

Psalm 118:15-18

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-118/psalm-11815-18/>

The Psalmist continues his poetic narrative testifying to the LORD's everlasting kindness by depicting a rejoicing camp following the stunning victory in battle. The tents of the righteous are full of joyful shouting as they praise the right hand of the LORD. The psalmist marvels that he is not dead but still alive. In verse 18, the psalmist reflects upon how the LORD has used these severe circumstances to mature him in His faith.

After describing the miraculous victory of how *the LORD* became the psalmist's salvation when his enemies had him surrounded in battle (Psalm 118:10-14), the psalmist describes the *joyful* celebration of *the LORD's* deliverance back at camp,

The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous (v 15a)
("Hosanna/I am saved!")

This line describes a scene following a military victory in the ancient world. *The sound of joyful shouting and salvation* can be heard *in the tents of the righteous* who are the winning side. Previously, the psalmist and *the righteous* had been surrounded by armies from all nations (Psalm 118:10a, 11a), but *the LORD* extinguished them as fire devours a thorn bush (Psalm 118:12). Now *the righteous* are celebrating their deliverance and triumph in the name of the LORD (Psalm 118:10bb, 11b, 12b).

As mentioned in the introductory commentary of Psalm 118, this psalm was used in the celebration of the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. This feast is described in Leviticus 23:33-43. During this feast, all native Israelites were commanded to dwell in *tents* for seven days (Leviticus 23:42). The line in verse 15 which says *the sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous* stands out as being particularly poignant for Israel in their celebration of the Feast of Booths.

The psalmist sings how the victory belongs to *the LORD* when he says: *The right hand of the LORD does valiantly* (v 15b).

In the immediate context of the psalm, the expression—*right hand of the LORD*—refers to *the LORD's* power and ability to dominate His enemies and deliver *the righteous*. The fact that this remark is stated in the present tense implies that the victory and the awe in which those who were saved by *the right hand of the LORD* are still fresh in the psalmist's mind.

King David, the likely psalmist, had many *joyful* celebrations in his *tents* following a victory in battle because of *the LORD's* help and *salvation*.

The expression—*right hand of the LORD*—is also a reference to the Messiah. The Messiah will *valiantly* triumph over all of Israel's enemies.

This line is prophetic of Jesus the Messiah, who defeated not only sin through His obedience to the *LORD* (Luke 22:42, Philippians 2:5-8, Hebrews 12:17-18, 12:1-2, 1 Peter 3:18) and death through His resurrection (Isaiah 25:8, John 11:25, 1 Timothy 1:10, Revelation 1:18), but will also defeat Satan (Revelation 20:7-10).

Next the psalmist observes:

The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly (v 16).

These observations are within the immediate context of the psalmist's scene, depicting the victory celebration of the *salvation of the righteous in their tents with the sound of joyful shouting*. The expression—*The right hand of the LORD is exalted*—means that the *LORD's* power is demonstrated, and is visible to anyone who will see. It also means everyone who is His is worshipfully giving thanks for His faithfulness, i.e His everlasting “hesed” (translated as “lovingkindness” in Psalm 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29).

In Messianic terms, the expression—*The right hand of the LORD is exalted*—means that the Messiah *is exalted*. Isaiah prophesies how *the LORD* “will allot [the Messiah] a portion with the great...and will divide the booty with the strong” (Isaiah 53:12).

The psalmist's expression—*The right hand of the LORD is exalted*—is prophetic of Jesus the Messiah who was highly exalted by God with a name that is above every other name so that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord” (Philippians 2:9-11). Jesus was exalted and rewarded because of His obedience, even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:8-10). Jesus promises that anyone who overcomes temptation and rejection from the world like He did will be exalted in similar fashion (Revelation 3:21).

The psalmist then repeats his praise: *The right hand of the LORD does valiantly*.

Next, he marvels: *I will not die, but live* (v 17a).
 (“Hosanna/I am saved!”)

Here, the psalmist almost seems astonished that he *will live* because he was close to death when his enemies had him surrounded (Psalm 118:10). His *salvation* and the fact that he *will not die* are nothing short of miraculous. Only *the right hand of the LORD could* have saved him.

Because he *will not die, but live*, he *will tell the works of the LORD* (v 17).

The psalmist will let everyone know that the reason he is not dead but alive is because of *the LORD's salvation*. *The LORD* is his boast and song, and *He has* become his *salvation* (Psalm 118:14).

The first line of verse 17—*I will not die, but live*—is also prophetic of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus died *but* was raised from the dead. His death was short-lived. He did *not* remain dead. He is risen and alive. Jesus the Messiah lives and *will continue to live*.

The psalmist then punctuates his praise with the following observation:

*The LORD has disciplined me severely,
But He has not given me over to death* (v 18).

To be *disciplined* means to be given instruction, often through lived experience. Discipline is something a father gives his children to instruct and teach them to grow and mature,

“My son, do not despise the chastening [discipline] of the LORD,
Nor detest His correction;
For whom the LORD loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son in whom he delights.”
(Proverbs 3:11-12)

“We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.”
(Hebrews 12:9-10)

Discipline is often unpleasant at the time but produces good outcomes to those who learn from it.

“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”
(Hebrews 12:11)

The psalmist says that *the LORD disciplined him severely*. This indicates that the circumstances and/or lesson was a painful one for the psalmist to endure and learn. Being surrounded by enemies who wanted to kill him was unpleasant and severe.

The discipline the psalmist endured may have been because of sin, but not necessarily the direct cause of it. If sin was the cause, it was an opportunity for the psalmist to endure the consequences of his ways and better trust *the LORD* in the future.

But *the LORD's* severe discipline may have resulted from something other than the psalmist's sin. It may have simply resulted from *the LORD's* love for the psalmist.

As this passage is applied to Jesus the Messiah, *the LORD disciplined Him severely* by sending Him to be rejected by His people and to die a painful humiliating death on a cross (Isaiah 53:10, Matthew 26:39, Philippians 2:6-8). Jesus was without sin (1 John 3:5b). Therefore, *the LORD* did not *discipline* Him because of any sin that Jesus committed.

The reason *the LORD severely disciplined* Jesus the Messiah was because He loved Jesus and desired Him to be great, to be exalted above all the earth (Isaiah 42:1, John 3:25, 5:20, 17:24). God also heaped the sin of the world upon Jesus because He loved the world (Isaiah 49:6, John 3:16).

Jesus, God's Son and the Messiah, faithfully endured *the LORD's* severe discipline. As a result of enduring difficulty in order to serve and love others, *He* was given a name above every name (Isaiah 53:12, Philippians 2:9-11) and *He* was granted all authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matthew 28:18).

As a loving father, *the LORD* desires good things for us (Matthew 7:11). The psalmist rightly observed: "He is [absolutely] good" (Psalm 118:1). *The LORD* desires all His children to grow up and acquire good character (Romans 12:2) so we can do the good works which *He* foreordained for us (Ephesians 2:10) and we can experience the unimaginably good things *He* has in store for us (Isaiah 64:4, 65:17, 1 Corinthians 1:9). His discipline (i.e. our circumstances) are the means He uses to grow us for these good things (Romans 5:3-5, Hebrews 12:7-10, James 1:2-4).

God originally created humans to partner with Him in ruling over the good creation *He* made (Genesis 1:26-28, Psalm 8).

Even after we rebelled in our sin, His lovingkindness is everlasting (Psalm 118:1-4, 29) *the LORD* still desires us to:

A.) become His children through faith in His Son Jesus Christ (John 1:12)

and then

B.) acquire His character so we can mature and become partners with Him in managing the new heaven and the new earth (Daniel 12:3, Matthew 19:28-29, 25:14-29, Romans 8:16-18, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Philippians 2:5-12, 2 Timothy 2:11-13, Hebrews 10:35-36, 12:1-2, James 1:2-12, 2 Peter 1:4, Revelation 3:21, 21:7).

And because *the LORD* is our loving Father who desires these good things for us, *He* disciplines all His children so that they may grow into mature sons with His good character (Hebrews 12:7-8).

Peter encourages us to rejoice now in the trials we face,

"Greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials."
(1 Peter 1:6)

And we rejoice in our present trials now because they are an opportunity to mature in our faith, and result in eternal rewards,

"So that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."
(1 Peter 1:7)

If we do this and faithfully endure *the LORD's* discipline (i.e. our present circumstances) however *severely* it may seem to be, then, like the psalmist whose *tents* are full of *the sound of joyful shouting*, we too will rejoice even more at His coming,

“You greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”
(1 Peter 1:8b-9)

If we trust *the LORD*, and choose His perspective for our lives, and follow Him, we can rejoice now in our trials and the severe discipline we encounter—and we will rejoice later when *the right hand of the LORD is exalted*.

These three choices (who we trust, our perspective, our actions) are our choices to make. How we choose will make a big difference in our lives now and an even bigger difference in eternity.

Biblical Text

**¹⁵ The sound of joyful shouting and salvation is in the tents of the righteous;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.**

**¹⁶ The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does valiantly.**

**¹⁷ I will not die, but live,
And tell of the works of the LORD.**

**¹⁸ The LORD has disciplined me severely,
But He has not given me over to death.**