In the last lesson I talked about the importance of having gratitude for the blessings we receive from the Lord. This lesson is about the importance of praising the Lord for those blessings. In other words, we need to not just feel grateful, but we need to express that gratitude. How we choose to show (express) our gratitude is up to us, but we need to learn how to pull the feeling of gratitude from inside of us and find some way to demonstrate it on the outside. Gratitude unexpressed devolves into ingratitude then into apathy and finally into contempt.

The manual suggests that the teacher ask various members of the class to choose verses or passages from the book of Psalms that are meaningful to them and talk about them in class. Since I cannot easily do that in a written article, I have chosen five selections from the first 75 chapters of Psalms that I feel are representative of the whole book of Psalms. As you read these five selections think about other passages in Psalms you have read that have personal meaning to you. Gratitude is something that is deeply personal. It is not possible to fully convey the depth of our emotions when we express our gratitude, but attempt it we must or we betray our own thanksgiving.

Psalm 10

David is good at outlining the problems with being wicked. He understands that it is their attitudes and behaviors that keep the wicked from enjoying the true blessings that the Lord wants to give His people. In Psalms 10:4 David says,

> 4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God:* God *is* not in all his thoughts.

It is because of pride that the wicked person does not seek the blessings of God. Because pride is a self-consuming, self-possessing attitude, the wicked person thinks only about him/herself. The answer to this problem is to choose to have God in all our thoughts.

When we are faced with choices and decisions, do we ask what the Lord thinks we should do? Do we consider what He would advise us to do? In our idle moments of thought do we find ourselves turning to the Lord or is that a foreign concept to us? The Lord needs to be part of our thinking process all the time. When we choose to do activity A over activity B do we consider how we can be a servant of good in that activity or are we only concerned with how much fun we can squeeze out of the activity? Those who find true blessings from God have Him in their thoughts regularly. For the righteous, God is never far from their thoughts.

Psalm 18

The Lord's works are marvelous. How often do we admit this? How often do we consider or list the many ways in which we have been rescued from our enemies, those who would do us harm in some way? How often do we confess, even to ourselves that God has intervened to save us from our own foolishness? In the following passage from Psalms 18: 17 - 28, David outlines ways in which the Lord was his delight, that which brought him joy.

> 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.
>
> 18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay.
>
> 19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
>
> 20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
>
> 21 For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.
>
> 22 For all his judgments *were* before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.
>
> 23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

> 24 Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
>
> 25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;
>
> 26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.
>
> 27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.
>
> 28 For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

Look again at verse 18. Our "stay" is that which holds us up. It is that upon which we depend and rely to continue from day to day. Do we recognize the Lord as our personal stay? Now look at verse 24. The Lord rewards us according to how clean we are in "his eyesight." Note that David did not say that it was according to how well he felt he was doing, but that the Lord rewards us according to His standard of behavior.

In the remaining verses David says that when we refrain from evil and take delight in good, we rise to the Lord's definition of goodness, and He blesses us for that effort. God will show purity to those who purify themselves, and show mercy to those who seek to show mercy. When we seek the Lord he blesses us with knowledge and wisdom, which is the light by which we guide our lives. In this way God lights our personal darkness and shows us the way.

Psalm 42

Most of us are not normally thirsty very often. Water or some other form of drink is readily available so we don't really think about what it means to be really thirsty. Take a moment to think of a time when you were hot and tired, and there was no relief in sight. You felt faint and would have given half the proverbial kingdom for just a sip of water to slake your thirst. Psalms 42: 1 says,

> 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

When the deer come to drink at the pond or brook it is not without peril. Their predators know that is where they will have to eventually come, so they lie in wait for them at the watering hole. Yet come the deer must, for they cannot deny their thirst. How great is our thirst for God? Are we willing to do whatever it takes to come to Him

to have our need relieved? We need His love, His wisdom, direction, His purposes in our lives. This is what gives our lives real meaning and direction. Are we willing to come to the scriptural watering hole, even though there are those in our society who lie in wait to trap and ensnare us for our beliefs? Just how thirsty are we?

Psalm 46

This very short verse in Psalms 46 is a powerful expression of the nature of God.

> 10 Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Life is full of noise. Messages are clamoring for our attention from every direction. News broadcasts, television shows, movies, music, cell phones, and print ads scream for our attention day and night. But where does David tell us we will find God? In stillness. When do you give yourself quiet time? When do you have time to think, ponder, pray, and consider what you are doing with your life, and how the Lord feels about what you are doing from day to day and hour to hour?

It is in the quiet moments we allot ourselves where we feel the Spirit and can come to know God. This verse assures us that if we will be still we can come to know that God really is GOD, and that he will yet be exalted above all nations in the earth.

Psalm 5

If you look at this chapter of Psalms in its entirety, it is a pretty good representative chapter of the whole book of Psalms. It covers all the basic issues David talks about in all the other chapters. He acknowledges that wickedness is poisonous to the soul and that the Lord always delights in righteous living. He rewards those who do good and punishes those who do wickedly. Following are the closing two verses of Psalms 5.

> 11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
>
> 12 For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

This is one of the main messages of the book of Psalms. Those who trust in the Lord, and are duly grateful for what they receive will be blessed, protected, prospered, and

saved by their Lord. He will bring them joy, deliver them from their enemies, and be a shield to protect them from those things that would do them lasting harm.

Conclusion

Psalms is a good example of how we should feel about the Lord and the blessings we are given on a daily basis. Do we express our gratitude as David did? How do we show how we feel? Remember that gratitude NOT expressed melts into ingratitude then apathy then contempt. We need to find ways to demonstrate our gratitude in order to more deeply allow ourselves to feel our own sense of gratitude. How do you express your gratitude?

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Praise the Lord

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