

Psalm 108: 1-6

¹ My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and make melody.

Awake, my soul!

² Awake, O harp and lyre!
I will awake the dawn.

³ I will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples,
and I will sing praises to you among the nations.

⁴ For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
and let your glory be over all the earth.

⁶ Give victory with your right hand, and answer me,
so that those whom you love may be rescued.

This psalm begins with a resolution and a promise: “I will sing and make melody... I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples and I will sing praises to you among the nations...” The reason? “For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.”

However, the psalm then moves backwards, for the thanksgiving precedes the delivery of victory and rescue for which the thanksgiving is given in anticipation. Vs. 5-6 call on God to exalt God’s self by giving victory to God’s people and rescuing them. To begin with thanksgiving and praise is to have the kind of faith that trusts and hopes victory and rescue will come no matter what.

But does the psalmist truly believe this without any doubt? Would you give thanks and praise to God believing without question God will rescue you and give you victory as you wrestle and struggle against some “foe” internal or external?

If you read the remainder of the psalm (vs 7-13) the most immediate foe the psalmist has in mind are other nations antagonistic and oppressive of God’s people. Their defeat and Israel’s victory will manifest God’s fulfillment of the promise to bless the people. But what if this does not happen as the psalmist hopes, prays and anticipates it will? How does God grant us victory in our lives as we are vulnerable to aging and illness, conflict in our relationships within our families, communities, societies and world? If things do not improve is this a failure on God’s part, a failure in our mode of praying or believing, or a failure of enthusiasm in us for praising God and giving thanks?

The constant challenge we face is finding ways to give thanks and praise in all the seasons and circumstances of our lives. Any rescue God may work in and through us must be about better equipping us to face whatever we must face in life and in death. To imagine faith and prayer to God will protect us from any hardship or challenge is an

illusion. To build up a faith and to pray a faith that calls on God and trusts that God will always provide (providence) a way through is altogether different. Our very spiritual growth and human flourishing are not contingent on avoiding the troubles of life, but developing our character, our values, our compassion and the quality of our relationships through them. Welcoming God into the centre of all that, learning to thank and praise the ground of our being (God), and learning how to open our hearts to the channeling of divine love energy (Holy Spirit, Jesus' Spirit), is what it's all about. The psalmist must learn this as each of us must learn this. May "our heart be steadfast" for the journey, through death to new life.

PRAYER: Fill our hearts, O God, so that we may sing and make melody to you, so that we may thank you from deep within our hearts. Grant us steadfastness of spirit, so that even when the days and seasons of life are hard, we may still thank you because thanksgiving has become a stabilizing foundation of our inner life. May we accept the truth that life will bring its challenges as much as its joys for all our efforts to make things work. What happens to our bodies, our minds and our spirits are not always in our hands to shape or control. The circumstances of life are bigger than us and yet they affect our lives substantially. May you be that steadfast power and energy within, the ground on whom we stand and the Spirit to whom we pray. Through the fire and the water, through the pain and through the joy, may we keep growing through you, to become a richer blessing to the world, surpassing any pain or hurt... Amen.