

Psalm 118:10-14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-118/psalm-11810-14/>

Three times the psalmist recounts how the nations surrounded him. Three times the psalmist boasts “In the name of the LORD I will cut them off.” He describes how the LORD will extinguish his enemies with fire. The psalmist addresses his enemy who pushed him violently to remind him that he did not fall because the LORD helped him. This section within this Hosanna Psalm ends with the psalmist’s boast of praise that the LORD is his strength and song and has become his salvation.

After making his claim, that *it is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man or princes*, the psalmist continues his poetic narrative/salvation song within Psalm 118.

This psalm is the “Hosanna Hallel.” A Hallel is a psalm of praise. Psalm 118 is called the “Hosanna Hallel” in part because the crowds were apparently singing this psalm and directing it toward Jesus as they shouted “Hosanna” when He triumphantly entered Jerusalem in a prophetic fulfillment of this psalm (Matthew 21:9, Mark 11:7-10, Luke 19:37-38)

The word, Hosanna, has two meanings. The first meaning is a cry or desperate plea for help—“Save me!” The second meaning is a shout of praise or exclamation that “*Salvation* has come!”.

Psalm 118 contains both of Hosanna’s meanings. And the prevailing truth that rings throughout both songs of the Hosanna Hallel is that *The LORD’s* lovingkindness (“hesed”) is everlasting (Psalm 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29).

In this passage, the psalmist returns to the “Hosanna/Save us” theme of personal distress that he described in Psalm 118:5-7 and how *the LORD helped* and delivered him. He does so by describing how *the nations surrounded* him three times (v 10, 11, 12) This is followed with a “Hosanna/We are saved!” boast about how he will be triumphant over them: *In the name of the LORD, I will surely cut them off.* (v 10, 11, 12). The psalmist’s boast is also repeated three times:

All nations surrounded me (v 10a).
 (“Hosanna/Save Me!”)

Nations refers to people of non-Israelite descent—the Gentiles. Interestingly, the Hebrew word that is translated as *nations* (גוֹיִם—H1471—pronounced: “go'-ee”) can also be used to describe a “swarm” of locusts or other insect *like bees*. In verse 12, the psalmist will compare *all nations* to a swarm of *bees*.

The psalmist, again probably King David, recalls a time when *all nations* came together to bring him harm. He says *they surrounded me*. This means that the psalmist was trapped by *all nations*. He could be referring to their military—as in *surrounded* by their armies. Or he could be referring politically—as in colluding against him. He could also be referring to both. There were

many times in David's life where he was *surrounded* by enemy armies or was the main target in the middle of a political plot or trap.

After describing the danger, the psalmist then speaks of his deliverance.

In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off (v 10b).
("Hosanna/I am saved!")

There are three interesting things about what and how the psalmist describes his deliverance:

1. His deliverance comes *in the name of the LORD*. The psalmist does not deliver or save himself—*the LORD* and His *name* delivers and saves him.
2. Despite being *surrounded* and *cut off* by *all nations*, the psalmist boasts that he *will cut off* his enemies. Those who have *surrounded* and have *cut him off*, are themselves surrounded and *will be cut off* by *the name of the LORD*.
3. The psalmist describes how *all nations surrounded me* in the past tense, but remarkably speaks of his salvation and deliverance in the future tense: *in the name of the LORD **I will surely cut them off***. This tense change seems to indicate several things.
 - It could be the psalmist's way of reminding himself that *the LORD* will continue to rescue him from future dangers even as He has rescued him from past dangers, "His lovingkindness ["hesed"—faithful mercy] is everlasting" (Psalm 118:1-4, 29)
 - It could also mean that the psalmist's salvation is not yet complete. He has been saved in a meaningful sense from the immediate danger, but there is a more complete and perfect *salvation* that *will* come to him at some point in the future.
 - It could also mean that even though the psalmist has been saved from being *surrounded* by his enemies, *the LORD's* judgment and vindication against the enemy *nations* has not yet happened. But it *will* take place. *They will be cut off*.
 - The tense change could also allude to the Messiah—"the one who comes in the name of the LORD" (Psalm 118:26). The Messiah will be encircled and *surrounded* by *all nations* but *will surely cut them off in the name of the LORD*.
 - The tense change could also reference a future event, such as *the LORD's* sudden return and judgment (Matthew 25:31-32); or when Satan and the *nations* he deceived will surround the city of Jerusalem before *the LORD* miraculously engulfs them with *fire* from heaven (Revelation 21:7-10).

The psalmist's tense change could include all of the above.

Next, the psalmist repeats each thought, almost verbatim,

*They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off* (v 11).

The word *They* refers to *All nations*. Every other word in verse 11 is the same as verse 10, with the same meaning. A reason for this repetition is probably to emphasize it. Repeating a thought or expression is a way to make it more memorable or to give it extra significance or weight.

The psalmist then repeats these expressions a third time, but with a twist. The twist is inserting two similes, one involving *bees* and the other a *fire of thorns*.

They surrounded me like bees (v 12a).
(Hosanna/Save us!”)

They were extinguished as a fire of thorns;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off (v 12b).
 (“Hosanna/We are saved!”)

Again, the pronoun—*They*—refers to *All nations*.

The first line of this thought extends to become a simile. It extends from *They surrounded me* to *They surrounded me like bees*. The image is one of an angry swarm of *bees* that are hovering over and repeatedly stinging the psalmist. Bee stings hurt. A single sting makes that spot feel a sharp pain that will be sore for a few days. One or two stings are annoying. Numerous stings can be deadly.

When one or two *bees* are chasing someone, there is usually a direction that person can run to get away. But a swarm of *bees* is intense and overwhelming. When *bees* are swarming after a person and have him *surrounded*, there is no direction he can go to evade them. The psalmist says *all nations* were *like* this as *they surrounded* him.

After the short simile about *bees*, the psalmist inserts a second simile,

They were extinguished as a fire of thorns (v 12c).

This second simile is immediately followed by a repetition of the psalmist’s boast in *the LORD*:

In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off (v 12c). This sounds somewhat like David’s boast against Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45-46).

In Hebrew, there are only three words within this new line: *Extinguished—Fire—Thorns*. To extinguish something means to put a sudden stop to something—usually *fire*. In this case what was *extinguished* was the swarming and fiery stings of the *nations* who had *surrounded* the psalmist *like bees*. The image is that at the height of their attack against the psalmist and at the moment they appeared to be the most triumphant was the moment that they were suddenly, surprisingly, and completely *extinguished*. The painful intensity ended very quickly.

The expression *extinguished as a fire of thorns* can be confusing at first glance because typically what is *extinguished* is a *fire*. But in this case the *fire* is not what is being *extinguished*, rather *fire* is the extinguishing agent. It is *the LORD's fire* and judgment that *extinguished* the swarming *bees* who have *surrounded* the psalmist.

Fire in the Bible is often an image of God's judgment or wrath (Genesis 19:24, Isaiah 66:16, Jeremiah 15:14, Ezekiel 28:18, 1 Corinthians 3:14-15, Hebrews 10:27, 12:29).

The term, *fire of thorns*, may be more accurately depicted as "*a fire of a thornbush.*" Thornbushes are not *fire* resistant. Their firm but thin brambles quickly burn and can be used to start a *fire*. Thornbushes also have many *thorns* that prick and sting, not unlike *bees*. When a raging *fire* engulfs a thornbush, it is quickly consumed. It is *extinguished* by *fire*.

Within the second simile:

- *The LORD's* judgment is the *fire*
- *All nations* are the *thorns* (thornbush)

As the *thorns* were quickly consumed by a *fire*, so has *the LORD's* judgment *extinguished all nations* who have come against the psalmist.

Again, the psalmist boasts in a future tense of this seemingly past event: *In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.* His sudden victory at the intense moment of being *surrounded* and swarmed *like bees* will come about because of the unmistakable power of *the LORD*. His triumph will have *the LORD's name* on it.

Psalm 118:10-12 is prophetic of Jesus the Messiah.

All nations, both Israel and the Roman Empire, consisting of many Gentile *nations*, colluded to surround and arrest Jesus the Messiah, in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:47, John 18:3). They will sting His face and back *like bees* as they slapped Him (Matthew 26:67, Mark 15:16-20), plucked His beard (Isaiah 50:6b), and scourged Him with their whip (Isaiah 50:6a, 53:5, Matthew 27:26a).

The reference to *thorns* could be a prophetic allusion to the Roman Empire of *nations*, or a prophetic allusion to the crown of thorns that they mockingly pressed upon Jesus the Messiah's head (Matthew 27:29).

Jesus's enemies surrounded Him *like bees* to mock Him on the cross (Luke 23:35-36). His death was excruciatingly intense. It felt so overwhelming that before He was arrested, He told His disciples, "My soul is grieved, to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38); and when He was crucified, He cried out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1, Matthew 27:46).

Jesus the Messiah's enemies *surrounded* Him in death.

But at that moment, Jesus the Messiah, “the one who comes in the name of the LORD” (Psalm 118:26), *cut them off* when He was raised back to life *in the name of the LORD* (Matthew 28:5-7). His resurrection suddenly and astonishingly *extinguished* His enemies *like a fire of thorns*.

And when He returns, Jesus the Messiah will come in glory and sit upon His glorious throne and *all the nations* will be gathered before Him as He judges them (Matthew 25:31-32). The outcome of this judgment will be that the Messiah’s enemies will be sent into the eternal *fire* (Matthew 25:41). The psalmist’s use of the future tense when he writes, *I will cut them off*, could be a prophetic allusion to the final and fiery judgment described in Matthew 25:31-46.

In the psalmist’s, and in our own lives, our *salvation* from sin and death comes when we call upon *the name of the LORD* (Acts 4:12, Romans 10:13, 1 Corinthians 1:2). Whosoever believes in Jesus as the Son of God and relies upon His *name* and righteousness for their salvation from the penalty of sin will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16, Romans 3,21-24, 4:24b, 5:21, 2 Peter 1:1). The New Testament refers to this salvation from the penalty of sin as “The Gift of Eternal Life.”

However, David was calling on God to save him from evil, which is an analogy to our opportunity as believers to be saved from the power of sin in our daily lives. We gain the free gift of eternal life through belief. But we gain the reward of eternal life when we walk by faith in the resurrection power of Jesus. The way we gain the experience of righteousness is to live by faith in God, that His ways are for our best, instead of living by pride, thinking we know best (Romans 1:16-17).

Therefore, whosoever calls upon the LORD “Hosanna/Save Me!” will be able to praise the LORD by saying “Hosanna/I am saved.” God saves us from the penalty of sin through faith in Jesus (John 3:14-15) and He saves us from the power of sin when we walk in the Spirit (Galatians 6:8).

[To learn more about the Gift of Eternal Life, see the Bible Says article: “What is Eternal Life? How to Gain the Gift of Eternal Life.”](#)

Our victory over our adversary, the Devil, the ruler of the *nations* (Isaiah 14:12, John 14:12, Ephesians 2:2) is accomplished through Jesus the Messiah. Satan’s armies will not stand a chance when Jesus opposes Him.

Interestingly, the book of Revelation prophesies something very similar to Psalm 118:10-12 in regard to Satan. When Satan and his army come and have *surrounded* the camp of the saints and the beloved city (Jerusalem), it is reported that “fire came down from heaven and devoured them” (Revelation 20:9). In other words, much like how the psalmist was *surrounded by all enemy nations* yet they were *extinguished as a fire of thorns*, so will Satan and *all the nations* he deceived be *extinguished by fire* from heaven when he has *the LORD’s people surrounded* (Revelation 20:7-9).

Satan will be instantly *cut off* and forever defeated at the presence of Jesus (John 12:31, Revelation 20:10). The psalmist’s use of the future tense when he writes *I will cut them off* could

be a prophetic allusion to this epic moment of Satan and *all his nations* being *extinguished as a fire of thorns* in Revelation 20:7-9, the final and fiery judgment described in Matthew 25:31-46.

We can overcome Satan and his temptations in this life by submitting to God, choosing to follow His will, relying upon His grace *in the name of the LORD* (James 4:7).

And much like how the psalmist's enemies have him *surrounded* and are trying to extinguish him but are themselves surrounded and extinguished by the LORD; so too did the enemies of Jesus, the Light of men (John 1:4), have Him *surrounded* and are trying to comprehend (i.e. extinguish) Him (John 1:5), but are themselves *surrounded* and *extinguished by the LORD* (Psalm 118:1-12, Revelation 20:9).

We can overcome Satan and his temptations in this life by submitting to God, choosing to follow His will, and relying upon His grace *in the name of the LORD* (James 4:7).

After prophetically noting this danger and triumph, the psalmist continues his poetic narrative of *salvation* by personally addressing his enemy and telling him that he failed,

*You pushed me violently so that I was falling,
But the LORD helped me* (v 13).

The phrase that is translated *you pushed me violently* in Hebrew is דָּחִיתַנִּי דָּחָה. It is a repeat of the same word (H1760) that is pronounced “daw-khaw.” Verse 14 begins: “dawkhaw dawkhaw.” The word means to “topple,” “throw down,” “knock over,” or “cast out.” It is most often used in the Old Testament to describe some sort of political overthrow. The repetition of it here adds force, violence, or a suddenness to the push.

In the life of King David, the likely author of this psalm, the phrase *you pushed me violently so that I was falling* could refer to Absalom's coup d'état that forced his father to flee the city of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 15:14). David was *pushed violently* from the city and had to hide among the hills (2 Samuel 16:13). Absalom's push made it so that David's reign *was* on the verge of *falling*.

In the life of Jesus the Messiah, the phrase—*you pushed me violently so that I was falling*—could refer to the hurried arrest, trial, and execution of Jesus, once Judas alarmed the conspirators on the night of Passover that his Master had identified him as a member of their plot. Jesus was *pushed so violently* by His enemies that He was killed. Jesus the Messiah was *violently pushed so that He was falling*.

But the psalmist's, David's, and the Messiah's fall was not final:

But the LORD helped me (v 13b).

- *The LORD helped* the psalmist so that he did not fall.

- *The LORD helped* King David so that he recovered his kingdom (2 Samuel 19:8-43). David was *pushed violently so that he was falling*, but because *the LORD helped* him, he did not fall.
- *The LORD helped* Jesus the Messiah, when He raised Him from the grave (Luke 24:6, Acts 13:30, Romans 8:11). Jesus was *pushed violently so that He was falling*, but because *the LORD helped* Him, He did not fall.

In our lives we may be *pushed violently* by those who oppose *the LORD so that we are falling* but as we rely upon *the name of the LORD*, He *will help* us and keep us so that we do not fall,

“The LORD is for me; I will not fear;
What can man do to me?”
(Psalm 118:6)

“It is better to take refuge in the LORD
Than to trust in man.”
(Psalm 118:8)

When we trust in God and believe that He will reward us if we are faithful, believers who are following *the LORD* have a similar protection as the psalmist.

Believers encounter dangers and trials (Matthew 10:16-26, John 16:33, James 1:2). But we are “protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). And our spiritual success is assured *in the name of the LORD* (Romans 8:28, 31, 37, 38-39).

We too can enjoy the blessings of *the LORD’s* protection over our spiritual lives if we follow Him by faith. Obviously, those blessings do not always look like comfort in this life. Believers often endure difficulty. In fact, God gives the greatest reward to those who endure the sufferings of Jesus (Romans 8:17b).

The psalmist then puts an exclamation in the middle of his poem when he says:

*The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation* (v 14).

Psalm 118:14 is the epitome of “Hosanna/I am saved” which is the theme of this psalm.

Here near the center of Psalm 118, the psalmist is following his own exhortation from the first verse of the psalm and the final verse of the psalm:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”
(Psalm 118:1, 29)

The expression *The LORD is my strength* means that *the LORD is* the psalmist's power and source of victory. It could also mean that *the LORD is* the psalmist's confidence.

The expression *The LORD is my song* refers to the fact that the LORD's praises are continually on the psalmist's lips and within his heart (Psalm 34:1).

The psalmist boldly confesses how *The LORD has become my salvation*. His confession proclaims that *the LORD is* not just *salvation* for everyone (He is!), but he personally and publicly testifies how *the LORD is his salvation*.

The word translated as "salvation" in this verse is a form of the Hebrew word: יְשׁוּעָה (H3444—pronounced: "yesh-oo'-aw"). It is the Hebrew name for Jesus—"Yeshua" (Matthew 1:21). Therefore, when the psalmist says: "*He has become my salvation,*" he is also saying "*The LORD has become my Jesus.*"

Biblical Text

- ¹⁰ **All nations surrounded me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.**
- ¹¹ **They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.**
- ¹² **They surrounded me like bees;
They were extinguished as a fire of thorns;
In the name of the LORD I will surely cut them off.**
- ¹³ **You pushed me violently so that I was falling,
But the LORD helped me.**
- ¹⁴ **The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.**