

Thought for Today: May 2, 2008

Psalm 117 (NASB)

**Praise the LORD, all nations;
Laud Him, all peoples!
For His lovingkindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD is everlasting.
Praise the LORD!**

This is the shortest psalm and the shortest chapter in the entire Bible. Psalm 118 is the exact middle chapter of the whole Bible, and Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. Now, if that little bit of trivia doesn't change your mourning to laughter and put a smile on your face, take a moment and re-read Psalm 117.

Where the New American Standard Bible translates "Praise the Lord," some translations will say "Hallelujah." Both are correct. "Hallelujah" is simply a transliteration of the Hebrew, while "praise the Lord" is a translation of it. In other words, "hallelujah" means "praise the Lord."

This unknown psalmist gives all people of every nation two reasons to praise the Lord:

- 1) God's lovingkindness is great toward us. The word for "lovingkindness" is a special and important word in the Old Testament. It is a word that has no exact equivalent in English, so we may not appreciate the fullness of what the psalmist is saying. When he speaks of God's "lovingkindness," he's talking about God's love, faithfulness, goodness, kindness, and loyalty. These are all elements of this special term. Other than God's holiness, this may be the most appropriate descriptor we have of God's nature. For human beings, the holiness of God may scare us or highlight the great distance between the Creator and the creature. But God's faithful lovingkindness draws us near to Him, because this character trait assures us that God is not the enemy of those who seek Him. God is the deliverer, the protector, the father, and the redeemer of His people. Praise the Lord!
- 2) The truth of the Lord has no end. Here, we find another pregnant word. The word translated as "truth" means more than simply true as opposed to false. It also carries the meaning of faithful, trustworthy, and reliable. To hear all that the psalmist may have been thinking as he wrote the fourth line of this psalm consider the following expanded paraphrase: The truth, the faithfulness, the reliability, and the trustworthiness of the Lord—all these things exist without end, and they exist for our benefit. Who could want any other kind of God? As the psalmist says, Praise the Lord!

I hope this additional information gives added color to the words on the page. But even without an expansion of the English terms used in this short psalm, it is a psalm of beauty and assurance. There is no god like the Lord, and His faithful love is ours forever! Our most appropriate response is praise.

Hallelujah!
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