



Community Group Discussion Guide

June 16, 2024

Psalm 68 | Mighty to Save

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

⇒ *When you think back over your history with God, what is a common theme?*

DISCUSS

Found in Book 2 of Psalms, Psalm 68 is considered to be a Thanksgiving Psalm. These types of psalms express deep gratitude for God's blessings. This is a victory song celebrating God's power to save. It expresses the triumphant march of God throughout the history of Israel.

Psalm 68 was written by David to the choirmaster (see [Psalm Overview](#) for additional information). David may have written this psalm when he conquered Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 5 or when he moved the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6. This psalm would have been used at subsequent triumphs of Israel, leading the people to rejoice in God for the victory He provided.

Psalms 68:1-3 *God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him! 2 As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! 3 But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!*

Rejoicing in God's provision, David asked God to rise up in power and to scatter His enemies in devastating defeat. David described the dissipation of smoke before a wind and the melting away of wax before a fire to picture the utter conquest of God's enemies, who scatter and flee in total disarray before Him. In contrast, the righteous rejoice in God.

- ⇒ *What comfort is there in knowing that God continues to exert His authority over the world?*
- ⇒ *Why is it important to see the contrast between the wicked and the righteous before God?*

Psalms 68:4-6 *Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the Lord; exult before him! 5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. 6 God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*

The coming of God is an occasion for great joy, and the gathered worshipers are called to join in singing His praise. The God who comes is not just a powerful judge deciding between the righteous and the wicked. The God whose strength is unmistakably displayed is also the compassionate heavenly Father concerned with the welfare of those who have little status or power.

Picturing God coming to the aid of His people, David invited the people to worship God for His tender care. God is a father to the fatherless, caring for orphans, a defender of widows, protecting the defenseless. He leads out the prisoners with singing while the rebellious live without God's loving care.

- ⇒ ***What do David's words reveal about God?***
- ⇒ ***How has God demonstrated His tender care to you?***
- ⇒ ***What should God's compassion develop in you?***

Psalms 68:7-10 *O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah **8** the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. **9** Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished; **10** your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.*

To bolster his heart in the present, David looked to the past, remembering the faithfulness of God. David reflected on Israel's march from Mount Sinai through the wilderness. There the earth shook, a manifestation of God's majesty (Exodus 19:18), and the clouds poured down rain to refresh His people. Forty years later the Israelites settled in the Promised Land, where the Lord promised to provide, in particular, for the poor and defenseless.

- ⇒ ***What are some other ways God showed His faithfulness to the Israelites?***
- ⇒ ***What past event in your life reflects the faithfulness of God and how does this affect your faith today?***

Psalms 68:11-14 *The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host: **12** "The kings of the armies—they flee, they flee!" The women at home divide the spoil—**13** though you men lie among the sheepfolds—the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions with shimmering gold. **14** When the Almighty scatters kings there, let snow fall on Zalmon.*

Not only does God provide for His people, but He also removes the enemies that threaten them. Before these battles were even fought, God announced He would be victorious over kings and armies—and this all came to pass. In their most vulnerable and defenseless moment, Israel's enemies were scattered like fresh snow.

Zalmon appears to be a mountain in Bashan, the northernmost region of Palestine, east of the Jordan River. In the time of Moses, it was ruled by a Canaanite king named Og whom the Israelite army defeated (Numbers 21:33-35). (Source: Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, pages 178, 1688)

- ⇒ ***What victories in your life has God already announced?***
- ⇒ ***Why is it vital to our faith that we remember we serve a victorious God?***

Psalms 68:15-18 *O mountain of God, mountain of Bashan; O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan! 16 Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his abode, yes, where the Lord will dwell forever? 17 The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them; Sinai is now in the sanctuary. 18 You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell there.*

As Israel occupied the Promised Land, God chose Mount Zion to be the place of His earthly abode. David pictured this as filling the other mountains with envy because God chose to reign in Jerusalem forever. God's entrance to Zion when David moved the ark back to Jerusalem is described as being attended by the chariots of God with thousands of thousands of the angelic host.

God was victorious over His enemies, taking as captives those who were once rebellious toward His rule. They were subdued to the point that they gave gifts to God to prove their loyalty to Him. God's claim of authority is no empty posturing but is backed up with the power to bring down the armies of the kings of the earth.

An interesting feature of this psalm is that Paul applied verse 18, which referred to the arrival of the ark of the covenant at Mount Zion, to the triumphant ascension of Jesus following His Resurrection. Ultimately, this psalm points prophetically to Jesus' enthronement at the right hand of God (Ephesians 4:8–10).

- ⇒ ***Why is it important to see the correlation between the Old and New Testaments?***
- ⇒ ***How can we become more adept at making these connections?***

Psalms 68:19-23 *Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. Selah 20 Our God is a God of salvation, and to God, the Lord, belong deliverances from death. 21 But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways. 22 The Lord said, "I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, 23 that you may strike your feet in their blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from the foe."*

God is not an aloof king, unconcerned about those over whom He reigns. No, He daily bears burdens of His people and provides deliverance. He is a God who saves and He is worthy of praise. His salvation can be seen in the defeat of His enemies—those throughout the world who continually walk in the way of sin and rebellion (pictured as those with a "hairy crown" or a warrior's, barbaric head of hair left uncut until he defeated his enemy in battle).

The victory procession of a returning king was common in biblical times. Captives were paraded as a visible representation of the king's conquests. God intended to bring His conquered enemies to Jerusalem so His people could share in the defeat of their opponents. The conquered came from Bashan, one of the chief cities of King Og defeated by the Israelites during their approach to the Promised Land (Numbers 21:33–35). Bashan and its majestic mountains lie to the northeast of Jerusalem and across the Jordan River. The sea mentioned as the source of additional defeated enemies is the Mediterranean, which borders Israel on the west. The effect of using these two geographical locations is one that describes the extremes and all that lies between. God will bring all of His enemies to ruin.

Some ancient peoples made public spectacles of their defeated enemies. The harsh description reaches its climax in a bloody, graphic way. The scene depicts the execution of captives from the defeated nations in the streets of Jerusalem. The general populace participated in the humiliation of their enemies and knew personally the great victory God accomplished for them.

- ⇒ ***How do we reconcile violent passages of Scripture with our faith journey today? Do we have anything comparable in our spiritual lives?***
- ⇒ ***What do these types of passages reveal about God?***

Psalms 68:24-27 *Your procession is seen, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary—25 the singers in front, the musicians last, between them virgins playing tambourines: 26 "Bless God in the great congregation, the Lord, O you who are of Israel's fountain!" 27 There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of Judah in their throng, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.*

David mixed the image of a victorious king entering his city—defeated enemies following—with the procession of faithful celebrants to the Jerusalem temple. Clearly the victorious king is God and He is surrounded by singers and musicians and is accompanied by representatives of all the tribes, although only four are mentioned: Benjamin and Judah (the two tribal members of the Davidic southern kingdom), and Zebulun and Naphtali (representatives of the northern tribes). These tribes at the geographical edges of the united Davidic kingdom form a "merism," standing for the whole kingdom between these points.¹ (A merism is a rhetorical term for a pair of contrasting words or phrases used to express totality or completeness.)

- ⇒ ***Using verse 26, finish this phrase by giving personal testimony of who God is to you: Bless God in the great congregation, The Lord, O you who . . ."***

Psalms 68:28-31 *Summon your power, O God, the power, O God, by which you have worked for us. 29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bear gifts to you. 30 Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples. Trample underfoot those who lust after tribute; scatter the peoples who delight in war. 31 Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.*

David prayed that God would continue to triumph over His enemies. David made reference to the foreign kings who came to Jerusalem with gifts as a tribute, acknowledging their submission and allegiance to God. David asked God to specifically rebuke and scatter:

- Egypt: Pictured as the beast among the reeds (possibly a crocodile or hippopotamus).
- Bashon: The region was known for its cattle.
- Cush (Ethiopia): Explicitly mentioned as sending envoys to submit to the authority of God and to make peace with Him.

- ⇒ ***What specific "enemy" are you praying God will defeat in your life?***

¹ Wilson, G. H. (2002). *Psalms* (Vol. 1, pp. 939–941). Zondervan.

Psalms 68:32-35 *O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah* **33** *to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.*
34 *Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and whose power is in the skies.*
35 *Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!*

Having been brought captive to Jerusalem, the nations witnessed the awesome power of God as He entered His sanctuary. David called upon all of these nations to sing praise to the Lord who comes with majestic glory and unrivaled authority. Having seen His glory, these rebellious nations cannot resist praising God, who is King both in the heavens and on the earth. Thus, at the end—overwhelmed with the power and majesty of God—Israelite and non-Israelite alike can only respond, “Blessed be God!”

⇒ ***How do we "ascribe power to God?" What has He done to garner our praise?***

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: David celebrated God as a mighty warrior and victor over His enemies, inviting praise from all people. David ascribed greatness to God and acknowledged His triumphant ascent to Mount Zion to rule over Israel and the earth. This psalm also reviews the history of Israel from their leaving of Mount Sinai, through their wilderness wanderings, to their entrance into and conquest of the Promised Land. David invited the Israelites to join him in praising the God who cared for them as His people.

- ⇒ ***Give testimony to ways God has proven Himself victorious in your life.***
- ⇒ ***Why is it important for us as a Community Group to share such stories with each other?***
- ⇒ ***How can we join together to praise God?***

2. Pray: Use this prayer time to praise God and to ascribe glory and honor to Him. Praise Him that He is a strong and powerful God who saves. Thank Him for being faithful to you in the past and ask Him to give you hope for the future.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, Psalms 1-75 pages 338-342.*
- *The NIV Application Commentary, pages 932-946.*
- *Shepherd's Notes, Psalm 51-100, pages 32-33.*