

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CXVIII. Rejoicing In God's Deliverance, Psalm 118
C. Recovering From Contemporary Idolatry
(Psalm 118:18-29)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In recent years, many people in our country and world who have relied on the government, society or even free cash handouts as the source of their fulfillment have found these resources to be dreadfully inadequate:

(1) Reliance on the government has often proved to be awfully disappointing: “(a) The FBI spied on Mr. Trump’s 2016 campaign in response to baseless claims in the Steele Dossier, which was funded by the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign and later renounced by its chief source, Igor Danchenko . . . (b) After parents . . . objected to pornography being supplied in school libraries, ‘the FBI opened dozens of investigations into parents who criticized school boards,’ The Washington Free Beacon reported . . . (c) The government launched a pressure campaign that led to the corporate censorship of the Hunter Biden laptop story. (d) President Biden has pushed to undermine the independent authority of the Supreme Court, which has the power to stop the federal government from targeting political enemies.” (“Another enemy targeted,” Republican-American, August 23, 2024, p. 6A)

(2) Reliance on the mainstream “legacy” media has proved to be dreadfully disappointing: “Many observers noted that during the Sept. 10 presidential debate, ABC News moderators David Muir and Linsey Davis fact-checked Donald Trump (five times) but failed to do the same when Vice President Kamala Harris spread misinformation.” (“The fact-checks ABC omitted,” Ibid., September 12, 2024, p. 8A; Gary Marvel political cartoon, 9/24 creators.com, Ibid.) The Republican-American editorial we cited here listed six “false and misleading statements” by the Vice President, adding that “Mr. Muir and Ms. Davis’ silence” of Harris’ misstatements “provided tacit endorsements of Ms. Harris’ false claims – but Americans deserve the truth . . .” (Ibid., “The fact-checks ABC omitted”)

(3) If people look to society for fulfillment, that is also proving to be awfully deficient: “School officials and social workers report that Connecticut is facing an epidemic of mental illness among . . . not just teens . . . but also children in elementary and middle school . . . (T)he cause” cannot be the “recent pandemic and its disruption of school and home life,” for “that is long over. Something else must be wrong. Child neglect was already bad when the virus struck. Because inflation has soared since then, real incomes have fallen. That may have worsened neglect.” (Chris Powell, “What do college students mean by ‘Free Palestine?’”, Ibid., September 4, 2024, p. 9A)

(4) However, (a) even free cash handouts to the needy has miserably failed to help: “(M)uch recent evidence suggests that giving people cash doesn’t actually solve their problems . . . (M)easures of financial health such as credit delinquencies, bankruptcies, foreclosures and credit utilization” have proved to remain “unchanged, and a temporary increase in self-reported financial health” have “eventually evaporated. Nor” have cash “recipients, as was hoped, use the cash cushion to find better jobs, invest in their own ability to earn, or pursue entrepreneurship. What did increase significantly was their consumption, while their work hours decreased,” and “(m)ost of their extra time was spent on leisure . . .” (Megan McArdle, “Cash alone proves inadequate to solve poverty,” Ibid., p. 8A)

(b) In a follow-up piece on this topic (Megan McArdle, “How to lift people out of poverty without just giving them cash,” Ibid., September 11, 2024, p. 8A) Megan McArdle mentioned a study by Harvard University economist Raj Chetty showing that “what we really need are healthier, more economically integrated neighborhoods where kids are connected to opportunity, not by the government, but by the people around them.” However, it takes a sea change in thought and action by the public to produce such neighborhoods, what Megan struggled to tell how to attain! (Ibid.)

Need: *So, we ask, “What is the solution to disillusionment over relying on the government, society and handouts?”*

- I. **First, if one relies on anything for fulfillment instead of God, he commits the sin of idolatry (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 1 John 5:21), so the disillusionment people have experienced over relying on the government, society and handouts for fulfillment is God’s discipline for contemporary idolatry!**
- II. **Coincidentally, the psalmist in Psalm 118:18 confessed that God had severely punished him for idolatry:**
 - A. The infinitive absolute *yassor* used with the regular verb *yissar* in the *intensive* Piel stem *emphasizes* the *action* of “discipline” in the verb, rendering it “disciplined severely” (Psalm 118:18a ESV; Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1079; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 415-416; Allen P. Ross, A Heb. Hndbk., 1975, p. 60)
 - B. Since the psalmist was identifying with his nation that had just returned from the Babylonian Captivity (H. C. Leupold, The Psalms, 1974, p. 814-816), he reported that God’s discipline on Israel had been very severe.

- C. That discipline had occurred primarily for Israel's turning from God to rely on pagan gods, 2 Chron. 36:14-20.
- III. However, God's discipline had not resulted in death for the psalmist and Israel (Psalm 118:18b), so the rest of the Psalm in verses 19-29 focuses on the psalmist's worship of God with God's resulting blessings:**
- A. Since Israel had repented of idolatry, God had forgiven her and brought her from captivity, Jeremiah 29:10-14.
- B. The psalmist thus anticipated entering the temple gates as a righteous person to worship God, Psa. 118:19-20.
- C. In worshipping the Lord, the psalmist thanked Him for answering his prayer to deliver him from Babylonian Captivity, noting that the nation Israel that the Gentiles had rejected had become the cornerstone in the Abrahamic Covenant to the joy of Israel's people, Psalm 118:21-24; **B. K. C., O. T.**, p. 878. [Since Israel's kings often represented the nation, Jesus in Matthew 21:33-44 applied this cornerstone to Himself Who was first rejected by Israel's leaders only to become the Head of her future Messianic Kingdom, Ibid.]
- D. Psalm 118:25-29 is the psalmist's prayer "for his people's salvation and prosperity," what is fulfilled in Christ's future triumph on behalf of His people and the establishment of His Kingdom. (Ibid., p. 879)

Lesson: *When the people of Israel relied on false Gentile gods for fulfillment instead of her true Lord, God sent them into the severe discipline of the Babylonian Captivity. The Hebrew remnant there repented of their idolatry, beseeching the Lord to deliver them from Babylon, and the Lord brought them back into the Promised Land where they could joyfully worship the Lord and hope in the future establishment of God's Messianic Kingdom.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) If we have experienced disillusionment over relying on the government, society or handouts for fulfillment, God is disciplining us for contemporary idolatry, and we need to repent of this sin and rely on Him alone as our Source of fulfillment and blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and/or provide additional guidance . . .)

Scripture relates **how** looking to the **God of Scripture addresses** the issues of concern in our introduction:

(1) On the catastrophic disappointment of relying on the government, (a) in Christ's future Kingdom, people worldwide will flock to Jerusalem to be taught by the Lord, He will settle disputes for many peoples, they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and no one will learn the art of warfare anymore, Isaiah 2:1-4. (b) Meanwhile, Romans 13:1-4 directs that even evil rulers are allowed of God to rise to power, that we must then live peaceably with them, practicing peaceful civil disobedience only if required to do so to obey God over man, Acts 5:29. (c) However, instead of relying on governments for blessing, God calls us to rely on Him, Jeremiah 17:5-8. This passage critiqued Judah's effort to seek Egypt's help against Israel's foe in Babylon, what God predicted would lead to great hardship in contrast to the great blessing of relying on God. (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Jeremiah 17:5-8)

(2) On the dreadfully disappointing mainstream "legacy" media's bias, (a) we should not be shocked at its deceit, for 2 Timothy 3:13 predicted that deception would arise and grow worse in time. (b) Thankfully, we have the truth of Scripture to offset **all** such deceit (2 Timothy 3:14-17) and (c) the indwelling God the Holy Spirit of truth (Acts 5:3-4 with John 15:26) through Whom we can hold to the truth as we rely on Him by faith (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

(3) On the terrible deficiency faced in relying on society for fulfillment only to find mental and emotional problems for teens and children in elementary and middle schools, (a) Ephesians 6:4 NIV directs parents to rear their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. In the spiritual realm, children and teens are like adults, for all levels of maturity need to trust in the Lord for inner fulfillment! (b) Proverbs 20:11 NIV, ESV claims that even a child is known by his acts, whether his conduct is pure and upright, what implies that even small children need to be disciplined in the Lord. The need to learn to look to Him for fulfillment as opposed to seeking blessing in false idols!

(4) On the failure of cash handouts to alleviate poverty, and Ms. McArdle's suggestion of somehow changing the thinking and actions of people in society to produce neighborhoods required to help those in need, (a) Proverbs 10:4 claims that a slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. However, to be diligent, one needs self-control, a product of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23! There is thus a direct relationship between being right with God and one's financial welfare! (b) Proverbs 10:22 claims that God blesses with wealth without adding pain to it, so it is financially to one's benefit to be right with the Lord! (c) However, Jesus said that we will always have the poor with us (Matthew 26:11), so failure to get right with the Lord is at the root of poverty. (d) Thus, every person needs to trust in Christ for salvation and to obey Scripture to address poverty. [The exception to this teaching is poverty caused by religious persecution, what is not the impoverished party's fault! (cf, Revelation 3:9)]

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we rely on NOTHING BUT the LORD ALONE as our Source of fulfillment for blessing.