



We can examine the Book of Psalms through a telescope to see the past. We can examine it through a microscope to see the details. The best way to examine the Book of Psalms, however, is through a stethoscope—to put, as it were, an ear to its heart to hear and feel the throb of life in the presence of the Lord. That is what we hope to do in this Thanksgiving devotional from the Psalms.<sup>1</sup>

We will use Psalm 30, a great psalm of thanksgiving. We are not sure of the exact occasion of the writing of this song. The ancient heading on the psalm reads, “A Song at the Dedication of the House. A Psalm of David.” It may have been composed for the dedication of David’s palace. Perhaps it was written for the dedication of some part of the temple (the threshing floor where the plague was stopped may have been dedicated as the site of the temple). Perhaps it was written by David, then used later when the temple was actually built. (It is still read today by the Jews during the Feast of Dedication.)

Whenever it was written, it was after a time of great trouble and danger had passed, a time when David faced death. Thus, David said *he* would always give thanks: “O Lord my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever” (v. 12). He also encouraged *others* to do so: “Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name” (v. 4).

For the next few minutes, let us look at this psalm to answer the question “*Why* should we give thanks to the Lord?” When my family gath-

ers around the table on Thanksgiving Day, before we eat we pause to count our blessings. We mention things like food, family, and friends. All of these are important. We must not, however, forget the most basic of blessings. In Psalm 30 David went back to the basics.

### **GIVE THANKS BECAUSE YOU ARE ALIVE (Vv. 1–3)**

I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up,  
And hast not let my enemies rejoice over me.  
O Lord my God,  
I cried to Thee for help, and Thou didst heal me.  
O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol;  
Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit (vv. 1–3).

Five different figures are used in verses 1 through 3 to stress a single fact: David’s life had been spared. He was still alive!

That is pretty basic, isn’t it? We may not have much. We may not have all we want. We may even have aches and pains. We are, however, still alive—and those aches and pains prove it!

### **GIVE THANKS BECAUSE GOD CARES (Vv. 4, 5a)**

Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones,  
And give thanks to His holy name.  
For His anger is but for a moment,  
His favor is for a lifetime (vv. 4, 5a).

It may strike us as strange that David said, “Give thanks to His holy name,” and then mentioned the *anger* of God. Evidently, in the recent past God had been angry at David because there was sin in his life.<sup>2</sup> Why was God angry? Because sin destroys the relationship between God and man. God’s anger at sin in our lives shows that He *cares* about us.

### GIVE THANKS BECAUSE GOD FORGIVES (V. 5)

God may be angry when we sin, but He will forgive us if we will repent.

For His anger is but for a moment,  
His favor is for a lifetime;  
Weeping may last for the night,  
But a shout of joy comes in the morning (v. 5).

The figure in the last part of verse 5 is that of the overnight visitor: He is here and then gone, in contrast with the “visitor” who comes to stay! Weeping comes, but it quickly goes if we throw ourselves on God’s mercy.

### GIVE THANKS BECAUSE GOD DISCIPLINES (Vv. 6, 7)

Now as for me, I said in my prosperity,  
“I will never be moved.”  
O Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made my  
mountain to stand strong;  
Thou didst hide Thy face, I was dismayed  
(vv. 6, 7).

In the past, when everything was going right with David, he apparently was filled with overconfidence: “Now as for me, I said in my prosperity, ‘I will never be moved’” (v. 6). He temporarily forgot that it was not by his own strength, but by God’s favor or mercy that his “mountain” was made “to stand strong” (v. 7a). Thus, God hid His face (v. 7b) and trouble came. Then David’s heart was stirred (v. 7c). Sometimes we need hard times to take a good, honest look at ourselves.

### GIVE THANKS BECAUSE GOD ANSWERS PRAYER (Vv. 8–12)

When problems came into David’s life, he turned to God and cried out: “To Thee, O Lord, I called, and to the Lord I made supplication” (v. 8). Verses 9 and 10 tell of that prayer:

“What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?  
Will the dust praise Thee? Will it declare Thy faithfulness?  
Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me;  
O Lord, be Thou my helper” (vv. 9, 10).

God heard and answered that prayer. Therefore, David said, “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness” (v. 11). As a result, David said that he would not cease to give thanks: “That my soul may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever” (v. 12).

### CONCLUSION

We could summarize Psalm 30 by saying that David was thankful for *life*—physical life, but above all, spiritual life. We may not have everything, but if we belong to the Lord, we have both physical and spiritual life. Thank God for both!

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This lesson is designed as a closing devotional for the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving Day (which falls on a Thursday in the U.S.). If you do not have a similar holiday where you live, the lesson may be adapted to the general theme of thanking the Lord, a topic always needed.

<sup>2</sup>This anger would tie in with David’s census in 2 Samuel 24. □

### A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

We hope you enjoy this special issue on the Book of Psalms. This issue is designed as a companion volume with the three issues on David.

Most of the psalms used in this issue are attributed to David in the traditional headings; a few are not. Since David lit the flame that burns through the entire Book of Psalms, we thought it appropriate to include a few that may not have been written by him.

An effort was made to give credit on the main sources of the lessons. If any primary sources were not acknowledged, let us know.

Two other issues of *Truth for Today*, written by Eddie Cloer and Steve Williams, have been devoted to a study of the Book of Psalms: November and December 1990. Also, I have had three other expository lessons from the Psalms in past issues: Psalm 23—“The Lord Is My Shepherd” (February 1984); Psalm 73—“When Good Things Happen to Bad People” (March 1988); Psalm 51—“The Cry of a Brokenhearted Man” (June 1988).

Later, the Book of Psalms will receive a more complete treatment in *Truth for Today*.

David Roper, Associate Editor, *TfT*