

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 5: Soul Songs**  
**Job – Psalms**

**Message 8 – Songs of Praise & Thanks**  
**Psalms 100 & 139**

**Introduction**

Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise occupy a major part of the book of Psalms. This is because gratitude toward God honors Him. After revealing that He does not delight in animal sacrifices and burnt offerings, God declares: “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High ... He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me” (Psalm 50:14,23). Both on a personal and a corporate level, we are to be marked by the attitude of gratitude.

There is overlap between the various Psalms of Thanks and Praise. A general classification is as follows:

Psalms of Corporate Thanks: 65, 67, 75, 100, 105, 107, 124, 136

Psalms of Personal Thanks: 21, 30, 34, 40, 66, 92, 108, 116, 138

Psalms of Praise: 18, 32, 41, 95, 96, 98, 103, 104, 106, 111, 112, 113, 117, 118, 145-150

**A Corporate call to Praise: Psalm 100**

Psalm 100 is the classic short call to praise. It may have been used at the 3 major annual festivals in Israel, as the people gathered to worship God. As in ancient times, it is still often used in worship services as the introductory call to enter God’s house with shouts of thanksgiving and praise.

*Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*

*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting and His faithfulness to all generations.*

**How** are we to give thanks and praise? With joyful singing and glad serving. **Why** are we called to do so? Because God has made us, cared for us, been good to us, and bestowed us with His lovingkindness and faithfulness. Quite simply, we worship God because He IS the LORD Who is worthy of our thanksgiving and praise. Through thanksgiving and praise, we acknowledge that it is our privilege to be the sheep of HIS pasture, and that we would not want to do life without Him.

Worship is to “declare worth” to God. His worth is priceless and praise is declaring to Him that He is worth my highest affection. Eg. I praise You for Your greatness (Psalm 145:3). I praise You that You are good and You are compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love (Psalm 145:8). Praise focuses on *who God is*, not on *what He has done for us*. Praise is telling God all the things that you love about Him. When we praise God, we bless Him by telling Him how much we love Him; but at the same time, our own faith is strengthened as we remember who God is and that He is intimately involved with every aspect of our lives. “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17,27; Luke 18:27).

Note: Giving “thanks” differs from “praise” in that thanksgiving focuses on what God has done and is doing for us. It is focusing on God’s care for our personal lives and the lives of those we love.

*Personal praise is so important for my own trust in and growing love for God. When I get together with other believers in corporate praise, I can join with them in celebrating God and telling Him what I love about Him. Praises put to music are simply declarations in song. It is all about focusing on God and His character, rather than what He has done for me. We honor God when we come together in corporate worship, with our hearts prepared to sing praise to Him.*

### **A Personal Reflection in Awe of God: Psalm 139**

The 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm reads like a personal song/poem David composed concerning the wonder of his relationship with God. He mentions giving “thanks” only once (v.14); but the entire tone of the Psalm is that of gratitude for all that God was to David. It may have been written during a time of struggle against some enemies, for he reflects upon God’s justice in dealing with “the wicked” toward the end of the Psalm. There were many things about God that

captured David's heart. He focused on five specific aspects of God's ways of relating with him that he was thankful for.

## **1. God knows everything about me: (vv.1-6).**

God is omniscient, meaning that He has perfect knowledge of everything. David first expresses his wonder over the fact that God personally and intimately knows everything about him.

***O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.***

God not only knew every thought, word and action of David; He also "enclosed him behind and before," meaning that He was carefully watching over David and protecting him. The very thought of God's personal intimacy with him was overwhelming to David.

*It is clear that David had thought about the ways he had felt God's very personal touch on his life. This is so important to learn. God is a personal God. He does know each of us intimately. But do I take the time to think about and voice to Him how I have experienced Him personally? Eg. Has God recently shown you a personal "touch" that you knew was just for you? Thank Him for your experience of Him.*

## **2. God goes everywhere with me: (vv.7-12).**

God is also omnipresent, meaning that He is completely present everywhere at all times. David was comforted by the knowledge that God went with him *everywhere* in life, even into the darkest valleys and most terrifying places.

***Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around***

***me will be night,” even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.***

Previously David referred to the “hand of God” being upon him for protection (v.5). Here David again refers to the “hand of God” leading him at every step of his journey (v.10). There was no place on earth that David could go where he could escape the personal presence of God.

*Often when I am in a hard chapter, it is difficult to see how God is there with me. I can feel very alone. Yet, knowing the truth that He IS THERE can help me to cling to Him in spite of my feelings of aloneness. “I will never leave you, no, I will never forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Sometimes it is not until later that I can see how God really was there with me. Psalm 139 declares the reality that there is absolutely NO place in the universe where God is not present. Are you feeling alone or abandoned? Spend time focusing on these verses. You can be comforted knowing the truth that He IS with you wherever you go.*

### **3. God skillfully formed me for a purpose: (vv.13-16).**

David further marveled that God *knew* him even *before* he was born. God fearfully and wonderfully knit him together while he was still in his mother’s womb, all for specific purposes that were pre-numbered and pre-ordained just for him.

***For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.***

Life did not begin on the day when David was born. It began when God skillfully formed David and numbered his days “*when as yet there was not one of them*” (i.e., before he had lived even his first day). The personal care of God for each one of us begins at the moment we are conceived!

Each of us was created with God complete involvement. Give thanks to God that all of the characteristics you were born with ARE part of His handiwork in you. Do you find yourself saying, "I wish I was more like ..." Or, "I wish I hadn't been born with ..." Choose to turn those regrets into opportunities to thank God for the way that He created you. Thank Him specifically for those things about yourself that you often complain about. You ARE fearfully and wonderfully made!

#### **4. God is immanently involved with me: (vv.17-19).**

God is both transcendent (over all) and immanent (in and through all). When we say that God is immanent, it means that He is personally and intimately involved in every aspect of our lives. He is "with us," not distant from us. He is mindful of us and engaged with us at every point. David was deeply moved at how *thoughtful* God was toward him.

***How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.***

There are trillions upon trillions of grains of sand on the beach. Imagine that God actually has that many thoughts towards you. When you realize that, it is so precious to be so special. Perhaps you feel like no one else is thinking about you, or understands you. God does! As you realize this, thank Him that He is constantly thinking about you. You are incredibly valued by Him!

#### **5. God also knows His enemies (and David's): (vv.20-22).**

David had no lack of personal enemies. Yet, it was more important to David that these people hated his God. It grieved David's heart to see and hear people taking God's name in vain. As evidence of his love for God, David expressed his own hatred of those who mocked and disdained his precious God. Above all, it comforted David to know that his God was *fully aware* of every one of his enemies, and *completely just* in His dealings with every human being.

***O that You would slay the wicked, O God; depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed. For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred; they have become my enemies.***

When the ultimate “Son of David,” Jesus Christ was on earth, He set a higher standard in terms of our attitude (and prayers for) our enemies. He spoke of loving those who hate us (Matthew 5:43-48). Why? Because that is actually how God loves. He doesn’t “hate” those who hate Him. He loves humanity and continues to reach out to us, in spite of our mockery and disrespect of Him. Thank God that even though you often think and act in ways that don’t reveal God’s character to others, in His mercy He still loves you and others who disregard or despise Him.

**A closing prayer for God’s intimate searching: (vv.23,24).**

David concludes as he began – with a word about how God “searches” out his inmost being. Whereas in the opening lines David said that God *had searched him and known him*, he closes by *inviting God to search him even more deeply*. He specifically asks God to search out those “hurtful ways” that remained buried in his heart (lit. “ways of pain”) and to bring healing to those areas of his life.

***Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.***

God’s Spirit wants to reveal to you things that are hidden so deep in your heart that you cannot see them (but God does see them). If God did reveal to you some flaw or hurtful way in you (some way that you self-protect, or some wound from the past), would you welcome this revelation? David invited God to search him and reveal the hidden hurts. This takes time of being alone and open to God’s Spirit. There is nothing to fear. His goal is to bring healing to the deepest parts of your heart.

**A final thought: Gratitude or Grumbling?**

Praising God and giving thanks displays an attitude of gratitude. The opposite of gratitude is grumbling. It is important to constantly choose to praise and thank God, both on your own and with others. If you don’t, you will inevitably gravitate toward complaining, blaming, bitterness, frustration and fear. Praise and thanksgiving is the proper response to your gracious, merciful God. But it is also good for you! You will have a heart that is full of trust, comfort, awe, courage, peace, reverence and respect. What parent doesn’t smile when a child says that he/she is thankful and grateful for who the parent is, and for what the parent does? An attitude of gratitude delights your Father *and* lifts up your soul!