

Rev. Lex DeLong / General Adult

Thanksgiving 2025 / Psalm 138:1–8

Offer thankful prayer to God because He has answered our past cry, regards our present lowliness, and guarantees our future purpose.

Notes

11/23 Ps. 138:1-8, "Thankful Prayer: Finding Strength in God's Answer," Scripture: Matt. 6:30-34

Intro: As we approach the Thanksgiving table this week, many of us will sit down with full plates but perhaps heavy hearts. The holidays have a way of magnifying our reality. For some, looking back at this past year brings memories of struggle and crisis. For others, looking at the present moment feels overwhelming—you may feel small, overlooked, or stuck in a "lowly" place. And for many, looking forward to the future brings fear about the unknown.

If we base our thankfulness only on how easy our life is right now, our gratitude will be as fragile as a dry leaf. True thanksgiving isn't just about the food on the table; it is about the confident peace in our souls.

The Context: This is exactly where King David finds himself in Psalm 138. He isn't writing from a palace of ease; verse 7 tells us he is walking "in the midst of trouble." Yet, this is one of the boldest songs of praise in the entire Bible. How does he do it? How does David find strength and peace when the pressure is on?

The Proposition: David describes that gratitude keeps your eyes looking forward, while remembering the past and living in the present. Gratitude acts like a virtual time machine. David looks at his past, his present, and his future, and he finds God active in all three. He realizes that prayer isn't just asking for things; it is the acknowledgment and acceptance of things in God's relationship with him that fuels and strengthens his soul.

The Homiletical Main Idea: If you need strength this holiday season, this text invites you to do one thing:

Main Idea:

Offer thankful prayer to God because He has answered our past cry, regards our present lowliness, and guarantees our future purpose.

I. Offer Thankful Prayer that Celebrates How God *Answered Our Past Cry* (Verses 1–3)

- Look back and see that God has demonstrated His lovingkindness and truth (v. 2)
 - ++God has already proven His Word to us ("magnified your word")
 - ++God has already revealed Himself to us ("Your name")
- ++We open our prayer with praise because we have a history with God. He didn't just listen; He answered and emboldened us (v.3)
- ++"On the day I called, you answered me."

"Emboldened" (Verse 3)

*"On the day I called, You answered me; You **made me bold** with strength in my soul."* (NASB)

- The Hebrew Word: Rahab (רָחַב)
- The Nuance: This is a rare and fascinating word choice. In almost every other context in the Bible, this root word is negative—it means to be "arrogant," "proud," or "boisterous" (it is related to the name of the chaos monster, Rahab).

Rahab the Chaos Monster is a figure from ancient Near Eastern mythology adapted into the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), where it represents a primordial sea monster embodying chaos, the turbulent deep, pride, and arrogant opposition to God's order.

- Why it Matters: David is saying something shocking: "**God, you put a 'holy arrogance' in my soul.**"
 - Most translations just say "strengthened" (KJV, NIV), but the NASB captures the unique Hebrew flavor with "made me bold."
 - When God answers our prayer, He doesn't just give us enough energy to survive (strength); He gives us a **confidence** in peace that almost feels like pride but is actually holy boldness. We can walk with our heads high, not because of us (which is what pride is focused on), but because of God, Who has proven He backs us and has proven the truth of His word in showing His lovingkindness to us, even through our difficult past, sometimes even because of it.

Illustration: Consider "Internal Steel" (Verse 3)

- God "emboldened" (Rahab) the soul. **God didn't remove the trouble; He increased the capacity to handle it.**

The Load-Bearing Beam Illustration:

"Imagine a house under the pressure of a heavy storm. You might pray, 'Lord, stop the wind!' But often, God doesn't stop the wind outside; instead, He reinforces the beams *inside*. That is what the word 'emboldened' means here. God didn't take David out of the battle; He put a steel spine into David's soul. **He made the man stronger than the storm.**"

"It is a wonderful thing to know God has the power to answer us. But power without care can be terrifying. The Psalmist shows us that the God who has the power to answer kings is the same God who has the humility to care for the weak. We move from His mighty hand to His tender eye..."

"So we praise Him for the history we have with Him. But does God only care about the big victories of the past? What about where we are right now? David reminds us that God isn't just the God of the victory; He is the God of the valley..."

II. Offer Thankful Prayer that Acknowledges How God *Regards* Our Present Lowliness (Verses 4–6)

- Even the kings will have to give thanks to God when He proves His words (v. 4)
- ++The LORD's glory will be seen by all (v. 5; c.f., Phil. 2)
- ++The exalted LORD regards the lowly (v. 6)

"Knows" vs. "Regards" (Verse 6)

*"For though the Lord is high, He **regards** the lowly, but the haughty He **knows** from afar."* (NASB)

- The Hebrew Words: Ra'ah (regards) vs. Yada (knows)
- The Nuance: There is a play on distance here that English misses.
 - To the lowly, God "sees" (ra'ah) them. In Hebrew, "seeing" implies looking with attention, approval, and intimacy. He is up close.

- To the haughty, God only "knows" (yada) them "from afar." He recognizes them—He doesn't ignore them—but He keeps His distance.
- Application: This heightens the paradox of the verse. Usually, you have to be close to someone to "know" them and far away to just "see" them. God reverses it: He is intimately close to the humble (seeing them with care) but stands far back from the proud (knowing them only from a distance).

Illustration: The Telescope vs. The Microscope Illustration:

"Human beings are like telescopes: we are always trying to look at the 'stars'—the big, famous, high-up people. But God is like a microscope. The higher He is, the more He focuses on the small, the minute, and the humble. To the world, you may be invisible; but through the lens of God's grace, you are the only thing in focus. He looks *past* the mountains to see the valley."

In vv. 4-6, David writes that we continue our prayer with awe. Even though God is high above the kings of the earth, His attention is fixed on the humble.

"Knowing that God sees our lowly state is comforting, but we need more than just observation; we need completion. We need to know that the God who watches over us will also work *through* us until the end. The **gaze** of God leads us to the **guarantee** of God..."

"It is good to know God is with us in the valley. But we aren't meant to stay in the valley forever. We need to know where this is all going. Thankfully, David doesn't just leave us with a God who cares; he points us to a God who completes..."

III. Offer Thankful Prayer that Trusts How God *Guarantees Our Future Purpose* (Verses 7–8)

- In trouble the LORD revives and saves us (v. 7)
- ++The LORD is completing us (v. 8)
- ++The LORD's care does not fade ("everlasting")
- ++The Lord will fulfill his purpose for us

"Fulfill" (Verse 8)

"The Lord will **fulfill** His purpose for me..." (NASB)

- The Hebrew Word: Gamar (גָּמַר)
- The NASB says "fulfill," but the KJV says "perfect." The Hebrew gamar means "to bring to an end," "to complete," or "to finish." It is the technical term for bringing a process to its intended conclusion.
- Why it Matters: It implies that your life is currently "under construction." God isn't just maintaining you; He is actively working on a project in you that has a finish line it is leading to.

Philippians 1:6 ("He who began a good work in you will perfect it"). Your confidence isn't just that God is with you, but that **God is a "finisher."** He does not leave projects half-done.

The Sculptor's Chisel Illustration:

"Michelangelo once said of his statues, 'The angel is inside the stone; I am just carving to set him free.' Sometimes life feels painful—like we are being chipped away at. But this verse promises that God isn't randomly hacking at your life. He is a Master Sculptor. Every trial is a chisel strike that is removing the excess to reveal the masterpiece He promised to complete."

We conclude our prayer with confidence. We do not fear the future because God has committed Himself to finishing His work in us.

Conclusion: As we leave here and head toward our holiday gatherings, I want us to carry the "holy boldness" the "holy arrogance" of Psalm 138 with us.

We have seen today that our God is the God of all time.

- In the Past: We saw that when we cried out, He didn't just whisper back. He answered and put Rahab—a storm-like, holy confidence—into our souls.
- In the Present: We saw that while the world ignores the humble to chase the famous, God pushes past the haughty to "see" and "regard" the lowly. He is close to you right now.
- In the Future: We saw that we are not finished products. God is Gamar—He is the

Finisher who guarantees that He will perfect the work He started in you.

The Application: So, when you sit at your Thanksgiving table this Thursday, look around at your family and friends, but then look inward at your soul. If you feel weak, remember the God who emboldened you before. If you feel invisible, remember the God who regards you now. If you feel worried about what's coming, remember the God who fulfills His purpose in, for, and through you forever.

The Final Encouragement: You can face the holidays with strength, not because your life is perfect, but because your God is faithful.

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"You can be thankful today because God heard you yesterday, He sees you today, and He will hold you tomorrow."