

True Prosperity

A Hanukkah Prayer of Dedication

Psalm 30:1 *"A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.
"For the end, a Psalm and song at the dedication of the
house of David" (LXX)*

I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

³ O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

⁵ For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved."

⁷ By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

⁸ To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy:

⁹ "What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?"

¹⁰ Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!"

¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,

¹² that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Psalm 30

Prosperity, Prosperity

PROSPERITY. IT IS A GIFT FROM GOD, a significant blessing that all people long for. “If you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will ... make you abound in prosperity (*tobah*), in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land” (Dt 28:1, 11).¹ It is a great good when prosperity comes to a person or a nation, as even a Jewish Vulcan knows (“Live long, and prosper”). But like anything good that God gives, we easily stumble over them. They are good gifts that come from a good God. But we fall over them as we pervert that which is good, with the result that can be some profoundly bad things because of them, or rather, because of us.

¹ The word in our Psalm is *shalu*, translated as *euthenia*. It, or a form of it appear only nine times. The LXX translates it in Genesis 41 as the “abundance” Egypt enjoyed during seven years of plenty. It seems to mean being at ease in prosperity. The word in the blessing in Deuteronomy is a form of *tob* (good; *tobah*). In Job, they are synonyms: “Because he knew no contentment (*shalev*) in his belly, he will not let anything in which he delights escape him. There was nothing left after he had eaten; therefore his prosperity (*tub*) will not endure” (Job 20:20-21). “One dies in his full vigor, being wholly at ease and secure (*shalev*), his pails full of milk and the marrow of his bones moist. Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of prosperity (*tobah*)” (21:23-25).

This week, **Justin Taylor** tweeted an old clip I had not seen from his (and my) former pastor **John Piper** on the Prosperity Gospel. He called it, “**How an extemporaneous aside became a viral video.**” It was 2005 in a gathering of 1,000 college students in the heart of the Bible-Belt in Birmingham, Alabama. He said,

I don’t know what you feel about the Prosperity Gospel—the health, wealth and prosperity gospel—but I’ll tell you what I feel about it. Hatred. It is not the gospel, and it’s being exported from this country to Africa and Asia, selling a bill of goods to the poorest of the poor: ‘Believe this message, and your pigs won’t die and your wife won’t have miscarriages, and you’ll have rings on your fingers and coats on your back.’ That’s coming out of America—the people that ought to be giving our money and our time and our lives, instead selling them a bunch of crap called “gospel.”²

² See **Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra** “The Story Behind John Piper’s Most Famous Attack on the Prosperity Gospel,” (Feb 14, 2017), *The Gospel Coalition: Bible and Theology*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/story-behind-john-pipers-most-famous-attack-on-the-prosperity-gospel>

He went on to give a chilling illustration of a father's most precious possession, his daughter, flying through the window of a car to her death. And though it was in the moment, Piper knows better than anyone the pain of such a thing, as his mother was killed when a log flew off a truck, smashed through a window, and instantly killed her in a bus. He said, "God is glorified in us when we can say through the deepest possible pain, 'God is enough. He will get us through. He is our treasure. Whom have I in heaven but you? And on earth there is nothing that I desire besides you.'" In another place he writes,

God is not glorified when we keep for ourselves (no matter how thankfully) what we ought to be using to alleviate the misery of unevangelized, uneducated, unmedicated, and unfed millions. The evidence that many professing Christians have been deceived by this doctrine is how little they give and how much they own. God has prospered them. And by an almost irresistible law of consumer culture (baptized by a doctrine of health, wealth, and prosperity) they have bought bigger (and more) houses, newer (and more) cars, fancier (and more) clothes, better (and more)

meat, and all manner of trinkets and gadgets and containers and devices and equipment to make life more fun.

They will object: Does not the Old Testament promise that God will prosper his people? Indeed! God increases our yield, so that by giving we can prove our yield is not our god. God does not prosper a man's business so that he can move from a Ford to a Cadillac. God prospers a business so that 17,000 unreached people can be reached with the gospel. He prospers the business so that 12 percent of the world's population can move a step back from the precipice of starvation.³

I don't completely share his convictions about what we are to do with our money. I don't see it as an either/or false dichotomy, unless we are trying to merit salvation. But I do share the basic premise about how we do not use our prosperity to alleviate the misery of others as we should. This problem is not as easily solved as simply giving all your money away. There are many, many factors that go into those questions. But neither is it solved by disregarding the basic point they make about selfishness in the face of prosperity. In fact, if we think we can easily dismiss it,

³ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR.: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 198.

perhaps we share the root of the problem ourselves, and don't want to deal with the truth?

Context: Dedication of the House

Psalm 30 is a **song of affliction** (perhaps sickness)—the opposite of prosperity, at least in some ways. Connecting it to the adjacent psalms (helping us remember to be reading the psalms together), it has been prayed together with Psalm 31 and a few others in the Psalter that deal with those kinds of personal pains.⁴ **Augustine** connects it to Psalm 29 saying that the previous song celebrates **the completion of that tent in which we live in our time of warfare, but now we have the dedication of the house that will abide in everlasting peace** (Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms* 30.1). At the very least, there is a “house” theme in both songs.

Along with every other psalm, it is not written in a simple English rhyming meter. Some have noticed that it has an orderly albeit quite difficult meter. Perhaps the meter of the rhyme was meant to show the disruptions in his life? Nevertheless, it is “**one of the best psalms, distinguished as it**

⁴ Cf. *The Domestic Guide to the Footstool of Mercy. A Course of Morning and Evening Prayers, Etc.*, 1828.

is for its light and flowing style in spite of a difficult meter, for its beautiful and appropriate images, for its clear outline, and for its uniform mood.”⁵

The song is a back and forth prayer of what David does for what God does. He recognizes out loud in his prayer both things. The song falls into three basic parts.

vv. 1–3, Praise for Yahweh, who has rescued the petitioner from sickness and Sheol.

vv. 4–5, Call to all pious people to join in the praise, and a creedlike explanation (**v. 5**).

vv. 6–12, Description of the healing and help, together with concluding praise.

Many speculate that the timing of David’s poem comes from some kind of illness, for he says, “**I cried to you for**

⁵ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *A Continental Commentary: Psalms 1–59* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 353, citing B. Duhm. [Imagine composing music or singing to this meter:](#)

Vs. 1	4 + 3	Vs. 5	4 + 4	Vs. 9	4 + 4
Vs. 2	2 + 2 + 2	Vs. 6	3 + 2	Vs. 10	3 + 3
Vs. 3	4 + 3	Vs. 7	4 + 4	Vs. 11	4 + 4
Vs. 4	3 + 3	Vs. 8	3 + 3	Vs. 12	4 + 4

help, and you have healed me” (vs. 2). Though it could have a physical healing in mind (it is certainly appropriate to pray about physical sickness), I don’t think that is what David needs healed. When we organize the psalm into its chiasmic structure, a center appears. What is that center? It is David, at ease in his prosperity and the great sin it drew out of him. “As for me, I said in my prosperity, ‘I shall never be moved’” (6). He sounds like Nebuchadnezzar. David wanted this sin healed!

Superscription (30:1a)

A) I will extol You, O Lord (30:1b)

B) Reflection (30:1c)

C) Cry, pit, praise (30:2-4)

D) God’s anger (30:5a)

E) God’s favor (30:5b)

F) I said in my prosperity, “I will not be moved”

(Ps 30:6)

E1) God’s favor (30:7a)

D¹) God’s anger (30:7b)

C¹) Cry, pit, praise (30:8-9)

B¹) Reflecting Prayer (30:10)

A¹) I will give thanks to You forever (30:11-12)⁶

⁶ <http://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2015/01/13/psalm-301-12/>. The girl at www.alittleperspective.com has vs. 7 as the center, “You hid your face; I was dismayed.” These are clearly parallel ideas.

When might he have had such thoughts as feeling as if he could never be moved? This question can prove **helpful and instructive**. A clue seems to come in **the superscription**. “**A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.**” The word “temple” is the word *bayith*. This is one of several words used in the OT for the temple (cf. **Ezra 3:9; 5:3**; etc.). The problem, of course, is that if David wrote this song, there was no temple yet (hence the LXX simply has *oikos* or “house”). Thus, Calvin speculates that he is talking about the dedication of **his own house**. He further speculates that it was sometime after his son Absalom had died.

That tale begins with Absalom and Amnon, half-brothers and sons of David. When Amnon falls in love with and then rapes his half-sister Tamar (Absalom’s full sister), Absalom seeks revenge. He kills his brother, and for it has to flee the kingdom. Upon return, he is then banished from David’s sight for two years. When the son then seeks revenge on his father: planning a coup, turning against David, forcing him to flee, and corrupting his house with his father’s concubines (**2Sa 16:22**), we aren’t very surprised.

After the long and sorted story of Absalom comes to an end, David returns to his own home. It is most likely, as Calvin thinks, that the king decides to dedicate his house at this time because of the things Absalom had done to defile it. It is not difficult to imagine David doing something like this. It was actually a law in the Torah. “When a man dedicates his house as a holy gift to the LORD, the priest shall value it as either good or bad” (Lev 27:14) and “The officers shall speak to the people, saying, ‘Is there any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it” (Dt 20:5). It is here that he writes his song as he reflects upon his previous troubles.

In thinking about this, consider the word “dedication” in the superscription. The word is *hanukkah*, which is used sparingly in the OT (found only here in the Psalms). A thing could be dedicated, or in the case of Jerusalem’s rebuilt wall, rededicated (Neh 12:27). David is probably rededicating, though he may be adding on to the house. As he rebuilds, he begins to reflect upon earlier days that led to this tragedy. It becomes a time to consider the past, while figuring out how to move on properly in the future.

In this fashion, consider how you might craft a prayer of your life that would take into account situations you have gone or are going through. Do you find yourself in the Psalm? Do you need healing, perhaps similar to that of David? What are your thoughts on prosperity? How do you deal with it? And how about the way you see God treating David here? How could these things help you to think about what Christ has done for you and what you have done in return? There ought to be a recognition here, as **Theodoret of Cyr** says, of “**the restoration**” not of a house, but “**of human nature that Christ the Lord accomplished by accepting death on behalf of us, destroying death and giving us hope of resurrection**” (Theodoret, *Commentary on the Psalms* 30.1). And a recognition of what God continues to do for you.

Praising the LORD

So what does this all look like? As we move into the poem, let's try to get a grasp its major themes. Another famous John (Calvin) has an interesting summary, “**David having been delivered from great danger, not only [1] renders**

thanks to God apart by himself, but at the same time invites and exhorts all the pious to perform the same duty. He then [2] confesses that he had flattered himself too confidently in his prosperity, and that his security had justly been chastised. In the third place [3], having briefly expressed his sorrow, he returns again to thanksgiving.⁷

The first words of the song are echoed in the last words: **Praises to the LORD**. “I will extol you, O LORD” (Ps 30:1). “I will give thanks to you forever!” (12). His prayer and song begins and ends with praising God. Many songs and hearts are filled with praising the LORD. It is what God created us to do. We find our deepest fulfillment when we are giving praise to God from the heart. Thanking him, blessing him, glorifying him. It is good to begin and end our prayers with praise.

For the Things he Has Done

Often, when we think of “praise,” our minds rush to **the good things** he has done for us. If God never did anything in

⁷ John Calvin and James Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 484.

our lives, we would not be able to praise him for such things. But God is real and he acts in this world upon the children of men. Those activities are always good, and often they are things we like and ask him for through prayer. In David's case, he reflects upon several of these kinds of things that God has done for him.

You have drawn me up (30:1). This has a pairing in a smaller chiasm in **vv. 1-3**: *You have brought up my soul from Sheol*. God has lifted David up. It is real and tangible. He knows it, and tells of it to God and others.

A) Drawn me up; foes don't rejoice (1b)

B) I cried, you healed (2)

A¹) Brought me up; restored me to life (3)

The **first up-bringing** concerns God's actions **in the midst of his enemies**. He *has not let my foes rejoice over me (1)*. We have seen several songs now where this means that God has saved him from his enemies, they did not catch him, they did not kill him, they did not defeat him. The same happens today to Christians. Many times, they literally come after believers. Often it is verbally. Increasingly, it is physically.

There is profound hatred that many have towards God and his people. But if God chooses not to allow us to become martyrs, he protects us from them. Even if he does, he always protects us spiritually. Even the martyrs are lifted up by his grace. David was lifted up in body and soul from his enemies. So, the king praises the LORD, and this is the very thing God has saved David to do.

The **second up-bringing** is about himself. *You have restored me to life (3)*. We have also seen songs where “**he has not let enemies rejoice over him**” meant that God has **kept him from sin** so that they did not rejoice in his hypocrisy and give occasion to mock God. The world is always watching, now more than ever. The LXX’s superscription “**for the end**” always makes the Church Fathers think of resurrection, and in drawing David up, his life now typifies that resurrected life. He is not down in despair, though he often has and will despair. He is not down in the pit of (spiritually in death or physically in some hiding hole). He is up, in the place where his God resides. God has lifted him there. This is something he experienced. Have you?

Between these remembrances is the prayer: *I cried to you for help, and you have healed me (2)*. His cries went very

specifically to *Yahweh* his *Elohim*. He cried out to the Covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom we have seen is Christ in preincarnate form, and to his Father by his Spirit. And when he cried, God healed. Again, this may refer to physical healing, we cannot rule it out. But the term *rapha* can refer to all kinds of healing: physical, emotional, spiritual, positional, familial. It is a general word. Whether from literal death or sickness or spiritual death or sickness, when healing comes, David praises the LORD. To forget such a thing would be an insult to his kindness, a reproaching of his gift. Thanklessness is the first great sin.

Everyone Praise the LORD

Until this point, his song is focused on himself. But suddenly, he turns outward: **to you!** “**Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints**” (4). There is a nice correlation here to **Psalm 29:1** which commanded **the sons of God**—the heavenly beings—to praise him. In their case, they were to ascribe strength and glory to him, because he is utterly powerful over history and has shown himself superior to them by defeating the chaos-waters of the Flood in a manner

that puts gods like Baal to shame. In our case, it is because we undergo similar experiences to David.

The heavenly beings were to “**ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name**” (2). Here, we “**give thanks to his holy name**” (Ps 30:4). If the Name in Psalm 29 was personified in one who is greater than Baal, whom we saw as the Son of God, then the Name in this Psalm—which was placed after it deliberately—must refer to the same Person. That means, the Lord Jesus was with David, even as he promised to be with us—never leaving or forsaking, being with us to the very end of the age. And therefore, his praise becomes our praise and the whole church—Old and New—sings together in melody: Hallelujah!

Seeing All the Attributes of God

Praising God is easy if all we are thinking about are his happy gifts. But what about his anger, his wrath, or his sometimes unpleasant hidden face? Many don't like to think of these things, let alone praise him in the midst of them. This is such an epidemic that many pretend and even argue

vehemently against him having them. But not David. And not you or I.

“For his anger (*'aph*) is but for a moment” (Ps 30:5). This begins what someone calls an almost **creed-like confession** of who God is. “Anger” is a common enough word, appearing in 58 verses throughout the Psalter, and one we’ve seen many times already, particularly in Psalm 2 and the anger of the Father and Son. **Some will say that God has no anger at all**, that perfect love precludes it. In reality, perfect love demands anger—if there is a righteous reason to be angry, such as injustice or rebellion or other kind of violation of holiness explained in God’s laws. Imagine if God didn’t care about such things? Our cultural blindness to this—where all anger is evil (except for mine, of course) has created a serious epidemic passively-aggressive angry people who vent their boiling lava at the shaking of nearly anything they don’t like. It is destroying individuals, families, churches, cities, and a whole nation. A proper theology of God’s anger is the only good place to begin to undo the damage that is being caused by this. For his anger, and his alone, is perfect, holy, and good.

Others say that God can't get angry at a Christian, because he has justified and forgiven us once-for-all. But this confuses a gracious legal declaration of not-guilty with a proper just response of anger against sin. Sin is wicked. Sin is ugly. Sin is devastating. Sin is destructive. Sin is vicious. Being justified doesn't mean God no longer sees what you do. To have no response to sin is the height of immorality. And it is obviously not true from this Psalm. God was angry with David.

There is parallel to this in the Psalm. He says, “**You hid your face; I was dismayed**” (7). The word is variously translated here as **troubled** (NAS, KJV, LXX), **afraid** (PST), **shattered** (NLT), **affrighted** (JPS), **alarmed/horrified** (Swedish, yeah I looked it up), **terrified** (TNK), **struck with terror** (CJB). This kind of reaction reminds me of how the sons of God should have reacted to the strength and glory of the LORD previously. But in this case, rather than doing something powerful, God does nothing. He hides his face. David can't see him, can't hear him, can't find him. This is exactly the reaction David gave to Absalom when he refused to see him for two years. And look at what it did to him!

Oftentimes people wonder, why is God silent? But do they really *feel the weight* of this as David did? Those words are emotional powerhouses. Does his silence terrify them, or cause them to mock his existence? There is a vast difference. Here we are learning that God will hide his face even from believers because of their sin. When he does, you go down, not up. When he does, you fall into the pit of your own making. When he does, as the other parallel demonstrates, you weep. “Weeping may tarry for the night” (5). “What have I done, LORD? Why are you so far from saving me? Why do you hide your face from me?” In those times when God seems far away, do not discount the possibility that it is because you have in fact sinned against him and he is hiding his smiling face. If you can come to agree with this, and you figure out that you are in fact hiding something from him (as if he doesn’t already know about it), that you are stubbornly unrepentant about it, then *you need to do two things*.

From Prosperity to Sin

Remember Calvin's "danger" and David's "healing?" Perhaps the "danger" he has been delivered from was his complacency in his comfort and ease! This is what he says in that center verse. "As for me, I said in my prosperity, 'I shall never be moved'" It isn't difficult to think of times in David's open-book life where he might have felt like this. It is before the house dedication. For example, he had been running from king Saul for several years. Finally, Saul is dead and David is king. His great enemy is defeated. The promises of God now begin to be fulfilled in his life.

He becomes prosperous. His life is comfortable. He gains wealth. He gains power. He can do anything. His home is luxurious. He is at ease. And though he had nothing before, suddenly he finds himself with everything. And it isn't enough. Remember Bathsheba for example, "In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they ravaged the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was

walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful..." (2Sa 11:1-2). In his ease, he uses the good gift, the king's house given to him by God, as a tool for great evil. And he felt unstoppable. No one would find out, like he even cared. But it ate the man alive.

Responding to our Sins Properly

What did David do when he realized that in his prosperity he was committing great sin? Here is what he didn't do. There is a [funny sketch](#) I heard a comic do (I forget his name), where he is watching late night television in the ease and comfort of his own home. Prosperity. Of course, that inevitable commercial comes on with some movie star guilting you into paying just \$9 a week to help a starving child. Picture after picture rolls across the screen. He starts to feel guilty for his own comfort in the face of those little children's despicable plight. He tries to justify his inaction. He looks at his popcorn in one hand and beer in the other and says, "\$9 a week? No one can live on \$9 a week! That's just two Caffè Lattes at Starbucks. No one can live on

two Caffè Lattes a week. Besides, look at his belly! He's fatter than I am. He doesn't need my help." That is what *not* to do when the guilt starts to roll over you.

What did David do? Two things. He **admitted that he had in fact sinned**. You must admit your sin *and* feel the weight of God's displeasure (even his hidden face) against it. This is very hard to do in the face of prosperity especially, because there is no immediate external problem prodding you on. In fact, it is the opposite. You are like a frog in a kettle slowly boiling. All you have is God's word telling you it is wrong, and your conscience either listening or denying. You must listen to God's word quickly and admit the attitudes and what they are bringing out in you either in what you have done (like David with that woman) or have not done.

Then he **confessed it before the LORD**. He was specific about it. Some have never confessed their sin to the LORD. You will not be saved until you do. David was saved already. But Christians continue to sin. He didn't do this to "get God to love him" or something like that. Rather, he did it because God already did love him. Now he was realizing the consequences his heavenly Father was now

allowing him to endure: the worst of all possible discipline—he hid himself from David so that he could not feel his love, see his grace, know his mercy. These experiences were not lost to him. He was undone. But it took a prophet of God to publicly convict him to bring him to repentance. How much more difficult is this without that?

But when **he came to his senses**, he realized that God was doing it for his good. God's anger is always connected to all of his attributes. He realized that this anger **"is but for a moment"** (Ps 30:5). If you have confessed your sin, know this to be true. Then see **another of God attributes**. His grace. **"His favor is for a lifetime"** (5). The word "favor" (*ratson*) is not the usual word for grace in Hebrew (*chen*), though grace is surely implied. It means **his pleasure or acceptance or will**. It literally reads, **"Life is in His good-will."** The LXX says **"life is in his will (*thelema*)."** Allow me to speculate that the meaning is that when we are obeying, whether in obedience to the law or the obedience of repentance, **we discover anew his good-will through doing his revealed will**. Put more simply, when we do what he wants, there is happiness and joy.

Hence the parallel, “**But joy comes with in the morning**” (5). Weeping is for the evening. Joy is for the morning. For the End—Jesus has risen. The familiar psalm pattern of evening and morning resumes, confession and awaking to newness of life. The next parallel, “**By your favor (ratson again), O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong**” (7). The meaning of this is difficult. Other translations read, “**You caused strength to remain for my mountain**” (YLT). “**I was firm as a mighty mountain**” (CJB). “**In your good pleasure you added strength to my beauty**” (LXX). “**You made me secure**” (NET). Mountains seems to be a metaphor for strength and permanence and David’s home all at once.

He isn’t finished. “**To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?**” (8-9). David isn’t doing anything new here. Instead, he is adding in his prayer things he has already said as a way of reinforcing it all. “**Cried,**” “**pit,**” and “**praise**” are three words that came in the same order earlier in the song. Whereas previously he was recounting how God had heard him and he was singing, now he is asking God to continue to help him do the same thing by not

leaving him, continuing to answer him, and to answer his cries for mercy. The point is, this is what **sanctification** is all about--constantly reminding oneself of these things. Renewal morning by morning. Becoming stronger in faith through the confession of sin and the praise of God in his anger or his grace. It is the point of David's *hanukkah*.

More Reflection and Praise

The song concludes with another prayer (10). It is a prayer for the future rooted in his reflection of the past. “Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper.” He needs God to hear. To hear what? To hear that he needs mercy. “Be merciful to me, a sinner,” the tax-collector cried out to Jesus (Lk 18:13). It seems it is always people like tax-collectors or prostitutes or the poor who recognize who they are in the Gospels. But you don't have to be the physical lowlife of the earth to know these things about yourself. David was king of Israel! The Gospel is for all people.

Jesus answered, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who

exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14). This is one of the rare times that Jesus uses the word “justify.” To be justified is to be declared legally not guilty for the crime you have committed in a court of law. God the Judge renders this verdict in the Court of Heaven to anyone who humbles themselves before him, confesses their sin and Jesus the Christ before men. This is the **opposite of works**, as we hinted at earlier. For in **humbling** yourself, you **empty** yourself, you don’t puff yourself up. You show your **helplessness**, not your strength. plead for **mercy**, you don’t presume to be owed anything. That man needed a **helper**, and David cries for the LORD to be his helper.

Thus, this *hanukkah* prayer of David’s actually contains all of the elements in his 10,000th prayer on this earth as we often tell people to have in their first. Isn’t that interesting? One never outgrows their need for confession of sin or God’s grace. If they think they do, then they have all the more need for it.

All that is left is for him to acknowledge now that God has and will hear him when he cries for mercy, because his God is alive, is Good, and loves to show mercy to any who

call upon him. This is the praise that he finishes the song with. “I will give thanks to you forever” (12). But those words are simply the culmination of praise that sees the true joy of knowing the LORD as he does. “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothe me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent” (11-12).

These are the things Messiah was prophesied to bring, not just to Israelites, but to the whole world. The prophet Isaiah sang, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion-- to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified” (Isa 61:1-3). The Lord Jesus, when he began his earthly ministry, read this passage before the hearing of

others before any other text saying that this day it was fulfilled in their hearing.

In other words, David's gladness can now be the gladness of all peoples everywhere. (Pseudo)Athanasius wrote, "He sings this psalm after he was saved from sin and his soul was renewed by repentance ... And he gives thanks and prays for the future, that he may be in safety and be established as a type of virtue for the others." This was David's rededication as he repented of his great sin of self-exaltation in the midst of the great prosperity that God had given him. Beware, lest you fall into the same temptations he did. But know that there is a good God who will restore you as he did his king if you come through Christ Jesus the Savior.