

Psalms 68

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[0 : 00] Do open your Bibles to Psalm 68. Psalm 68. It's lovely to see you back there. Welcome.

I've got to say to the YouTubers, welcome again. It feels strange, doesn't it? It feels like there are three churches. There are the 915, not the 11, and the YouTubers.

We need to keep reminding ourselves of one church. We are really looking forward to it as we back together. So, Psalm 68. And over these two weeks, I'm just going to take one verse.

I'm going to take daily verses. So, give us today our daily bread. Christ is speaking for us daily. But today, I want us to look at Psalm 68 and verse 19.

Many of you will know, 20 or 30 years ago, there was a little story that was everywhere in the Christian world. There was a little story called footprints.

[1 : 03] Do you remember it? You were seeing it on postcards or bookmarks, fridge magnets. It tells the story of somebody who looks over their life and they see their life as footprints.

Two sets of footprints in the sand. It's a walk with God. And you notice that there are times when there's only one set of footprints.

And this person looking over their life, sees that during the hard times there's only one set of footprints, not two. And so, the person raises the question. And says to God, these were terrible times. Why was it when I was going through the terrible times, you disappeared?

And you deserted me. And you know that. The reply comes back. Where God says, when you were going through those terrible times, I was carrying you.

And that's why there was only one set of footprints. Now, long before that slightly cheesy and comforting story was written. The Sabbath 68 verse 19. This is it.

[2 : 06] Blessed be the Lord who daily bears his up. Who daily carries our burdens.

Another version. And so, instead of a sadistic God who drops bombs onto us, as is the God of self-imagination. Or a careless God who sits in heaven and folds his arms and just kind of watches when things go wrong.

The Bible tells us that God is a God who draws alongside his people and under his people in order to sustain his people and to lift them up and your burdens.

And you'll see that that is something God does daily. Christianity is a full-time following of the Lord Jesus. There are people who say to me, Paul, I'd never be a Christian.

I couldn't possibly give up one hour a week to come to church. And unfortunately, there are people like that who say that on their Christianity. But God doesn't want you to give up one hour a week.

He wants you to give up every hour of every 24 hours.

[3 : 12] Everything. The paradox is this. When you give to the Lord Jesus every hour of every day, you are more liberated than ever.

Than if you hang onto it yourself. By giving away your life to Jesus, you find freedom. And I don't think it's an accident, is it, that in our society, our society which is very resistant to the Lordship of Jesus, which says, I'm in charge, I want to do what I want, I'm in control.

It is also restless. And empty. We've got this tremendous sense of autonomy. But with it, as Kevin says, people who are very, very weary and very confused.

And so we must go back and see what is important. And we find in the word of God that God asks us daily to give ourselves to him.

And credibly, he gives himself to us daily. So what does it mean? What does it mean that he bears our burdens? If God is carrying our burdens, why does it feel as if we're having to carry over?

[4 : 25] Why does it feel so often as if we've got the cares of the world on our shoulders, when this verse tells us that God is carrying our burdens? Earlier in the year, Yuki asked me and a couple of other men to move a piano for him.

He didn't tell us it was on the second floor. But after praying, he said, could you come and move the piano? And what I noticed was upstairs, Chris Prattett moved to the back of the piano, and Costa moved to the front of the piano, and I was on the side of the piano, carrying it upstairs. Which is always the best place to be, because it's impossible to bear any weight. And so we kind of move along as they're bearing the weight. And I was jammed at the side, I looked like I was carrying the piano, but actually I wasn't.

I was a tugging carrier. And you might wonder, is this God like that? It is God a tugging carrier of your burdens. The Bible says he daily supports us.

And yet there are times out there in your life, like there are in mine, where I feel completely overwhelmed and burdened and crushed. And so we wonder, is this a pretend text? And we need, therefore, either to see it in its context to appreciate what's being said.

[5 : 38] Two headings. And first of all, I want you to see that he is the God of the whole journey. And second, he is the God of the whole burden. First of all, he is the God of the whole journey.

Psalm 68 is a victory psalm. You'll see that at the very beginning, in the introduction. It's a song. It's not a mini song. It's not like they're going to football game, but a singing after that is.

It's not a mini song that celebrates some small victory. It is a maxi song. It is a song that says, the Lord has taken me from the start of the journey to the end of the journey.

And I have begun to thank God, he says. And I have finished. And so I thank God. I was taken out of prison and he brought me home. What this song is all about, I can prove to you.

Let me show you verse 17. And the second half of verse 17. It says, the Lord is among them. Sinai is now his sanctuary. And what you see in Psalm 68 is that the Lord has traveled from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion, the city of God.

[6 : 48] In other words, he's gone with his people from the place where God gathered his people at Sinai. They built that little box. They built the Ark of the covenant. And it was the symbol that God was with them.

And they've gone into the wilderness. And they've gone all that way, as it were. And God walks with them into the promised land. And they take in the Ark. And we find that that city now becomes a God-centered city.

So it begins with Moses. It began to be fought, didn't it, with slavery in Egypt. And it goes right on the way through to David, entering his home in Jerusalem.

And this is the psalm which is praising God for the start and the finish of the journey. It's a very feisty start, isn't it? Verse 1. What shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered and those who hate him shall flee before him.

As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away. As wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God.

[7 : 52] But it is a feisty song about a victory. And you might be thinking, well what has this got to do with God bearing our burdens? And I'll tell you it has everything to do with God bearing our burdens.

Because as the Israelites got back on their journey, they could have put together a very different type of song. They could have written a song all about hardship. And there'd be massive hardships on the journey.

Tens of thousands of people, young and old, all ages walking through the desert. They experienced hunger. They knew what it was to have battles.

They knew what it was to be divided. There were temptations. You read the book of Joshua, the book of Judges and all the problems. Those travelling years. They were difficult years. And they could have put together a song of hardship, but they didn't.

And so the psalm of Psalm 68 is one of blessing. And it talks about the faithfulness of God. And the provision of God. And the kindness of God.

[8 : 54] And so why does this psalm take that out? Is it that David was in a kind of strangely nostalgic happy mood? Has he decided to be positive for a change?

Has he put on some rose tinted spectacles? You know, sort of one eyes looking back over the whole of his life. And the answer of course is not. The answer is that this God is the God of the journey.

And he thanks God for covering him and them from their arrival from the start to the finish. Think of a person who goes in for surgery.

And of course, you go in for surgery, it's a pretty fairly traumatic process. And they could if they wanted, could they make a list of all the things that are difficult.

But after they've gone into surgery and come out of the other side and out of the hospital. And they've been supported and cared for and provided and made well. There's another song that rises up, isn't there?

[9 : 57] That it was a journey. It was a process. And it was valuable and it was wonderful. And that is what the writer is doing here. It's been a hard journey, but it's been a successful journey.

And that is what he's got to score for. Let's see over it. It's in verse one. God shall arise. That's the beginning. They were the words that were spoken every time the people of God got up to move to the next stage of the journey.

May God arise as we arise. God, you come with us as we go forward. But in verse four, God rides on the desert. He is a very great God.

But verse five, he is a father to the fathers. And he is a protector of words. He is very great. And he's very caring.

In verse eight, he shakes the earth, doesn't he? But he also provides in verse nine, showers of blessing. In verse 12, kings and armies flee. And he drives out his enemies.

[11 : 02] But in verse 13, he enriches his people, while he does the silver and gold. So this is the story of a very powerful God, who is also a providing God.

And when you go to verse 14, you see that God moves into the land that is the promised land. And he scatters the kings of the land. You may be interested to know, you may have not noticed this before, but in Deuteronomy 20, verse 10, God always makes an offer of peace to those who are in the land.

And so that is, before the people of God moved into the promised land, they return, make an offer of peace to the inhabitants.

And if that was rejected, then the overthrow will come. And that offer of peace, then overthrow, is the way God always thinks of his people today.

Verse 16, God moves into Zion. And you see this kind of picture language, trippy language. The other mountains are spoke of in personal ways, aren't they?

[12 : 14] The mountains are envious. They gaze in envy. Oh, rugged mountains are the mountain where God has chosen to reign. That God has chosen Zion.

And the other mountains, alongside, they wish it was them. In verse 21, he takes Jerusalem as his capital and he crushes his enemies. In verse 25, the singers and musicians are called for, come in and sing and dance.

And if you go in verse 28, there's a song, a prayer that God will continue to show strength. And in verse 2, 32, the nations are spoken to and the nations are told, this God is the God of our all.

And the kingdoms of the earth need to acknowledge him as the very great king. So there's the process. God having brought his people to Jerusalem. So sing up and listen up.

Because this is a very, very great and gracious God. And here is the logic, okay? The logic is this, that if you arrive on the last day, and you go safely through the gates of heaven, what does that prove?

[13 : 27] It proves that you have not been abandoned on any day. That if you arrive on the last day, you've not been abandoned on any day.

And in fact, you will discover that actually you've been watched and you've been guarded and sustained and provided for every day. That the God who has given you your life and your breath and your spiritual life and your spiritual breath is watching over you every day.

And carrying you every day. And so he is the God of the Jew. And what he has begun, he will put into completion.

From start to finish. And the guy in the footman's story, but of course he has learned with hindsight, didn't he? That God had not deserted him on any day, but God had carried him most days.

And the Christian who travels from here to heaven, who goes from the cross to the crown, from where we begin to where we finish, will discover that Jesus has saved and protected and provided the same encounter.

[14 : 35] That's the first thing, he's the God of all journey. The second thing is, he's the God of all burden. He's the God of all burden. And I want to zero in on this phrase, that God daily bears our burdens.

What does that mean? And what does it mean that God daily carries our burdens? That he daily bears us up? Well, we know, look at verse 8, that there is not going to be any burden that is too heavy for God.

You might think there's something in your life that's too heavy for God. Look at verse 8. Because if God is able to shape the earth, if you know how to shape the earth, you can carry the burdens of the people coming.

Soon do. And we also know in verse 6 that God is not hard-hearted. God is interested. You see it. He is a father to the fathers.

He cares for the lonely, the widow. Verse 5. He's interested. Verse 6. He talks about the prisoner. [15:49] Verse 9. He speaks about the weary. Verse 10. He talks about the needy and the poor.

So that's what you have that list. You have the fathers. You have the lonely. You have the widow. You have the prisoner. You have the weary. You have the poor. And you've really got the summary of the needs of the weak.

But I want to especially look at verse 17 to 20. Because they are more meaningful, I think, than the Old Testament readers realise.

So look at verse 17. Who goes into the sanctuary? And that's the Lord. And who has come from Mount Sinai to the sanctuary? And if you look at verse 18.

It's saying, you, O Lord, ascended on high. And you led captives in your train. And in verse 19. It is the same Lord that bears our burdens. And in verse 20. Just a little bit of a pun. So I'm not going to get a bit of violence in the next bit. You'll see that he is the same one who enables you and I to eat it from death.

[16:48] So who knows this is about? We've discovered, don't we, these verses that it's about the Lord Jesus.

We don't even really understand these verses until we become Christians. And we've discovered, don't we, that it's about the Lord Jesus.

We don't even really understand these verses until we become Christians. I replied to Jesus who ascended. Jesus didn't ascend some earthly mountain, but he ascended into glory.

And so Jesus is now, where is Jesus? We talked about the now of the capitalism. He is in the heavenly Jerusalem. He's in heaven. And this Jesus is the one who, as it were, travelled.

He now ascended. And what did he do? He conquered all his enemies. And so the apostle Paul changes verse 18. And when the apostle Paul quotes this, he changes the words from received gifts from enemies to gave gifts to his people.

[17:57] And the apostle Paul does that because he's using the text as an apostle. That's how he wants us to understand it. In a way that he should be explained, he's making a really important point to you and I.

That Jesus has not only conquered his enemies, he's not only impoverished his enemies, but he's enriched his people. There's a positive side to it.

That when Jesus ascended after dying and rising, what did he do wonderfully? He poured out his spirit on his people, which enables us to live and progress and grow.

So, it is the impoverished of Jesus' enemies that is matched by the enriching of his people. With the gift of new life.

And so Jesus is victorious over his enemies, which is wonderful. But he's also the generous giver of his spirit.

[18:57] He ascends, doesn't he? And then the spirit descends. And that makes verse 19 even more significant. Because the Lord who ascended is described as saviour.

And he is the burden bearing saviour. Literally, the words mean, he loads up for us.

It's a lovely phrase, isn't it? He loads up for us. And we can't read those words, can we? Of a saviour who loads up for us without remembering that Jesus is the saviour who loaded up for us.

The rest of the Old Testament tells us, doesn't it? Of our iniquities and our sins. And Jesus took that load upon himself. He loaded up for us. And so that load that he took upon himself enables us in the words of verse 20 to be to know from death.

Because there's no greater load to have lifted off you than the load that will cause you to die.

[20:13] Imagine a person who says, I want God to lift off me the load of poverty. And I want to be a rich man.

Well, you've traveled from birth to death a rich man. Great. Imagine someone said, I want God to lift off the load of sickness from my life.

And okay, you can travel healthily from birth to death. Healthily. But surely the wise man or woman will say, is there a God who can lift off what will kill me?

Is there a God who can lift off what is going to bring me to death? Of course that is what God must understand in the person with God Jesus.

He's loaded up the very greatest burden in order that we might begin and go through glory. And so we need the Apostle Paul's logic in Romans.

[21 : 23] So you know this verse. God did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. Now will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things.

So we can't read the word Savior in the Old Testament without thinking of Jesus our Savior. God is a great man. And we can't agree that he carried the greatest burden.

That if he carried the greatest burden that you and I have, is he not going to be interested in those other burdens? So think of a father, think of a dad.

He spent thousands of pounds putting his children through school. And he sent his son or his daughter through school. And then during the summer holidays, his son or his daughter is very, very thirsty.

And they haven't got money on them. They haven't got money to get a drink. And so they asked their father, would you buy me a drink? What's he going to say? He spent thousands of pounds putting them through school and they're asking for 75p for a drink.

[22 : 33] Is he going to give me a thousand? Because he's paid the greater price. He's paid the greater price. I think of a mother. A mother who spends all her spare hours with her children and she takes an interest in them.

And she listens to their interesting stories and their not interesting stories. Is she likely to take an interest when that child is in really desperate circumstances?

When that child is breaking her heart and crying and just wants someone to listen to her? Will the mother at that point listen to her child? Of course she will. Because if they did the big thing, are they not liking to do the little thing?

And if God has done the big thing of taking and lifting the greatest burden that we have, you can be absolutely sure that he's interested in the smaller burdens that we have.

And so you see the centre of Psalm 68 is the saving and rising God. And of course it's been concrete for your eyes in the person of Jesus.

[23 : 37] A God who will pay the ultimate. And who will therefore support your daily need. And I think daily is such an important word, isn't it?

Because as you and I walk out of this building this morning, and we remember that God is a God who carried his people. And who in the person of Jesus carried our greatest burden, daily means that he continues to be interested in you.

And so today he is interested in the burdens that you bear. That trouble your heart. And tomorrow when you get up, he will be interested in the burdens that you bear.

And Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, and this week, and this month, and later this year, and this decade, and this lifetime, he will be interested in our daily basis. And your daily burdens.

Now let me try and kind of anchor this. These are very great claims that. Why do I believe this? Why do you believe this?

[24 : 49] Why do you believe that God daily bears our burdens? Why do you believe that God daily bears our burdens? When you and I feel such great burdens? Well, two reasons. First of all, the Bible tells us so.

The Bible tells us so. So 2-2-1-8, chapter 33. It's the only verse in this. It tells us that underneath us, as the people of God are the everlasting arms.

And so you can sink fairly low, can't you? But you can never get under the arms of God.

Underneath are the everlasting arms.

For we're told in Isaiah 46, verse 4. A verse that's grown to be more to me in the last couple of years. That the Lord says, I have made you. And I will carry you even to your great air.

I will carry you. That's what God tells us. But we also believe that God is a God who daily bears us up.

[25 : 58] Because as we look backwards, we see that He's kept His promises. Don't we? As we look back, we see again and again and again that He has enabled us.

And He has sustained us. And He's kept us going. And so we believe this because the Bible tells us so.

And we believe it because as we look back, we know it's now. The second thing I want to say in applications is we don't always feel it. We don't always feel it. We don't always sense the support. And Scripture is full of examples of people who will be at their wit's end in life. And who felt suicidal. We could do a sermon series on the suicide of the people of God.

And you would be amazed. I think it's probably between five and seven of them. And then we're told about them that they're at their wit's end of our life.

[27 : 00] The disciples in the boat absolutely terrified. Like the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians who says, We despair of life itself. And so we are not promised a sense or a feeling continually being sustained.

Like we float along on some kind of mattress. We've grown through life. The quick escape. The quick fix is not the experience of the people of God. But the fact remains that whatever we might be feeling, God really bears a sight.

And the third thing is this. A lot of the relief from God is given to us by the people of God. And God says we are to do good, especially as an household of faith.

And a great deal of support that comes to us comes through the people of God. And it's the people of God who greatly support us and care for us and pray for us and partner with us.

And so as God is dependable, so we must seek to be dependable. Some of you said in the day that the greatest ability is dependability.

[28 : 27] And there's no doubt you said that God is a dependable God. And the people of God must seek to be dependable people as best as we can. And that's why it's such a tragedy when people hold the church at our own life.

And don't play their role and keep themselves away from the people of God. Because they miss out on so much of what God has to support them. Bear them up. And so there we are, Psalm 68 verse 19.

The policy of God is that He daily bears us up. And I try to suggest to you that the best way to see that is the backdrop of the whole of the journey. A God who takes His people from start to finish. And it says to me that the whole journey that you and I are invited and see His great faithfulness. For this promise. And I try to suggest to you that the great burden, the very great burden that needs to be lifted of our sin in Jesus, God has lifted that burden.

And that enables a person to escape from death. And if God is interested in your escape from death, you can be absolutely sure that He is interested in your perforation of life, hasn't He?

[29 : 52] And so it's no wonder, is it, that verse 19 begins in this way. Blessed be the Lord. Blessed be the Lord.