

Our Response
June 25, 2017
Allen Power

Psalm 138:1-8

Opening: I was taught to always say “thank you.” It’s so ingrained I don’t really even think about it. On the one hand, that’s polite and good. On the other hand, it’s sort of bad. Question: **Ever say “thank you” and not MEAN it? Ever get a weird gift that caused you to say “thanks” but not really? Examples?**

When it comes to worship, some of us go to the traditional service, some to the contemporary service, but all of us sometimes just go to the “lip service!” We sing or say the words, but it’s become routine, ho hum, just second nature.

Big Idea: God is SO GOOD; whole-hearted thankfulness should be our natural response!

My prayer is that by really “chewing on” Psalm 138, we’ll walk out of here with a renewed conviction when we tell God we’re thankful for Him we’ll really FEEL it!

Psalm 138 (ESV)

Give Thanks to the Lord

138 Of David.

¹ I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;

² I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your
faithfulness,
for you have exalted above all things
your name and your word.

³ On the day I called, you answered me;
my strength of soul you increased.

⁴ All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth,

⁵ and they shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.

⁶ For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly,
but the haughty he knows from afar.

⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve my life;
you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my
enemies,
and your right hand delivers me.

⁸ The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

- Psalm 138 is known as an “individual” psalm of thanksgiving. I think a better word is “personal” psalm of thanksgiving.
- David wrote this as his very own song of praise and thanks to our Lord.
- As I’ve said, words are important in Bible study. I want us to look at each verse and specifically explore certain words so we really get the meaning.
- Verse one: David begins by stating the main point, thanking the Lord with his “whole heart.” **What is meant by the term “heart” in this verse?**
- The “heart” in scripture isn’t just about emotion (though it includes that.)
- This refers to “...*the whole man, with all his attributes, physical, intellectual and psychological, of which the Hebrew thought and spoke, and the heart was conceived of as the governing centre for all of these. It is the heart which makes a man, or a beast, what he is, and governs all his actions (Pr. 4:23). Character, personality, will, mind are modern terms which all reflect something of the meaning of ‘heart’ in its biblical usage.*”¹
- “Innermost parts” is another good term describing our true “heart.”²
- **How would you describe “whole-hearted” thankfulness? What are examples of something you thank God for with your whole heart?**
- Here’s my definition: If I would be devastated over the loss of something, I should be expressing “whole-hearted” thanks that it is in my life!

- My family, my health, my heritage, freedom, provision, my salvation, miraculous answers to desperate prayers, and the list goes on and on.
- When I'm thanking God do I really FEEL it in my "innermost parts?"
- Verse one: David didn't just SAY it, he SUNG it! **Why do you think singing is such an effective form of praising and thanking our Lord?**
- Illustration: "Like a good neighbor, _____!" "Rice-A-Roni, _____!" and "The best part of waking up is _____!"
- "We are farmers... _____" Advertising jingles WORK!³
- Singing songs of praise engrains thankfulness and worship of God into our very minds. We call that making a joyful noise and it's important!
- David said, "...before the gods I sing your praise." There is debate among scholars on the meaning of "the gods." *"This may well refer to the angels, as the Greek Septuagint took it (see 8:5 and note; 29:1). Others suppose these are human rulers (see note on 82:1), while still others think these are false deities."*⁴
- What's not up for debate is David's point: Our God is greater!!!!
- That reminds me of a worship song Chris Tomlin taught us:

Our God is greater, our God is stronger
 God You are higher than any other
 Our God is Healer, awesome in power
 Our God, Our God... ⁵
- Verse two: *"I bow down toward your holy temple."* **What does that convey? In Old Testament times where was God's presence?**
- If we are serious about thanksgiving, we'll do it with reverence.
- Verse two: Look at "steadfast love" and "faithfulness."
- Steadfast love - (*ḥě·śěḏ*): *"Str 2617; **loyal love, unflinching kindness, devotion, i.e., a love or affection that is steadfast based on a prior relationship (Ex 34:6, 7)**"*⁶ **What's your definition of steadfast love?**
- Faithfulness – *"reliability, trustworthiness, i.e., a state or condition of being dependable and loyal to a person or standard"*⁷

Lamentations 3:22 (ESV) The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;

- In an age when it's rare to have anything you can count on 100%, we have access to the steadfast love and faithfulness of our Lord.
- Also in verse two, David said the Lord has exalted His name and His word above all things. God is so great and so majestic; He makes Himself and His word famous. We serve a God Who is too great to ignore!
- Verse three: When God answered David's prayer it increased his "strength of soul." **What do you think that means? Ever had God answer your prayer in such a way that you KNEW it had to be HIM? How did that "grow" you spiritually?**
- Answered prayer remembered, results in a soul strengthened. If you want to grow bolder and deeper in your relationship with God, just spend time recalling when He graciously and supernaturally answered your prayer.
- Verses four and five: We live in a day when God and the things of God are marginalized at best and blasphemed at the worst. One day that will change! David says every leader of every nation will be thanking God.
- Psalm 102:15 (ESV) *"Nations will fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory."*
- Verse six is a powerful promise: Though the Lord is high above us, He is partial to lowly, humble people and He is aloof from the proud and arrogant.
- Remember when Jesus told the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in Luke 18? Jesus ended with these words: *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*⁸
- James 4:6 (ESV) ⁶ *But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* Praise Him!!!
- Verse seven reminds us of last week's lesson in Psalm 23. In the midst of trouble, the Lord preserves our lives. Twice David refers to the "hand" of God. **What does scripture mean when it talks about the hand of God?**

- *“The hand of God is the symbol of his power: its being upon one denotes favour (Ezra 7:6, 28; Isa. 1:25; Luke 1:66, etc.) or punishment (Ex. 9:3; Judg. 2:15; Acts 13:11, etc.). A position at the right hand was regarded as the chief place of honour and power (Ps. 45:9; 110:1; Matt. 26:64).”⁹*
- Knowing that the very hand of God is holding us is something to sing praise about. We are in the palm of His mighty hand!
- Know what else is in the palm of God’s hands? Isaiah 49:16 (ESV) *“Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...”*
- When you’re having a bad day and feeling insignificant, just remember God has YOUR NAME engraved on the palm of His hands.
- Verse eight is a promise worth engraving on the palm of OUR hands!
- Verse eight is one of the best verses to memorize! David begins with a statement to Himself, a statement to God, then a plea.

Psalm 138:8 (NLT) ⁸ The Lord will work out his plans for my life— for your faithful love, O Lord, endures forever. Don’t abandon me, for you made me.

- Do you believe that? Do you believe it in your “innermost parts?” No matter how bad things get, the God of the universe will work out HIS plans for you life! Not our silly plans that make no sense; HIS plans for YOU!
- He will work out His plans in love and faithfulness; He will NEVER abandon us, because He made us. God made YOU and there’s no one else like you. He has created a plan specifically for YOU.
- Now, THAT’s something to be thankful for and humbled by with our WHOLE HEARTS!

So, What’s The Takeaway?

- Our Lesson Writer puts it well: *“Gratitude is what brand-new parents feel when their first baby is born and the doctor says, “Your baby is perfect.” It’s what a cancer patient feels when she hears the surgeon say, “We got it all, and it was benign.” To comprehend giving thanks with my whole heart, it is helpful to consider another way of saying it—“No part of my heart is not grateful.” The writer of Psalm 103 expressed something similar*

when he wrote: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!” (v. 1).”¹⁰

- Here’s the problem with human nature: When things are going well, we tend to be forgetful instead of thankful.
- When you worship, is it the traditional service, the contemporary service, or is it “lip service?”
- Has being a follower of Christ become so routine that we express our thanks to God the same way we’d thank a server for a refill of our water?
- If so, that can change TODAY! We need to claim David’s personal psalm as our own. In a reverent mindset we need to focus on His presence, His power, His steadfast love and faithfulness, and THANK HIM FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS.
- Before we go out into a harsh and angry world, we need to look in the mirror and quote Psalm 138:8: The Lord will work out his plans for my life— He made me; He loves me; and He will never abandon me!
- Now that’s something to SING praise about!
-

¹ Banwell, B. O. (1996). Heart. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 456). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

² Psalm 51:6 (NASB95)

⁶ Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

Proverbs 20:27 (NASB95)

²⁷ The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord,
Searching all the innermost parts of his being.

Proverbs 18:8 (NASB95)

⁸ The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.

³ <http://people.howstuffworks.com/culture-traditions/tv-and-culture/10-catchiest-commercial-jingles5.htm>

⁴ Crossway Bibles. ESV Study Bible (Kindle Locations 76490-76494). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Song Credits: Title: Our God Writer: Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman, Jesse Reeves, Chris Tomlin Artist: Chris Tomlin Album: And If Our God Is For Us CCLI#: 5677416© 2010 Thankyou Music,sixsteps Music,SHOUT! Music Publishing,worshiptogether.com songs,Said and Done Music,Vamos Publishing

⁶ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁷ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Lk 18:14). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁹ Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton's Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

¹⁰ Lifeway. (n.d.). *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*.