

# Undivided

Psalm 118:5-9

## Sermon Outline

### A. We have His Undivided Attention (vs. 5):

1. My distress – This is a person that is so besieged by an enemy that they are under intense internal anguish that makes them feel like they are in a confined, tight, restricted space that hampers them from doing what they need to do. It refers to terror at the approach of a raping army (Jer. 6:24).
  - a) *Anguish* (cf. 116:3) is ‘enhanced’ here by a definite article suggesting ‘supreme anguish’. In itself the word suggests ‘pressure/constriction’ and contrasts with the freedom that came in answer to prayer.<sup>[1]</sup>
  - b) It is generally agreed that the Babylonian captivity is intended. The nation had called to God in its distress by the mouth of Daniel (9:4–19) and of other holy men. The Lord answered me, and set me in a large place; literally, *the Lord answered me on the open plain*. The idea is, “The Lord gave me enlargement” —took me out of my straits— “set my feet in a large room” (Ps. 31:8).<sup>[2]</sup>
2. Called – The Psalmist makes a sustained loud cry out to the Lord trusting that the Lord respond to the specific problem that he is experiencing.
  - a) The theme throughout this passage is one of rejoicing that God has given deliverance and victory. In actual use, this passage, because of its individualized nature, called for a solo voice. The single voice represented the personified nation in general and the assembled worshipers. With verses 19-21, the procession had undoubtedly reached the temple gates and was demanding entrance.<sup>[3]</sup>
3. Lord – The Psalmist uses Yahweh as representative of the most personal name for the Lord. It is frequently used in scripture to highlight the Lord’s glory and His closeness to the Psalmist demonstrating how concerned the Lord is for him. This name also represents how the need to fear the Lord God.
4. The Lord answered – The Lord gave a verbal response to the Psalmist. It is interesting that the Psalmist used a personal name for Christ and received a personal answer.

## B. He Shows No Partiality While Defending Us (vs. 6-7):

1. Lord – After his answered prayer, the Psalmist uses a different name for the Lord when he says that the Lord is going to function in his favor. The Lord here means the One who has all authority and power to reward or punish people.
  - a) Any man; all men. They can do no more than God permits. They cannot destroy me when he means to save me; they cannot defeat his gracious designs towards me. I am safe if God is my Friend. Comp. Notes on Rom. 8:31. <sup>[4]</sup>
  - b) *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”* (2 Cor 4:7-11; NASB)
2. Fear – Even though the Psalmist has every logical reason to fear that there would be much harm he makes a cognitive decision to not fear.
  - a) On the basis of this, he reminded the people (vv. 6–9), that since the LORD was with him, he need not fear what others might do to him (cf. Heb. 13:6). And because the LORD was his Helper (cf. Ps. 27:9) he could be sure of triumph. Therefore, the people too could be sure that it is better to turn to the LORD than to trust in human resources. <sup>[5]</sup>
3. What can man do to me – No matter how obligated people may feel to harm the Psalmist, no matter how deep their commitment may be to do so, he is confident with the Lord’s help they cannot harm him.
4. Lord – After his answered prayer, the Psalmist uses a different name for the Lord when he says that the Lord is going to function in his favor. The Lord here means the One who has all authority and power to reward or punish people.
5. Who help me – The Lord consistently assist, rescues or saves the Psalmist in the face of his enemies.
6. Look with satisfaction – Because the Lord is our present help, we can gain a complete understanding of His power, authority and saving grace while experiencing hate from those who are our enemies.
7. Who hate – Those who hate the Psalmist are intensely hostile towards him and desire to do ill-will towards him.

### C. He is Always Dependable (vs. 8-9):

1. It is better – When we take refuge in God, it is practically and economically better resulting in an excellent experience of life.
  - a) “It is *better*,” etc. It is better, (1) because man is weak, —but God is Almighty; (2) because man is selfish, —but God is benevolent; (3) because man is often faithless and deceitful, —God never; (4) because there are emergencies, as death, in which man cannot aid us, however faithful, kind, and friendly he may be, —but there are no circumstances in this life, and none in death, where God cannot assist us: and (5) because the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to this present life, —the power of God will be commensurate with eternity.<sup>[6]</sup>
  
2. Refuge in the Lord; Trust – Taking refuge is to have confidence that the Lord will not allow the rug to be pulled out from under us. We can rely on His power and authority while being anxious for nothing.
  - a) On the one hand, swarms of nations surrounded him and seemed likely to overwhelm him (cf. Deut. 1:44). On the other hand, prayerful trust in Yahweh’s powerful, “name,” appealed to his cry of lament (v 5), was the secret weapon that brought him victory and quelled the affray as quickly as it takes blazing thorns to burn away (cf. 2 Sam 23:6–7; Isa 9:17 [18]; 10:17; 33:12). Without Yahweh’s aid all would have been lost.<sup>[7]</sup>
  - b) The verbal phrase *to take refuge* means to seek protection, safety, security (see 2:12 and comments); and *put confidence in* translating the verb meaning “rely on, depend on, trust in” (see comments on “trusted” in 13:5).<sup>[8]</sup>
  
3. Man – Compared to the Lord trusting in man is to rely on frailty which could be here today and gone tomorrow.
4. Prince – A prince may have power, but it is not all power. They may be obligated to us, but it can change. We may have a relationship with them, but it would not be based on a covenant like it is with the Lord.
  - a) Israel, on its return from Captivity, had begun by putting a good deal of trust in its human helpers, as Cyrus and the other friendly heathen mentioned in Ezra 1:4–6; 3:7. But this help, after a little time, had failed them (Ezra 4:1–24), and they had found themselves in great difficulties.<sup>[9]</sup>

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- <sup>[1]</sup> Motyer, J. A. (1994). [The Psalms](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 565). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- <sup>[2]</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *Psalms* (Vol. 3, p. 88). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.
- <sup>[3]</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Ps 118:5). Chicago: Moody Press.
- <sup>[4]</sup> Barnes, A. (1870–1872). *Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms* (Vol. 3, p. 169). London: Blackie & Son.
- <sup>[5]</sup> Ross, A. P. (1985). [Psalms](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 878). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.
- <sup>[6]</sup> Barnes, A. (1870–1872). *Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms* (Vol. 3, pp. 169–170). London: Blackie & Son.
- <sup>[7]</sup> Allen, L. C. (2002). *Psalms 101–150 (Revised)* (Vol. 21, p. 166). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.
- <sup>[8]</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Reyburn, W. D. (1991). *A translator's handbook on the book of Psalms* (p. 988). New York: United Bible Societies.
- <sup>[9]</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *Psalms* (Vol. 3, p. 88). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.