

## Praising God in Uncertain Times

In this series of articles we've been looking at ways in which God shows his love to his children always, but also in these uncertain times in which we're living. As a quick review, we've seen God's presence, protection and persevering love. That being true, what does this Psalm teach us about how we should respond to God's love? Our response should be a response of:

### —Proclamation and Praise

"Your praise reaches the ends of the earth....Let Mt. Zion be glad.....Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of your great judgments!" (vs. 10) This verse also connects to verse 1: "Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised....." Being reminded of God's love expressed in this Psalm by his presence, protection and perseverance should spur our hearts to praise our awesome God! In verses 12-14 the Psalmist calls on the old covenant people to, "Walk about Zion....[notice how she stands strong and how her towers, ramparts and citadels are still standing]. After the completion of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem under the leadership of Nehemiah, the wall was dedicated. At that time there were great choirs assigned to march with the leaders of the people around the wall in celebration. They offered sacrifices to God and 'rejoiced with great joy....and the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.'" (Neh. 12:43)

Here in Psalm 48 scholars suggest that the Psalmist is encouraging the people to look at the defense systems of ancient Jerusalem which point to our greater strength which is God himself. He can care for his people in uncertain times. The Psalmist is encouraging the people to take a survey of the wonderful covenant love of God to sustain his people. Looking again at verses 13-14, we're also to proclaim God's faithfulness and love to the generations to come. When we think about God's sustaining love for his people, we should want to proclaim that love to the coming generations. The old Puritan commentator Matthew Henry has written: "Let all the members of the church in particular take to themselves the comfort of what God does for his church.....Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength, safety, and faithfully *transmit our observations* to those that shall come after us."

As Christians, this side of the cross, we know that this Psalm points ultimately to the presence, protection and preserving love of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the presence of God—he is Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). When Jesus ascended back to the Father after the Resurrection, the Spirit was sent to be with the church (John 14:26). Jesus himself replaces the Old Testament temple with his body (John 2:21). He is the head of his church and we gather each Lord's Day to praise him as well as the Father and the Spirit. In contrast to the kings of the world, King Jesus has all authority and power to protect his people—the church (Mt. 28:18; Eph. 1:21-22). He is the Word of God and he guides us by his Spirit through the written Word, the scriptures. The last phrase of Psalm 48 *literally* reads, "He will guide us beyond death." It is Jesus Christ whose perfect life and sacrificial death carries us—even beyond death—because he has destroyed, for all time, the power of death over his people; we don't have to fear death because Jesus died the death that we deserved to die. "Through death [Jesus Christ] would destroy the

one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14) As we conclude this series, I want to mention five quick ways that we should respond to God’s love. These come from the Puritan, John Owen in his book entitled “Communion with God.”

—**Rest:** We should find our all in God. Owen writes, “The soul stops all its wanderings and searchings to *rest* in God alone.” (see also Psalm 73:25)

—**Contentment:** Knowing that God is in control helps us as we struggle with discontentment and discouragement in these uncertain times.

—**Delight:** “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4; see also Psalm 40:8)

—**Reverence:** This is inclusive of the praise of God both public and private. (Hebrews 12:28-29)

—**Obedience:** “But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him; whosoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” (1 John 2:5-6; see also 3:24)

May this series from Psalm 48 be a reminder to all Christians of God’s love for us in Jesus Christ. Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.