

Psalm 98 : God Remembers His Promise

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if I could, this evening with the Lord's help, if I turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Psalms in Psalm 98.

Psalm 98, we're going to look at the whole Psalm, but if we just read again from the beginning. O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his stentfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God and so on.

Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King. Let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing. As you know and as you have before you this evening, they're the opening words from the popular Christmas carol, Joy to the World. And they were first written in 1719 by the well-known preacher and hymn writer Isaac Watts. And lots of people they sing these words at this time of year at carol services up and down the country. But the question is, why do we sing Christmas carols? Why do we sing these songs of joy and celebration? And what is it about this time of year that makes people maybe that little bit happier? And I guess well there are probably a number of reasons for a start. A few of you I'm sure this evening you're on holiday and you've got two weeks off or maybe more and you come together as friends and family at this time of year and we exchange gifts and we spend time with one another and we enjoy ourselves. But of course that's not what Christmas is all about because as Isaac Watts reminds us in his Christmas carol, Joy to the World, the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King, let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing. Isaac Watts' Christmas carol seeks to remind us that we will only know through lasting joy by looking to Jesus Christ because he's the real reason to rejoice and celebrate at this time of year. The birth of the Saviour to the world to deliver us from our sin and from the power of death and even the punishment of hell. That's a reason to rejoice and celebrate. But you know what's interesting is that Isaac

Watts' Christmas carol, Joy to the World, it was actually based upon Sam 98 because Sam 98 is a Sam that calls us to rejoice and celebrate in the promise of a coming Saviour.

In fact, Sam 98, it was written during one of the darkest periods in Israel's history and yet this Sam, as we read it, it's just bursting with praise and it's bursting with praise because of the promised arrival of the Saviour into the world. And I just want us to look at this Sam this evening and I want us to look at it under three headings, three simple headings. Rejoicing with praise, revealing in passion and remembering the promise. Rejoicing with praise, revealing in passion and remembering the promise. So look first of all at rejoicing in praise or rejoicing with praise. We're reading in verse one where the Sam is saying, Oh, saying to the Lord a new song for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

[4 : 0 1] Now, as we said, Sam 98 was written during one of the darkest periods in Israel's history because it was written after the ex Israelites had returned to Jerusalem after being 70 years in exile in Babylon and they were in Babylon due to the idolatry and their disobedience.

The Lord had allowed this Babylonian army to invade the city of Jerusalem and destroy the city along with the temple and the Israelites, they were taken into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. But when the Israelites returned, they had to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

They had to rebuild the walls. That was under the guidance of Nehemiah and they had to rebuild the temple. But you know, when the Israelites rebuilt the temple, they expected the glory cloud of the Lord, which symbolized the Lord's presence and it had been with them way back in the since the Exodus. The Israelites expected the glory cloud of the Lord to reappear in the temple, but it didn't. When they rebuilt the temple, there was no sign of the glory cloud.

There was no glory cloud and the Lord remained silent and the silence of the Lord had made the people of Israel think that the Lord had just forgotten about them, that the Lord had forgotten them completely. And as a result of the Lord's silence, the people were silent because they couldn't worship the Lord. They couldn't rejoice in the Lord. They took their eyes off the Lord completely and they didn't even sing to the Lord. They were silent.

And you know, we can often think like that as well when we're faced with dark and difficult providences in our lives. We can think that if the Lord isn't speaking to us with appropriate Bible verses and Bible passages that we can think that, well, the Lord has forgotten me.

[5 : 52] He's abandoned me. But that's not the case at all, my friend. Because you know, it's in those times of silence that the Lord is urging us to cling to the promises of His word.

It's in those times of silence that the Lord is urging us to seek Him more earnestly. And you know, that's what the Samus does. The Samus in the Lord's silence, he is clinging to the promise of a savior. He's clinging to the promise that was given way back in the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter three, that the seed of the serpent will come and crush the head. The seed of the woman will come and crush the head of the serpent. The Samus, he's clinging even to the promise that was given in Isaiah, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call his name Emmanuel. The Samus, he's clinging to the promise unto us a child is born unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

His name will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of peace. You know, my friend, in the Lord's silence, the Samus was clinging to the promise of a savior and he was rejoicing in the fact that the Lord would be faithful to his promises.

And because the Samus was rejoicing with praise, he calls everyone everywhere to rejoice with praise. He calls everyone to rejoice with him. That's why he opened Psalm 98 with the words, Oh, sing to the Lord a new song for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Samus calls everyone everywhere to sing this new song to the Lord in anticipation for the arrival of the king. And it was a new song because it pointed forward to a new day. The Samus was saying that a new day was going to dawn in the history of this world. It's a new song because there's going to be a new beginning.

There's going to be the promise of new life and new hope for the savior of the world is going to make all things new. You know, the Lord may have been silent, but he hadn't forgotten his promise of salvation. And with that, the Samus was rejoicing with praise and he was inviting everyone everywhere to come and sing this new song to the Lord. The Samus was rejoicing with praise because of the promise of a new day. He was rejoicing with praise because the Lord had done marvelous things. That's what he says in verse one. He was rejoicing with praise and inviting everyone to come and sing that new song to the Lord because the king is coming. The king is coming. And that's what Isaac what says, joy to the world. The Lord is coming. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing.

[9 : 02] And you know, it's as if the Samus here, he's inviting everyone to come and sing to the Lord. He's inviting this almost you could imagine a world orchestra. He's inviting everyone to be rejoicing with praise at the promised arrival. King Jesus. And I say that because when you read verse four, he says, make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth break forth into joyous song and sing praises, sing praises to the Lord with the lion with the lion and the sound of melody with trumpets and the sound of the horn. Make a joyful noise before the king, the Lord.

It's this he's calling this world orchestra to sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. And you know, we're included in this invitation to be rejoicing with praise because we have good reason to rejoice. We have good reason to rejoice tonight because the king has come. You know, that's why we should make every effort to sing in church. We shouldn't stand silently in church. We should stand singing, singing praise to the Lord because of his promise of salvation. We should make every effort to be rejoicing with praise when we're in the Lord's house. But you know, what's more is that the Samist extends this invitation to sing to the Lord and use song. He extends it to the whole of creation, not just humanity, but the whole of creation. He says in verse seven, let the sea roar and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell in it, that the rivers clap their hands, let the hills sing for joy together. You know, the Samist is calling the whole of creation to sing to the Lord. And in this Christmas Carol, Isaac

Watt, he expressed these sentiments in the second stanza. He says, joy to the world, the Savior reigns, let men their songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy. He's calling the whole of creation to praise the Lord. But you know, why does the Samist do that? Why does the Samist call the whole of creation to rejoice with praise at the arrival of King Jesus? Well, is it not because the whole of creation is under the same curse of sin? The whole of creation is under the curse of Adam's sin. When Adam sinned and fell from that perfect estate wherein he was created, all mankind sinned in him, and the whole of creation fell with him in his first transgression. And today the whole of creation is under this curse of sin and death. And you know, my friend, we don't have to look far to be reminded of that fact. Because you know, there's not one of us here who's unaware that the world we live in is full of brokenness. And that we're broken people living broken lives in a broken world. There's not one of us here who hasn't seen the effects of sickness. There's not one of us here who's immune from suffering. There's not one of us here who doesn't know what it is to be confronted with the sorrow and separation that death brings into our homes and into our families. And you know, it's always at this time of year that we're made more aware of the devastation and the destruction that sin has brought upon us. My friend, we don't have to look far to be reminded of the curse that this creation is under. In fact, the Bible reminds us that the whole of creation, the whole of creation is groaning. And the whole of creation is longing to be set free from the curse of sin and death. And that's what the psalmist is rejoicing, why the psalmist was rejoicing with praise. Because it was said about this promised king.

He says that his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation. The psalmist was rejoicing with praise. And he invites all of us to rejoice with praise because of the Lord's promise.

The Lord's promise was that King Jesus will win the victory over sin and death. The promise was that King Jesus will crush the head of the serpent. The promise was that King Jesus will be that wonderful counselor, everlasting father, prince of peace. And that's what happened.

[13 : 58] Because Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 15 that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sin and death, the curse that we're under, it has been swallowed up in victory.

And now King Jesus says Paul, he stands over death and he stands over the grave and he says, oh death, where is your sting? And oh grave, where is your victory? And you know, that's what Isaac wants to do attention to in the third stanza of his Christmas carol.

He says no more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found. The psalmist emphasises the same point, that this king, he's come and his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. And for that reason, the psalmist says we're to be rejoicing with praise because the Lord has promised and procured victory through the death and resurrection of King Jesus. We're to be rejoicing with praise. But you know, the psalmist, he not only calls us to be rejoicing with praise, he also affirms that the Lord will be revealing in passion the promised King. That's what I want us to see secondly, revealing in passion, rejoicing with praise and revealing in passion. He says in March 2, the Lord has made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.

So with the psalmist bursting with praise because of the promised arrival of the Saviour into the world, he affirms in March 2 that we're to be rejoicing with praise because the Lord promised to reveal this Saviour in passion. He says the Lord has made known his salvation. The Lord has declared his salvation. He has held it, his salvation. He has promised the arrival of salvation and he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. That's what he says. And you know, this is what we need to remember, that the Lord made known his salvation and he revealed his righteousness for the sake of the world, for the sake of all nations. And this was important because for generations the Jews had confined the message of the Lord's salvation and righteousness. They had confined it to themselves. In fact, that's why they were in the mess they were in. Because as a nation, Israel had been called to be a light in the midst of a dark world. They were meant to be a herald and a witness of the Lord's light of salvation and they were to be a light to all the nations. But instead of making the Lord's light and salvation and righteousness known, they hid it. They hid the light. They veiled the light. They kept the light to themselves and as a nation they became a proud people. And they started thinking that nobody else deserves this salvation. Nobody else deserves the Lord's righteousness and salvation except them. And you know, that's why when you go to the New Testament and you have Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, when King Jesus appears seeking to establish his kingdom of heaven, the first thing he says in the Sermon on the Mount is that the Christian and the

Christian church must not be like the nation of Israel. No, Jesus says that the Christian church must remember that they are the light of the world. And there to let the light of the Lord's salvation and righteousness so shine that it will glorify their Father in heaven. You know, my Christian friend, we're not to keep the light of the Lord's salvation and righteousness to ourselves. We're not to hide the Lord's light in a cupboard and we're not to veil it from our friends or our family or the fellows in our community.

[18:24] No, we're to make the light of the Lord's salvation and righteousness known. We're to do as the Bible says, proclaim it on the rooftops. We're to share it wherever we go. We're always to be ready and willing to give an answer for the light and the hope that is within us. Because as Paul warns us, if our gospel is hid, it's hidden to those who are lost.

If we are veiling the gospel, we are veiling it to those who are lost. And you know, that was always the great missionary vision. The missionary vision was that one day all the nations of the earth would be rejoicing with praise because of the revealing impassion of the light of the Lord's salvation and righteousness. That's what we're singing earlier on in Psalm 100. That all people that on earth do dwell would sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. The great missionary vision for the revelation of the Lord's salvation and righteousness was that all people everywhere would sing to the Lord. And that's what happened when King Jesus was revealed in person. Do you remember how Jesus, as he called his disciples, and he prepared them to go and turn the world upside down with the light of the Lord's salvation and righteousness? And King Jesus, he sent out his disciples with the commission.

Go and make more disciples. But not just disciples in the nation of Israel. No, no, no. Go and make disciples of all nations. And notice the great commission wasn't to go and make converts. The great commission was to go and make disciples. And it begs the question, doesn't it? Are you a disciple of Jesus? Are you a follower of Jesus? Are you a learner of Jesus? That's what the word disciple means. It means learner. Are you a disciple of Jesus?

And if you are a disciple of Jesus, are you being disciplined? Are you following Jesus closely? Are you learning more about Jesus? Are you walking with Jesus? Are you growing in your faith in Jesus Christ? Because the great commission is to make disciples, not converts.

Converts are important, of course, but the commission was make disciples. But you know, what I don't understand about disciples of Jesus is why they don't take advantage of the ordinary means of grace. I don't understand why some disciples of Jesus don't see the priority of coming to church, both ends on the Lord's day. I don't understand why some disciples of Jesus don't see the value of going to the prayer meeting during the week.

[21 : 30] I don't understand why some disciples of Jesus don't make more of more use of Bible studies and fellowships. Because if we neglect these things, the reality is we're missing out. We're starting our growth. We're withholding the blessing from ourselves. We're losing out. And you know, it was once famously said, you've only one life. Soon it will be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. And that's true when it comes to your growth as a disciple. We should make discipleship our priority if we are a disciple of Jesus.

We should make it a priority about everything else to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You know, my friend, the Lord has made known his salvation and righteousness in order that there will be disciples in all nations. That's his vision. That was the Lord's vision. That was the Samist's vision. That should be our vision. But you know, there's something else here. This is what I love that whether the Samist knew it or not, he was saying something so beautiful because the word salvation can be translated as Jesus. The Samist was rejoicing with praise. He's saying, why did the beginning of verse two, the Lord has made known his salvation, the Lord has made known his Jesus. And was that what the angel said to Joseph, Mary shall give birth to a son, you shall call his name Jesus, call him savior, call him salvation, for he shall save his people from their sins.

The Lord has made known his salvation. The Lord has made known his Jesus. The Lord was revealing in person Jesus, our righteousness. You know, my friend, the glory of the gospel is that the Lord made known to us his salvation and revealed in person Jesus, our righteousness.

He is our Jehovah said, Kenu, the Lord, our righteousness. And what the Samist is reminding us is that as Jehovah said, Kenu, the Lord, our righteousness, King Jesus will right all wrongs. He will vindicate the oppressed, and he will bring justice and judgment in the earth. That's what the Samist affirmed in the last verse of the Psalm. He says before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth, he will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. Now, what we read there is that the Lord not only promised that he will make known to the world his salvation and righteousness in the person of King Jesus.

But what we also what we see in verse nine is that the Lord promises that he will judge the world according to his salvation and righteousness in the person of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 38] And you know, many people, they have a negative view of the day of judgment. But they only have a negative view of the day of judgment because they know that without Jesus Christ as their savior and their righteousness, they're guilty before a holy God. And they basically have no leg to stand on. And you know, my unconverted friends sitting here this evening, where you have to be called to the bar of God's judgment today. You know that you would stand guilty and condemned before King Jesus, this King of righteousness. But you know, the truth is the day of judgment will be a great day for the Christian. It'll be an awful day for the unconverted. But it'll be a great day for the Christian because it's the day of indication.

It's a day of freedom. It'll be on that day that this creation that has been groaning since the fall and groaning with the curse of sin and death. It'll be on that day that it's finally freed when the Lord makes all things new. It will be on that day says the Bible that the former things of this world that are so awful will finally pass away.

And the Lord will bring home his people and wipe away every tear from their eyes. And as Revelation reminds us death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, not crying, not pain anymore. You know, it'll be a great day for the one who's trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation and righteousness. But will that be you, my friend? Will that be you on that day? Will you be rejoicing with praise on that day that the Lord has come? Will you be rejoicing with praise? And so in Sam 98, the psalmist, he not only calls us to be rejoicing with praise at the Lord's salvation, he also affirms that the Lord will be revealing in person King Jesus and the Lord will do it. He'll do it all by remembering the promise.

And that's what we see lastly and briefly remembering the promise, rejoicing with praise revealing in person and remembering the promise, remembering the promise. We'll just read again from the beginning. Oh, saying to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things.

His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The Lord has made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. When Isaac Watts wrote his Christmas Carol, he concluded with the words, he rules the world in truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love. And with those words, Isaac Watts, he picks up the emphasis of verse three and Sam 98 that the new day dawned and King Jesus arrived all because the Lord was remembering the promise, the promise that he had given to his people. The new day dawned and King Jesus arrived because the Lord was remembering his promise, because the promise as we read in verse three was a promise of steadfast love and faithfulness. Whereas the New Testament would translate it, a promise of grace and truth. A promise of grace and truth. And this is interesting because as we said earlier,

[28 : 35] Sam 98 was written during one of the darkest periods in Israel's history. It was written, as we said, just after the Israelites had returned to rebuild the temple and to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, they had been in exile in Babylon for 70 years. And yet when they returned and rebuilt the city and rebuilt the temple, the glory of the Lord never returned.

There was silence from the Lord. And the silence of the Lord made the people think that the Lord had forgotten all about them and abandoned them. And they couldn't worship the Lord. They couldn't rejoice in the Lord. They couldn't sing to the Lord. And yet the psalmist in Sam 98, he's urging the Israelites, the Lord's people, he's urging them to be rejoicing with praise because of the Lord's promised salvation. The psalmist affirmed that the Lord will be also revealing in person the promised King and the Lord will do it all by remembering the promise, remembering his steadfast love and faithfulness, by remembering his grace and truth. The Lord promised, there's an amazing thing about the Bible how it all holds together.

The Lord promised that the latter temple would be greater than the glory of the former temple. He said the glory of the latter temple would be greater than the glory of the former temple.

But that promise was fulfilled not by the by God's glory cloud appearing in the form of a pillar, a pillar of cloud. God's glory appeared as John reminded us in the form of a Persian. It wasn't a pillar, a pillar of cloud. It was the Persian of Christ. And that's what John was telling us in the opening words of his gospel, that Jesus Christ is the eternal word. And John is saying to us, this is the marvel of salvation. The word became flesh and dwelt among us. And John says, we have seen his glory, the glorious of the only begotten of the Father. We have seen the glory cloud in the Persian of Jesus Christ and his glory.

His glory says was just like it was promised. It was the glorious of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth, full of stentfast love and faithfulness. His glory was just as the psalmist said. He remembered his stentfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. His glory was revealed in the Persian of Jesus, full of grace and truth.

[31 : 17] And John says to us, because we have seen his glory, we must come and worship him. We must come and bow down before him and worship him. My friend King Jesus came into this world to save sinners because the Lord was remembering the promise of grace and truth. And you know, it's no wonder Isaac Watts concludes his Christmas carol with the words, he rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness and wonder of his love. So Psalm 98, it's a Psalm which calls us to rejoice and celebrate in the promise of the Savior. Therefore, we have a great reason to be rejoicing with praise at this time of year because salvation was promised to sinners by revealing in person the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this Christ would deliver us from sin. He would deliver us from the power of death and he would deliver us even from the punishment of hell by trusting in him by faith and faith alone. And all this has taken place. This wonderful salvation has taken place because the Lord was remembering the promise, the promise that he made that he would show grace and truth to all who would come to him in faith and obedience. Now, you know, that's a reason to rejoice and celebrate. That's a reason to celebrate. But as Isaac Watts says, joy to the world. The Lord is coming. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room.

And there's a question for you. Has your heart prepared room for Jesus? Do you have room for this Jesus in your heart? Have you prepared room for him? Joy to the world. The Lord is coming. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee this evening that we are able to rejoice with praise that the king has come. That he has come in humiliation coming into our world, being born of the Virgin, conceived of the Holy Ghost. And we thank the Lord and we praise thee that he was obedient in his life and even obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And help us then we pray to respond to this king, to prepare him room in our heart, that we might abdicate our own throne and let Jesus sit on the throne of our heart, that we would worship him as king of kings and Lord of lords because he is worthy to be praised. All Lord bless us we pray, that we would bow in submission, that we would live lives that seek to follow after Jesus and be disciples that ever look to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Lord bless us then we pray, remember us we ask and continue with us, for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen. We are going to bring our time to a conclusion by singing the words of Sam 98, Sam 98 and the Scottish Salter were singing from the beginning.

And we are singing down to the varshmakt 4.