

## How Could We Thank You Enough, O Lord? Psalm 138

Today makes me think of one of my favorite movies, “Hoosiers” – a small town high school in Indiana overcomes adversity to win the state championship. I love the when the team walks into that gigantic arena in Indianapolis, and their jaws drop as they look at the massive seating capacity, the freestanding hoop, and massive scoreboard. Coach Norman Dale senses their intimidation, and so he has them measure the distance to the free throw line and the height of the goal. The coach says:

“I believe you’ll find these are the exact same measurements as our gym back in Hickory.”

The team laughs. Tension eases. Time to play ball.

Well, I don’t think your jaws are on the floor at this facility, but it is a step up, isn’t it? But what I want to say is that **the goal is still ten feet tall.** I don’t mean that one!

**I mean figuratively - what we have been doing in the past, is what we will continue doing now.**

**We have a new facility, but the same message and the same mission.**

### Psalm 138/Heart

That message and mission flows out of **hearts in awe of God.**

And this is what I want to talk about today from Psalm 138.

In the following ten weeks or so, we will have a series on “Gospel. Community. Mission.” But today, I want us to **focus on the heart** – what drives our mission.

- Effective and enduring Christian ministry flows out of a **worshiping heart.**
- We live/minister best out of a **healthy soul.**

### Paul Tripp:

I am more and more convinced that what gives a ministry its motivations, perseverance, humility, joy, tenderness, passion, and grace is **the devotional life of the one doing ministry.** When I daily admit how needy I am, daily meditate on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and daily feed on the restorative wisdom of his Word, I am propelled to share with others the grace that I am daily receiving at the hands of my Savior.... It is my worship that enables me to lead others to worship. It is my sense of need that leads me to tenderly pastor those in need of grace. It is my joy in my identity in Christ that leads me to want to help others live in the middle of what it means to be “in Christ.”

Underneath faithful and effective and **enduring ministry** unto Jesus is a **vibrant devotional life.** The Psalms help us cultivate such a life.

This Psalm helps us to express **thanks** to God **more wholeheartedly.**

- We should be **more expressive in our thanks to God than David** is, for we have experienced a greater measure of grace, as people living on this side of the cross.

### So don’t let David out-praise you!

- **David is “all in” – are you?**

### Even in Trouble

“But **you don’t know what I’m going through.**”

- Notice **verse 7** – David is praising God in the midst of **trouble/enemies**.

David sounds a lot like **Paul in Philipians**, doesn’t he?

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

**It’s that kind of heart I want, don’t you?**

Let’s consider the heart of the Psalmist here – as we follow David, a man after God’s own heart – in three sections of the Psalm.

### **#1: A Heart Overflowing with Gratitude to God (138:1-3)**

“Thank you! Everything in me says “Thank you!”” (The Message)

#### **A. WHY?**

David gives us three reasons to give thanks:

#### **1. For Who God Is (1-2a)**

##### **V. 1 – “to **you**, Oh Lord”**

**V. 2:** This Psalm speaks about various attributes of God (eg., truthfulness, glory, grace, sovereignty).

Two of them are highlighted in verse 2: His **steadfast love and faithfulness (2)**

- These are God’s **covenant perfections**.
- “**Chesed**” - faithful love/covenant love/loyal love/loving-kindness.
  - Picked up again in **verse 8**
  - Psalm **136** celebrates this attribute repeatedly
  - Psalm **106-07** open with these words
- “**met**” (faithfulness)
  - See Ex 34:6; Ps 25:10; 57:3; 61:7
  - His faithfulness is seen in the next verse as David speaks about the reliability of His Word/Promise
- These two attributes **tumble throughout the Psalms**.

Contrast this with Islam for a moment.

- In the Quran, each of the 114 chapters (with one exception), begins like this: “In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.”
- While Allah may be called this, the fact is, in Islam, Allah deals with people on the basis of their performance, not according to grace.
- You may call Allah “merciful and compassionate” but **does he actually show mercy and compassion in the Quran itself?**

**The Bible is a book filled with examples of how God has shown such love to sinners.**

He has shown it most magnificently at the cross (Rom 5:8).

Paul puts these attributes together as he thanks God for salvation:

#### **1 Timothy 1:12-15**

<sup>12</sup> I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, <sup>13</sup> though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, <sup>14</sup> and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

- John Bunyan, said Paul could call himself the “chief of sinners” because he had yet to meet John Bunyan! Bunyan said he had the worst heart in all of London.

But we should not only recognize his love and faithfulness in salvation, though, but **in providence.**

- Today is **living demonstration of God’s faithfulness and love toward us**, in enabling us to have this facility.
- And we could line up individually and tell stories of how God has been faithful to us individually as well.

Let’s Be a thankful people! Give thanks to Him for his steadfast love and faithfulness!

## 2. For His Word (2b)

“you have exalted above all things your name and your word” gets translated in different ways, but on the whole I like the ESV here.

This verse serves as an **antidote to pride and self-promotion.**

- It sets our hearts aright – humbled before God, directed by His Word.

God’s name is the revelation of Himself, and His Word is how his nature is revealed.

We love *the Word* of God because it teaches us about ***the God of the Word.***

God reveals Himself in a general way in creation and through conscious, but only in saving way in His Word – as we learn about the Savior.

**We don’t believe in the Jesus of our imagination, but in the Jesus of God’s *written revelation.***

**Who/what is your authority?**

- Tradition?
- Culture?
- Self?

**Genuine Christianity is about coming to know the Christ of the Word, and submitting our lives to Him.**

Let us be thankful that He has revealed the Savior to us in His Word!!!

**Alistair Begg has this verse in marble at Parkside Church.**

- May we too be known for many years of faithful ministry of the Word right here!

## 3. For Answering Prayer (3)

God answers prayer. God had delivered David and so he praises God.

The way God answered the prayer is interesting.

It doesn’t seem that God **changed the circumstance as much as he strengthened David to endure it.**

- NEB: “You answered me and made me bold and valiant.”
- HCSB: “On the day I called, You answered me; You increased strength within me.”
- NASB: “On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul.”
- NET: “When I cried out for help, you answered me. You made me bold and energized me.”

Kidner, “**It is not always the situations which most needs changing; it is, as often as not, the man [or woman] involved in it.**”

Sometimes God doesn't remove the problem, but he gives more grace to endure it.

- He strengthens us, emboldens us, energizes us. (2 Cor 12:8-10) – Walter dissertation

Don't miss the simple fact that **prayer has a transforming effect on our lives!**

- When in trouble, get alone with God.
- Why? **God can restore your vitality/strength and your morale!**

## **B. HOW Should We Give Thanks?**

### 1. **Intentionally** (“I will, v. 1)

- An act of the will.
- “I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing Your praise ...” (HCSB)

### 2. **Wholeheartedly** (“with my whole heart,” (1b)

- **“He's holding nothing back. This praise comes from the bottom of his soul. From the very depths of his being, he is throwing all of himself into this praise.” (Duncan)**
- Now, we express emotion differently. But there must be intensity!
- **Nats Game: People around me (A nerdy passion, a loud passion, an animated passion, etc)**
- **“Surely God is in this place” (1 Cor 14:25)**

### 3. **Boldly** (“before the gods” I will “sing,” v. 1c)

- “Angels?” “Judges?” “Kings?”
- All possible, but like the ESV here, **“gods.”** In the context of David's writing, idols abounded. It was a **polytheistic world.**
- David is saying **I will not be silent though others around me worship false gods.**
- I will worship the living God **publically** (“temple”).
- I will worship the living God **verbally** (“sing”)
- **Spurge: “There is a time to be silent, lets we cast pearls before swine; and there is a time to speak openly, lest we be found guilty of cowardly non-confession.”**

David – like us – lived in a world where false gods were worshiped and this bothered him.

- We live in a world filled with various **ideologies, idols, and demonic powers.**
- But we must say with David, “I will worship the Lord alone!”
- **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, “I'm going to worship the one true God not some image.”**
- **Missionaries: “I'm going to worship the true and living God, not the gods of Hinduism”**
- **Ernie Johnson on national TV, “I know you're not supposed to talk religion, but I follow Jesus Christ...”**
- **Students: Praise Him though your peers do not!**
- **Workplace: Worship him by the way you work, though others may not.**

**Why should we praise him before the gods of our day?**

Because **He is Better! He is true!**

- Can you say, “Lord, you are better than sex”?
- “Lord, you are better than a diploma.”
- “You are better than being known or praised by others.”
- Fill in the blank. He's better than anything.

### 4. **Humbly** (bow down,” v. 2)

**Psalms 95**

<sup>6</sup> Come, let us **worship** and **bow down**;  
let us **kneel** before the LORD our Maker.

<sup>7</sup> For He is our God,  
and we are the people of His pasture,  
the sheep under His care.

Three words that say, “bow down.” **“Bow down, bow down, bow down.”**

- **Is he trying to make a point? Yes! God is so mighty and so gracious to us that we should fall on our face and say “worthy are you oh Lord!”**

**Not to make a spectacle or draw attention to us, but in sincere humility and awe.**

It’s certainly fine to do this in public, as David is talking about the temple here, but there should also be this kind of devotion **privately**.

**“Dr. Tozer’s prayer life was quite remarkable. His regular habit was to sprawl on his study floor, face down, and worship God.... Such prayer and worship marked the foundation of his study and preparation for public ministry.” (James Snyder)**

## **#2: A Heart Longing for the Nations to Praise God (138:4-5)**

David moves from an **individual** expression of thanks to an **international** longing for the nations – including the kings of the nations – to worship God.

It’s translated various ways:

- **HCSB:** All the kings on earth **will** give You thanks, Lord, when they hear what You have promised.”
- **NIV:** **May** all the kings of the earth praise you, Lord, when they hear what you have decreed.
- It’s **a prayer** and really **a promise** waiting to be fulfilled.

At any rate, David is painting on a **broader canvas** now.

God’s glory is **to be acknowledged on earth as it is in heaven.**

David believes that God is worthy of praise among the nations!

## **Psalm 67**

- <sup>1</sup> May God be gracious to us and bless us  
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*
- <sup>2</sup> that your way may be known on earth,  
your saving power among all nations.
- <sup>3</sup> Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!
- <sup>4</sup> Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*
- <sup>5</sup> Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you!
- <sup>6</sup> The earth has yielded its increase;  
God, our God, shall bless us.

7 God shall bless us;  
let all the ends of the earth fear him!

**Many of them are right here among us!**

**If you don't follow Keelan's blog, "The Peoples Next Door," you should.**

- There are people groups everywhere in this nation, including here in Raleigh.

**V. 4b-5: How will they come to praise God?**

When they know of the **words/ways** of the Lord.

The **mighty** are converted the same way the **non-mighty** are converted: through the Word.

In every **network**, live to make him known.

- **Spurge: "David the King cared for king's souls, and it will be wise for each man to look first after those in his own order (ie., vocation)**

By **your words**.

But also by a corresponding **attitude of joy in God**. "They shall sing!"

- "Let the nations **be glad**" (Ps 67) – Let us **model that!**
- **Acts 16** – singing hymns in prison!

**Nathaniel Ward**, one of the first ministers in New England, was one of the older ministers to come to the Colonies. Prior to formal ministry, he had studied law. Over the mantel of his house, the former resident had carved three words that he thought summarized Puritan devotion: **sobriety, justice, and piety**. Ward added one word: **laughter!** Ward said, "I have two comforts to live upon: **The one is, the perfections of Christ; the other is, the imperfections of all Christians.**"

- That's another way to talk about **the gospel**. We are imperfect, but we have a perfect Savior!
- **The gospel is good news – it should make us glad!**

**One of my great joys as a pastor is to watch the people of IDC **dance!** Not because you're great dancers, but because I love to see joy!**

- We're part of a **great marriage!**
- WE have been **united to Christ!**
- The world should see us **radiating a contagious Christian joy.**

**Don't miss the last phrase in **verse 5**: "for great is the glory of the Lord."**

**What will make us testify to his greatness with joy?**

- We must be swept up in the glory of God!

**Don't be swept up in your glory!**

**Tripp: "There is no more dangerous form of drunkenness than to be drunk with your own glory. It has the power to reduce you to shocking self-righteousness and inapproachability."**

**When you are captured by the glory of God, instead of your own glory, **you will speak about him, and you will do so with great joy.** So let's keep our gaze on him!**

**One of my prayers is that this facility would not make us an **inward church.****

- We exist for the good of the world.

**Let's continue testifying to the worth of King Jesus with our words, deeds, and attitudes.**

### #3: A Heart Trusting in the Grace of God (138:6-8)

4 expressions of grace that gave David great assurance:

#### 1. The Lord cares for us (6)

- We should be humbled by God's humility.

**V. 6: What particular way of the Lord does David wish to show to the kings about the glory of God?**

That **he regards the lowly.**

- He stoops to care for the humble!
- Kidner, "God's caring for the humble is "His glory."

### Psalm 8

- <sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
<sup>4</sup> what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

You mean the God who created and sustains the universe cares for you? Yes. Marvel at it.

- He is Father to the Fatherless.
- He is the protector of the refugee.
- That's his nature.

He's our God. **He condescends to us.**

- "And he says to the kings of the nations, **"Match that!"**
- What kind of god are you worshipping?

This theme of God condescending to the lowly is most wonderfully seen at **the incarnation of Jesus.** The Word became flesh and dwelt among us!

**His glory expressed in saving the humble:**

Luke 18:13-14

<sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

**Illustration: Man and a widow, "Tell me about your kids." She fell in love.**

- God's love for his children should melt our souls, and cause us to soar in worship.
- This God of transcendent power loves us. We are His forever.

#### 2. The Lord preserves us (7)

We can rest assured even more than David.

How do we know this?

- God has united you to Jesus Christ by His Spirit

He will preserve His saints.

- 1 Pet 1:6

We have "troubles" and "enemies" but he will preserve us! – PSALM 23

#### 3. The Lord will complete His purposes in us (8a)



- **Students sometime receive an “I” – Incomplete.** God has none! He compels what he starts.
- **Phili 1:6, Eph 2:10**
- **Romans 8:28** of the Psalms
- Also **Psalm 57:2**
- **This confidence is not misplaced – it’s rooted in God’s “steadfast love” for his people!**

#### **4. The Lord will never forsake us (8b)**

David offers this last line as a plea.

- Jesus answered it: “I will be with you always, even to the end of the age...” (Matt 28)

#### **Messianic Promise**

Behind David’s resting in the grace of God is the massive promise of **2 Samuel 7**.

God promised to set one on David’s throne that would reign forever.

- God looked upon David, the lowly, and anointed him.
- God often delivered Him, and He did indeed preserve Him and keep His promise to David.

David’s greatest son, the Messiah, came.

- He came lowly.
- He came and defeated our greatest enemies through his death/resurrection.
- He fulfilled the Father’s purpose.

How do we get a heart of gratitude, a heart for the nations, and a heart resting in grace? Jesus.

- Christ traded places with us.
- He died for sinners.
- He has forgiven us, and given us **a new heart.**
  - Hearts that want to do God’s will.
  - Hearts that want to see the nations worship.
  - Hearts that can trust God with our futures.

We offer our worship to God today not by coming to a temple, but by coming through Jesus Christ, our great Temple.

- It is through Him that our worship is acceptable to God.
- It is through Him that we can bring glory to God.
- It is through Him that we have joy and confidence.
- It is through Him we can say, “Rejoice always, again I say rejoice.”

#### **Conclusion**

What gives a ministry its motivations, perseverance, humility, joy, tenderness, passion, and grace is *the devotional life of the one doing ministry*.

As we seek to have many fruitful years of ministry in this place, let’s look to Jesus to give us the kind of heart we need.