

EBC Abridged: "The *Hallel* psalms are found in three separate collections: the "Egyptian Hallel" (113-118), the "Great Hallel" (120-136), and the concluding Hallel psalms (146-150)...The Egyptian Hallel and the Great Hallel were sung during the annual feasts (Lev 23; Nu 10:10). The Egyptian Hallel psalms received a special place in the Passover liturgy, as 113-114 were recited or sung before and 115-118 after the festive meal (cf. Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26). The concluding Hallel psalms (146-150) were incorporated in the daily prayers in the synagogue after the destruction of the temple (A.D. 70)."

Although the author is not identified, I think there are clues that point to David.

**Psalms 118:1** ¶ O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: because his mercy *endureth* for ever.

**Psalms 118:2** Let Israel now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

**Psalms 118:3** Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

**Psalms 118:4** Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The psalmist opens with a call for everyone to give thanks to the LORD. Why? Because He is good; He is the essence of moral excellence and virtue (Webster). In fact, Jesus tells us that only God is truly good in and of Himself.

*Mark 10:18 "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God."*

We should also give thanks to the LORD because His mercy, His lovingkindness, is never-ending; He is always ready to extend that mercy to mankind. The psalmist then begins to make specific address to his audience, beginning with the people of Israel to the priests descended from Aaron to everyone the fears the LORD. He urges them all to declare the never-ending mercy of God because they are all recipients of that mercy.

Spurgeon: "Mercy is a great part of his goodness, and one which more concerns us than any other, for we are sinners and have need of his mercy. Angels may say that he is good, but they need not his mercy and cannot therefore take an equal delight in it; inanimate creation declares that *he is good*, but it cannot feel his *mercy*, for it has never transgressed; but man, deeply guilty and graciously forgiven, beholds mercy as the very focus and centre of the goodness of the Lord."

**Psalms 118:5** I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, *and set me in a large place*.

**Psalms 118:6** The LORD *is on my side*; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

**Psalms 118:7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.**

With this section, the psalmist becomes personal. The LORD has brought him victoriously through a time of distress. When He prayed for God's help, he was answered in accordance with his expectations. God put him in a large place, a place of protection. Because he knew the LORD was on his side, he did not fear anything that man could do to him.

Verse 7 reads as though the psalmist was not without supporters, and together they looked to the LORD as their leader. With God as their leader, he knew they could not lose.

I am reminded of an old saying, "God and me equal a majority." And the following verses from scripture.

*Isaiah 59:1 "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save...."*

*Jeremiah 32:17 & 27 "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee....Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?"*

*Mark 10:27 "...for with God all things are possible."*

**Psalms 118:8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.**

**Psalms 118:9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.**

The psalmist knew from experience and confidently declared that the LORD was faithful; He never fails in keeping His promises. Men, however, no matter their station in life, are undependable. Not only are they undependable, they are limited in their ability to provide help. God's resources and abilities are limitless!

Interesting observation by Boice quoted by Guzik: "It is reported by people who count such things that there are 31,174 verses in the Bible, and if that is so, then these verses, the 15,587th and the 15,588th, are the middle verses. That position should be reason enough to give them prominence."

**Psalms 118:10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.**

**Psalms 118:11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.**

**Psalms 118:12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.**

**Psalms 118:13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.**

Verse 11 is basically an exclamation point to verse 10. These verses allude to the fact that the psalmist was a king, possibly even David. He was confident that although he was surrounded by enemy nations (sounds like an alliance of his enemies), he was confident of victory because the LORD was on his side. He pictures the enemy as a swarm of bees that are destroyed by fire and smoke. Though they had done everything in their power to conquer this leader, he defeated them with the LORD's empowerment.

Spurgeon: "What wonders have been wrought in the name of the Lord! It is the battle-cry of faith, before which its adversaries fly apace. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" brings instant terror into the midst of the foe. The name of the Lord is the one weapon which never fails in the day of battle: he who knows how to use it may chase a thousand with his single arm."

**Psalms 118:14 The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.**

The psalmist declares the LORD to be his strength (security and power), his song (the object of his praise) and his salvation (deliverer and saviour).

Another clue—King David was known for his love of music, and it would be natural for him to think of praise as a song.

**Psalms 118:15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.**

**Psalms 118:16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.**

As in previous verses, verse 16 seems to be an exclamation point to verse 15. The psalmist notes that when the LORD acts on behalf of His people, it is natural for them to respond with joy and shouts of victory. His mighty works exalt Him. The "right hand" is a reference to one's power and authority.

Spurgeon: "Let none of us be silent in our households: if we have salvation let us have joy, and if we have joy let us give it a tongue wherewith it may magnify the Lord."

**Psalms 118:17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.**

**Psalms 118:18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.**

These are the words of a victor. "I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the LORD." He admits that God has chastened him severely but had given him the victory. It would seem that he had received the intended instruction and correction of that chastening.

It is important to note that chastening is an act of love by our Father in heaven. Scripture is clear in declaring that He chastens every child He loves.

*Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."*

Verse 18 should be on the lips of every child of God throughout his/her life. We should ever live to declare the works of the Lord and praise His name!

Spurgeon: "The Lord frequently appears to save his heaviest blows for his best-beloved ones; if any one affliction be more painful than another it falls to, the lot of those whom he most distinguishes in his service. The gardener prunes his best roses with most care. Chastisement is sent to keep successful saints humble, to make them tender towards others, and to enable them to bear the high honours which their heavenly Friend puts upon them."

**Psalms 118:19 ¶ Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, *and* I will praise the LORD:**

**Psalms 118:20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.**

**Psalms 118:21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.**

As I looked at the Hebrew for "gates of righteousness," it occurred to me that it could represent either or both of two things—entering the presence of God (at the temple or church in our case) or entering a righteous way of life. Either way, the purpose for entering in is to praise the LORD and thank Him for answering His prayer for deliverance. Only those that are righteous (those trying to live in obedience to God's law) come to God's house with the intent to offer Him praise and thanksgiving.

**Psalms 118:22 The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.**

**Psalms 118:23 This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvellous in our eyes.**

It would make sense in light of these verses for the psalmist to be David. He was not accepted as God's chosen king for many years after his anointing. He recognized that it was all the LORD's doing that he was finally accepted and established as the father of Israel's royal dynasty.

However, that is not where my thoughts first go when hearing or reading these verses. They are too closely connected to the words of Jesus, and that is where my thoughts first go.

*Matthew 21:42 "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?"*

In context, He used these verses to tell the Pharisees that He was the chief cornerstone upon which God's kingdom would be built even though they rejected Him as their Messiah. I think only through the revelation of this application from the mouth of Jesus would we make a connection with these verses to that truth.

Peter used these verses to clearly identify Jesus as the Messiah when questioned by the Pharisees after healing the lame man in the name of Jesus.

*Acts 4:10–12 "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

It is always amazing to me how specific verses from a psalm have specific application to the Messiah as revealed by the Holy Spirit through Jesus and the writers of the New Testament.

**Psalms 118:24 This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.**

"This is the day" may make reference to the day of victory in the heart of the psalmist. I think it is valid to apply this truth to each and every day of our lives. Every day that God gifts us is another opportunity to show our love and gratitude to our Father in heaven for His many blessings—especially for the gift of Jesus as our Saviour. Every day is another opportunity to serve Him and share the truth of the gospel.

On a personal note, I used to attend Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, and James Kennedy started every Sunday morning service with this verse. I loved it!

**Psalms 118:25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.**

**Psalms 118:26 Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.**

As the psalmist begins to close, he calls for the LORD to continue to defend and preserve his people. He also asks for God's blessings upon them. He declares that he is seeking His blessing in faith as he and his people celebrate how they adore Him from His house (the temple).

**Psalms 118:27 God *is* the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar.**

**Psalms 118:28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee: *thou art* my God, I will exalt thee.**

**Psalms 118:29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.**

Several translations give the sense of verse 27 similar to the NIV: "*The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.*"

It is obvious that the psalmist is praising the LORD for His blessings, and it makes sense that he is offering a sacrifice to honor God for those blessings. The NIV implies that this is a sacrifice being celebrated by all the people on a special occasion.

As he closes, the psalmist personally declares the LORD to be his God and that he will praise and exalt Him as such. He then calls for the people to join him in thanking God for His goodness and mercy—mercy that is limitless. He closes his song the same way he started it.