

Everybody, the Jews love to hear a good story and particularly when it recounts the purposes of God. And what's interesting about Paul's story in the book of Acts is they liked his story. The people actually were fine with it until he made his last point, which is, because you're rebellious and you don't want to listen, God has sent me to the Gentiles. And then they decided he was only fit for, to be murdered. But up to that point, everything was going pretty good.

This is really, really common among the Jews. But I want you to understand that it's not just a cultural thing. I think it is that from one particular standpoint, but it's also a really good idea.

When you're praying, do you remember in prayer God's faithfulness? When you are laying things before the Lord and asking for His help, do you remember the Lord's faithfulness? Do you recount the Lord's faithfulness? I've been trying to do that more and more when Sue and I get together and pray. And just talking about, Lord, You brought us through; and Lord, You saw me through; and You saw Sue through that time. And it's good to remember.

And that's what David is going to do here beginning in verse 7. He says here if you'll read with me in your Bible. He says,

"O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, (now he's recounting all those years ago when God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt. He says,)

8 the earth quaked, (In other words, the earth literally shook.) the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, (Notice the reference to Mount Sinai, so we know what he's talking about. He's talking about the wilderness when God gave them the law. He says,) before God, the God of Israel.

9 Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished;

10 your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy."

All right, so he begins to mention the things that God did in His faithfulness. But he, notice he talks about how the earth shook. And what he's doing is he's remembering what we are told in the Book of Exodus, when God visited the people on Mount Sinai. It says the whole mountain looked like it was on fire. Can you imagine what that would have been like? And it says that the earth literally shook. There was an earthquake.

And the thing that it doesn't mention right here, but it's told us in Exodus, this is interesting. When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, there was a trumpet blast. But not just a (Pastor Paul makes a trumpet sound) type of trumpet. It was a trumpet note that sounded and just kept going and did not stop. It was just a constant, like only probably an angel could do without having to even take a breath. It just kept going and kept going. What an awesome thing that would have been. Right? (Exodus 19:16-20)

Well, that's exactly what David is doing in this part of this victory celebration is he is recounting the awesomeness of the Lord. And that's why he brings up things like this, the ground shaking. It speaks of the majesty and the grandeur, right, of the Lord.

He remembers also the mercy of God. He talks about how You made it rain in abundance. Now this is an interesting thing that we're not necessarily even told about in Exodus. But we're told that God sent rain upon the people to refresh them. He says, He refreshed them while they languished.

All right, so he's speaking here of how the Lord took care of them. He said, you even provided for the needy. And that means that it didn't matter whether you were rich or poor in the wilderness. God fed everyone the same with that manna that they found. The Lord took care of His people. What is he doing? He's recounting and remembering God's faithful provision.

God's faithful provision. Think about that phrase, God's faithful provision. Because that's what I think you and I need to remember when we're praying. Remember God's faithful provision. Recount it. Speak about it. Talk to Him about it. Lord, I remember how You faithfully provided for me in that situation when I prayed and my needs were great. And, to use Davidic language, when my heart was faint, You took care of me. You faithfully provided.

Now he's going to talk about the victory. He's going to talk a little bit more about the victory parade.

He says in verse 11. He says,

"The LORD gives the word; (And he's talking about the word of victory.) and then, the women who announce the news are a great host; (Now he's talking about the women who go before this victory parade, announcing the victory, right? And he says, "the women who announce the news are a great host."

And here's what they're saying, verse 12.

"The kings of the armies- they flee, they flee!" That's their message. As they come into the city, speaking and dancing and sharing this victory news, they're talking about how the enemy has fled. The enemy has fled before the Lord.

And then David adds here, *"The women at home divide the spoil—"* And this was something else, frankly, that the women did after a time of victory. They would be responsible for going through the things that were brought in terms of spoil.

Now as we get into verses 13 and 14, I'm just going to tell you ahead of time that the Hebrew here is very difficult to translate. If you were able to look at this verse or these verses with a parallel Bible, and maybe some of you even have one in front of you. And you looked at it and like say three or maybe even 4 different translations, you would find that they differ quite a bit because this is just really challenging.

But here's how the ESV puts it,

"13 though you men lie among the sheepfolds- the wings of a dove covered with silver, it's pinions with shimmering gold.

14 When the Almighty scatters kings there, let snow fall on Zalmon."

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) actually does a pretty good job. Verse 13, it renders it this way. *"When you lie down among the sheepfolds, You are like the wings of a dove covered with silver, And its pinions with glistening gold."* That makes a little more sense. But we're still not sure who is actually lying down among the sheep folds. Because some translations speak in the masculine terms and some in feminine.

And this is just one of those examples, frankly, where the Hebrew is very challenging to interpret because, or to translate and interpret. Because you got to remember something about the Bible, it's really old. And David is describing things that, in some cases, culturally, societally, we are ignorant of. We're like, he knows exactly what he's saying, but you and I, we didn't live there. I mean,

just like we haven't ever probably seen a victory parade like they put on, we haven't seen a lot of things related to that. And he's probably talking about one of them right here.

But he goes on in verse 15 to say, and this is interesting. He says,

"O, mountain of God, mountain of Bashan! O, many-peaked mountain of Bashan!"

16 Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his abode, yes, where the LORD will dwell forever?"

Notice that he talks here about the mountains, or the mountain of Bashan. Actually, you'll, you see here that he referred to it as a many peaked mountain. There's actually different mountains that they've identified or we've identified over the years in that, those, that mountain range of Bashan. One of them is Mount Hermon, which is in that mountain range.

And if I was... I was thinking about putting a picture up on the screen for you because, but I didn't. But it's, you can look it up. It's actually a pretty majestic looking mountain range. It's snowcapped and it's big. And like it describes here, it's many peaked. Right? It's not just a single peak like Mount Rainier or something like that.

Here's what he's saying in this part of the Psalm. He says, why are you looking with hatred or jealousy, if you will, at the mountain of God. What is the mountain of God? It's Zion. Because Zion, Mount Zion is the place where God chose to put His presence. Right?

But what's interesting about Mount Zion? I don't know if you've ever seen a picture of Mount Zion or if you've ever been to Israel. You and I wouldn't call it a mountain. It's a hill, essentially, before of course it was built up. But I mean nothing to the mountains of Bashan or Mount Hermon. I mean, which is majestic, snowcapped. The taller peaks of the mountain range of Bashan go up to 7,000 feet. That's a significant mountain.

If you and I, if, well, let me just, I'll just ask you. If you were God and you were going to pick a mountain to call the Mountain of the Lord, what would you pick? I would probably pick something that looked very majestic and imposing, big mountain. People would look at it and go, whoa, the Mountain of God! What did God choose? Zion. It's a hill. It's a hill. It's barely a hill.

Isn't it interesting that David personifies the mountain in the Psalm saying, why are you looking with hatred or jealousy upon the mountain that God chose? It's His choice. This whole conversation, which is these mountains personified, brings you and I to a better understanding of this whole idea that, what God chooses is rarely what we choose.

Now you and I ought to be really glad about that. Here's why, because he's chosen you and me and we're not that impressive either. Can I share with you what the apostle Paul had to say about this? It's written in 1 Corinthians. Let me put it up on the screen for you. Look at this for he says,

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (ESV)

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards; not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise (at least not according to worldly standards; not many (of you) were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (Maybe one or two, but look at what he says here.) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

This is a great passage to read when we start taking ourselves a little too seriously. When we start thinking that, we're all that and a bag of chips. It's like, no, no, no, wait a minute, remember what God's Word says, God chose the lowly things. I mean, we can go around all day long going, God chose me. Thank you very much. But then we go to a passage like this and say, oh, what did God choose? The lowly, the despised, the things that are not. That's what we ought to have on our T-shirt, shouldn't we? I am not. What a great T- shirt!

Do you know that you have to choose to be humble? Do you know that being humble is a choice? The Bible says, humble yourselves before the mighty hand of God that induces and He may lift you up. (1 Peter 5:6) Humble yourself; don't take yourself so seriously, even if God has given you a wonderful gift. And He gives out some pretty wonderful gifts.

But you know what he puts those gifts in? Cracked pots. That's us. We're cracked pots, broken vessels. Oh, there's something about us humans. We like to focus on the pot. We do. And somebody ministers to us, or we receive ministry from some person, and we really delight in the ministry that we've received from them. But we go and we talk to them like they are the treasure.

They are not the treasure. They're the pot that holds the treasure, right? And eventually that pot is going to break completely. It's cracked now, but it's the treasure that is important. Right? Not the vessel. Consider your calling brothers. I like that. Keep it in mind.

He says, look at verse 17, back in our Psalm. Verse 17 he begins by speaking,

"The chariots of God (he says, the chariots of God) are twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands; (He says,) the LORD is among them;"

Now, is he referring to the chariots of Israel? No. You know why? God wouldn't be among the chariots of Israel if they were thousands upon thousands. Because you see, God specifically told them not to amass chariots. He specifically told them, don't have too many chariots. If you do, you're going to start putting your hope in your military prowess. Don't amass chariots. Don't amass horses. I am the Lord who fights on your behalf. The victory is Mine.

What are we talking about here? We're talking about the angelic host. See, it's not a problem for God to have all those chariots, spiritually speaking. David is talking about how the hosts of the Lord is there, is in the victory. He's giving glory to the Lord. He's saying, it's God's battle and He has come with thousands upon thousands of His angels.

Don't you wish we could see angels sometimes? I know we're not supposed to seek angels. I know that. And it's dumb to even focus too much on angels. But man, they're cool. I mean, at least the way the Bible portrays them. They are pretty cool. Can you imagine thousands upon thousands? David, or rather John got to see thousands upon thousands of angels in the halls of heaven.

But the last statement of verse 17 is another challenging phrase where the ESV says, "*Sinai is now in the sanctuary.*" Or as the NASB says, "*The LORD is among them at Sinai in holiness.*" The translators were not sure whether the word should be "sanctuary" or "holiness." And that may, I think the NASB have a closer rendering to the original.

But verse 18, if you look at that in your Bible, is probably going to sound familiar to you. It says,

"You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.

And what David is giving you here in verse 18, is again a victory statement of the Lord ascending victoriously with His captives, His captive enemies. That means, following Him. And again, he's referring to this military procession, that's the word. But he's... Can you see that he's going back and forth between talking about the physical procession where he references the women and so on and so forth, shouting their victory slogans. And then he switches to the spiritual and he begins to talk about the hosts of heaven in their just innumerable numbers. And now he talks about the Lord ascending. His own victory parade, if you will, with the captives in His train and so forth.

Now what's interesting about this is that the Apostle Paul actually sites this verse in the New Testament. It's in the book of Ephesians and I want to show it to you on the screen from chapter four. He's talking about a different subject matter, but he says,

Ephesians 4:7-12 (ESV)

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (talking to the church here,) Therefore it says, (and here's where he quotes Psalm 68) "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men. (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that (he also) he had also descended into the lower regions, of (the) earth. He who descended is the one who also ascended far above the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, (and that word for shepherds is pastors) to equip the saints for the work of (the) ministry, for building up the body of Christ," Interesting, isn't it?

The apostle Paul uses the same verse from Psalm chapter 28, where the king or the one who ascends on high receives gifts of men. And he refers it to Jesus Christ, victoriously ascending after His victory and giving gifts.

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul reverses the gift idea - where the king receives gifts in Psalms - he gives gifts in Ephesians. And what are those gifts? Well, he lists them there: apostles, prophets, evangelists, and the pastor teacher gifting to the church. What are those given for? To build up the body of Christ, to do the work of the ministry.

It's a different usage of the idea. And you might say, well, wait a minute, does the apostle Paul have the freedom to do that? I mean, does he have the ability just to change the meaning of that verse? Oh yeah! By the inspiration of the Spirit. Biblical writers did it all the time. They would take a...

What Paul is doing is he's citing a victory Psalm, and he's relating it to Christ's victory. Whereas, David is describing a victory parade and the ascension of the victorious king, Paul is citing the ascension of the victorious King. It's the same picture, but it's giving gifts instead of receiving. It's interesting.

Now, as you begin verse 19, you're going to notice that David shifts here. Instead of recalling God's faithfulness in the past, he's going to speak of His power and ability for today. Now it's going to be today. All right. He says,

"Our God is a God of salvation (not was. And by the way, can I remind you again, and I try to do this as often as I can, but the word, salvation in the Old Testament can be translated deliverance. Okay, it doesn't necessarily refer...

You and I hear it and we just think eternal salvation. We think of being saved in the sense of I'm going to heaven because I've accepted Jesus. And that's great. That's wonderful.

But in the Old Testament, they didn't necessarily always think in those terms. They weren't thinking along eternal sorts of terms all the time, unless it was mentioned thusly. It is often referring to just the deliverance of the moment: being delivered from the Philistines; being delivered from the Amorites; being delivered from whoever the enemy might be. Right? God is a God of deliverance. He's a God of salvation. Okay?

He says, *"Our God is (a God of deliverance) a God of salvation, (He is the Lord, excuse me) "and to God, the LORD, belong deliverances from death."*

That's what God does for His own people. But what does He do for the enemies?

Verse 21,

"But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways.

22 The LORD said, "I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, (In other words, wherever they may have fled to hide, I'll bring them back.)

23 that you may strike your feet in their blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from the foe." (Graphic, but the Lord is promising a complete victory. What does David say here in verse 24? He goes on to say,

"Your procession is seen, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary—"

And here's where he describes it. Look at what he says in verse 25,

"the singers in front, the musicians last, between them, virgins playing tambourines:" Dancing, rejoicing.

And here, what are they saying? Verse 26, they're saying,

"Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you who are Israel's fountain!"

This is what the virgins are singing as they dance along playing their tambourines. And he even says here in verse 27, oh, look, there's little Benjamin." He's considered one of the smallest of the tribes.

"27 There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of Judah in their throng, (which is one of the biggest of all the tribes. And also) the princes of Zebulun, (and) the princes of Naphtali."

Isn't this something? David was looking with his spiritual sight. And he said to the Lord, Your procession is seen. I can see it. I can see the rejoicing. I can see the victory parade. I can see it!

Now his prayer. Verse 28.

"Summon your power, O God, the power, O God, by which you have worked for us."

And he's talked about all these things from the past. Now he's saying, God, do it again. I say, I pray that you would summon the same power that worked for us in the past. Do it again.

"29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bear gifts to you."

30 Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds," And for David, that was a reference to the king of Egypt, the Pharaoh.

He talks about, *"the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples. Trample underfoot those who lust after tribute;*

Tribute is what you would receive from a nation you had conquered. If they wanted more riches, they would go out and conquer a neighboring nation and then impose taxation on that nation in the form of tribute.

He says to the Lord, "trample them underfoot; *scatter the peoples who delight in war.*

31 Nobles (and that means kings) shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God."

David is saying that instead of receiving tribute the way they wanted to, those kings are going to come from those warring nations. They're going to stretch out their hand to you instead.

Verse 32,

"O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the LORD,"

Now he's not talking to the Jews now. Notice how this verse begins, *"O kingdoms of the earth,..."* This isn't just to the Jews, this is to all the kingdoms of the earth. Sing praise he says, *"to the LORD."*

Verse 33,

“to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.

34 Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies.

35 Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel- he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!"

Now I want to just, I want to close out this Psalm with, by having you underline, highlight, or just remember the statement that he makes there in verse 35. It's pretty much in the middle of that verse where he said, *"he is the one who gives power and strength to his people."* And the reason I want you to focus on that is because there is so much wisdom bound up in those words. He is the one who gives power. He's the one who gives strength in case you were wondering. He's the one.

It's interesting, the older I get, the more I realize how weak I am as an individual. And not just physically I've never been strong physically. I'm talking about my inner fortitude. When I was a young man I considered myself strong. But that's because I was young and because I was stupid. But what I did is, I wrongly identified the energy of youth with inner strength. I mistook the two. I thought just because I had youthful energy, I was a strong person. I was not and I am not to this day. I am not a strong person.

And neither, frankly, was the apostle Paul. And that may sound like a strange phrase when we talk about probably the man who was the greatest of all the apostles. Great from our perspective. But I want you to take note of a statement that the apostle Paul made about the strength that God worked in him. He wrote about it in Colossians, and he said this,

Colossians 1:29 (ESV)

For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

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That is an incredible verse. It's a verse that's worthy of our meditation. He, Paul, talks about all the things he had done. And he says, this is what I'm working for; it's what I'm laboring for. This is why I'm toiling. And I do that toil with the energy that He gives me. And by the way, He gives it powerfully.

But you'll notice here that Paul hasn't told us any insights, hasn't given us any insights here on how to have that power. He just talks about the power. And you can see he's giving the glory to the Lord for that power. But he's not telling you and I how. There's no insights here on how you and I can tap into that power.

For that we have to go to a different book of the Bible. In fact, it's a very common passage that you're familiar with. And he wrote about it in 2 Corinthians. And I've highlighted the most important sections of this where Paul writes,

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (ESV)

...to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of all the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

...to keep me from becoming conceited (which means full of myself) because of the surpassing greatness of all the revelations, (that God had given me, he says,) a thorn was given me in the flesh, (he referred to it here as) a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, (He didn't just pray. He pleaded) that it should leave me. But he said to me, (This is the Lord speaking to Paul.) "My grace is sufficient for you, (And here's the key; here's the secret) for my power is made perfect in weakness." (What's Paul's conclusion?) Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, (and) insults, hardships, persecutions, (even) calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Now, if you were to take just that last sentence and divorce it from the rest of the passage, wouldn't make any sense, would it? If somebody said, when I'm weak, then I'm strong. What? Reminds me of things like little four year old boys say. They contradict themselves in the same breath, I can break that, but I can't break that. I remember my own kids saying things like that. I used to just cock my head. You're weird.

And that statement wouldn't make a lick of sense. But when the context of everything Paul has told us here, we understand why he is strong when he is weak. Because when he is weak, the power of God is made perfect in him. In other words, when Paul recognizes his personal weakness and brings it before the Lord, he is then free to receive the untainted, undiluted power of God.

Some of us are wondering why we don't see more power in our lives. It's because you haven't gotten weak enough. We have this incredible thing in us as human beings, this drive to live and to survive and to fix.

We're fixers and we're survivors. And when we face a difficult circumstance in our lives, we usually snap into high gear related to fixing and surviving. And what we end up doing is we end up manipulating circumstances in an attempt to try to make them better. What we inevitably do is make them worse.

Although it's interesting, sometimes God will let us actually succeed. Do you know that the Bible even shows some of that? You see some people in the Bible who do things contrary to the Lord, and God lets it succeed for a short time. But it's just long enough for us to go through this self-delusion that I'm actually doing some good in my life by taking the strong role, I'm going to fix this thing.

My marriage isn't in the greatest condition, so I am going to fix it. And I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that. And I'm going to fix this relationship, and this situation, and this business, and... whatever. And we wear ourselves to a frazzle. And then we wonder why we're lacking in power at the end of the day.

I want to remind you that Paul speaks of the power of God working in him that works powerfully. But there's something else about this that I would be, it would be wrong for me not to mention. For those of you that are asking for God's power, maybe you are recognizing your weakness. And maybe you're asking for God's power, but you're still not necessarily seeing what you think you should be seeing.

And it might not be power that you're asking for. It could be something else that you're needing. Let's just make it more general. Let's just say whatever you need. Okay. Whatever you need from God. Whatever it may be, you're just not getting it. You're just not getting it the way you think you should.

Can I suggest to you that you're maybe going about it wrongly. And here's what I mean by that. The Bible says this, actually, Jesus said these words, seek first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And then all these other things that

you have need of, God will take care of them in due time. (Matthew 6:33) And that's a little bit of a paraphrase, but I think, you know what the... It catches the essence of what Jesus told us. Seek first the kingdom of God.

See, there's many times that you and I are looking for God to do something. And it's not getting done the way we think He should. And we're beginning to wonder, God, why aren't you answering my prayer? Why aren't you doing this? Because I want power to do this." And God says, I told you in my Word to seek first the kingdom of God. I want you to give your first energy to Me and then I'll give you abundant energy for everything else. I'll provide for everything else down the road.

Maybe it's even money, Lord, I'm just not able to pay my bills. Lord, would you help me to have more finances so that I can pay my bills" And God comes to you and says, well, I told you to seek first the kingdom of God and My righteousness. And then all these other things would be added on top of that. Are you simply asking Me to do this for your kingdom and are you ignoring My kingdom altogether? I told you to seek My kingdom first. You with me?

It's a principle that we ignore far too often. Here's why, and James talked about this. He said, you ask and you don't receive because you want to ask to spend it on your own pleasures. (James 4:3) See, we're asking to have things answered by the Lord so that it can be just for me. I want more money for me, for my pleasure.

And God says, I'm still waiting on you to seek first the kingdom of God, to seek Me first. To seek to serve Me first. You give Me the first fruits and I will bless you with an abundance afterward that you won't even be able to contain. But seek first to spend yourself for Me. Right? Not for you, for Me.

Let's pray.

Father, I thank You so much for just the power of Your Word. Your Word is so good, so fresh, and so meaningful. Lord, we praise You. We praise You for teaching us and instructing us in the Scriptures. Please don't stop.

We have so much more to learn, so far to go, so much to grow. Teach us Your ways, O God, that we may walk in Your truth.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen.