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### **How's Your Thank-ability? Psalm 118**

Why do we fail to thank people? Why do we not have a heart of thankfulness as would be fitting with what we have, or even thankful in spite of what we have, in spite of our circumstances. Why are we not more thankful? One would think that the people with more stuff would be the most thankful...but that is just not so. In fact, it is often the very opposite is true. The people with all the stuff, all the money, all the opportunity, all the health, all the talents and advantage often seem to be the people who have a hard time giving a genuine word of thanks.

Why do we fail in the area of thanks? For some of us, we fail to thank well, because there is little done that impresses us as worthy of our thanks. It's no big deal. They have done this for you so often..you expect it. Only when it is not done do you get upset. But why offer your thanks for something so unimpressive. Some of us fail to give thanks well, because we don't like the idea of being in debt to someone else. We don't like admitting that someone else has done for us what we needed. We don't like thinking that we now are in debt to the person who has done for us..so by going skimpy on our thanks we are somehow lowering making our repayment loan lower. Small thanks, makes what the other has done smaller so that our return of the favor can be then smaller. We don't like to be beholding to anyone..especially those we don't care for. We fear taking a weaker position. We fear that if we thank the way we ought then the other person will take advantage of us in what the want from us. We fail to thank well because we are suspect of their motives behind their act of kindness. We don't do a great job of receiving things well from others. We do not like to humble ourselves under their service.

Some of us fail to thank well because we are so dense, we have failed to see what another has done for us. Perfect example is mom. What an incredibly important job, a thankless job that gets taken for granted. We become so used to mom doing for us that we fail to see what they are doing and so we do a real poor job of saying thanks. Now I know most of the kids and husbands are feeling guilty right now so go ahead and take

a minute to thank mom. It seems when kids move out or go away to college they magically discover how valuable mom was. Just doing the laundry, mom becomes a super hero. When children get married and begin to have kids they often return home and say, wow that was a lot of work, and those little suckers don't even say thank-you. Thanks mom and dad for all those countless hours you stayed up with me at night, changing my diapers, providing countless things for me and largely unthanked. We fail to thank because at the time we don't see it as anything worth our thanks. Mom and dad I can't believe all you did for me when I could not do for myself. Thanks.

We fail to thank when we compare another's gift with what we were given. We fail to give thanks because we don't feel the person giving is worthy of our thanks. We fail to give thanks because we just aren't impressed or see anything worthy of our thanks or awe.

If you ever go to visit Old Faithful at Yellowstone National Park. You will be amazed by the number of tourists, Japanese and Germans surrounding the geyser with their video cameras on tripods in place, trained on the famous hole like weapons guarding its arrival. A large digital clock displays the number of minutes until the next hot water eruption. While waiting for the next spout, one can enjoy food or drink in the dining room of the Old Faithful Inn that overlooks the geyser area. It's very interesting when it is about one minute before the eruption, everyone in the dining area rushes to the windows to see the famous water shot. Almost immediately, as if cued, a crew of busboys and waiters descend on the tables to refill water glasses and clear away the dirty dishes. When the geysers goes off, all the tourists are wowing and oohhing and awiiing, some will even applaud. But if you look over your shoulder not one single busboy or waiter, not even the ones that had finished their chores so much as bothered to even look out the huge windows. Old Faithful had become entirely too familiar...it had lost its power to impress them. There are few things more quickly taken for granted than God's faithfulness...but few things are more important and impressive. God deserves our untiring praise, wonder and thanksgiving.

We need to be better at giving thanks. Thanks to God and thanks to others. We need to be better givers of our thanks. My purpose this morning is to enliven a heart of thanks among God's people. After all if

anyone has a reason to be thankful, should not God's people be noted for their thankfulness? Turn in your Bibles to the book of Psalms. Its right in the middle. If you were to drop it open, there is a good chance it would open to Psalms. Chapter 118. This is the last song in a group of Hallel psalms or praise songs. We often sing Hallelujah and many people don't even realize that they are singing the Hebrew word, Hallel is praise. Yah the word for God. Praise God, or Praise the Lord. These hallel songs are connected with certain of the feasts and This song 118 is sung after the Passover meal has been eaten. It is quite possibly Jesus sang this song with His disciples after the Passover meal just before He went to the garden of Gethsemane to be betrayed and later crucified. In Matthew 26:30 it reads "And after they sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." This is also significance as later in the Psalm 118, verse 22 says the "stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." In the New Testament writings, Jesus applied this statement to Himself as a stone, rejected by men, but used by God as the key stone, the chief stone by which all others are measured.

This Psalm was intended to be sung antiphonally with the leader reading a section then the worshippers responding with an easy to remember phrase. Please stand for the reading of God's word and I will signal your response. READ.

Look at verse 1. It begins with the phrase "give thanks" For those here who are ready to work on becoming better at their ability to give thanks, work on their thank-ability. Number one, It's great to know that we have something we can give. Amazingly we have something we can give even to God. By its very nature, thanks must be given. It cannot be forced or else it is mere words, just polite manners. Thanks must be given voluntarily. We have something we can give even to God and that is our thanks. Isn't that neat to have something to give to God that He would love to receive? Christmas is coming and on just about everyones list there is someone who seems to have everything. What do you get for the person who seems to have everything? Every tool known to man. Everything together in life. What could one give? How about that person who Owns it all, created it all and is God? What about a gift to God? One of the neatest gifts we can give to God is a thankful heart. He just loves people who are thankful. Parents don't you just love it when your kids

are thankful. What does it want you to do? Give them more stuff. They may even be trying to manipulate us to get what they want by being thankful but we don't care. Because we are incredible suckers for people who are thankful. We like to help those who reveal a truly thankful heart. One who is thankful is impressed by the kindness received and is ready to acknowledge it. To Thank, is to appreciate what another has done for me. The origin of the word come from think. Its to think rightly about what another has done on your behalf. How is your thank-ability. It is up to us, our choice...because it is something that only comes from us. We have something we can give to God that He just loves to hear. Our Thanks.

Well, How do we begin to grow in this area of thanksgiving? Not only must we first realize we have something to give, But secondly good thank-ability begins by recognizing that another has acted on our behalf. If we are so dense that we don't see how much another has sacrificed on our behalf..we are never going to be good thankers. Just like kids who are blind to the sacrifice their moms do for them, driving them places, cleaning their clothes, cooking food for them to eat, giving them money. Thankful hearts have eyes that can readily see something worthy of their thanks. That's not easy because the ability to see things worthy of thanks demands that you be other focused...and not self-focused. And we are so selfish...it's tough to get past me and mine. Selfish people are so ingrown all they see is life through their own eyes, so when others do thing for them they assume they deserve it, that is their right, they are entitled to it...that is just the way life works...so they will only kick and scream when that blessing is absent. They would never think of saying thanks. Thanks demands that we get out of ourselves and see things through others eyes, more other-centered. We have to be able to see how others have acted unselfishly on our behalf.

The Poet here in Psalm 118 has no problem recognizing and publicly affirming that God has acted on his behalf. "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His lovingkindness is everlasting." His loyal, Hessed love is not capricious it will be consistent and last forever.

Point number 3, Giving thanks is a relationship enhancer. Look at verses 2 and following. Look at all the people that are infected by the Psalmists thanksgiving. Let Israel say. Let the house of Aaron, that is the

priests say. Let all those who revere the Lord, all the worshipers say. Say what, His lovingkindness is everlasting. When you thank another it will draw you closer together in relationship. Thanksgiving is a relationship enhancer. When we are thankful to God and express it, we say it to God..it draws us closer in relationship to God, and to those who love God. Do you want to have better relationships then put on the overcoat of thanksgiving. Wear it wherever the winds are cold. Where it where all can see and appreciate it and you will be warmed by its effects.

Be grateful. Pursue like a detective those things you can thank others for. Look especially for those little things that typically get unnoticed. If you manage people at work, look for those things you can be thankful for. You would be amazed at how it will enhance your relationship with others. The returns on a simple thank-you far outweigh the price of its offering, but an unthankful boss or employee will reap a harvest of "I'm quitting" notices. Write a note, give a call, drop by. Say the words some how. Thank you. Before thanksgiving, take a sheet of paper, a warm drink, and sit down to quiet evening and write down everything you are thankful for...pick two that you had never noticed before and write a note to thank that person for his or her kindness on your behalf.

My guess it will enhance your relationship with them, for you enter into the great thanksgiving exchange. As they give you kindness, in return you give thanks. It does very little good if you do not communicate your thanks somehow to them. Keeping it all to yourself doesn't qualify as thanksgiving. Oh you may say you are thankful in your heart, but it that other person never knows it what good does that do? Nothing. The groups of people here in verse 2-4 are saying it, acknowledging it. I have heard parents who praise their children on and on in the absence of their kids...but then the children will say, I never heard my father say he was proud of me, I never heard my mom say I did a good job at anything. Why do we fear that if we thank someone we will produce a bloated head? Why do we think if we verbally thank someone they will take advantage of us and want something more in return? We are people that loved to be thanked. I do. Why because the other person has recognized the effort I took on their behalf to help them out. I did it because it was important to me. When that other person says thanks, they are agreeing with me that it was a valuable and important thing to do...and it was

done for them. That agreement enhances our relationship with each other. When we give our thanks to each other we become closer friends. When we give thanks to God we will draw closer to Him. How is your Thank-ability?

In verse 5 we see the Poet is in distress. Initially it doesn't seem like a position of distress would vault forth a heart of thanksgiving...but that is what happens. Point number 3, Look for Need to set up an opportunity for fostering a thankful heart. The Psalmist has plenty of Need. He is in distress, feeling overwhelmed, closed in, surrounded, like bees, v12 closing in and stinging without protection. One bee I can swat away, but swarms of bees at my head and I'm going to start to run. V. 13 feels pushed over the edge. Alone and fearful. No one likes to be in need of help, in trouble, in distress, lonely or overwhelmed, unable to make it on ones own. Men especially. One of our biggest fears is having to rely on someone else. We will work three times harder on our own, to get the job done, as long as we don't have to break down and ask someone for help. Just be in a car with a man at the wheel. He will never admit he's lost, why ...He doesn't want to face the torturous embarrassment of having to bury his pride and ask someone for directions. He doesn't want to ask for help when he is in need. But it is that very need that gives you the chance to say thank you. The point is this, if you were never in need, then no one would ever need to help you and you would never get the chance to say thank you to someone. It is need that sets up the opportunity to foster a heart of thanks.

We seem to have a better ability to recognize and say thanks, when we have first needed, struggled, gone without, hurt, felt overwhelmed, felt rejected, experienced loss. When you have been taken for granted, you see very clearly when others do the same for you. Women seem to love going out to restaurants far more then men. Why? They know and appreciate the hard work and effort that goes into preparing meals, every day , 21 a week, 274 a month, 1095 a year, 11,000 every decade, over 66,000 a lifetime. We can appreciate those in the struggle, because we ourselves were once their and struggling. In the absence of blessing, we can be thankful remembering the times clearly when God blessed us with many good things. We foster a heart of thanksgiving in the middle of our own need by remembering when God lovingkindness and faithfulness

was clearly seen in the past. We can see the difference and thank God. If never a need, then no thanks.

Mother Theresa tells a story about when she and some friends went out one evening and picked up four people off the street. One of them was in a most terrible condition. She told the sisters, "you take care of the other three; I will take care of the one who looks the worst. So she did all her for her that she could. When she put her in a bed, there was the most beautiful smile on her face. She took hold of Theresa hand and said only two words, "Thank you". Then she died. Now, If we were in this ladies place we probably would have tried to draw a little attention to ourselves. "I'm dying here," Moan, moan, I'm hungry, thirsty, I'm in pain." But instead she gave much more, grateful smile of love and thanks. Too many people in this world die twisted and bitter. She died with a smile of thanksgiving on her face.

Wow. What a convicting story. It just shows how long ways I have to grow in the area my ability to give thanks. Point 5 We all have room to grow in our thank-ability. But it is encouraging to know that we can grow in our thanks. It's infectious. Just as the Psalmist encouraged and challenged others, the people of Israel, the priests, the worshippers all to give thanks. He challenges us today. The Psalmist models a thankful heart. Think about those you know who are really thankful. What are they like? It seems those whose have a great thankers have the ability to see even the insignificant things as worthy of thanks. They are unselfish and other centered. Lord open the eyes of my heart to see even the little things to be thankful for, those things that are overlooked by most everybody else. As we skip down through this Psalm we see in verse 22 again the stone that was rejected became the chief cornerstone. The insignificant, the rejected, the seemingly weak..God uses in mighty and powerful ways. God looks with different eyes and calls us to do the same, delighting to use the rejected and ridiculed. V.24 The Psalmist recognizes one of the most taken for granted events that occurs every day. The coming of a new day. In .v25 Thanking God for those fellow worshiper who love God as well. We grow in our gratitude when we begin to search and see the significantly insignificant things to be grateful to God for.

Some of more thankful people I know have gone through difficult life experiences. The tough times ripped from them the oppressive luxury

of taking life for granted and replaced it with the blessed delight of chewing on life's smallest morsels with savory delight. A thankful heart develops an eye for the significantly insignificant as the struggle through life presents us with a choice to be thankful or bitter. Verse 6 he says resolutely "I will not fear" He has chosen faith over fear. He has chosen to look for things that will forge our faith.

Those who model thankfulness well have hearts that look to God for ultimate satisfaction. Verses 7-9 we can choose to look to man for refuge, for satisfaction, or for God. v.8 it is far better to hide in the Lord for protection. What can man do to me? v.6 Ridicule and lack of honor and rejection has no effect, why because I am looking to a different set of eyes for my satisfaction and honor. I do not look to the world for my satisfaction, for my pleasure, for my fulfillment, to feel my emotional lonely needs or social security. I am looking alone to God to provide and I am thankful to Him for all He has provided. Great is Thy faithfulness.

God has done so much for us. Do you want to begin to foster a heart of thanks? Go on a thanksgiving hunt, not for eggs or candy but for those things worthy of thanks...possibly even those things that seem insignificant to most, but not to you. Find it and mark it with your thanks. Then look for another. Mark that with your thanks. Go on a thanksgiving hunt for the rest of your life and you will be amazed at the enhancement of your relationships with god and others, you will be amazed at the joy, the peace in the midst of trouble. God gives us good things, what a privilege to be able to give something back.

Max Lucado writes from his book *The Great House of God*. "I've seen you stalking the malls, walking the aisles, searching for that extra special gift. Stashing away a few dollars a month to buy him some lizard-skin boots; staring a thousand rings to find her the best diamond; staying up all night Christmas Eve, assembling the new bicycle. Why do you do it? So the eyes will pop, the jaw will drop. To hear those words of disbelief. "You did this for me?" Wow Thanks! And that is why God did it. Next time a sunrise steals your breath or a meadow of flowers leaves you speechless, remain that way. Say nothing. and listen as heaven whispers, "Do you like it? I did it just for you"