

Session 7

November 25, 2018

## A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Psalm 138:1-8

Hurricane Michael passed through our region of the Panhandle in a day; but the devastation will remain for months...and even years. Yet on the Sunday that followed, churches everywhere in the area gathered where they could...outside, in parking lots, under trees, in makeshift shelters. Everywhere around, God's people gave testimony that while buildings may have been damaged, the church was not. With so many hemmed in by fallen trees and downed power lines, only about 30 arrived at my church where we gathered at our picnic pavilion and held services under loose and banging tin. With all that could have been said and done that day, the overwhelming emotion on display was not gloom, but gratitude.

In Psalm 138, David packs all eight verses with expressions of thanksgiving, and explains how and why believers can maintain this continual "attitude of gratitude" regardless of the circumstances.

**The depths of thanksgiving...with all of my heart (vv. 1-3).** From the beginning, David plunges into his thanksgiving prayer with exuberance. He just can't help himself! From down in his heart, he directs his gratitude as high as he can reach, toward all the expressions of God's might and majesty. The *heavenly beings* in verse 1 is the Hebrew word for "gods." Whether in the presence of kings, or idols, or angels, he will not stop praising the one true God. He reaches up to God in verse 1, then bows before Him in verse 2. The temple proper had not yet been built, so his reference is to the place where God dwells. Taking into account all that God is, David gives thanks to His name then acknowledges all that God has given him: love, truth, promises, salvation and strength. The implication of verse 2 is that in so doing, God had proven Himself faithful to His word.

**The breadth of thanksgiving...from all the earth (vv. 4-6).** Who better to advise the rulers of this world than the great king himself? Verses 4 and 5 are the musings of one who has walked with God since he was a child. The man who once said, "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (Ps. 37:25) is confident that any king who truly understands God's promises and faithfulness to those promises will embrace Him as fully as he had. Note that David did not see the Lord as "on his side" alone. Rather than keeping his secret of success a secret, the wise king was also benevolent. He wanted "all the kings on the earth" to *hear* of His promises, *sing* of His ways, and *give thanks* to the Lord. Charles Spurgeon rightly remarked, "David the King cared for kings' souls."

**The scope of thanksgiving...for all He does (vv. 7-8).** The wise and benevolent king was also discerning. While earnestly longing that all kings of the earth would embrace the Lord, he acknowledged that the proud would set themselves against the Him (v. 6), and thus against His people. Nevertheless, the king ends his prayer by looking ahead with confidence. The same faithfulness God had shown in the past will carry him into the future. Experience strengthens faith, and David is rich in both. God will continue to preserve him, to grab hold of him, to save him, and to fulfill His purpose in him. Why? Because God's love is both eternal and intentional. He will not abandon His work-in-progress. The apostle Paul was equally certain of this when he

wrote to the church at Philippi, “I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).

(Please do remember in prayer those brothers and sisters who lost so much because of the recent storm. But be assured: their faith remains strong, their testimony sure, and their attitude one of gratitude!)