

Psa 50:23 The GLORY of THANKSGIVING

PRELIMS. We all know (or do we?) that the 1st Catechism is ‘Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever’. We have been created to glorify God – and our text tells us that thanksgiving is glorifying to God! I find that very ‘**releasing**’ and **encouraging**. It seems that to truly **thank** God is to fulfil the **one reason** why we were created and put on this planet!

To come to the **end** of life and be thankful is a wonderful thing. To feel grateful for your life on earth so that you want to thank God is marvellous. Of course we have all heard people say in old age they are thankful – but our Psalm is talking about being thankful to a **particular** and **definable** God, **the God of Israel!**

It is **natural** to feel thankful when things go well – it is not **rocket science**, nor is it **saving grace**, to **recognise** that **anything** can **happen** to us at **any time** and when we witness some poor soul, to say ‘There, **but** for the **grace of God**, go I’! Ie, it is not rocket science, nor saving grace, to recognise that we are **creatures** utterly **dependent** on a **Sovereign** God who does according to **His** will among all His creatures! We all know that anything can happen to us, and can happen suddenly!

But to recognise that there is a **purpose** and **reason** for our **hard** times, our **painful** experiences, our **humiliation**, and that such things **fulfills** the purpose of some Greater Being takes much more than a common understanding of the plight of man! To believe that life, everyone’s life, has a purpose and that there is an overall Being **superintending** all the affairs of mankind, is to have more than a general understanding of life.

To believe that also the **joys** of life, the **thrills**, the **hopes**, the **expectations**, the **successes** of life, are all **planned** by a **loving God** who **controls** every **detail** of life is to know God in a real way that is not common to all human beings!

That is why I am always fascinated with **Nebuchadnezzar** and believe, although he was a pagan, by God's **grace**, he **became** a true believer and follower of the One Living and True God! He, in my opinion, **glorified** God after being **humiliated** in the **highest degree** (made to eat grass) and yet could say "*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, **praise** and **extol** and **honour** the **King of heaven**, for **all** His **works** are **right** and His **ways** are **just**; and those who walk in **pride** He is **able** to **humble***"[Dan 4:30] That, sounds to me to be true **humility**. And what is also most telling, is that he is **not** too **proud** to **advertise** his **embarrassing experience** before his **subjects** and the whole **world**!

I think he is truly **giving thanks** to God for what he had gone through, and what, at the end he had discovered – that **God rules** in the kingdom of **men** - not just in heaven! He believes in a God before whom "*all the **inhabitants** of the earth are accounted as **nothing***"[35], even kings are nothing compared to Almighty God! To me that change takes nothing less than the **saving grace** of God to a **proud** king who loved **himself**!

Here is a man who at one time believed he was king of the world. He said "*this **great** Babylon...**I** have built by **my mighty power**...for the **glory** of **my** majesty*"[30]. But God struck him down so that he was an **embarrassment** to all who looked upon him **crawling** on the grass, but who now believes that none can challenge God saying to Him "*What have you done*"[35c]! This is marvellous!! What **power** it must have been to bring about such a **change** of **mind**!

This **Psalm 50**, makes clear that giving thanks to God, glorifies God. It says that God called the **earth** to pay attention to what He is going to say, He "*summons the **earth***"[1]. God is going to speak – but it is to His **covenant** people He is going to speak in the hearing of the whole earth for He says "*Gather to Me my faithful ones, who made a **covenant** with Me by sacrifice*"[5].

God says “*I am God, your God”*[7], then he **chides** them **ironically**, saying that he cannot fault them for their sacrifices “*Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before Me*”[8]. But Israel’s worship is not true worship, for “*Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving”* [14]! God is **instructing** Israel about **real** and **acceptable** worship. If you offer thanksgiving, then “*call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me”*[15] God is **teaching** them about what glorifies Him.

Then God says “*To the wicked...what right have you to recite My statutes or take My covenant on your lips*”[16a]. You see, there **are** the **wicked** among the covenant community. Being in the covenant does **not guarantee** salvation – you must have **faith** in God’s Word, in what He has stipulated in the covenant.

Now among the covenant people, ie, in Israel, there were regular times of **repeating** the covenant **publicly** and of **renewing the covenant** (Deu 31:9-13, Josh 8:34, 2Kin23:2, Neh 8:1-3) and here we have a reference to one of these occasions. But God wants them to be **honest/genuine** about their covenant profession. God says in effect ‘Do not glibly accept the terms of the covenant if you do not intend to keep it’! God is speaking to those who **broke** the 7th, 8th, 9th commandments “*you see a thief... you keep company with adulterers...you give your mouth free rein”*[18,19]! There **are covenant-breakers** among the covenant community!

God concludes his address saying “*Mark this, you who forget (or ignore=Heb) God” **covenant-breakers** [22] “*the one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies Me”*[23] The Bible teaches that all our worship and **adoration** of God is a sacrifice “*let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God”*[Heb 13:15] Paul talks of “*the sacrifice and service of your faith”* [Phil 2:17] “*present your bodies as a living sacrifice”*[R 12:1]*

So any kind of “**wicked**” person [16], who **realises** his **utter dependence on**, his **indebtedness to** Israel’s God for **everything** they’ve had, and offers praise to God - glorifies God!

Most importantly that **includes**, as in the case of Neb, the **confession** of our **sins** and the acceptance of **God’s way of righteousness**! Look at [Dan 4:27b] “**break off your sins** by practising **righteousness**”!! “it is **evident** who **are** the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not **practice righteousness** is not of God”[1J3:10] So Neb who **was** “ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and” was “seeking to establish his own” many years ago, “did not **submit** to **God’s righteousness**”, has **now, submitted** to God and **His** way of righteousness “by showing mercy to the oppressed” [Dan 4:27c] and by “**praising, and extolling, and honouring** the **King of heaven** for **all** His works are **right** and His ways are just”! And perhaps Neb was able to praise and extol God **especially** because “those who walk in **pride** (like myself) **He** is able to **humble**”[37c]!! Marvellous!

So **what is it** to truly praise and thank God? Whatever it is, it is **not** a formal utterance made out of **habit** (as we can do so often in giving thanks for a meal!) Rather it is a **movement** in the **soul** which results in a humble confession that I am **undeserving** of so many good things, it **must** be **solely** due to the **grace** of God above and it is so **wonderful** and **enjoyable**. It is ‘grateful basking in the sunshine of God’s love’ **keenly aware**, this is no accident but a **deliberate mercy** from a loving and gracious God. Ie, it is being **thankful!** “Oh give **thanks** to the Lord...for His steadfast love...Let the **redeemed** of the Lord **say so**”. Those whom God “**gathered in** from the lands, from the **east** and from the **west**, from the **north** and from the **south**”[Psa 107:1-3] **APP** Neb **said so** to all in his kingdom! What about **you/I?** Have **you/I** said so? What has God to do to **you** before you acknowledge He **rules** your life?