

# God's Salvation

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Preacher: Rodger Crooks

[ 0 : 00 ] So, Revelation 7, 9 to 17. After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation,! From all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb,! clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing round the throne, and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne, and worshipped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen!" Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know.' And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst no any more. The sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Amen. Now we're going to sing again. We've got this time from Psalm 72, verses 8 to 15.

A psalm that anticipates what we've just been reading about, anticipates how all nations and all peoples will come to worship God one day before His throne." So Psalm 72, verses 8 to 15.

We're going to sing into the tune, Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing.

Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing.

[ 2 : 52 ] Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing.

Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing. Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing. Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing. Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing. Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing. Church Triumph. And so if you're able, please stand to sing. My people stand to sing. Take pity on the weak, and save them from oppressive might.

He'll rescue them from violence, their blood is precious in his sight.

Long may he lift, may she must go, begin to him abundantly.

May people ever pray for him, and bless his name continually.

[ 4 : 47 ] Now, we're going to read in the book of Psalms, Psalm 117, page 511 in the church Bible.

Now, before we turn to God's word, we're going to pray.

Today, we're going to use on Trinity Sunday a Trinitarian prayer for illumination. And those of you who ever heard John Stott live or on tape or any other media will know that this is a prayer that he often prayed before he preached, very Trinitarian in his thinking.

So, let's come and ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Father, may your word be our rule, your spirit, our teacher, and your son's glory, our supreme concern.

Amen. Now, if you lined up all the Psalms, you know, tallest to the left and shortest to the right, Psalm 117 would be right at the very end of the line.

[ 6 : 42 ] You know, if you were picking a football team in the school play yard from the Psalms, he would be the last one picked because he's the smallest. All lovers of trivia will know that not only is Psalm 117 the shortest Psalm, but it's also the shortest chapter in the whole Bible.

In the Hebrew text, it's only 17 words long. But although Psalm 117 might be a wee fella, he's like a, I was going to say a banty rooster or a bantamweight boxer.

He's a pocket rocket. He punches well above his weight. And he does so because Psalm 117 has a great theme.

It's a theme of God's salvation. And we know that that's Psalm 117's theme because it's the one before last of a mini-salter that runs from Psalm 113 to Psalm 118.

These Psalms are known as the Egyptian Hallel. They were sung at the Passover meal. So you also have to imagine as we come to this Psalm, Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples.

[ 8 : 05 ] It's literally hours before his arrest and trial and crucifixion. And Jesus celebrates the Passover with his disciples.

And he will have sung these Psalms. He will have sung Psalm 117. And the Passover is all about God's salvation. How he rescued his people from slavery in Egypt and brought them through the desert into Canaan, the promised land.

So as we unpick Psalm 117, we need to remind ourselves it's all about telling us all about God's salvation.

But before we unpick it, let me read it. I'm not strictly reading from the ESV, but if you've got it in front of you, you'll follow it. It's my own translation.

Psalm 117. Praise the Lord, all nations. Applaud him, all peoples. Because his covenant love towards us is mighty. And the Lord's faithfulness to his truth never fails, enduring forever.

[ 9 : 15 ] Praise the Lord. So as we jump into Psalm 117, the smallest Psalm with his big theme of God's salvation, there's a number of things I want us to note about it.

And here's the first one, that God's salvation is all about worshiping God alone. It's all about worshiping God alone. Praise the Lord. Applaud him is what Psalm 117 instructs us to do.

Now, why do we need to be told that? And the answer is quite simple, because in and of ourselves, we don't worship God.

It doesn't come naturally to us to worship God. In fact, we worship anyone or anything other than God. One of the sub-themes of the Egyptian Hallel Psalms, and in particular, the middle section of Psalm 115, is the exposure and dismantling of idolatry.

It's saying to us that left to our own devices, we worship idols, substitutes, replacements for God. Now, I can't be 100% certain, but I'm pretty sure that most of us don't have a statue stashed away in the garden shed that we nip out to a couple of times a day and bow down in front of it.

[ 10 : 42 ] We don't have that. Our idols are more sophisticated, and therefore, they're much more sinister. Our idols are anyone or anything that takes the place of Jesus in our hearts.

Anyone or anything to whom we look for, to for security and happiness. This could be our possessions, our family, our career, our image, our health, power and control over others, or power and control over our circumstances.

It could be someone else's approval. Someone we would, if only that person said to us, once, well done, it would make our day.

Our idol can even be our church. However, the greatest idol that we have, folks, as you know, is ourselves.

The idol that the vast majority of people today worship is themselves. They believe in themselves, but not in God's Son.

[ 12 : 06 ] They look to themselves, inside themselves, for the resources that they need to live, but not to God's Spirit. They have to be true to themselves, but not to what the Bible says in God's Word about truth and reality.

We turn Psalm 117 on its head. We change its focus, and we say, praise me, applaud me.

The Commonwealth Games are coming to Glasgow soon, and you're bound to hear, we're bound to hear, somewhere, some, at least once, somebody say, if you only believe in yourself, you can do anything you want.

What a load of nonsense. But that's the idol that people worship today. They believe in themselves. But when God saves us, something really radical happens to us inwardly, in our hearts, to our identity, in our inner selves.

[ 13 : 25 ] God transforms us from being people who worship idols, and especially the idol of ourselves, into people who worship Him. Here's how Paul wrote about how God's salvation had inwardly reshaped the Christians who lived in Thessalonica.

It's 1 Thessalonians 1 verse 9. He said about them, they turned from idols to serve, to worship the living and true God. They began to praise the Lord.

They began to applaud Him. I wonder has that radical transformation, Psalm 117 verse 1, is talking about, I wonder has it taken place in your heart I wonder does it continue to take place in your heart?

Have you, or have you allowed someone or something else to take the place of Jesus in your heart? It's so easy to do.

It's so easy to do. And if it has happened, then you need to turn away from that idol. You need to dethrone it before it destroys you and give Jesus His rightful place.

[14:56] Today and every day, you need to pray, Lord, be supreme in my heart. Bid every rival, every idol, every alternative to you give way and depart.

God's salvation involves worshiping God alone, praising and applauding the Lord. And then as we explore this small psalm with the big theme, the second matter we discover is this, that God's salvation is for everywhere and everyone.

For everywhere and everyone. Who is to worship God alone? Who is to praise and applaud the Lord? Well, the psalmist gives us the answer, all nations, all peoples.

Now, the Hebrew words are different and they don't mean the same thing. Nations is an expansive term. It's a geographical term. It refers to every place in every part of the world outside the borders of Israel.

Peoples is a more compact noun. It's a personal term that refers to smaller groupings within nations, right down to even a grouping of one.

[16:15] So Psalm 117 verse 1 could legitimately be translated as praise the Lord everywhere, applaud Him everyone. And here we have Psalm 117 plugging into the, into an uncompromising line of Bible teaching.

that there is only one God. The God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One God and three persons.

There's only one God and that He alone is to be worshipped. Now, one of, people today will find that deeply offensive because one of the foundations upon which our culture rests is the idea that everyone as an individual has the right to choose for themselves.

And one of the things everyone has a right to choose for themselves is their own religion. You know, you'll hear parents come out with this really stupid statement.

You know, I'm not going to force religion down my children's throats when they're small. I'm going to let them grow up and choose for themselves. Well, the very fact that they are saying that means they've already chosen for their children non-religion.

[17:48] But that's the whole idea. We can choose for ourselves our own religion. But Psalm 117 cuts right across that. It challenges that sacred cow of our culture's value system.

So when people slam into Psalm 117's instruction that everywhere and everyone must worship God alone and that no one or no one is, or nowhere is exempt from that, they find it, as one commentator puts it, incendiary, highly controversial, and offensive.

I did come across one writer who rather naughtily suggested that we should sing Psalm 117 at a multi-faith service and see what happens, but I wouldn't advocate that at all.

But it just slams across it. this teaching that there is only one God who is to be worshipped by everyone everywhere, it's just one of a whole raft of issues that are taught in the Bible which our culture hates.

Think of some of them. Jesus' uniqueness as the only way to God. The fact that everyone doesn't go to heaven. the reality of judgment and hell.

[19:15] God is the creator of the universe. That human life begins at conception. That human gender is binary, either male or female.

That marriage is a lifelong heterosexual commitment between a biological man and a biological woman. These are just some of the matters for which our culture hates the gospel.

And it lambasts Christians. It ridicules and reviles us for being relics of the past, of a bygone age, and not on the right side of history.

But folks, we must hold tight to the Bible's teaching, refusing to water it down or to accommodate it to the current cultural norms. And when we're tempted to be embarrassed by the gospel and compromise and perhaps even abandon it and renounce our faith, we need to remember what Jesus said in Mark 8, 38.

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this sinful and adulterous generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with his holy angels.

[ 20 : 31 ] within 24 hours of singing Psalm 117 with his disciples in the upper room, the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus suffered outside Jerusalem city walls at the place of the skull.

Hebrews 13, verse 12. And then he adds, in the light of Jesus' willingness to suffer shame and humiliation to save us.

He says, Hebrews 13, verse 13. Let us then go to him outside the camp bearing the disgrace he bore.

Let's be prepared to do that. There's another matter that this small psalm with the big theme talks about.

It tells us that God's salvation is achieved by Jesus. You would be absolutely right if you think that the Old Testament is distinctly Jewish.

[ 21 : 35 ] However, you would be completely wrong if you think the Old Testament is exclusively Jewish. Some Christians think that God's heart for all nations and all peoples only starts in the New Testament with John 3 and 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son or Matthew 28, 19 go and make disciples of all nations or Acts 1, verse 8 you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Christians who think that need to read the Old Testament a bit more carefully. A thoughtful reading of the Old Testament shows that the heart of God that in the Old Testament we see God's heart reaching out to the remotest parts of the earth.

We see this in the Egyptian Hallel. These six Psalms are distinctly Jewish. They deal with the Exodus that event or more accurately series of events which are foundational to the Jewish religion and nationhood.

However, these six Psalms are not exclusively Jewish and each of them apart from Psalm 116 the nations are mentioned. The Egyptian Hallel is not simply for one people group in one particular geographical location but it is for all nations and all people everywhere and everyone.

And that God's salvation would be for all nations and all peoples everywhere and everyone it takes us back to Genesis 12 and God's promises to Abraham which are the basis for all that God did and is doing and will do in history and one of those promises was the promise of a program to bless the whole earth with his salvation and he would achieve it through one of Abraham's physical descendants.

[ 23 : 38 ] All peoples on earth will be blessed through you. Genesis 12 verse 3 and while the Hebrew word for peoples and earth are not the same as Psalm 117's the ideas are exactly the same everywhere and everyone.

So Psalm 117 verse 1 it echoes with the sound of Genesis 12 verse 3 and as he sang Psalm 117 at the last supper I'm pretty sure that Jesus was very aware that he was the fulfillment of Genesis 12 verse 3 that he was the one through whom God's salvation is outlined in Psalm 117 would be achieved that he was the ultimate descendant of Abraham whose death on the cross would bring blessings of God's salvation to all peoples on earth and causing all nations to praise the Lord and applaud him.

God's salvation is achieved only through Jesus and that is why if you want to experience the blessings of God's salvation you must come to Jesus and that's why if you want to continue to experience the blessings of God's salvation you must keep coming and staying close to Jesus we've only got to verse 1 it's a small psalm but there's verse 2 in it and we're into verse 2 where the psalmist explains why God alone is to be worshipped everywhere and by everyone but the big theme of the small psalm is still the same God's salvation and at the start of verse 2 we encounter the fact that God's salvation is mighty now in most English Bibles the Hebrew adjective that describes God's covenant love is translated with the word great that translation great gives the impression that God's love you know is big and huge and vast you know long and wide and high and deep now that's absolutely true and that is taught in the

Bible that God's love is great it's long and wide and high and deep but it's not what Psalm 117 verse 2 is saying about God's covenant love it's saying something different the Hebrew adjective is only used four times in the Old Testament and each time it means mighty strong powerful it's a military word it's used to describe the overwhelming defeat of an enemy one commentator puts it it is a vigorous formidable word used of the stronger side in a battle and what the Psalm is saying is that God's covenant love is mighty it overcomes all obstacles and opponents that God sweeps aside

and overwhelms in his covenant love anyone or anything that opposes his purposes of salvation and as

Jesus sings it in Psalm 117 he's conscious that he has come as the mighty God of Isaiah 9 verse 6 and the mighty of Isaiah 9 and Psalm 117 are the same family of words he's conscious that within hours on the cross he's going to be engaged in a ferocious battle with God's enemies of sin and death and evil and Satan but he also knows that he will conquer them that his mighty love will overwhelm them will defeat them because God's covenant love is mighty his resurrection would confirm his victory but not only has Jesus covenant love conquered all his enemies for us but folks his covenant love has overwhelmed us is mighty for us it's used this word is used in Psalm 103 where it talks about as high as the heavens are above the air so great is God's covenant love for us think about how we fought tenaciously to hold on to our idols even though we were aware that they were destroying us and dragging us into hell think of all the excuses we made why we shouldn't become a

[ 28 : 59 ] Christian some of us can think of the years we fought against God we knew we should become a Christian but we fought with every breath we had against becoming a Christian but praise Jesus his mighty love overcame us and overwhelmed us and overpowered us and he wiped away all our excuses all the obstacles we raised and by his Holy Spirit he subdued our rebellious hearts and brought us under his life giving rule how mighty was his covenant love towards us and some commentators suggest that the phrase be translated as over us but why do we have to choose between the two why can't we have them both you see

Jesus covenant love covers and protects us as it overcomes us it's over us like a shield like a dome that destroys the drones of Satan's attacks and wipes them out some of us are afraid that even though we trust in Jesus now that in the future something might happen to us or we might do something that will keep us out of heaven we need to listen to Psalm 117 verse 2 his covenant love over us is mighty that Jesus your mighty savior will not let you be lost he just won't let it happen no one can pluck you out of his strong nail pierced hands his covenant love over you is so strong that nothing or no one will stop you reaching heaven so don't be afraid and keep on trusting in this mighty savior and then the second part of verse two we see that God's salvation is trustworthy again a bit of housekeeping with translations the

English translation of the second part of verse two either go for God's faithfulness as in the ESV and NIV or God's truth as in the authorized version now what's the right translation well both are very unlike me to hedge my bets like this you know but both are right literally literally we get our word amen from the word truth or faithfulness and some of us are old enough to remember the old-fashioned Elizabethan English of the authorized version verily verily literally amen amen modern translations have truly truly or I tell you the truth so the second part of verse two is talking about God's truth it's talking about how things really are what is authentic as opposed to fake it's talking about what reality is and yet it's also talking about the Lord's faithfulness what God says is not simply true it's also trustworthy it will always turn out to be reliable and because it never fails enduring forever the Lord's truth is always trustworthy at all times and in every situation in God's word you have everything that you need for life and godliness and this was Jesus only own experience at the last supper as he sings from verse the psalm 117 about the Lord's faithfulness to the truth Jesus does so in faith he's been promised that after he had died for the sins of his people the father by the holy spirit's power would raise him from the dead and bring him back to heaven's throne and he sing psalm 117 verse 2 confident in God's trustworthiness to do what he said he would do and since Jesus experienced the never failing faithfulness of God to his truth as he put his hope in God's trustworthiness to keep his promises promises then so can we as we do the same and then there's one more matter before I conclude and break the radio microphone from verse 2 we notice that God's salvation is successful now some of you are small in stature and you're always lamenting that you can't see very far you know you need to get the step ladder out to see things at the back of the cupboard you're always doing that and we might think that because psalm 117 is short a little fella he's got a very limited range of vision we'd be very wrong if we think that psalm millennia and millennia when he does so all psalm 117 can see is the success of God's plan of salvation the psalmist sees from his time somewhere in the second millennia

BC to our time somewhere in the third millennia AD with its call for all nations and all peoples to praise and applaud the Lord this psalm is giving us the benchmark for judging the success of God's

plan of salvation we're always wondering are things successful psalm 117 gives us the benchmark for judging the success of God's plan of salvation and this is when God's plan of salvation is successful it's when the church God's people is made up not only of Jews a limited group of people from one geographical location and from a single culture but of Gentiles as well a huge mass of people from geographical locations throughout the whole world and from a whole kaleidoscope of cultural backgrounds it's successful when because of what Jesus has achieved through his death and resurrection no matter where they are from no matter who they are no matter their cultural background people are accepted as equals in the church through faith in

[ 36 : 51 ] Jesus now do you want to see tonight a mini representation a sort of snapshot of the success of God's plan of salvation yes you do sorry I thought you'd gone to sleep but well here's what you do have a wee look around you just turn around and have a wee look around you you know we're a real motley lot we're you know we're from different ethnic groups I'm sorry you can't be from Scots Irish from Northern Ireland but that's we'll settle with other ones you know we're from we speak different languages some of us here have different mother tongues yeah

Glaswegian is accepted as a mother tongue yeah we're different we're different ages we're different backgrounds we're different educations we're there but we're all equals in God's church through faith in Jesus we're a snapshot of the success of gospel but let's go right through out through Glasgow it's even more you know and out into the whole Scotland out into the world today all nations all peoples are praising and applauding God the success of God's plan it's working and we're part of it does that not excite you does that not get us off the floor and our worship today and the success of the gospel it anticipates the worship the final and total success of God's plan of salvation because like

Psalms 72 that we sang and many other Psalms Psalm 117 looks even further forward in time than our time it looks past time to a time when time will be no more it looks to a time when we will see the complete and total success of God's plan of salvation when before the throne the church made up of people from every tribe and nation and ethnic community and culture and language group Revelation 7 verse 9 will praise the Lord they will shout hallelujah they will applaud God for his covenant love in sending Jesus to die on the cross that they might be saved and for his faithfulness to the truth in blessing all nations through the salvation of Jesus commentators they they really fall over all over themselves to sing the praises of psalm 117 a short psalm of breathtaking grandeur this is

Spurgeon you would know it from his words this psalm which is very little in its letters is exceedingly large in spirit and someone else this tiny psalm is great in faith and its reach is enormous it is a wonderful psalm so what do we take away from it apart from some of the things we've been thinking of let me suggest three takeaways very quickly number one trust in Jesus because he is the only savior for everyone everywhere and keep on trusting in Jesus every day because his covenant love towards you which is mighty and his faithfulness to his truth which never fails and endures forever tell others about Jesus Paul quotes Psalm 117 in Romans 15 verse 11 to remind us that the way the success of

God's plan of salvation comes about is through the preaching of the gospel throughout the world so tell others about Jesus so that they might come to experience for themselves the blessings of God's salvation and the third takeaway is live for Jesus one of the questions raised by Psalm 117 is this why do we tell people who are not Christians to worship God alone because what he has done for us the people of God you know surely we would be far better if you trust in Jesus this is what God will do for you isn't that what people like today but Paul is saying no he said Psalm 117 says no no live for Jesus tell them what God has done for you and why why do we do that because well we do it because of what Paul talks about in Romans 11 verses 11 to 36 where he talks about living for [ 42 : 49 ] Jesus will provoke in people who aren't Christians a healthy jealousy for the blessings of God's salvation that when people who are not Christians see the blessings of God's salvation in their lives they will want God's salvation for themselves they'll say to themselves I want a bit of that I need to find out more about this Jesus these Christians say has transformed their lives so that they live in this way that's the challenge of Psalm 117 for us to live for Jesus because only if people who are not Christians see clearly in our lives evidence of God's covenant love and faithfulness in our lives will they be attracted to Jesus my son used to be a primary school teacher he taught in P2 and we really didn't think well I didn't think that was his natural habitat as a environment as a teacher because we knew he was really good working with kids sort of about 9, 10, 11 but

P2 that wasn't it but he really loved it and he said I had to get over one thing that when you went to the classroom at the start everybody all you used to get was little little fingers poking you in the leg small people poking you in the leg and said Mr. Crooks Mr. Crooks Psalm 117 is very small and tonight he's poking us in the leg he's got something to say to us he's saying trust in Jesus tell others about Jesus and live for Jesus let's pray for a moment Lord God whose covenant love is mighty and whose faithfulness to your truth never fails grant that through the preaching of the gospel throughout the world and through the witness of our words and lives in our communities you might be worshipped!  
as the only living and true God by everyone everywhere hear us for the sake of Jesus the only savior of sinners amen