

## With Confident Gratitude

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**Bible Verse:** Psalm 138  
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I invite you to turn to our Psalm for this evening, Psalm 138. Psalm 138. If I'm recalling correctly, Psalm 138 was the very first Psalm that I ever preached from some 25 or more years ago. This is a new message, not the one that I used to preach in times past, but so Psalm 138 has a particular closeness to my heart; we have been walking together, Psalm 138 and I, for quite a long time. And I'd like to read it as we start. The inscription is important for what we have to say this evening. You see that it says that it is "A Psalm of David," and then beginning in our English verse 1 we read,

1 I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You before the gods. 2 I will bow down toward Your holy temple And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word according to all Your name. 3 On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul. 4 All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD, When they have heard the words of Your mouth. 5 And they will sing of the ways of the LORD, For great is the glory of the LORD. 6 For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly, But the haughty He knows from afar. 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me. 8 The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting; Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

As we come toward the end of the psalter, this Psalm 138 is the first in a series of eight that is ascribed to David, and so we see Psalms of David, Psalm 138 through 145, I believe it is, if my math is correct on the spot here. Psalm 138 through Psalm 145, we're seeing the final section of Psalms that are attributed to David and, of course, we saw many Psalms of David early on in our studies of the psalter.

This Psalm here is primarily a Psalm of thanksgiving but you could say it's thanksgiving with an unexpected twist that we'll see at the end, as it concludes with a prayer for help in difficulty. David is writing this and he is under affliction. You see that in verse 7. I think it's important to highlight this at the start because he doesn't dwell on it in the Psalm. He says in verse 7, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me." So David is

writing in the midst of some kind of unspecified affliction, there's some measure of adversity that he is facing as he writes this Psalm, and yet it is eminently a Psalm of confident praise and confident thanksgiving; he's writing this Psalm in a spirit of confident gratitude even though he is in the midst of affliction.

And when we think of David, we would do well to go back to 2 Samuel 7 for just a moment. 2 Samuel 7, and remember the Davidic covenant. 2 Samuel 7, you will remember that David was made king after the failed reign of King Saul, and David had a desire to build a temple for the Lord, to build a house for the Lord. God said David wasn't the one for that, it would be given to his son, but in the midst of unfolding that to David, he makes this magnificent promise to David beginning in verse 12 that later in chapter 23 is called a covenant between God and David. So in chapter 7, verse 12, we read this, God speaking to David says, "'When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers,'" in other words, "'when you die, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.' In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David." The Davidic covenant is God's unconditional promise to David and to his descendants that they would receive an eternal house, an eternal throne, and an eternal kingdom, and ultimately this promise is fulfilled not in Solomon but in David's greater son the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you turn to Psalm 110, you see hints of this. Psalm 110, again, another Psalm of David in Psalm 110, and you read this where Yahweh "says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" So David is writing and says that Yahweh, the LORD, says to David's Lord. So Yahweh is speaking to someone greater than David and yet he is making these promises about establishing David's Lord and making his enemies a footstool at his feet, and so we see here, and the Lord Jesus Christ picks up on this in the gospels, is that you see that the promise made to David would ultimately be fulfilled in his greater son, the descendant of David coming from his loins, and that is the person of Jesus Christ.

And if you turn to Matthew 1, in Matthew 1 you see a very significant statement in the very first verse. Sometimes the unstudied will somewhat mock the genealogies of Scripture and, you know, "It's so boring to read these and blah, blah, blah, and why is this information in here, who cares about this?" Well, to the student of Scripture and to the Jews who were looking for their Messiah, this information is profoundly important because the Messiah was going to be the son of David. And so for the statement to be made in chapter 1, verse 1 of Matthew, the record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, is a profoundly important statement because it is showing that the Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the intent of the Davidic covenant. In Christ, in the Messiah, in the Lord Jesus you see the one who will receive this eternal house, will sit on David's throne and will inherit an eternal kingdom that will never end.

And so right from the very start as we remember the Davidic covenant and we just trace quickly through Scripture some of the thread of it, we see how significant this is, and if you step back and just contemplate Psalm 138 in that context, as you turn back to Psalm 138 now, you can well see why David might be one who is speaking with confidence even though he's walking in the midst of adversity; you can well see that he would be a man of gratitude even though he was under affliction because he was the recipient of these great promises of God and he knew God well enough to know that God would be faithful to deliver on his promises no matter what the present situation might seem to be. And so from the perspective of God's promises, David is confident even though he walks in the midst of the valley as he opens and writes this Psalm.

We're going to see three sections to this Psalm, and you see in the first section that he opens on a note of private thanksgiving. Verses 1 through 3 is a note of private thanksgiving as David is giving thanks to the Lord in the first person singular. That's very important to notice because he starts with personal thanks and then it expands out greatly as you progress through this Psalm. And before we get to that, I just want to comment and remind you of something that I call attention to often: the ability of the Holy Spirit to compact so much significant truth into such a short amount of space is one of the marks of the genius of Scripture and one of the sure imprints of the Holy Spirit's ultimate authorship through the human author of the text of Scripture. Scripture is inexhaustible even in the brevity of the words that it uses and so it's just very crucial for us to have a great reverence for Scripture and to take each verse seriously and carefully to mine out what there is in it.

Many of you, like me, we've gone through Bible reading plans to read through the Bible in a year, and that's a good thing to do, we've distributed yearlong Bible plans and, you know, I'm thankful for everyone that reads Scripture like that, but we need to remember that as we're reading in a manner like that, you're reading through things fairly quickly and if the only Bible reading or Bible study you do is like that, you might get a broad sweep of Scripture and that's a good thing, but it's only an inch or two deep. And so we need this time of concentrated study diving in deeply to a text to appreciate the fullness of what God has to say, and this Psalm is certainly like that. We see David giving private thanks as we open here in the first two verses.

Let's look at them again, David says,

1 I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You  
before the gods. 2 I will bow down toward Your holy temple And give  
thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You  
have magnified Your word according to all Your name.

Notice the theme of thanksgiving and that it is repeated twice in those two verses. Verse 1, "I will give You thanks." Verse 2, "I will bow down and give thanks to Your name." And so there is this theme of gratitude that permeates right from the start; you just get this aroma of the incense of thanksgiving that carries throughout the rest of the Psalm.

So David is expressing gratitude as he writes here and he says there in verse 1, "I will give You thanks with all of my heart." His whole inner man is involved. Beloved, this is not like our prayers often are, sadly, where we're going through the motions, just kind of maybe rote going through a prayer list or just with a sense of a fulfillment of duty, but we're praying while our mind is distracted and we're mouthing words but our mind is a hundred miles away; you know what that's like just as well as I do in my own heart and life. David here is showing us that thanks comes from the fullness of heart and he is engaged, he is energetically throwing his whole man into this expression of thanksgiving as he writes. And you know, the matter of prayer, the matter of meditation, of serious thought about God and serious commitment to him and to his people, it takes effort. This is something that we give our whole inner man to and our whole inner man is involved, David conscious of the greatness of God, David conscious of the greatness of the promises that God had made to him personally, looks at that and says, "This is worthy of the response of my entire man. Everything about me must be joined into and must be poured into my response as I give thanks to You, O God."

It reminds us, and why don't we turn over there to Matthew 22, a text that we turn to often in our recently completed series on the 10 Commandments. Matthew 22:37, this is what God requires from us at all times. There is no half-hearted true Christian. Matthew 22:37, Jesus answering the question, "What is the great commandment in the law?" He says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." And the parallel passage elsewhere in the gospel it says, and adds, "and with all of your strength." And so this is call of a total heart response, all of the inner man, all of the thoughts, all of the faculties fully engaged, "God, I'm giving myself over to this with every power of my being."

And that is what God is worthy of and David is determined to thank God for his goodness, and more than you might realize, I'm preaching to myself as we go through this Psalm here this evening. It's so important that we framed it by looking at verse 7, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble." David is under pressure, he's in turmoil as he writes this, but notice with that context in mind that he has determined to overcome the affliction, to not yield under the adversity but rather even in the face of the adversity he says, "I'm going to give everything I am over to expressing my gratitude to You." That's a great challenge, isn't it, when the pressures of life and the unsolvable difficulties and the difficult people press in around us and make life difficult for us. I know what it's like to yield to the pressure of that and you kind of get wrapped up in it and you do too, it's a common lot for all of us. Well, what we need to see and what Psalm 138 does is that it calls us to stop when we find ourselves in the midst of that kind of affliction and say, "I have a spiritual responsibility right now in this affliction to rise above it. I have a responsibility to remember who my God is, what He is like, the promises that He has made to me, and to look beyond what I see with my eyes and by faith to honor Him with the thanks of the fullness of my inner man."

He's determined to do it and, beloved, it's work. It's hard to do that. It's much easier to yield to the pressure and to yield to the discouragement in those times, but this Psalm

calls us out to remind us as you and I are in the midst of trouble, this gives us an aspiration in our hearts to pursue and to go after and say, "This is what I want to be like also. I'm determined to thank God even in the midst of my affliction. I won't wait until the affliction passes, I'll praise God now in the midst of the storm." And so it's quite the challenge that's laid down before us.

Now he goes on there and he says in verse 1, "I will sing praises to You before the gods." It's not simply a verbal, there's a musical aspect, there's a musical aspect. "I'll sing from a fullness of heart. I'll lend music," David, the sweet harpist and the sweet psalmist of Israel, David says, "I'll lend my music to my praise as well." And so there's just a spiritual vibrancy here that I think you'll agree with me is very attractive, it's a very winsome spiritual vibrancy even as it challenges us in the midst of our own affliction to aspire after this.

Now look, turn over to John 16 with me, this passage just kind of comes to my mind in the midst of this and I want to highlight this and maybe another passage also from the gospel of John as we just let Scripture interpret Scripture and to give us the opportunity to see in a very appealing way to me anyway, of an appealing way to see what our spiritual opportunity is in those times of affliction, to pass the test that the Lord brings to us. The Lord tests us, brings affliction, brings discouragement, brings opposition. The Lord tests us in order for us to show forth the faith that he's already put in our hearts and to affirm the things that we know are true even when we're feeling the weight of sorrow.

So in John 16:33 we see the Lord Jesus Christ in a different context saying this, he says, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me," in Christ and in Christ alone, not in our circumstances, not in external support, not in worldly appreciation, Jesus says, "so that in Me you may have peace." And he says, "In the world you have tribulation," this is an expected reality for the believer in Christ, there will be adversity and trials and hardships and difficulties and discouragement that come our way. There will be physical and spiritual and relational affliction. This comes with the territory of living in this fallen world. What we see in Psalm 138, what we see Jesus saying in verse 33, yes, all of those things are true, those are the obstacles that are in front of us but he says, "you take courage for I have overcome the world." "You take heart," Jesus says, "in Me." And as we stand on this side of the cross, we look back, we see that our Lord Jesus Christ has conquered sin, conquered Satan, conquered death in his life, death, burial and resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God. Those of us that are joined to him, united to him by faith, we share in the fullness of all of his accomplished work, in the fullness of his resurrection life, everything that Christ has done is credited to us now and one day will be the fullness of our experience when we are glorified with him in heaven, when we see him face-to-face and we are made like him, 1 John 3:2 says. Jesus says, "You take all of those realities that belong to you in Me," Jesus says, "and you take courage in the midst of this hostile world and you rise above the obstacles, you recognize the obstacles but you rise above them and you rest in Me. I have overcome the world and therefore you have also."

That is the power of the position that we have in Christ, and just going back and so with that said, now I want to take it a step further to help steel your resolve, and when I say "steel," I mean steel, s-t-e-e-l. I'm not trying to take it away, I'm trying to strengthen your resolve for you. In light of those things, what this does for us is it gives us a spiritual perspective that deepens our commitment to Christ, our commitment to the word of God, and even our commitment to one another in the body of Christ.

Go now to John 6 and we're just kind of illustrating the fullness of the commitment that David was expressing with his confident gratitude in Psalm 138 here. You'll remember that the teaching of Christ caused many to turn away. He emphasized the sovereignty of God and the inability of man to the crowds that were gathered around him, there were thousands at the time, and in John 6:65, actually let's go back to verse 64, he says, "there are some of you who do not believe." He wasn't persuaded or fooled by the fact that there were large crowds about him. He knew the hearts of men. He knew what was in man, John 2:23-25 says, and so he didn't entrust himself to men. And Jesus says to the crowds in verse 64, "there are some of you who do not believe." And it says, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him," specifically referring to Judas. And so in verse 65, "He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.'"

Now go on in verse 66, this is not the mark of a prosperity preacher here. This was a turning point in the life and ministry of Christ. Verse 66, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." The teaching of Christ himself caused people to turn away and no longer follow him. He wasn't saying what they wanted and so they said, "I'm out. I don't want anymore of You, O Christ. I don't want anything more." And so they walked away from him. Their outward appearance of commitment proved to be only superficial and not lasting.

So what happens? In verse 67, "Jesus said to the twelve," you know, he had gone from filling an arena to having a small group discipleship meeting in just a very short time. And so as everything had shrunk down to this group of the disciples, Jesus said to them, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" The frame of his question expects the answer, no, in the Greek text. And so he's drawing them out, he's giving them an opportunity to express and affirm their faith in the midst of seeing the crowds go away from Jesus.

So in verse 68 you see this, "Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.'" Now think about this with me in the context of Psalm 138. David is in the midst of affliction and the affliction is like wind under his wings that raises him up higher. For you and me in the midst of our affliction and difficulties, it's the exact same thing. It points us to Christ, we remember who he is, we remember our union with him, and we take courage because Christ has overcome the world. In addition to that, we recognize that there is no escape route for us. This is not an escape room experience when you enter in with Christ and you find your way out in the midst of the maze of things. No, in the midst of the difficulty, in the midst of the maze of it all we

recognize something extraordinarily important in our hearts, that whatever affliction comes to me, whoever brings difficulty or challenge to me, the one thing I know I will never do is I will never leave the Lord, I will never abandon him. How could I do such a thing? He and he alone has the words of life. Christ and Christ alone has the words of eternal life, and so we realize that we are anchored in him and not only can we not leave because God would not let us leave, he perfects the work that he begins in all of us, but even from the sense of our own heart conscious commitment we say, "Lord, I am here. I am with You. I trust You. I give thanks to You. Even in the midst of this very affliction I give thanks and I'm not going anywhere, Lord, because I trust You completely and You have made great promises to me, my heart is full of gratitude no matter what's happening around me." That is the Christian spirit and the Christian response to affliction and we see David foreshadowing it for us in the Old Testament in Psalm 138.

Go back there now with me with that little lengthy diversion into New Testament thought to give us perspective on it. Now you see David walking in the midst of trouble and you say, "I will give You thanks with all my heart." You know, beloved, if we are thinking clearly in the midst of our trials, this would be exactly where we were. We would remember the promises of God to us despite how difficult the affliction is, and I know for many of you it's deep, it's chronic, it's long, and there are many tears that accompany it. I get that. I realize that people close to you have disappointed you and let you down in some cases, but we look past all of that, we walk by faith not by sight, and we remember our privileged position in Christ and there we find our strength, our confidence, and our reasons for gratitude, to respond with our whole man.

David says there at the end of verse 1, "I will sing praises to You before the gods." It's not entirely clear exactly what that phrase "before the gods" means. It could mean angels. It could mean human rulers, the Hebrew word allows for both of those interpretations. Probably in this context he means that, "I will praise You before the opposition of unbelievers. If I am before unbelievers and surrounded by their idols, I will step forward, I will give You praise even in that context. I am willing to stand alone against the world for You, O God, and give thanks and acknowledge You whether anyone joins with me or not as I do." I love the commitment of this. I love the vibrancy of this. This is soil that you can sink your spiritual roots into and grow because you realize that neither people nor circumstances can hinder you from a vibrant expression of praise and a walk of confident gratitude with your God no matter what else is happening around you.

So David is saying with that view of that phrase, that interpretation of it, David is saying, "I will stand apart from false religion in order to honor Yahweh." We would say today, "I will stand apart from false religion and from the false Christianity of our day so that I can truly be identified with Christ. I want it no other way." So David is conscious and humble before the manifest presence of God.

Look at verse 2, he says, "I will bow down toward Your holy temple," the temple being the place where God's presence was manifested, sometimes the tabernacle was called the temple before the permanent structure was constructed, "I will bow down toward Your holy temple. I will bow down to where You have made Yourself known and I will give

thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth, for Your loyal love and for Your faithfulness, for You have magnified Your word according to all Your name." You see, David is expressing spiritual reasons for his gratitude. There is not – notice this, beloved, and be encouraged by it – he's not giving thanks in this Psalm by reason of external prosperity or external blessings. He's in the midst of turmoil and trouble as he says this and so what he is expressing, the reasons that he finds for his gratitude are spiritual related to the attributes and perfections of God, his loyal love, his faithfulness, his word, and the fact that God has entered into covenant with him and promised to keep him through it all. And so he's grateful in response to the person, the word, and the promise of God and that is enough for him. He's thankful for the word of God. God's promises exceeded David's highest expectations and were far beyond anything that he deserved. David knew the great character of God, he knew how exceedingly abundantly good he was, and yet even with that God had done even more than he had asked or could have thought, and so we see that this kind of thanks is central to true worship.

Look over at the book of Colossians and we see this echoed in the New Testament as well. Colossians 3. My intent, Lord willing, is to teach through Colossians after the first of the year, you know, a few months down the road, and so my mind is starting to get into Colossians even though we're not there publicly yet. But in Colossians 3:16 in a passage that helps us understand what it means to be filled with the Spirit because it's directly parallel to that passage in Ephesians 5:18, what's the Spirit-filled man look like? What does the Spirit-filled man and woman do? What's in their hearts? Verse 16, Colossians 3, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." Do you want to know if you're Spirit-filled? Oh, this stings to say this, this steps on my toes and it gets into your kitchen and the word of God just stirs up all kinds of things in our hearts when we take it seriously and contemplate what it means and apply it to our day to day, hour to hour lives. You want to know if you're Spirit-filled? Ask yourself whether you're one that is in the pattern and habit of giving thanks to God no matter what's happening in your life. That's the pattern, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

He goes on and he says in verse 17, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Doing what? "Giving thanks through Him to God the Father." This is a comprehensive disposition of life. Whatever you do in word or deed, whatever turmoil you're responding to, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, so you're conscious of the one who is with you even in the valley of the shadow of death, the one who is with you always even to the end of the age, you're mindful of that, you're mindful of your union with him, you're mindful of your justification, you're mindful of sanctification, you're mindful of your future glorification, and all of those spiritual riches and mindful of the fact that nothing in the created order can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord, Romans 8:38 and 39, with all of those things in mind, you give thanks through him to God the Father.

Look down at Colossians 4:2, he says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of," what? "Thanksgiving." Thanksgiving. Give yourselves over to prayer



and as you do it, conduct it in a spirit of thanksgiving. That is exactly what we see David doing here in Psalm 138.

Now just a reminder and an encouragement to you as we start to move back toward Psalm 138, let's take a quick depot stop at Ephesians 3:20, and actually we'll need to go a little further back to verse 14. Paul is praying for the believers at Ephesus and you see the apostolic spirit for the entire church really, because, you know, the Spirit intended this to be read not only by the church at Ephesus but by the other churches in the region and preserved it for us for the entire church as the centuries would go by. Paul says after having expounded on the blessing that is due to God because of his great grace and mercy to us in salvation, verse 14 he says this, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." Paul knows that the exalted call of the Christian life and the spiritual nature of things that we are talking about, he knows it is beyond natural ability to do this. God understands that the great spiritual call that Scripture places on our heart is beyond our natural ability to carry out. We need help. We need the help of the Holy Spirit to live in this frame of mind, and we need the help to grasp and understand the spiritual realities that enable us to do so. We need illumination from the Spirit and we need strength from the Spirit to do this, to be this, more importantly.

So in verse 16 he says, "I'm asking God that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." David said, "I give thanks to You with all my heart." Paul says, "I'm praying that the Spirit would strengthen you in the heart so you could do this, so that," verse 17, "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

And so with all of that in mind, go back to Psalm 138. David there at the end of verse 2 is giving thanks to God's name for the lovingkindness and truth that he has shown to him. We in Christ in an even greater fullness of the Trinitarian blessing that has been bestowed upon us, we give thanks to the loyal love of God for saving us, the loyal truth of God, we thank him for the work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, and we realize that no matter what happens around us, we have the supreme blessing of the highest one in the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, communicated to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, he is there to stay rooted and grounding us in love in a way that the blessing can never be taken away from us and therefore we give thanks to his holy name.

God is the object of David's thanks there in Psalm 138:3. Look at it with me, notice again the inner man, the inner focus of this blessed Psalm. Verse 3, David says,

3 On the day I called, You answered me;

God has answered his prayer, whatever that prayer was, it's not specified in the context but David called on God, God answered him, and the way that he answered him was he made David, look at it there in verse 3,

You made me bold with strength in my soul.

David is thanking God for the way that he had strengthened him in his inner man in the same way that we when we are strengthened by the Spirit of God in that Ephesians 3 kind of way and we're feeling the strength and we know the expansion, we sense the expansion of our spiritual capacities and our spiritual confidence in the midst of affliction which would crush others, we give thanks and say, "God, I give thanks to You. This boldness in my soul must come from You because it didn't come from me. I know what a sniveling coward and what an ungrateful wretch I have been in the past, and so here I am strengthened in my soul," you say to yourself and you say to God, "Lord, I give You thanks. I am experiencing the spiritual reality of the work of the Holy Spirit in my heart that Christ died and rose again to purchase for my well-being. I am living out spiritual realities as I walk in confidence in Your blessing going forward." You know, Ephesians 3:12, we don't have time to turn there, I've diverged enough already, but one of the things that Ephesians 3 says in verse 12 is, is that we have bold and confident access to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So David is confessing his gratitude to God in Psalm 137 which we looked at last week, the psalmist could not give thanks to God in a foreign land; you'll remember he hung up his harp and he couldn't sing the praises of God for his glories in Zion because he was in captivity. Now in Psalm 138, David says, "I'm giving thanks." He confesses the Lord even when others would not. Well, we need to move on quickly to the second section in this Psalm where we saw private thanksgiving in verses 1 through 3, now in verses 4 through 6 we're going to see public thanksgiving. Public thanksgiving and here David's private thanks yield into a public spirit of thanks that spreads throughout all of the earth.

Look at verses 4 and 5 with me. David says,

4 All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD, When they have heard the words of Your mouth. 5 And they will sing of the ways of the LORD, For great is the glory of the LORD.

Remember that David is a king as he is writing this, and David as a king is concerned for what you could say loosely, his circle of peers, those who were kings of other domains, of other places, of other lands. David wants them to join in his praise publicly for God and so he looks beyond his own realm to leaders elsewhere and looks for them to join in the praise, and in the early part of the psalter, Scripture admonishes world leaders to heed the Son of God.

Look at Psalm 2 with me just ever so briefly. Psalm 2, and those of you that were with us back in 2014 when we first started this series, we said that whether you were with us or

not we said this, Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 are like twin pillars that guard the entrance into the entire psalter and they establish themes that the other 148 Psalms build on, and you see that in Psalm 2:10 where the psalmist says, "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" This time that we've just read there in Psalm 2, that's still future to us when all of the kings of the earth bow before the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes to establish his reign on earth and all of the kings come and bring tribute to him. And just the audacity of Scripture, you might say, the audacity of Scripture to make a call to the highest levels of world leadership, to United States Presidents, to kings in Arab countries and other leaders of Parliament in, you know, the former British domains, and every other place, every king, every queen, every prince, every princess, all of them universally called to bow down before Christ and give honor and homage to him or they're in disobedience to God and under the threat of his wrath. The audacity of Scripture, again, showing forth by the very terms of what it says, showing forth its inspiration by God that it would call on all kings, even the unconverted ones, to bow before the Lord Jesus Christ is nothing less than what Scripture calls them to do.

So David is remembering this. Go back to Psalm 138. David looking to a time that is still future to you and me because this has never happened, this has not yet happened in human history, David says, he's looking prophetically to a messianic time says, "All the kings of the earth will give thanks to You, O LORD, When they have heard the words of Your mouth. And they will sing of the ways of the LORD, For great is the glory of the LORD." A time is coming when there will be a universal acknowledgment when Christ establishes his throne on earth in the city of Jerusalem, there will be a universal acknowledgment of his authority, of his goodness, and of his supremacy at that time and the nations will stream to Jerusalem to give praise and honor to Christ. You can read about it in the book of Zechariah.

And why should the nations give thanks to the God of Israel? Why will they do that eventually? Verse 6,

6 For though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly, But the haughty He knows from afar.

God is worthy of praise for the kindness and justice that he distributes, that he administers. In himself, Jesus Christ is the most lofty one in the universe. He is high and lofty. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and there is no one who compares to him and yet we come once again to this beloved – you know, words fail me at times like this again – you come to this beloved juxtaposition, his great highness, his justice, his holiness, his absolute sovereign rule over all, and yet you see that this lofty one is kind. He cares for those who are in need and he provides for them.

Look at that in verse 6, "though the LORD is exalted, Yet He regards the lowly." Isn't that what he does for you when you pray to him and he hears and he answers you, you in

your weakness, you in your sorrow, you when those times when we don't even know what to say in prayer? David said in one of the prior Psalms, you know, "My heart is so troubled I cannot speak." And sometimes the only words, so-called words that you have are expressed in the tears that are running down your cheek and God regards those and Scripture says he keeps our tears in his bottle, counts every one of them, knows all about it and cares. In the midst of your difficulties, what God is like that, at the pinnacle of the universe and yet he regards the tears of a lowly mother or a lowly father, a hurting child, and cares and responds to them? He does this without compromising his justice. He does this while he rejects the proud who only exalt themselves and are concerned for their own honor. God cares for those who come humbly to him in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. What a great God. What a great God. What a great Scripture. What a great Lord Jesus Christ we have. This is who he really is and regardless of what happens around us, regardless who joins around us as we do, we will praise this God, we will give thanks to him and we will trust him come what may. That's what he is worthy of, the fullness of a heart response and the fullness of whatever circumstances we might face.

So David has given private thanks and he's called all the kings of the earth to join in him in response to who this God is, holy, just, sovereign and transcendent and yet merciful and kind and imminent, meaning he is near, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You've anointed my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Beloved, if you know those things to be true, if those things belong to you by faith in Christ, don't you see how you can be filled with thanksgiving come what may no matter what?

Well, in the midst of such lofty things that David has said in the first six verses, you might think had I not introduced the Psalm to the contrary, you might think that David had no problems and that he's just on the, you know, that things are just going really well for him and that's why he's thankful given how lofty his prayer is and how sincere and full-throated his thanks are in this Psalm, but that's not the case. We've seen private thanksgiving, we've seen public thanksgiving, now thirdly, we go to personal trust. We go to personal trust and we can only treat this in a moment here as time has gotten away from us but here, beloved, is where you and I face the call to respond. This is our call to application. This is our call to apply what we've said and to show that we mean it and that we really believe the things that we've said, that we're not just saying these things for the sake of, you know, this is what we're supposed to do when we gather on a Tuesday night, and not simply to affirm it in a general way but in a deeply personal way. David in these final two verses, his thanksgiving leads him to trust in his present trials. He is expressing faith in his present trials.

Look at verse 7,

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me.

You see, David had his opponents, he had his enemies, he had those that were looking for his downfall, tearing him down, looking to undermine him, and in the midst of that David says, "Even though I'm in the midst of that, God, You'll revive me. You'll stretch forth Your hand. You'll deal with those who are trying to undermine my throne. Your right hand will save me." It's this great expression of confident trust.

Then he says in verse 8, he makes kind of a third person statement, he addresses the congregation, as it were,

8 The LORD will accomplish what concerns me [and then he goes immediately vertical and says]; Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting;

Let's stop there for a moment and consider that and I want to save that last phrase for our closing comments here. When David says that, "I walk in the midst of trouble," the word there has the sense, as I said earlier, of intense inner turmoil. He's greatly conflicted inside by the external pressures that are on him, and in the midst of that inner experience, it's at that point that he rises to the heights of this confident gratitude that he expresses. It's in the midst of the cauldron of the boiling difficulties of life that he rises and sets forth this lofty standard for the rest of us to aspire after. In the midst of that cauldron, that boiling pot of affliction, David is confident that the Lord will bring him through it. And faith, beloved, true faith, the way that we apply this and think about this in our own lives is that your faith should express itself in humble dependence on God in the midst of your most serious trials.

Look at verse 7 with me again, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me." The ESV there, which some of you use, I know, says, "You preserve my life." You know, the verb tense in the Hebrew can be taken as either a present or a future, it's a different kind of verbal aspects in the Hebrew verb system. In any event whether it's taken as a present or a future, it pictures this, don't miss this reality, it pictures God's work of keeping his own. What God does is he keeps his people. God keeps covenant with his own. God is loyal to his people and that means that if you are in Christ, you can know with utter absolute certainty no matter what is happening in your life right now, that God will preserve you, God will keep you, God will bless you no matter what, and those spiritual realities become the perspective by which you view your affliction rather than using your afflictions as the way that you view the spiritual realities and call them into question.

And God's hand, it says there in verse 7, "You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies," God's hand is a symbol for his power. It's a metaphor for his power. It's by your hand that you take something and grasp it and exercise authority over it. David says, "God will use His power, His illimitable might, God will use His strength to help me overcome the trials and the foes that I face." And that is what has revived David's heart in the midst of his inner turmoil. He remembered God's strength, he remembered God's loyal love, it restored confidence to his soul and from that spirit of

restored confidence in the midst of his affliction, he says, "God, I give You thanks." And what should be overflowing in the hearts in this room and animating the spirit of what we share together in the aftermath of the teaching tonight, is just this collective united sense of confidence that the Lord is going to be good for us despite the respective afflictions that you and I are going through. The adversity in David's life, the opposition from his enemies who are a real genuine threat to him, that adversity and opposition only strengthened his trust all the more because the tsunami wave of the affliction cast him onto the shore of the goodness, the greatness, the grace and the promises of God and he said, "I've got an anchor to stand on here. I have a solid foundation. I know what the outcome of my trials are before the outcome occurs. The outcome of all of my affliction is going to be a manifestation that God has once again showed His loyal love to me, and I believe that and I'll hold onto that even if I don't see it in this life. I know that I'll see it in heaven and if that's the only place that I see it, I'll see it and that's enough to satisfy my heart."

So David is strengthened not only by the power of God but also by the loyal love of God. Look at verse 8, he says, "The LORD will accomplish what concerns me." The Lord will take care of everything that is afflicting me right now. Whatever is afflicting me, the Lord is going to take care of it. I trust him completely, David says, and he can say that because he remembers in the middle of verse 8, "Your lovingkindness, O LORD, is everlasting." The loyal love of God guarantees that God will use his power to help us in our difficulties.

Beloved, let this sink deep into your soul and let it become the anchor, the cornerstone by which you view all of life if you are a Christian. God loves his people. He really and truly does and it's not just the passing sentiment that comes and goes like human expressions of love and commitment. No, his love is genuine. It is real. It does not change. It does not rise and fall based on performance. God's love is driven not by how we conduct ourselves, it is driven by his own internal character. This is who God is. 1 John 4:7 and 8, God is love. Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God and God is love. This is at the core of his essence and when God has set his love on you, my friends, in the Lord Jesus Christ, he's never going to change it. He's not going to withdraw it. And if he loved you supremely in Christ at the cross, beloved, understand that all of the lesser things are included in that as well. "If God is for us, who is against us?" And God is for us and God is for his people. God is for churches that proclaim Christ and proclaim his word, and God is for his people, and God finishes what he begins.

So David has established twin towers, you could say, looking at the power of God, looking at the loyal love of God, and now having established that his prayer is very simple at the end of verse 8. Now he makes a request. This is the first time that David makes a request in the entire Psalm and it's simply,

Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

David doesn't ask for a specific outcome, he simply says, "God, be faithful to me." It's that simple. "God, be faithful to me." God's wisdom will assure the right outcome and so

David can simply ask God not to forsake him, and the New Testament bids us to that same kind of confidence. Paul said in Philippians 1:6, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Jesus said in Hebrews 13:5 and 6 through the writer of Hebrews, "I will never ever ever leave you nor will I ever ever forsake you." So I can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper. What can man do to me?" God having done the greater thing for us in Christ will do the lesser thing to sustain us in the end.

But understand this: you can in life right now in the things that you're facing, you can stake everything on the loyal love and the power of God. You can stake everything on that. You don't need to see any change in the circumstance to have the same confident gratitude that David expresses here in this Psalm. And I'll go a step further, beloved, it's not just that you can but as a Christian, those who name the name of Christ, you must. This is what we do as believers. We stake everything on the faithfulness, the truth and the power of God, and as we do that we give him thanks for the strength that that gives to us in our soul.

So beloved, in the midst of the difficult trials that I know that some of you are going through and the discouragement that it brings because it's just chronic and relentless, I get that, and your elders pray for you, aware of those chronic difficulties that you are going through, knowing that the waters are deep, but your hope is not in the prayers of your elders, your hope is in the loyal love, the great power, and the perfect faithfulness of your God, and when you rest in him, when you rest in Christ, when you rest in those revealed perfections, you can know for certain that your faith is not in vain and that the Lord will revive you in time, and by faith you look forward with confidence and with gratitude to the result that is sure to come, and you appropriate it now, by faith you reach forward into the future and you bring the blessing of that into the present, even if it's not externally with you in the moment, you reach forward, you grab hold of what you possess and you let it change everything about the way you perceive things in the present. Beloved, we put no confidence in our own flesh to save or keep us. We trust in Christ alone, by faith alone, and he will prevail.

Let's pray together.

*Father, I know that these words have come to discouraged hearts this evening. I pray that the power of Christ, the power of Your Spirit, the power of Your true inerrant word would refresh the hearts of Your saints and give us all the confidence that we need going forward to express thanks to You with all of our hearts, and as we have this final opportunity as David comes, for us to sing praises to You before the gods and give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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