

J.J.

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

Psalm 118

*1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!*

PRAY and also PRAY FOR NOEL

INTRODUCTION :

In his book FOLK PSALMS OF FAITH, Ray Stedman tells of an experience H.A. Ironside had in a crowded restaurant. Just as Ironside was about to begin his meal, a man approached and asked if he could join him. Ironside invited him to have a seat. Then, as was his custom, Ironside bowed his head in prayer. When he opened his eyes, the other man asked, "Do you have a headache?" Ironside replied, "No, I don't." The other man asked, "Well, is there something wrong with your food?" Ironside replied, "No, I was simply thanking God as I always do before I eat." The man said, "Oh, you're one of those, are you? Well, I want you to know I never give thanks. I earn my money by the sweat of my brow and I don't have to give thanks to anybody when I eat. I just start right in!"

Ironside said, "Yes, you're just like my dog. That's what he does too!"

Ray Stedman, Folk Psalms of Faith.

Next week it's Thanksgiving *Don't forget the reason for Thanksgiving.

On January 31, 1957, the Canadian Parliament proclaimed:

"A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed ... to be observed on the 2nd Monday in October."

As Christians, we should say to one another... "HAPPY THANKSGIVING TO THE LORD!"

Psalm 118

*1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!*

Background : This verse can also be found in Psalm 106:1; Psalm 107:1, Psalm 118:1, 29; Psalm 136:1

But the first time, it was used in the Bible was in 1 Chronicles 16:34. David just defeated the Philistines and the ark of the covenant (that's the manifest presence of God) was being brought into Jerusalem.

He assigned a band, yes, drummers, folks playing guitars and even a singer (Kenaniah) and even mentioned the reason why he assigned Kenaniah is because he was good at singing. (So let's make sure, we assign someone who sings good LOL). And when the ark was being brought in, David, was dancing in front of the Lord (his wife Michal, didn't like it). Then when the ark was placed inside the tent, he assigned Asaph, the worship leader to sing a song where in the end, you will that verse *O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!*

Now why am I telling this background. The ark of the covenant is the manifest presence of the Lord and it's more than reason enough to praise and thank Him.

Very important : The Bible is very clear that whenever His church gathers, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST is in our midst and that is enough reason for us to praise and thank Him!!!

How?

Psalm 118

1 O give thanks

Giving thanks means to say it, to confess it.

Etymology : Give thanks *yadah* “to shoot arrows” “to cast”,(it's a verb), so it means we have to shoot arrows of thanks to Jesus!

Note : I believe we should make it a habit that in everything, the first words that must come out of our mouth is **“Thank You Jesus.”**

The book of Hebrews said it should be the fruit of our lips

Hebrews 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

ROOT WORD OF YADAH : Now interestingly, the root word for *yadah* is *yad* which means hand... and one of the meanings of *yadah* is is “hand extended”

I know some Christians do not like to raise their hands while praising and worshipping but the Bible specially in Psalms that says that we should lift our hands in our worship. (By the way, the reason why the command is lift up your hands and not lift up your arms is because you cannot lift your hands without lifting up your arms).

And you know what happens according to the Bible when we lift our hands in worship? Our hearts and our spirits are lifted up. Try it.

Quote : *Why do you always lift hands during worship? Because that's what children do when they want to be held by their Father.*

Now in the Bible, we are commanded : *1 Thessalonians 5:18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. (NLT)*

Why?

HERE ARE THE THREE ABSOLUTE REASONS WE SHOULD THANK GOD.

He is GOD. He is GOOD. He is GRACIOUS.

1. HE IS GOD.

O give thanks to the Lord.

Etymology : יְהֹוָה (that's Hebrew)

Translated in Latin letters "YHWH"; so it's pronounced as Yahweh or Jehovah

*"TO BE", "TO EXIST", "I AM" It means :

- nothing is before Him
- nothing is above Him
- nothing or no one created Him
- He has always been and He is always and He will always be
- He doesn't depend on anybody, everything comes from Him.

The reason we thank God is not just because of what He has given us or He has done...BUT SIMPLY BECAUSE HE IS GOD!

The world's very existence, our very existence is only possible simply because He exists.

Application :

- We give thanks to Him because without the One who exists, **NOTHING AND NO ONE WILL EXIST.**

Acts 17:28 For in Him, we live and move and have our being

ILLUSTRATION: I was sharing with DCF last Sunday that an average man takes between 20,000 to 23,000 breathes per day. So for a week, we have already taken at least 140k breaths and for a year, around 1.68M and if we're at least 50 years old, we have taken 84M breaths.

Since it's such a normal thing for us, we think it's automatic that we're still going to take our 20k breaths per day. How are we sure?

I was telling the story of a workmate of mine who in 2 months ago, a 46 year old dad was just playing basketball in their front yard with his 8 year old daughter on a beautiful Saturday summer morning. He felt a pain in his chest. He went inside took aspirin. The wife called 911 but it was too late. He passed away.

Do you think he thought on a Friday night that Saturday morning will be his last time to breathe?

That's why the Psalmist says :

Psalm 150: 6 Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

And in the same Psalm we are discussing, it was written

*Psalm 118:24 This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

What day is it today? Who made this day? The reason we even have this day is because THE GOD WHO EXISTS MADE IT EXIST.

Were you the one who made this day? Are you even in control of your life?

Important : The fact that we are “here” (I’m not talking about place but about our VERY existence) is reason enough to say “Thank You Jesus.”

It’s because our Lord Jesus Christ is God Himself.

John 8:58 Very truly I tell you, “Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

Now, who dare say that Jesus is not God, when it is very clear that Jesus declared Himself as God and it showed in His life, His works, His miracles, His words and of course, His resurrection.

As C.S. Lewis said in Mere Christianity :

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say.

You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

The very reason we exist and we are here (not in this place but again we’re talking about our VERY existence) is because of Jesus. And He is definitely with us here today.

Colossians 1: ¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Illustration: I will hear people sometimes tell me when I’m invited to preach, “Pastor, thank you for being here.” And I appreciate that. But THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE IS HERE, JESUS CHRIST AND WE SHOULD REALLY BE THANKFUL FOR THAT.

Now also In the Bible, whenever we think of the Lord, it talks about His Sovereignty.

This means our Lord is in total control of everything. When God showed Himself to Isaiah, when King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw the Lord as sitting on His throne.

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

Quick background : King Uzziah was a good king at first which brought power and prosperity in Israel and when he died, the people was worried what's going to happen next and that's the time our Lord showed Himself to Isaiah "sitting on His throne" to show that I am the one who truly rules and in control.

Biblical Illustration : Remember the story of Job? If you read further from Job chapters 1 to 2, his friends were saying to him that you must have done something in order for God to take away your wealth, your family and even his health. Job professed innocence which was true because it was God himself who said to Satan that Job was righteous. So Job wanted an audience with God to ask Him why is this happening to him?

So then the Lord spoke to Job.

Job 38 : 1 Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

*2 "Who is this that obscures my plans
with words without knowledge?*

*3 Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.*

God did not answer Job why these things were happening to him. He answered in such a way, BY ASKING JOB QUESTIONS. "Where were you when the earth was created? Do you know what's in the deepest parts of the sea? Do you know when I will let fall snow and hail? Or do you know how the stars were created? How about the animals? Do you know when mountain goats give birth? Where the birds fly and etc?"

And then in the end, God mentioned two large beasts, the Behemoth and Leviathan. Two large and wild beasts that no man can control. In short, it has no benefit to man at all and God created them.

Now why did God answer this way?

Listen carefully. It's not because God did not want to answer Job's questions. It is because he knows that even if he answers Job, man's finite mind will never understand the purposes of God even with this two large animals which he created that has no benefit to man at all.

*Isaiah 55: 8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"*
declares the Lord.

*9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

God is saying to Job, you need to trust THAT I KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING AND I'M IN TOTAL CONTROL OF EVERYTHING EVEN IF SOMETIMES WE CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT.

And why can we trust God?

2. HE IS GOOD.

1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

Etymology : towb “good” morally good (perfect), pleasant, kind

And remember His goodness is perfect goodness, there's nothing evil about Him.

James 1:17 Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow

Application : If you are undergoing trial, it doesn't mean God just wants you to suffer, His purposes are good.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Jeremiah 29: 11 For I know the plans have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future

And remember James said,

He never changes or casts a shifting shadow

This means, He is always good, there is not one single time that He is not good.

Application : So it means, if you are undergoing trial right now, we can thank God because we know that this is FOR OUR GOOD AND THAT HIS INTENTIONS ARE GOOD!

Example : If God has allowed sickness in your life, that is for our GOOD AND HIS INTENTIONS ARE GOOD! If God has allowed financial difficulties in your life, that is for OUR GOOD AND HIS INTENTIONS ARE GOOD. If God has allowed relationships to be broken, that is for OUR GOOD AND HIS INTENTIONS ARE GOOD.

Quote : 'God is too good to be unkind and He is too wise to be mistaken. And when we cannot trace His hand, we must trust His heart.' Charles Spurgeon

AND HIS HEART IS GOOD.

BIBLICAL Illustration : Remember Joseph. God gave him a dream that he will rule over his parents and his brothers. He did not do anything wrong. But his brothers wanted to kill him. He was then sold to slavery. And then with Potiphar, he was doing well as a slave and yet was accused of sexual assault and thrown into prison even if it wasn't true.

He spent many years in prison and interpreted the dream of the baker and the cupbearer and asked not to forget about him when the cupbearer was released. But he still stayed in prison for 2 years and you know the rest of the story, the Pharaoh had a dream and the cupbearer remembered Joseph.

Joseph suffered for 13 years even though he did not do anything wrong!

And when he saw his brothers, and his brothers knew it was him and they became afraid that he will take revenge, what did Joseph say to them.

Genesis 50:20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good,

Application : You might think what's happening to you right now is bad or evil but we can thank God simply because in His sovereignty even if you can't understand it, His intentions are always good. GOD IS GOOD ALL THE TIME AND ALL THE TIME GOD IS GOOD.

That's why I love that song in that animated movie, "Prince of Egypt"

I thought I did what's right
I thought I had the answers
I thought I chose the surest road
But that road brought me here

So I put up a fight
And told you how to help me
Now just when I have given up
The truth is coming clear

You know better than I
You know the way
I've let go the need to know why
For you know better than I

If this has been a test
I cannot see the reason
But maybe knowing I don't know
Is part of getting through

I try to do what's best
And faith has made it easy
To see the best thing I can do
Is put my trust in you

For You know better than I
You know the way
I've let go the need to know why
For you know better than I

We can thank God even in the midst of suffering because His intentions are always good because that who He is. AND NOT ONLY HE IS GOOD... HE LOVES US!

3. We give thanks to the Lord because HE IS GRACIOUS

his steadfast love endures forever!

Oh Beloved of God, I can talk about this topic in a million ways. But one of the absolute reasons we can thank God is because of His great love for us.

Etymology : steadfast love, mercy, great love, lovingkindness “checed”

This word has been used 248 times in the Old Testament

It 's so hard to describe this word because of its profoundness. E.g. it's just like how do you describe a sunset? How do you describe kissing your wife? How do you describe seeing your firstborn or your grandson?

That's why, one of Paul's prayer to the followers of Christ :

Ephesians 3:17 And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

But let me attempt it : This word in a good sense shows ZEAL or DESIRE to show his love, IT'S A PASSIONATE KIND OF LOVE, and it's not only emotional but AN INTENSE DESIRE TO SHOW HOW HE LOVES YOU THROUGH HIS KINDNESS, MERCY AND FAVOR.

Story : Karl Barth, famed theologian was once asked, “**What is the greatest thought you ever had?**” His answer : “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” – Dale Galloway
“Rebuild your life”

Now the reason why I said we thank God because He is gracious is because grace is the New Testament equivalent for “checed”.

God loves you because He CHOSE to love you.

his steadfast love endures forever!

Etymology : endures forever “owlam” always, continuous, perpetual

Again, God loves you because He chose to love you. He loves you not because you are good or better than others. His love doesn't stop when you become bad. HE LOVES YOU . PERIOD.

What is the assurance that God's great love endures forever? I believe this story will capture the love that God has for us.

ADOPTED GIRL GOES TO DISNEY WORLD

I never dreamed that taking a child to Disney World could be so difficult — or that such a trip could teach me so much about God's outrageous grace.

Our middle daughter had been previously adopted by another family. I [Timothy] am sure this couple had the best of intentions, but they never quite integrated the adopted child into their family of biological children. After a couple of rough years, they dissolved the adoption, and we ended up welcoming an eight-year-old girl into our home.

For one reason or another, whenever our daughter's previous family vacationed at Disney World, they took their biological children with them, but they left their adopted daughter with a family friend. Usually — at least in the child's mind — this happened because she did something wrong that precluded her presence on the trip.

And so, by the time we adopted our daughter, she had seen many pictures of Disney World and she had heard about the rides and the characters and the parades. But when it came to passing through the gates of the Magic Kingdom, she had always been the one left on the outside. Once I found out about this history, I made plans to take her to Disney World the next time a speaking engagement took our family to the southeastern United States.

I thought I had mastered the Disney World drill. I knew from previous experiences that the prospect of seeing cast members in freakishly oversized mouse and duck costumes somehow turns children into squirming bundles of emotional instability. What I didn't expect was that the prospect of visiting this dreamworld would produce a stream of downright devilish behavior in our newest daughter. In the month leading up to our trip to the Magic Kingdom, she stole food when a simple request would have gained her a snack. She lied when it would have been easier to tell the truth. She whispered insults that were carefully crafted to hurt her older sister as deeply as possible — and, as the days on the calendar moved closer to the trip, her mutinies multiplied.

A couple of days before our family headed to Florida, I pulled our daughter into my lap to talk through her latest escapade. "I know what you're going to do," she stated flatly. "You're not going to take me to Disney World, are you?" The thought hadn't actually crossed my mind, but her downward spiral suddenly started to make some sense. She knew she couldn't earn her way into the Magic Kingdom — she had tried and failed that test several times before — so she was living in a way that placed her as far as possible from the most magical place on earth.

In retrospect, I'm embarrassed to admit that, in that moment, I was tempted to turn her fear to my own advantage. The easiest response would have been, "If you don't start behaving better, you're right, we won't take you" — but, by God's grace, I didn't. Instead, I asked her, "Is this trip something we're doing as a family?"

She nodded, brown eyes wide and tear-rimmed.

"Are you part of this family?"

She nodded again.

"Then you're going with us. Sure, there may be some consequences to help you remember what's right and what's wrong — but you're part of our family, and we're not leaving you behind."

I'd like to say that her behaviors grew better after that moment. They didn't. Her choices pretty much spiraled out of control at every hotel and rest stop all the way to Lake Buena Vista. Still, we headed to Disney World on the day we had promised, and it was a typical Disney day. Overpriced tickets, overpriced meals, and lots of lines, mingled with just enough manufactured magic to consider maybe going again someday.

In our hotel room that evening, a very different child emerged. She was exhausted, pensive, and a little weepy at times, but her month-long facade of rebellion had faded. When bedtime rolled around, I prayed with her, held her, and asked, "So how was your first day at Disney World?"

She closed her eyes and snuggled down into her stuffed unicorn. After a few moments, she opened her eyes ever so slightly. **"Daddy," she said, "I finally got to go to Disney World. But it wasn't because I was good; it's because I'm yours."**

It wasn't because I was good; it's because I'm yours.

Source: PROOF: Finding Freedom through the Intoxicating Joy of Irresistible Grace
By Daniel Montgomery and Timothy Paul Jones

That's why the Bible says :

Romans 8: 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, [neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God is crazy about us. Proof?

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

So if things aren't doing well in your life right now and he is allowing even seemingly evil things to happen, WE CAN THANK THE LORD ALWAYS - FOR HE IS GOD, HE IS GOOD AND HE LOVES US ALWAYS

Let's say this together :

***1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!***

S.G.D.