

# PSALM 138

It does not appear, nor is it material to enquire, upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but in it,

**I.** He looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had had of God's goodness to him (v. 1-3).

**II.** He looks forward with comfort, in hopes,

1. That others would go on to praise God like him (v. 4, 5).
2. That God would go on to do good to him (v. 6-8). In singing this psalm we must in like manner devote ourselves to God's praise and glory and repose ourselves in his power and goodness.

## PSALM 138:1-5

### GRATEFUL PRAISE

*A psalm of David.*

**I.** How he would praise God, compare <sup>BB1</sup>Psalm 111:1.

**1.** He will praise him with sincerity and zeal — “*With my heart, with my whole heart, with that which is within me and with all that is within me, with uprightness of intention and fervency of affection, inward impressions agreeing with outward expressions.*”

**2.** With freedom and boldness: *Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee, before the princes, and judges, and great men, either those of other nations that visited him or those of his own nation that attended on him, even in their presence. He will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pious ejaculations in any company, but will sing praise if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is work which the greatest of men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. Before the angels* (so some understand it), that is, in religious assemblies, where there is a special presence of angels, <sup>AB1D</sup>1 Corinthians 11:10.

**3.** In the way that God had appointed: *I will worship towards thy holy temple.* The priests alone went into the temple; the people, at the nearest,

did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our temple, and towards him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God, in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherward we must lift up our eyes in all our addresses to God. *Our Father in heaven.*

## II. What he would praise God for.

**1.** For the fountain of his comforts — *for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth*, for thy goodness and for thy promise, mercy hidden in thee and mercy revealed by thee, that God is a gracious God in himself and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him. *For thou hast magnified thy word* (thy promise, which is truth) *above all thy name*. God has made himself known to us in many ways in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater things are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation is much greater than what is discovered by reason. In what God had done for David his faithfulness to his work appeared more illustriously, and redounded more to his glory, than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential Word, and of his gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law, and made that honourable, magnifies the gospel much more.

**2.** For the streams flowing from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, v. 3. He had been in affliction, and he remembers, with thankfulness,

**(1.)** The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, he prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him, gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his promises and their prayers.

**(2.)** The sweet communications he then had from God: *Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul*. This was the answer to his prayer, for God gives more than good words, <sup>4306</sup>Psalm 20:6. Observe,

[1.] It was a speedy answer: *In the day when I cried*. Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer grow rich by quick returns. *While we are yet speaking God hears*, <sup><2624></sup>Isaiah 65:24.

[2.] It was a spiritual answer. God gave him strength in his soul, and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God give us strength in our souls to bear the burdens, resist the temptations, and do the duties of an afflicted state, if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds and to wait with patience for the issue, we must own that he has answered us, and we are bound to be thankful.

**III.** What influence he hoped that his praising God would have upon others, v. 4, 5. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences, and his example, to embrace religion; and, if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now,

**1.** This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others. “They shall all praise thee.” When they visited David, and, after his death, when they sought the presence of Solomon (as *all the kings of the earth* are expressly said to have done, <sup><4923></sup>2 Chronicles 9:23), they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel.

**2.** It may look further, to the calling of the Gentiles and the discipling of all nations by the gospel of Christ, of whom it is said that *all kings shall fall down before him*, <sup><3921></sup>Psalms 72:11. Now it is here foretold,

**(1.)** That *the kings of the earth shall hear the words of God*. All that came near David should hear them from him, <sup><1196></sup>Psalms 119:46. In the latter days the preachers of the gospel should be sent into all the world.

**(2.)** That then they shall praise God, as all those have reason to do that hear his word, and receive it in the light and love of it, <sup><4138></sup>Acts 13:48.

**(3.)** That they shall *sing in the ways of the Lord*, in the ways of his providence and grace towards them; they shall rejoice in God, and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, Those that walk in the ways of the Lord have reason to sing in those ways, to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them; and, if we are so, *great is the glory of the Lord*. It is very

much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those who walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good Master and his work its own wages.

## PSALM 138:6-8

### GOD'S CARE OF HIS PEOPLE

David here comforts himself with three things: —

**I.** The favour God bears to his humble people (v. 6): *Though the Lord be high*, and neither needs any of his creatures nor can be benefited by them, *yet has he respect unto the lowly*, smiles upon them as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth to cast a gracious look upon them (<sup>-2575</sup>Isaiah 57:15; 66:1), and, sooner or later, he will put honour upon them, while *he knows the proud afar off*, knows them, but disowns them and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and welcome — that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out; witness the instance of the Pharisee and the publican, Luke 18.

**II.** The care God takes of his afflicted oppressed people, v. 7. David, though a great and good man, expects to *walk in the midst of trouble*, but encourages himself with hope,

**1.** That God would comfort him: “When my spirit is ready to sink and fail, *thou shalt revive me*, and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles.” Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles and are ready to die away for fear.

**2.** That he would protect him, and plead his cause: “*Thou shalt stretch forth thy hand*, though not against my enemies to destroy them, yet *against the wrath of my enemies*, to restrain that and set bounds to it.” **3.** That he would in due time work deliverance for him: *Thy right hand shall save me*. As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the right hand of the Lord, that shall save all those who serve him.

**III.** The assurance we have that whatever good work God has begun in and for his people he will perform it (v. 8): *The Lord will perfect that which concerns me,*

**1.** That which is most needful for me; and he knows best what is so. We *are careful and cumbered about many things* that do not concern us, but he knows what are the things that really are of consequence to us (~~4052~~ Matthew 6:32) and he will order them for the best.

**2.** That which we are most concerned about. Every good man is most concerned about his duty to God and his happiness in God, that the former may be faithfully done and the latter effectually secured; and if indeed these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, ~~3006~~ Philippians 1:6. Observe,

**(1.)** What ground the psalmist builds this confidence upon: *Thy mercy, O Lord! endures for ever.* This he had made very much the matter of his praise (~~4006~~ Psalm 13:6), and therefore he could here with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope. For, if we give God the glory of his mercy, we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well pleaded, “*Lord, thy mercy endures for ever; let me be for ever a monument of it.*”

**(2.)** What use he makes of this confidence; it does not supersede, but quicken prayer; he turns his expectation into a petition: “*Forsake not, do not let go, the work of thy own hands.* Lord, I am the work of thy own hands, my soul is so, do not forsake me; my concerns are so, do not lay by thy care of them.” Whatever good there is in us it is the work of God's own hands; *he works in us both to will and to do;* it will fail if he forsake it; but his glory, as Jehovah, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end that we may in faith pray, “*Lord, do not forsake it.*” Whom he loves he loves to the end; and, as for God, his work is perfect.