

Faith Unto Enlargement Through Adversity - Part 1

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Faith in the face of adversity can lead to enlargement and a new experience of life.

Duration: 38:14

Scripture: Ezra 4:9-10, Psalm 118

Topics: "Adversity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker introduces the theme of the conference, which is 'faith unto enlargement through adversity.' The speaker refers to Psalm 118 as the Passover Hosanna Song and explains that it is about faith and triumph over adversity. The speaker relates this theme to the life of Martin Luther, who considered this Psalm his song. The speaker also connects the Psalm to the building of the second temple and the opposition faced by the remnant of Israel.

Transcript

This morning, our word will be a preliminary and introductory word to the main message of this conference, kind of preface for the striking of the keynote to which all that follows will be tuned. And it is rising out of the psalm which we have read, Psalm 118, which I would like you to have before you as we meditate. The real title of this psalm is the Passover Hosanna Psalm, and its theme is faith unto enlargement through adversity.

And that is the theme of the conference, faith unto enlargement through adversity. Martin Luther called this psalm his psalm. He said, that is my psalm.

And I think his life is a very good commentary upon the psalm. We know why he made it his psalm. Indeed, he might have been the originator of it.

So true was his life to all that is here. Just an explanation and a summing up of all his experience. That is my psalm, he said.

I'll leave that for the moment. There are two other themes that make this psalm live, because really it was born out of experience. There is behind it very deep history, in two connections especially.

In the first place, this psalm, whose composer no one seems to know, was adapted at least, if not composed for, it was adapted to, the Passover after the dedication of the Second Temple. And most of you are acquainted with the history of the Second Temple. You have to turn in that connection, of course, to the book of Ezra, and alongside of it the book of Nehemiah, and then into the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah.

And when you read those four books, you have the setting of Psalm 118. Read these verses from 5 to 16 again, in the light of day, and if you have any knowledge of those four books, you will see what light is thrown upon these verses. Or to take a fragment, verse 10, all nations compassed me about, in the name of the Lord I will cut the mark.

They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about. And turn to the book of Ezra, chapter 4, verses 9 and 10. And in verse 9 you have a whole host of nations, and they are called nations there.

A host of nations, the names of which we will tie your tongues in knots very quickly, all gathered against Ezra and the building of the Second Temple. They compassed him about, all nations compassed him about. They compassed him about like stinging bees.

Thus, this description of adversity, of opposition, gives this psalm a very real practical connection and application. See, in the building and dedication of that temple, by the remnant which had escaped from captivity and returned to the land with that object in view, certain things spring into view. And if this psalm is the account or description of things as they were then, then it is indeed the story of life out of death to begin with.

We can understand the nations speaking in this personal way, for you must remember the I and the me, repeated in this 118th psalm, is the personification of the remnant, or of the nation. It is as though the nation were speaking as an individual. It is a collective I. And the nation is here saying, the Lord hath chastened me so, how true that was, for seventy years in captivity, but he hath not delivered me over unto death.

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord, so that that remnant speaking in these words does really embody this great truth of life out of death, and life triumphant over death. The Lord had foretold, before he sent his people into the power of exile and captivity, that he would open their graves and bring them out, and here it is. They are out, out of that grave of captivity, and a grave it was.

There is no singing in the grave. The dead praise thee not, is a phrase of scripture, and how true it was away there. We hung our harps upon the willow.

How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? The dead praise thee not. But listen, O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, his loving kindness endures forever. For times repeated at the very beginning of the psalm, and then added as the crown at the end.

The new psalm. On resurrection ground. So, the psalm to begin with is that of life out of death, and then quite clearly it is that of release from bondage.

These people are so rejoicing in that aspect of their position, by the loving kindness of the Lord, that they are reminded of their earliest great deliverance, and you will see here in the psalm a reference to, and a quotation from, the book of Exodus. The great deliverance from Egypt. They bring the two together.

Deliverance from Egypt, and deliverance from Babylon. And the deliverance from Egypt is always in the scripture termed deliverance from the house of bondage. Out of the house of bondage.

The psalm then is the psalm of release from bondage. Now brought right into the rebuilding of the second temple. You can see how these nations, represented by these people who had been brought into Samaria, were strengthened, were pressed.

What a time Nehemiah had in building the wall from these people, pressed in on every side. What a time Ezra had. How those prophets suffered.

Indeed the work was held up for more than a decade by reason of this opposition and adversity all around. But the point is that the temple was built, and finished, and dedicated. And this psalm was sung at the dedication, or at the Passover which followed the dedication of the temple.

And so the psalm says, all right, let them do their work. Let them press from every side. Let them oppose as they will.

The thing is done. The Lord has done it in spite of everything. And we are out.

So the Lord answered and brought me into a large place from death to life, from bondage to liberty, from limitation to enlargement, into a large place. And this represented a tremendous thing on the Lord's part. When you consider all that the Lord had to cope with, although of course it's putting it in a wrong way to say the Lord ever has to cope with anything.

He is so supremely superior to every situation. And yet, God was against His people. It was no small thing.

To bring them out into this enlargement meant the overcoming of tremendous difficulties. The Lord answered and brought me into a large place. It reminded of another word so familiar to us.

Thou broughtest us into the net. Thou caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water.

But Thou broughtest us out into a large place, a wealthy place. It's the sound of triumph over limitation bringing into enlargement. And then, as we have pointed out, it is so clearly the psalm of God's faithfulness over His people's unfaithfulness.

The version from which I have read uses the word loving-kindness. The version which perhaps most of you are using is mercy. His mercy endureth forever.

God's loving-kindness. I think there's a note about that you know that touches the heart when you think of the failure and the unfaithfulness of His own people. What a story it is.

All the way along and then right through the lives of the major prophets and the minor prophets. What a story of unfaithfulness, of failure. It would seem that if ever the mercy of God, the loving-kindness of God could have been exhausted, that would have been the case with these people.

How so terrible were their reactions to the mercy of God. How far they went against the Lord. But here, in the end, and this is the end of the Old Testament that we are in, we are with Nehemiah, the last book of the Old Testament in historical order.

We are at the end of a dispensation. And the great notice, His loving-kindness endureth forever. These were people who knew what they were talking about when they used that language.

Not just poetry. Sentiment is mercy. Endureth forever.

It's therefore a time of tremendous consolation. Tremendous consolation. We know our weakness.

We know our unfaithfulness. We know how we have failed and do fail. The end of the story is His loving-kindness endureth forever.

Well, you see, it's the experience. And out of the experience, the testimony of a people who have proved the Lord to be faithful. Over against their own failure and unfaithfulness and over against all that men could do against them.

The psalm worth having. No wonder Luther said, that's my psalm. But there's something even more than that.

The second thing about this psalm is that it is believed to have been the psalm sung by the Lord Himself and His disciples on the Passover night. I used to, before I knew this, say, I wish I knew what it was they sang when it says there, after the supper and when they had sung, they went out. I used to say, I wonder what it was they sang.

I'd like to know. I've discovered that it is very strongly believed on very good grounds that this was the psalm they sang. The Lord Jesus sang it.

His disciples sang it with Him. I wonder if they knew what they really were singing. Well, let's look at it.

There's no doubt about it. Is there that this psalm very largely, if not altogether, related to the Lord Jesus? Because it is quoted immediately in connection with Him in several places in the New Testament. Here you have, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. And so the title of the psalm, which is not based upon that incident of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem, what we call Palm Sunday, when they cut down palms and went before Him, singing out of this psalm, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord.

Not based upon that incident, but on other grounds the psalm is called The Passover Hosanna Song. Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

See, that's related to the Lord Jesus and taken out of this psalm in part at any rate. And then you know that on several occasions in the New Testament the words are quoted, the stone which the builders rejected, same as become the head of the corner. The Lord Jesus himself used that concerning himself.

Peter used it concerning Christ. So this is in a large sense what is called a messianic psalm. It is related to the Lord Jesus.

Now, if the Lord did sing this psalm on that dark night of the Passover, later the betrayal, look again. What a triumph of faith! I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. Going straightway to get the heavenly trial and the cross, I shall not die.

He has left in faith. He has left the garden. He has left the trial.

He has left the cross. Right over into the resurrection. What a triumph of faith through adversity, through suffering.

But oh, what a meaning this gives to Gethsemane. Look, Passover. This is my body, which is for you.

This is my blood, which is shed for the remission of sins. And they sang a hymn. And after the hymn, the next hymn, Gethsemane.

Look. Bind the sacrifice with cause, even unto the horns of the altar. What was Gethsemane? They bound him.

They bound him and led him away from the garden. But his interpretation of that binding was the sacrifice, even unto the horns of the altar. Not tied on the altar by the horns, but bound unto, being led toward the altar.

That's the meaning here. Bind and lead to the altar. Puts a new life upon Gethsemane, doesn't it? Upon the bonds, the captivity.

A new life. Oh, this is not man's prevailing. This is not man's overcoming.

This is not man's triumph. This is the Lamb of God allowing himself to be led to the altar. That's the next thing after singing.

He has sung. Bind the sacrifice, even unto the horns of the altar, and forthwith he goes. He goes next to Gethsemane, next to the betrayal, next to the judgment hall, and next to the cross.

But there is the divine side of all that. You see, take, taking hold of all this human side as men regard and interpret it, and turning it into the redemption of the world. Yes.

And then, verse five again, Out of my distress, I called unto the Lord, upon the Lord. The Lord answered me and set me in a large place. Are these words of the Lord Jesus? Yes.

Out of my distress, I cried, My God, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt, in my distress. And although it does not seem that the Lord answered and delivered, an apostle says that he was heard. That he was heard.

And how was he heard? Have we the proof that he was heard and answered? The Lord answered me and set me in a large place. Well, what about that? A large place. Yes, a very large place he is in.

Oh, how enlarged was our Lord through his cross. How am I straightened, he said, how am I straightened until it be accomplished. Passion was the enlargement, the release from limitation and put me in a large place.

Enlargement through suffering. But, it's the voice of faith, the voice of faith. He is represented here as going to the cross.

And faith goes beyond the cross and claims the answer. Of life, not death. Enlargement, not limitation.

Well, we could dwell, could we not, quite a long time upon the enlargement that has come to the Lord Jesus through suffering, by faith, what enlargement? Are we going to speak much about that possibly these days? But here's the message. All leading up to its larger application. Here again, what a testimony this is to the mercy of God.

This is the point. I said a few minutes ago that this I is an inclusive and collective I. In the first place, it is the nation speaking in this personal way, using this personal pronoun, I. Now it's taken up in relation to the Lord Jesus, I shall not die. But you see, it is not just personal.

We know that the Lord Jesus had no need to go to the cross for himself. It has often been pointed out, those words used not later, by an apostle, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame, and he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, should be translated who instead of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despised the shame. And it takes you to the Mount of Transfiguration.

The Mount of Transfiguration was the seal to the perfection of his moral character. There is no transfiguration or glorification apart from moral perfection. And so God gave him the great witness that he was perfect, that he saw no fault in him, that he had passed the scrutiny of the eyes of divine holiness, and there was not a flaw or a blemish in him.

He was perfect. Therefore he had a right to go right through to the glory. Hooray! On the Mount of Transfiguration the glory was his.

It was declared his. It was shown to be his. It was his.

But instead of the joy that was set in front of him, he turned around and came down and endured the cross. And you will look at the context of those words and you'll find that it's all because of ourselves. That he was not going to glory without us.

Bringing many sons to glory, he hesitated his coming down and for the time being forgoing his right, his immediate right to the glory and enduring the cross. Bringing many sons to glory. Yes, to bring us.

And in that letter to the Hebrews you know how it is put. Into the mouth of the Lord himself I and the children whom God hath given me. I and my brethren.

Well, you see now, this glorious psalm with its wonderful background in the life of the Lord Jesus and by the cross of the Lord Jesus gathers us in. We are in this collective I. We come into the good of this. I shall not die but live.

The Lord answered me and brought me into a large place. Well, it's true, isn't it? It's true. We have got that life triumphant over death.

He's given that life to us. It's ours. Not only in that general way the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord but a testimony for all our lives.

Something for now. Life which has come out of death. Out of his death.

And has overcome death in him. It's for us. Don't lose the force of death by familiarity.

It is to be a testimony every day dear friend. What we have in Christ has got to be experienced and manifested every day. And it can be.

But then upon this we shall dwell so much more fully. What enlargement we have in Christ from our limitations. Oh, how great is the place into which we have been brought.

How immeasurable the resources. How vast are the ranges. How potent are the forces into which we have come in Christ through his death.

But then I close by just reminding you of this. While it is all concluded in him where he is concerned there's nothing more to be done in this matter. It's full and it's final and he has entered into his rest.

He has sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Nothing through which we go can add to that. Nothing which we experience can take from it.

Nevertheless, in a sense not vicariously, not atoningly not in the sense of his great redemptive work but in a sense of fellowship with him while in this world he is still rejected and in humiliation in fellowship with him the principle still remains. That is, that life and enlargement come through adversity and hate triumphs therein. It's the law of life.

Hate triumphs in adversity issues in life and enlargement. We shall see more fully how true that is but it's very true. Very true.

The Bible is just full of that. Real test of faith. Not adversity and opposition.

Everything coming in, circling round. All nations encompass me about. They encompass me about.

They encompass me about. You see, it reiterates. Very real.

Nevertheless, nevertheless that only constitutes the challenge to faith. Faith looks upon that as its opportunity and when faith comes out in its declaration over against all that and says I shall not die, I shall not live and declare the works of the Lord then faith makes that declaration. That's the highway to a new experience of life and a new range of fullness.

Enlargement. Enlargement. By way of faith challenge and faith victory.

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