



Thanksgiving Psalms

Introduction

Having tasted godly wisdom from the wisdom psalms, it is appropriate to turn to the thanksgiving psalms which are expressions of gratitude to God. The songs were written as a way of giving thanks to God for His saving grace and giving public testimony to God's concern, care, and intervention on behalf of His people. They were commonly written after an experience of God's deliverance, especially from enemies. Some thanksgiving psalms express the thanks of an individual and some express the thanks of the community or nation.

Because we are blessed in so many ways, Christians today tend to take for granted many of God's kindnesses. We come to expect God's blessings and fail to stop and give thanks for all He does for us and all He is to us. May these psalms be a reminder and an encouragement for you to remember to thank God often for His loving concern, care, and interventions on your behalf!

We studied five thanksgiving psalms last week.

- I. Thanking God for Healing - Psalm 30
- II. Thanking God For Deliverance - Psalm 34
- III. Thanking God for His Awesome Works - Psalm 66
- IV. Thanking God for His Righteous Judgment - Psalm 75
- V. Thanking God, Who is Our Help - Psalm 124

I. Thanking God for Healing - Psalm 30

Psalm 30 is David's psalm of thanksgiving to God for delivering him from death when he was severely ill. The title of this psalm is *A Song at the dedication of the house of David*. This may refer to David's own house, but more probably to the dedication of the threshing floor of Ornan as the site for the future house of God (temple). This dedication took place after David sinned by numbering the people of Israel, and was chastened by God by the sending of a plague. God's mercy confined the plague to the threshing floor of Ornan. There David offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God, proclaiming, *This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel* (1 Chronicles 22:1).

A. God's Healing of David - Psalm 30:1-3

The psalm begins with David exalting God for answering his prayer for healing. David's death would have been reason for his enemies to rejoice (30:1). But David had prayed (30:2) and now he was able to rejoice because

God's deliverance had lifted him up (30:1), brought his soul up from the grave, and kept him alive (30:3). "So when you are sick, pray. Ask God for healing. And when you are well again, remember that it is God who has healed you, and thank Him for it, as the psalmist does" (James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*).

B. God's Chastening and Delivering - Psalm 30:4-10

In verse 4, David calls the people of Israel to join him in thanking God, who had shown grace and mercy in healing him. David calls the people to remember God's holiness and reminds them that it is God's character to be gracious and merciful.

1. God's gracious character - 30:5

God's *anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life* (30:5). God is always displeased with sin. God hates sin and He corrects his children (Hebrews 12:5-7). But though his anger may cause weeping for a night, joy returns in the morning.

2. David's self-confidence - 30:6-10

David's sin, which required correction, was his self-confidence. It was not until God disciplined him by removing His blessing and protection (*You hid Your face* - 30:7), that David realized His security was in God. David longed to continue to praise God and declare His truth to others (30:9). He knew that death would be the end of that joy which he cherished. So he cried out to God for mercy and help (30:9-10).

3. David's joy in thanking and praising God - 30:11-12

God answered David's prayer and in response to his healing, David sang, *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness* (30:11).

David reinvested his newfound gladness by singing praises to God. God had abundantly blessed him and he would not be silent. He would proclaim his praise publicly as he loved to do (30:9). He would give thanks to God forever!

How often do you share with others the merciful and gracious things God has done for you? The thanksgiving psalms teach us how to thank and praise God openly, not just for what He has done, but for who He is.

II. Thanking God for Deliverance - Psalm 34

The title of Psalm 34 reveals that it was written when David *pretended madness before Abimelech who drove him away*. However, the incident to which it refers is probably David's desperate situation described in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. David feigned madness before Achish, king of Gath and then fled to hide in the cave of Adullam, the place where he may have written this psalm. It was a very low point in David's life. He had failed to trust God to protect him from Saul. He had relied upon himself and as a result had become a fugitive. He was all alone, in mortal danger. He felt that he was without hope and without resources. Psalm 34 is a psalm for you if you are alone and everything seems to be going against you.

The first ten verses of the psalm are David's testimony of what God had done for him. The last twelve verses are a sermon to encourage the fear of the Lord.

A. David's Testimony - Psalm 34:1-10

1. Call to worship - 34:1-3

David begins with his personal exultation in the Lord and then calls others to *magnify the Lord with me and.....exalt His name together* (34:3).

2. Declaration of deliverance - 34:4-7

David describes the trouble he experienced, the prayer he uttered to the Lord, and his joyful deliverance. David calls himself a *poor man* (34:6) filled with *all my fears* (34:4). He *sought the Lord* (34:4), *cried out to Him* (34:6), and the Lord heard him and saved him (34:4,6). David's conclusion is joy and assurance because he finally returned to God. Because *the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him*, he was delivered (34:7). *The angel of the Lord* is the Lord Jesus Himself (Genesis 48:16, Judges 6:11-16, 22, Judges 13:21-22, and Zechariah 3:1-3). Scholars sometimes use the term "Christophany" to describe appearances of the pre-incarnate Christ. David saw Him with the eyes of faith!

3. Invitation to *taste and see that the Lord is good* - 34:8-10

David's desire is that others experience the blessing of trusting in the Lord just as he has. He says that those who fear the Lord and trust in Him *shall not lack any good thing*. These verses are an invitation to act upon what we know of God and His goodness so we may experience for ourselves how good He truly is.

B. David's Sermon - Psalm 34:11-22

David calls God's children to listen so he may teach us the *fear of the Lord* (34:11). This is something which is important for all of God's children to know. Proverbs 9:10 tells us, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*. Essentially, David tells us that the fear of the Lord is obedience to God in all we say and do (34:13-14). To obey God is to do what is good and abstain from evil.

God is always looking out for His children. He hears those who fear Him when they cry out for help (34:15). He is near those who need Him (34:18). He delivers us (34:17, 19), saves us (34:18), and redeems our souls so that we shall never be condemned (34:22)! From Ephesians 1:7 we learn that it is in Christ that *we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace*. Further, Hebrews 9:12 teaches us that *with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption*. Praise be to God our Redeemer who is near to us, delivers us and saves us so we shall never be condemned! God's people have so much to be thankful for!

III. Thanking God for His Awesome Works - Psalm 66

Psalm 66 is another of the "orphan psalms." We do not know the writer or the occasion. It is one of Israel's songs of national thanksgiving to God for His deliverance. The psalmist speaks for the nation of Israel and invites other nations to join in praising God. The last eight verses are the psalmist's own testimony to the people.

A. All the Earth Invited to Praise God - Psalm 66:1-7

The psalmist calls *all the earth* (66:1,4) to *shout* (66:1,4), *sing* (66:2), and *speak forth* (66:3) praises to God. His awesome works and the greatness of His power are reason for even His enemies to submit and praise Him (66:3). The psalmist gives two examples in verse 6: God's sovereign rule and power was demonstrated on behalf of Israel in both the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-25) and the Jordan River (Joshua 3:16) crossings. The reaction of the nations is seen in Joshua 2:2-11 and should have caused them to acknowledge God and refrain from rebelling against Him (Psalm 66:7).

B. People of Israel Invited to Praise God - Psalm 66:8-12

The psalmist turns to the people of Israel and calls them to bless and praise God (66:8). He reminds them how

God had led them through trials of affliction but had faithfully brought them through to a place of even greater blessing. God preserved their lives and kept their feet from slipping (66:9). It is an encouragement to know that God does the same thing today for His people! Is God taking you through trials and testings right now? As you look above and beyond your circumstances to praise God for His faithfulness, may He bring you through to *rich fulfillment* (66:12) on the other side, as He did for the people of Israel. He will preserve your soul and keep your feet from slipping! Will you thank Him for that?

C. The Psalmist Praises God - Psalm 66:13-20

The psalmist now takes the pulpit to pray and preach. As the sounds of the praise of Israel and the nations fade, he humbly speaks to God and then to *you who fear God* (66:16).

1. The psalmist's vows to God - 66:13-15

In a time of trouble the psalmist had made vows to God. He is now intent upon keeping his promises. He will offer burnt sacrifices to God, consecrating himself to God and worshiping Him. He will offer costly sacrifices of rams, bulls, and goats (66:15). What sacrifice will you offer to God? *I beseech you...by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service* (Romans 12:1).

2. The psalmist's testimony - 66:16-20

King David, the psalmist calls all those who fear God to come and hear what God has done for him. God had heard and answered his prayer which arose from a pure heart. He blessed God for His faithfulness and mercy.

“When God's people are in need they should purify their hearts and pray. When they do, He answers and blesses them. This should cause other people to honor and praise God” (Dr. Tom Constable, “Notes on the Psalms”).

IV. Thanking God for His Righteous Judgment - Psalm 75

Psalm 75 is another national song of Israel, looking forward to the day when God destroys the wicked and exalts the righteous. It was written by Asaph, one of Israel's worship leaders, The psalm presents God as the righteous Judge.

A. The People of Israel Give Thanks - Psalm 75:1

Asaph gives thanks to God for Israel because of His

wondrous works which proclaim that His name *is near*. God's *name* stands for God Himself. God is near! God is near because He is everywhere. God is omnipresent; always at hand to help those who humbly call upon His name.

“Are you aware that God really is near at hand, that He is present in all that happens, and that nothing that ever comes into your life or happens to others is accidental? If you can see that and really believe it, it will transform all of life for you. You will never again be 'under the circumstances,' as we say, but will always be above them. If you know that God is near, you should thank Him for it” (James Montgomery Boice, Psalms).

B. God Declares Judgment - Psalm 75:2-5, 10

Beginning in verse 2, God speaks, assuring to the righteous and warning the arrogant wicked. God is the righteous judge who will act at the *proper time*, the time of His choosing (75:2). By His power, God could dissolve all the earth and its inhabitants but for now, He chooses to hold it together by His power. See Colossians 1:17. The arrogant are warned to cease their boasting and the wicked are exhorted against exerting their strength against God and refusing to yield to Him. (The word *horn* in verses 4, 5, and 10 symbolizes strength.) God will carry out His righteous purpose in dealing with both the righteous and the wicked (75:10).

C. The Preacher Gives His Warning - Psalm 75:6-8

The preacher adds his warning to the warning of God. Enemy invasions of Israel came primarily from the north. Verse 6 is a warning not to look to the east, west, or south for victory over these enemies. *God is the Judge* (75:7) and he alone decides who will be exalted and who will be put down.

God will pour out His cup of wrath and the wicked will be forced to drink. What a clear picture this must have been to the original singers of this song, knowing that kings of many nations of the time forced convicted criminals to drink poisoned wine. The same image is seen in Psalm 60:3, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15-17 and 49:12, Habbakuk 2:16, and Revelation 18:6.

D. The Psalmist Declares Praise to God - Psalm 75:9

Asaph closes this psalm by publicly praising God. *I will declare forever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob*.

The final verse may be an added warning from God or a promise by Asaph to diligently work to promote justice in the world. What can you do to help promote justice in the world today?

V. Thanking God, Who is Our Help - Psalm 124

Psalm 124 was written by David to honor God's preservation of His people, Israel. In this psalm, David blesses God for not allowing the pagan nations to swallow them alive (124:3). Some commentators believe this psalm was sung by David and his armies after their victory over Absalom (2 Samuel 18). Others view it as a celebration of Israel's victory over the Philistines (2 Samuel 5:17-25). Still others believe it was written much later, in the days of Queen Esther, when the Jews were delivered from the evil plot of Haman. (In this case, David could not have been the writer.) Psalm 124 is traditionally sung at the Jewish Feast of Purim which is a commemoration of the deliverance from Haman's evil (Esther 9:20-28).

Psalm 124 is also one of the *Songs of Ascents* (Psalms 120-134), psalms sung by Jewish pilgrims making their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the annual feasts of Israel. James Montgomery Boice ([Psalms](#)) remarks that these psalms do not reflect the high level of faith found in other psalms and that they all have a hint of sadness about them. He writes, "If so, it is appropriate for those who were on their way to God's city but had not reached it yet. It is this note of sadness that makes these songs so descriptive of the Christian's similarly hard and upward pilgrimage through this dark world toward heaven."

The psalm begins on a plaintive note by looking back at a time when the people of Israel were confronted with a serious threat from their enemies.

A. *If It Had not Been* - Psalm 124:1-5

Repetition of the phrase, *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side* in both verses one and two, emphasizes the importance of the thought. Had Israel not had the help of the Lord, they would have experienced sure and total destruction. The psalmist gives three graphic images of the impending doom:

1.) They would have been devoured by the enemy, swallowed alive (124:3). This is similar to 1 Peter 5:8 where the apostle refers to the devil as a roaring lion, roaming about, *seeking whom he may devour*.

2.) They would have been overwhelmed by the waters (124:4). Floods, in the Old Testament, are often pictures of severe trouble or danger. This would have been easily understood by the Jewish people because flash floods were common in the wadis of their land.

3.) The swollen waters (in a spiritual sense) would have smothered their souls. This is a picture of the flood waters rushing over and covering helpless people, leaving them totally ravaged.

B. *Blessed be the Lord* - Psalm 124:6-8

In verse 6, the psalmist turns from imagining *what if?* to thanking God for His deliverance. David blesses God because He was faithful to Israel. By His sovereign power, they escaped harm. Israel was like a helpless bird caught in the fowlers trap until the sovereign God of the universe broke the trap and set them free. The One *who made heaven and earth* (124:8) was and remains the help of the helpless!

Applications

1. Psalm 124 pictures the Israelites in mortal danger from their physical enemies. We may compare the dangers they faced to the spiritual enemies of sin and satan in our world today. What if the Lord had not been on our side? What if He had not sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sin and draw us to Himself? What if He had not given His Holy Spirit as a seal to ensure our salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14) and sanctification (1 Peter 1:2)? If the Lord had not done these things, we would be left to the mercy of our enemies: our own sin, satan, and the world. We would be without hope. But *blessed be the Lord* who is on our side and shall *preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore* (Psalm 121:7-8). Don't forget to thank Him!

2. In Psalm 66:13-15, the psalmist was most eager to keep the promises he had made to God in his time of trouble. What a lesson for our world today which takes promises so lightly! If we cannot even keep promises to each other, how can we ever expect to keep promises to God? Do you make promises lightly and then fail to keep them? Do you ever promise to pray for someone and then completely forget about it? Will you become more diligent about keeping the promises you make?

3. In Psalm 75, Asaph taught that God's wondrous works declare that He is near. Are you observant of God's wonderful works around you? Do you have the personal awareness that He is near? Have you thanked Him for being near? Will you do so now?

4. In your pilgrimage here on earth, how often do you thoughtfully thank God for answers to prayer?

QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

Day One: Read all notes and references.

1. a. Which psalm this week was most meaningful to you? Why?

b. What did you learn from the thanksgiving psalms that you will apply to your life?
2. After studying these thanksgiving psalms, what do you want to thank God for?

Day Two: Read Psalm 3 and skim 2 Samuel 15-18.

3. According to the title of this psalm and the 2 Samuel passage, what was David's situation when he wrote?

4. a. What was David's complaint?

b. Where did he turn for help?

c. What was it that seemed to give David confidence (See Psalm 3:5)?
5. a. What did David ask God to do for him?

b. How did he express his confidence that God would do what he asked?
6. What does it mean to you that *Salvation belongs to the Lord* (Psalm 3:8)?

Day Three: Read Psalm 88.

7. a. What did Heman the Ezrahite (the psalmist) say about the frequency of his prayers?

b. ♥ (Heart Question) How does this compare with the frequency of your prayers?
8. a. From verses 3-9 and 18, what were Heman's troubles?

b. Which of these troubles were from God?

c. Give some examples of parallelism (where the same thought is repeated in consecutive lines) which give added emphasis to Heman's troubles.
(Example: "Forsaken among the dead,/like the slain who lie in the grave," verse 5)

9. a. If Heman were dead, what would he be unable to do? Give verse.
- b. In his final cry for help, what questions did Heman ask God?
- c. What did Heman tell God about the terrors He had sent?
- d. What is the final word of Heman's lament?
- e. How does Colossians 1:13-14 give encouragement that you need never be in darkness?

Day Four: Read Psalm 90 and Numbers 20 (for background).

10. What do you learn about God from Psalm 90:1-2?
11. What do you learn about mankind from Psalm 90:3-11?
12. a. What request does Moses make of God in Psalm 90:12?
- b. What do you think this means?
- c. What request does Moses make of God in verse 14?
- d. From what Moses has written in this psalm, why do we need God's mercy?
13. a. What is Moses' final request in this psalm?
- b. ? (Thought Question) Why do you think Moses made this request? Keep in mind Numbers 20.

Day Five: Read Psalm 51 and skim 2 Samuel 11-12.

14. a. From the 2 Samuel passage, what were the sins David had committed?
- b. According to the Mosaic law, what was the penalty for committing these sins? (See Leviticus 20:10 and 24:17).
- c. From Psalm 51:1, 2, 7, and 14, what did David want God to do about his sin?
15. a. In Psalm 51, what was David's attitude concerning his sins? Give verses.

b. What did David ask God to do about his heart? Give verse.

c. ? (Thought Question) Why would this be necessary?

16. a. What kind of sacrifice does God desire?

b. Is this the sacrifice David offered? Explain your answer.

17. a. What result would God's forgiveness bring in David's life?

b. Did God forgive David? See 2 Samuel 12:13.

c. According to 1 John 1:9, what will God do for you if you confess your sin?

Day Six: Read Psalm 137 and 2 Kings 25:1-11 and 2 Chronicles 36:17-20 for background.

18. a. Why did the captives' weep? Use the Kings and Chronicles passages also.

b. Why could they not sing?

19. a. What did the psalmist never want to forget?

b. ? (Thought Question) Give some reasons the psalmist would not want to forget Jerusalem.

20. a. What did the psalmist ask God to remember?

b. What was the imprecation (or curse) he invoked on Babylon?

c. What were the judgments God had prophesied against Edom in the book of Obadiah and against Babylon in Isaiah 47:1-3?

d. How would Galatians 6:7 apply to this passage?