

## Gratitude is an Attitude... 'At all times'

Psalm 34

11/18-19/2017

**PP** (Picture of the Washington Monument) The Washington monument is the tallest building in D.C., standing just over 554 ½ feet

The construction was completed in 1884, its capstone set on the point 8 years earlier, made out of, at that time, coveted aluminum

**PP** (capstone) There are four sides to this capstone facing each direction on the compass On the east-side were inscribed the Latin words, *Laus Deo*... which mean *Praise be to God* A powerful reminder to our nation that God is worthy of all praise

***"I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth."*** 34:1

### **PP 1-When should we be full of gratitude to God?**

This Psalm starts out with an incredibly exciting, but impossible-sounding message...bless the Lord *at all times*!!

In good times as well as difficult times, ***'bless the Lord'***!

To ***'bless the Lord'*** is to award, or honor, or show gratitude to God

But there is a deeper meaning to the word ***'bless'*** that forms the root of gratitude

This is a verb here that springs from a noun which means knee

Sounds a bit strange doesn't it...*bless is related to the knee*!??

To bless the Lord is to be filled with a sense of God's greatness and goodness, that makes a Christian willing to take a knee before Him and offer to Him all we are

To bless the Lord is absolutely opposed by any amount of pride that exists in us

Recall when God healed King Hezekiah of Judah from death,

**PP** ***"But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem."*** 2 Chronicles 32:25

His heart was proud, he had accomplished incredible things for Israel, and he felt he deserved the healing that God promised him

Gratitude is a grace word, the realization that any good thing God gives us or does for is underserved, and the result is praise and awe and respect and blessing

If any of us has a gratitude problem, it reveals we have a pride problem

It should be true of us that ***'His praise shall continually be in [our] mouths'*** 34:1b

David defines praise: ***'My soul makes its boast in the Lord, let the humble hear and be glad'*** 2

Boast of God all the time, not just when life seemingly is going the way we want

In fact David examples this in verse 4, ***"I sought the LORD, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears."*** 34:4

When God blesses, boast, and when God delivers, boast, and when God restores, boast...praise Christian, your praise impacts and affects the church, pulling your brothers and sisters in Christ into their own praise with hearts of gratitude

David's example is an invitation to all of God's people to ***'magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together!'*** 34:3

***'magnify'*** which means to make great, doesn't mean we can increase God's greatness, but our collective praise can elevate the view that others have of God, exalting His name

Church, let us lift up and bless God, for it has a profound impact on our own souls as others  
***“Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.” 34:5***  
 A radiant face is a face of joyful hope and the promise is that those who bless God with hearts  
 of gratitude will never be ashamed of putting their confidence in Him!

Is God nudging you yet?

Have you come through that terrible trial, and somehow your heart is thanking God for it?  
 Are you in that trial, but your heart is singing a refrain of the wonderful mercies of God?  
 Have you discovered that in good times and even hard times, a heart of praise will bless God?  
 You see, gratitude is a work of grace in our hearts, not a determination of our flesh  
 You and I cannot conjure up gratitude, we're not able to just become grateful in our own power  
 This is squarely a work of God in our hearts, as His presence and goodness are given to us  
 Which is where David begins to head, after we get a clue of God's grace in rescuing Him

## **PP 2-Why should we be full of gratitude?**

***“This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” 34:6***

**PP** *“He who praises God for blessings will always have blessings for which to praise God.”*  
 Spurgeon

There is a possibility that there is a cynical flutter going through some minds right now  
 I mean, David was the king with wealth, fame, power and luxuries...right?  
 Meanwhile, some are in some seriously fierce trials and battles, and we are to bless God always?  
 Do you have a heading or a title at the beginning of this Psalm?  
 You likely do, and it may read, *‘Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech’*  
 The story is found in 1 Samuel 21, when David fled from murderous Saul to the land of Gath  
 This was not only a Philistine city, but the home town of their hero Goliath who David killed  
 The servants of the king of Gath found out David was there, and David was afraid for his life  
 So he feigns insanity...scratching on the city gate, drooling into his beard like a madman  
 So convincing was he that King Achish drove him out saying, I have enough madmen already  
 David's life was spared and he recognized that this was from God: ***“The angel of the LORD  
 encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” 34:7***  
***‘The angel of the Lord’*** in the Old Testament is usually a reference to Jesus Christ  
 Christian, this is a promise for you and me...Jesus encamps around those who ***‘fear Him’***, which  
 is not terror fear, but a mixture of the highest awe and most profound respect for God  
 The two stir up our affections for God and forms our worship

And the way this awe and reverence grows in the hearts of God's people, is to ***“taste and see  
 that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” 34:8***

This sounds a bit odd doesn't it...to taste and see that the Lord is good?!

**PP** Peter instructed, ***“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may  
 grow up into salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.” 1 Peter 2:2-3***

To taste is to test, to experience...it is the mom who squirts the baby bottle on her arm first to  
 make sure it isn't too hot for her baby

Christian, this Psalm is calling us to test and see just how good God is  
 When you are in that trial, bless the Lord, and praise Him, **verse 1**

Magnify the Lord, and exalt Him with other believers, **verse 2**

Seek Him, **verse 4**, look to Him, **verse 5**

Cry out to Him in your trouble, **verse 6**

Through all this He will prove His goodness to you, and you will learn to *‘take refuge in Him’*

But there is one more question that I want to answer from this Psalm:

**PP 3-How can we be full of gratitude and blessing?**

***“Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints, for those who fear Him have no lack!”*** Psalm 34:9

The rest of this Psalm is an assault on the prideful heart that prevents blessing and gratitude

David gives reason after reason to bless God and praise Him with gratitude

But fast forward over 1,000 years to when Jesus Christ walked the earth, and I’d like to tell you  
how the Jewish people cultivated grateful hearts that blessed the Lord

The Jews were taught to pray three times a day: morning, afternoon and evening

One was the Shema, and another was the Shemone Esri, or the Amidah, or simply ‘The 18’ which  
were benedictions or blessings

Benedictions are good words, and these prayers were good words about God...praising Him

For times of healing they prayed, *‘Blessed are you, O LORD, the healer of the sick’*

For forgiveness, *‘Blessed are you, O LORD, Who is merciful and ready to forgive’*

For receiving wisdom, *‘Blessed are You, O Lord, the gracious giver of knowledge’*

The Jewish people understood that gratitude doesn’t come when we get more things of the world,  
but when they tasted the presence and the goodness of God and returned praise to Him

The rabbis taught that you shouldn’t pray The 18 on the back of a donkey, because being up high  
can make you feel proud and self-sufficient

Instead, come down to earth, stand, and offer your benedictions to the One higher than you

They would gather at the Temple to pray The 18 as it served to remind them of God’s presence

If you were out of Israel, you turned and faced the direction of Israel

If you were in Israel, you turn toward Jerusalem, where God’s presence dwelt

And if you didn’t know what direction Jerusalem was, turn your heart toward the Holy of Holies

A life with God was a life of giving thanks to Him

Every rabbi would teach his disciples, his talmidim, how to pray The 18 in his own way, which  
is what the disciples were doing when they asked Jesus to *‘Teach us to pray’*

The Lord’s Prayer is The 18 in summary form

In the early church, the Christians would pray the Lord’s Prayer three times a day

But gratitude for the Jewish people went beyond The 18 prayers

They would not eat until they paused and remembered that their meal was a gift from God

One rabbi said, *‘A man must not taste anything until he has blessed it’*

But they wouldn’t so much bless the food, but the One Who gave it to them

**PP** They understood what **Psalm 24:1** says, ***“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof,  
the world and those who dwell therein”***

Everything is a gift from God!

So serious was it to bless God for the meal, if they forgot, they would go back to where they ate  
and thank Him so they wouldn’t forget the next time

If this was practiced today, and you forgot to pray at the table at the Pburg Chick Fil A, you would go back, ask the people to get up for a moment and sit down and bless God. Arguments between rabbis took place debating how much time you had to return and thank God. It was generally settled that you must do that before the food is digested out of your body. They were taught to bless God for each item of food you ate in a meal: bread, figs, wine, meat. The principle was that God was lavishing His goodness upon them, so they returned blessing. Jesus gave thanks in the upper room for the bread, and later for the wine they enjoyed.

But their gratitude extended to even a lamp by blessing God Who brought light from darkness. They would bless God when they saw a comet; when they stood at the edge of the Mediterranean Sea; when it rained because God's mercy sends rain on the just and unjust. Disciples stayed bunched up with their rabbi, never knowing when he would say a blessing. They had, believe it or not a blessing that one rabbi gave for going to the bathroom: *"Blessed are you, O Lord, who has formed man in wisdom, and created in him many orifices and many cavities."* Well, if you have ever not had one of those orifices working right, you know how sincere that blessing can be!

But like any religious activity, prayers of blessing became for many of the Jews what they considered a way to make themselves righteous.

**Romans** proclaims clearly, ***"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."*** 10:4

Righteousness can only come through Jesus Christ Who gave His life for us. A grateful heart will pour out in constant good words toward God for all things and in all times. Are you tasting and seeing that God is good to you?! Let God's praise be continually on our lips, making this week of Thanksgiving a new way of life.

Let me close by returning to the Washington Monument for a moment more. Since the capstone is about 555 feet high, the National Park Service created a replica which is on display for all visitors to see with a plaque next to it. The side with Laus Deo is so close to the wall that it couldn't be seen and the plaque was censored to remove any mention of the original words and their translation. There was such an outcry that the Park Service promised to restore it and make it easily visible. Let the praise of our mouths never be censored, and rise up and bless the Lord at all times!

Amen  
Pray