



Psalms 138

Whole hearted Praise to God!

Psalms 138:1-8, *I will praise You with my whole heart; Before the gods I will sing praises to You. ²I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name. ³In the day when I cried out, You answered me, And made me bold with strength in my soul. ⁴All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, When they hear the words of Your mouth. ⁵Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, For great is the glory of the Lord. ⁶Though the Lord is on high, Yet He regards the lowly; But the proud He knows from afar. ⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand Against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me. ⁸The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands.*

Background of Psalm 138

1. Authorship

Psalm 138 is attributed to **David**, making it one of the few Davidic psalms in the final section of the Psalter (Book V: Psalms 107–150).

This placement is significant because Book V emphasizes **restoration, thanksgiving, and renewed trust** after seasons of exile and hardship.

Why this matters?

David's voice appears here as a model of **personal gratitude** and **public praise**, anchoring Israel's worship in God's covenant faithfulness.

2. Historical Setting.

While the psalm does not specify an exact event, scholars generally connect it to a season when:

- David had faced **intense opposition**
- God had **answered his prayers**

- David experienced **deliverance and strengthening**
- Nations or rulers around him were beginning to recognize God’s hand on his life

This fits several moments in David’s life:

- His rise to kingship despite Saul’s pursuit
- His deliverance from surrounding enemies
- His establishment as king over a united Israel

The psalm carries the tone of a man who has been **rescued, vindicated, and reassured** of God’s ongoing purpose.

3. Literary Placement in the Psalter.

Psalm 138 begins a small collection (**Psalms 138–145**) often called: **“The Final Davidic Collection”**

These psalms:

- Celebrate God’s steadfast love
- Highlight His faithfulness to His promises
- Emphasize humility, trust, and worship
- Prepare the reader for the climactic praise of Psalms 146–150

Psalm 138 serves as the **gateway** into this final Davidic praise sequence.

4. Theological Themes.

Psalm 138 is rich with theological depth. Key themes include:

a. Wholehearted Worship.

David praises God “with my whole heart,” showing undivided devotion.

b. God’s Exalted Word.

“You have magnified Your word above all Your name”

God’s promises and character are inseparable.

c. God’s Nearness to the Lowly.

Though exalted, God bends down to the humble.

d. God’s Faithfulness in Trouble.

David acknowledges that God revives him in the midst of adversity.

e. God’s Commitment to His Purpose.

“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me”

God finishes what He starts.

5. Structure of the Psalm.

Psalm 138 flows in three movements:

1. Personal Praise (vv. 1–2).

David expresses wholehearted gratitude for God’s character and Word.

2. Testimony of God’s Help (vv. 3–6).

David recounts how God answered him and strengthened him.

3. Confidence in God’s Future Faithfulness (vv. 7–8).

David trusts God to preserve him and complete His purpose.

This movement mirrors the journey of many believers:

Praise → Testimony → Trust

6. Liturgical Use.

In Jewish and Christian tradition, Psalm 138 is used as:

- A psalm of **thanksgiving**
- A psalm of **renewed trust**
- A psalm for moments of **deliverance**
- A psalm for **dedication** and **commitment**

Its language is deeply personal yet universally applicable.

7. How the Background Shapes.

Understanding the background helps frame the sermon:

- David praises God **after** experiencing deliverance
- His gratitude is **public**, not private
- His testimony encourages **nations** and **leaders** to worship
- His confidence in God’s future work strengthens believers in trials

Psalm 138 becomes a model for:

- **Thankful worship**
- **Humble dependence**
- **Bold testimony**

- **Enduring trust**

The setting: David is the author, but he isn't writing from a "bubble" of safety. He writes while "walking in the midst of trouble" (v. 7).

The "gods": In the ancient Near East, kings and nations claimed their idols were supreme. David stands in the middle of a pluralistic, often hostile world and declares his allegiance.

The Hook: Most people thank God *after* the storm passes. David thanks God while the clouds are still dark. This is "audacious gratitude"—praise that serves as a spiritual weapon rather than just a polite response.

Thesis: Genuine worship transforms our perspective of the past, our influence on the present, and our confidence in the future.

I. **Personal Worship: The "Whole-Heart" Commitment (v. 1–3)**

"I will praise You with my whole heart; Before the gods I will sing praises to You..."

- The Hebrew word for heart (*lebab*) involves the will and intellect, not just emotions. To praise "before the gods" means David is declaring God's supremacy over any earthly power, rival ideology, or cultural idol.
- **Wholehearted praise** reflects a life fully yielded to God.
- David praises God for **His character**—lovingkindness (*hesed*) and truth (*'emet*).
- God's **Word** is exalted: *"You have magnified Your word above all Your name."*
- **The Core Reason (v. 2):** God has magnified His **Word** and His **Name** above all things. His promises are as reliable as His character.
- God **answers**—He is not distant.
- God **strengthens**—He gives inner courage.

Love the Lord with all your heart.

Deuteronomy 6:5, *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

Worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:23–24, *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

God's Word is settled forever.

Psalms 119:89, *Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.*

Daniel in the Lion's Den. In **Daniel 6**, Daniel faced a decree forbidding prayer to anyone but the King. Like David, Daniel's worship was "whole-hearted." He didn't hide. He opened his windows and prayed as he always had. He praised the true God "before the gods" of Babylon.

Colossians 3:23. *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters."*

The "Ebenezer" on the Desk. A businessman in a hostile corporate environment kept a small stone on his desk. When asked, he would say, "It reminds me who I actually work for." He praised God "before the gods" of profit and ego, and eventually, his integrity led his critics to seek his counsel.

Application

- Begin each day with intentional praise, not leftover energy.
- Let God's Word shape your emotions, decisions, and worship.
- Praise God not only for what He does, but for who He is.

The "Bold Strength" of Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman, the famous conductor of the Underground Railroad, lived out the "Audacity of Gratitude" in the face of the most terrifying "gods" of her time—the system of American slavery.

The "Cried Out" Moment: Harriet was a woman of deep prayer. She often said she "talked to God every day" and "stood still and let Him lead her." In one specific instance, she was leading a group of runaway slaves toward freedom when she felt a sudden, heavy "trouble" in her spirit. She sensed slave catchers and dogs were closing in.

The Answered Prayer (v. 3): Instead of panicking, she sat down by a river and "cried out" to God. She later testified that God didn't instantly transport her to Canada, but He "made her bold with strength in her soul." She felt an internal prompt to lead the group into the icy, deep water of the river—a move that seemed suicidal.

The "Perfecting" Purpose (v. 8): The group crossed safely, and the cold water completely threw the dogs off their scent. They reached freedom shortly after. Harriet lived the rest of her life as a testimony to Psalm 138. Despite being a "lowly" woman with a bounty on her head, the "kings of the earth" (senators and generals) eventually sought her counsel during the Civil War.

II. Global Impact: The Kings and the Lowly (v. 4–6)

"All the kings of the earth shall praise You... For though the Lord is on high, yet He regards the lowly..."

- David's private worship has a public echo. Verse 6 is the "hinge" of the Psalm: God is not impressed by the "proud" or the elite; He is drawn to the humble. The word "regards" (*ra'ah*) means to see with intentionality and care.
- God is **exalted**, yet He bends low to the humble.
- The proud remain far from Him.
- God's Word will reach the nations.
- Even rulers will acknowledge His greatness.
- Worship expands when God's Word is proclaimed.

God is near to the brokenhearted.

Psalm 34:17–18, *The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. ¹⁸The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*

James 4:6, *God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

Isaiah 57:15, *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

God dwells with the contrite and lowly.

Psalm 22:27, *All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You.*

All nations will turn to the Lord.

Philippians 2:10–11, *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Every knee will bow.

Revelation 7:9, *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,
A multitude from every nation worships God.*

The Call of Gideon. In **Judges 6**, God didn't look for a king in a palace; He looked for a fearful man threshing wheat in a winepress. Gideon felt "lowly" and "least," but that was exactly where God's focus was.

James 4:6. *"God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble."*

The "Hidden" Compassion of Dr. Brand

Dr. Paul Brand was a world-renowned hand surgeon who spent his life working with leprosy patients in India—people who were considered the "lowly" of the lowly, the "untouchables" of society.

One day, Dr. Brand was examining a patient's hand. In the medical world of that time, leprosy patients were often treated like clinical objects because they couldn't feel pain. But Dr. Brand did something unusual. As he looked at the man's scarred, crippled hand, **he reached out and took the man's hand in his own with deep tenderness.** He treated the patient not as a "case," but as a human being made in the image of God.

The "King" Notices: The patient began to weep. Dr. Brand asked through a translator why he was crying. The man replied, "**No one has touched me for twenty years.** Everyone else looks at me from afar, but you regarded me."

Years later, Dr. Brand was honoured by the "**Kings of the Earth**"—he was **knighted by the Queen of England** and received countless international awards. When the world asked how he became so influential, he pointed back to those "lowly" patients. Because he "regarded the lowly" just as God does in **Psalm 138:6**, his work eventually caused the "kings of the earth" to hear his words and praise the God he served.

Application

- Bring your anxieties to God; He listens.
- Humility attracts God's presence; pride repels it.
- When overwhelmed, ask God for inner strength, not just outer solutions.
- Share God's Word boldly; it carries global power.
- Pray for leaders to encounter God's truth.
- Remember that your worship joins a worldwide chorus.

III. Future Confidence: The God Who Finishes (v. 7–8)

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me... The Lord will perfect that which concerns me..."

- David acknowledges he is currently "in the midst of trouble." The word "perfect" (*gamar*) means to bring to a completion or to perform fully. It is a promise that God does not leave "half-finished" projects.
- Trouble is real, but God is present.
- God **revives, protects, and fulfils His purpose.**
- God's mercy endures; He does not abandon His people.

Psalm 23:4, *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

God is with us in the valley.

Romans 8:28, *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

God works all things for good.

Philippians 1:6. *"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

He who began a good work will complete it.

Peter on the Water. In **Matthew 14**, Jesus didn't wait for the storm to stop before reaching out to Peter. He stretched out His hand *in the midst* of the waves. God's hand is active during the trouble, not just after it.

The "Mess" of the Master Weaver

There is a famous story told about a young girl who used to sit at her grandmother's feet while the grandmother worked on a massive tapestry.

From the girl's perspective on the floor, all she could see was the **underside** of the fabric. To her, it was a disaster. There were jagged knots, loose threads of dark colours, and tangled messes of yarn that seemed to have no pattern at all. She would look up and say, "Grandmother, that looks like a mess! Why are you using those ugly brown and black threads?"

The grandmother would simply smile and say, "Child, you are looking at it from your side. I am looking at it from mine."

Eventually, the grandmother would finish the work, lift the girl up, and show her the **top side**. The girl was stunned to see a beautiful landscape—a sunset with vibrant golds, deep purples, and rich textures. The "ugly" dark threads she saw from below were actually the shadows that gave the sunset its depth. The "tangles" were the anchors that held the masterpiece together.

Application:

- Trust God's process—He is perfecting what concerns you.
- When surrounded by enemies or pressures, rely on His protection.
- Rest in the truth that God finishes what He starts.

IV. Conclusion & Application.

The "Whole Heart" Audit: Is there a "room" in your heart you haven't let God into? Is your gratitude partial, or is it whole?

- **The "Lowly" Path:** If you feel overlooked, remember that pride creates distance ("*He knows from afar*"), but humility creates intimacy.
- **The Finished Work:** Whatever "concerns you" today—children, health, finances—God is under a self-imposed covenant to *perfect* it. He does not forsake the work of His hands.

Start your day with wholehearted praise

Praise shifts your focus from problems to God

The Secret of the Redwoods

In the early 20th century, a group of naturalists began studying **the Giant Redwoods of California**. These trees are some of the oldest living things on earth, **surviving for over 2,000 years**. They stand hundreds of feet tall, weathering massive storms, forest fires, and centuries of drought.

When you look at a Redwood, you would assume that for a tree to stand that high, its roots must go deep—perhaps hundreds of feet into the earth to anchor it. But botanists discovered a shocking paradox: Redwoods have incredibly shallow roots. **Their roots rarely go deeper than six to ten feet.**

The Crisis: Logically, a 300-foot tree with shallow roots should fall the moment a "storm of wrath" (v. 7) hits it. If a Redwood stood alone, it would perish.

The Revelation (The "Hand" of the Creator): The secret to the Redwood's survival isn't the *depth* of the roots, but the intertwining. As the roots spread out horizontally, they find the roots of the other trees and literally lock onto them. They create a massive, underground "web" of support. When the wind blows against one tree, the entire forest holds it up.

Furthermore, when a "lowly" (v. 6) sapling begins to grow in the shadow of the giants, the older trees actually pass nutrients through this root system to the younger ones that can't reach the sunlight yet.

The Connection to Psalm 138

As we close let us remind ourselves:

1. **"In the Midst of Trouble" (v. 7):** Like the Redwood, you may feel the wind of a storm today. You might feel that your roots are too shallow to hold you up.
2. **"The Lord Will Perfect" (v. 8):** God's way of "perfecting" you is often through the "intertwining" of His grace and His people. You are not standing alone. The "Work of His Hands" isn't just you—it's the entire "forest" of His Kingdom.

3. **The Master Weaver:** Just as the Redwoods survive because they are locked together by a design they didn't create, your life is held together by a Covenant (*Hesed*) that you didn't initiate.