

## Psalm 136

Psalm 135 and psalm 136 are similar in that in the 135<sup>th</sup> psalm we're exhorted to *praise* the Lord while in the 136<sup>th</sup> psalm we're exhorted to *give thanks* to the Lord. Both of which I would dare to say is something that lacks in the average Christians life. Oh obviously we come together once or twice a week in order to *praise* the Lord, focus collectively *on* the Lord, and being reminded of all of the benefits allotted to us *in* the Lord certainly that invokes thanksgiving in our hearts. But the truth of the matter is that praise and thanksgiving in the life of the believer *should be* commonplace. *Praising* God and being *thankful* to God should be like 2<sup>nd</sup> nature to the one who's been *redeemed* of God.

I include myself when I say that it's shameful how much (as it pertains to the goodness and grace of God toward our lives) we take for granted. Yet over and over again throughout the bible we see it modeled *before* us and the exhortation comes *to* us to be a people of thanksgiving. Do you remember when David had the ark transported to Jerusalem in order to put it in its proper place there in the tabernacle? It was an enormous and festive occasion, a celebration; and we read there, "*And he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel.<sup>1</sup>*" Thanksgiving and praise...like and hand in glove. It goes on to say, "*On that day David first delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the LORD: Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples!<sup>2</sup>*"

We're to be a people of thanksgiving toward our God. Psalm 100:4, "*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving. And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.*" Of course time would forbid us to consider all the places we find the exhortation throughout the psalms, the psalms are littered with the exhortation to be thankful and demonstrations of thanksgiving. Remember when the law was passed there in Babylon that anyone who consulted or sought any man or god but the king for 30 days would be thrown in the lion's den? What did Daniel do? We read this, "*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.<sup>3</sup>*" Thanksgiving to God was simply a daily part of his life multiple times throughout the day.

Of course the exhortation unto a thankful heart is in no way limited to the OT. In the book of Hebrews 13:15 we read, "*Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*" To the Colossians Paul wrote, "*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*<sup>4</sup>" It's all throughout your bible.

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Ch. 16:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Ch. 16:7-8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Da 6:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Col 3:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He exhorted Timothy, *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,<sup>5</sup>”* Sunday morning we were speaking about the need for genuine humility in our lives. Being thankful is certainly one characteristic of humility.

The flipside (of course) to being thankful is being *unthankful*, which is characteristic of pride and independence from God; it’s indicative of self-sufficiency as opposed to a humble, thankful dependence upon the Lord. In the book of Romans Ch. 1 after Paul *thanks* God for them he begins to write of the depravity of man. And he says, *“because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.<sup>6</sup>”*

So a life that glorifies God, that praises God, that gives thanks to God and walks in humility before God will be appropriately balanced before God, blessed of God. However the life that refuses to glorify God, a life that’s not thankful to/toward God, but rather is puffed up, proud and self-sufficient before God is placed on a slippery slope of downward declension and depravity. What’s the application? Be thankful to God ☐!

Vs 1-26

Now as this psalm progresses to do you begin to get the idea that the psalmist is seeking impress a certain principle upon us? What do you think it is? That His (God’s) mercy endures *forever!* What is mercy? If grace is *giving* us what we don’t deserve than God’s mercy is *not* giving us what we *do* deserve. I’m so glad, so *thankful* that God’s *mercy* endures forever. What would happen if God’s mercy only endured for a few years? Or what would be the result if His mercy endured up to 1,000 sins or shortcomings; or 10,000 for that matter? I’ll tell ya what would happen, we’d all be lost, none of us would make it because our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked.

Even if we’re not physically sinning in someway the problem lies in that our heart so easily goes astray. That’s why Jesus said things like, “You’ve heard it said that you shall not murder but I say to you that if you’re angry at your brother with out a cause you’re already in danger of judgment” (Matt 5:21-22) Or, “You’ve heard it said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’ but I say to you that if you even look on a woman (or on a man [ladies]) with lust in your heart you’ve already committed adultery in your heart.” The root of sin lies in the heart.

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<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Ti 2:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>6</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ro 1:21-25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

That's why it's so important/critical to you and me that God's mercy be inexhaustible. The book of Eph Ch. 2 and Vs 4 teaches us that God is "*rich*" in mercy. Again, we're thankful that "mercy" is not an attribute that God is "poor" in, that He easily/quickly runs out of, but that He's *rich* in mercy, has plenty to go around.

In reality the word that's been translated "mercy" could also be translated His, "loyal love" or His, "lovingkindness". Equally grateful we thank God, we praise God that His lovingkindness, His loyal love toward us, His mercy toward us endures, it lasts forever.

The psalmist pulls out and points to several reasons to give God thanks throughout this psalm. The 1<sup>st</sup> reason he cites is found in the very 1<sup>st</sup> Vs, "For He is good." I think just review the few things we've already talked about demonstrates and accentuates the *goodness* of God, He is merciful, He's loyal in His love *for* us, His lovingkindness is with out end *toward* us. We spent time talking about this in the previous psalm. How that He's sent Christ on our behalf, Jesus laid down His life for us, paid our penalty, made a way where there was no way, He's made us righteous before God, given us His Holy Spirit, He's given us gifts through/by His Holy Spirit. He works through us then rewards us, grants us to sit with Him, to reign with Him, to share in the inheritance of His kingdom forever. Why? Because we're so awesome? Hardly, it's because He's so good. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, "for He is good!"

In Vs 2-3 we're illuminated to the fact that He is above all, He is the God of gods and the Lord of lords. Which underscores another reason to be thankful because even if He was good but there was another above Him who was cruel or cold and calloused that wouldn't help us much. Because He could be overruled at will. But there's no one like Him, there's no one beside Him and none other than Him.

BTW quick side note, we're reading here that the Lord of lords is also the God of gods. In 1 Timothy 6:15 we read in regard to Jesus "*He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,*" In the book of Revelation we read where John wrote and said, "*Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*"<sup>7</sup> Now if (as it says here) the God of gods is the Lord of lords and the NT identifies *Jesus* as the Lord of lords, what does that make Jesus? The *God of gods*... Vs 1, He is good, Vs 2-3 He is above all, Vs 4-9 He created all, notice.

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<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Re 19:11-16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 4-9

There are a # of things (as you study the scriptures) that are simply assumed in the bible. For instance the bible never tries to explain the existence of God, never tries to rationalize or prove that He is, it simply assumes that God exists. Gen 1:1, “*In the beginning God...*” It’s simply stated as a matter of fact, then it moves on. As a matter of fact the psalmist states, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘*There is no God.*’”<sup>8</sup> Something else the bible assumes is the fact of *creation*, there’s no room for evolution in your understanding of the scriptures. The bible doesn’t teach that God just started the ball rolling and let things evolve from there or any of that nonsense, simply that He created *it all*. Let’s go back to Genesis, remember that Vs I started to quote? The very 1<sup>st</sup> Vs of the bible; allow me to finish it for you. “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*”<sup>9</sup> That’s it! Oh the following Vs will carry on to elaborate when He did what, but as for how the world came into existence, as for how the heavens were made and the earth was formed, as for how the sun and the moon were hung on nothing; God simply (if you’ll allow me to say “simply”) made it so, He created it.

In His (the word is [Vs 5]) “wisdom” He made the heavens, laid out the earth above the waters, made great lights, the sun to rule by day, the moon and the stars to rule by night. Psalm 104:24 “*O LORD, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of Your possessions—*” Proverbs 3:19, “*The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens;*” Write it down, look at it later, Prov 8:22-29, God established His creation through wisdom. Here’s one more, Jeremiah 51:15, “*He has made the earth by His power; He has established the world by His wisdom, And stretched out the heaven by His understanding.*”

God is good, He’s above all, in His wisdom He created all... He is our Deliverer (Vs 10-16).

## Vs 10-16

Now obviously these Vs have their *interpretation* in Israel but they certainly find an *application* in us as well. How that God has broken our chains, set us free and delivered us with a strong hand and an outstretched arm from the bondage of sin and death. Not via the Passover lamb but through the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ who shed His blood to take away the sins of the world.

Also it’s interesting to consider attitude and perspective when we consider the way that God works in our lives isn’t it. Think about the things that the psalmist is citing here. He cites the Passover and the Red Sea experience. Do you know what the children of Israel did when God set them free and brought them to the Red Sea? They griped and complained that Moses had brought them out there to die. Then when God delivered them and brought them through the Red Sea, you know what they did? They went from a short-lived time of rejoicing to complaining that they didn’t have enough food. Next they complained about water, at one point they were murmuring and complaining simply for the sake of murmuring and complaining.

<sup>8</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ps 14:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>9</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Ge 1:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

After God provided them Manna guess what they did? Complained that it was too bland. When they came to the Promised Land you know what they did? They complained that there were giants in the Land. They complained about Moses' leadership, it didn't really matter what God did, or how God did it they managed to find something in it to complain about.

Perspective, it's an interesting thing. Because here as the psalmist looks back at those same events instead of going, "The 1<sup>st</sup> born of those who weren't under the blood of the lamb died, God is so mean!" He said, "Praise the Lord, in His mercy God set us free." Instead of saying, "How cruel of God to allow them to see and sense that they were trapped at the Red Sea" He says, "God is so merciful, He made a way where there was no way and delivered the nation against impossible odds." Instead of saying, "Only manna? Giants in the land?" He said, "God was so faithful to lead them to meet their needs and to do what He said He would do."

Now, here we are, some of us may be going through some (what we would consider to be) rough times. Some of us may be thinking, "What are the leaders at that church doing?" Or, "I wish Pastor Jeff would get a grip on *this* or be more dialed in concerning *that*." Or we could stop to realize that there's going to come a time when we'll look back on our lives and be able to see incredible things that God was doing right in our midst and we'll either have to say that we were rejoicing *in* it, or complaining *about* it. Who really cares if things don't go exactly the way I think they should all the time? What matters to me is, is God having *His* way in *my* life? Even if it seems difficult for me at times, or I don't understand what's happening in a particular moment. Can I trust the Lord and rejoice *in* the Lord knowing that if He's begun the work He'll be faithful to complete it?

God is our *Deliverer* and He's our *Defense*, or our *Protector*...

Vs17-20

Were there giants in the land? You bet there were, was the battle Israel's? No, not at all. The battle belonged to the Lord, He delivered them, He Promised a Land to them, therefore it was His responsibility to Provide for them and to *Protect* them, and guess what, that's exactly what He did. So again, Phil 1:6, "...*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;*<sup>10</sup>" God has delivered you, He has redeemed you with a strong hand and an outstretched arm (literally upon the cross), therefore (though there will be battles and tough times, difficult days) as you seek Him, as you abide *in* Him and His word abides in you; He will protect you, and provide *for* you and lead you all the way to your final destination in His presence forevermore...Notice not only is He our Protector, He's also our *Provider*.

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<sup>10</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Php 1:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Vs 21-22

Now last time I checked a “heritage” wasn’t something you earned or worked for. It’s something that’s simply gifted to you because you’re part of the family, because of your association with the one who owns the estate. God *gave them* the land as an inheritance. Even so in Christ it’s God’s good pleasure to *give* to us the kingdom. The bible teaches us that in Christ we simply *inherit* the kingdom of God along with Jesus Christ guess why? Because we’ve earned it? No, we’ve done nothing to deserve it; it’s just that we’re part of the family, joint heirs with Christ, (through faith *in* Christ) of the kingdom of God. We’ve been born again into the family of God. “*But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*<sup>11</sup>” Not only does God provide *for* us but He’s also *faithful to* us. Notice...

## Vs23-24

What more can we say, God is faithful, He remembers us in our lowly state and rescued us from our enemy (namely Satan). We were bound, we’re were his prisoner and Jesus set us free.

God is faithful, and God is gracious.

## Vs 25

He feeds us, literally and spiritually through His word. But this is what we refer to as the “common grace” of God. It’s grace that God extends to everyone alike; there is a certain grace that’s extended only to the believer. We call it “saving grace”, but you don’t have to a believer to experience the grace of God. The fact that you have air in your lungs, the fact that you have water to drink, or food to eat; God doesn’t owe those things to anyone. Yet He extends His grace to both the righteous and the wicked alike, the believer and the nonbeliever in granting them breath, water, food; it rains on the just and unjust alike. God is good, He gives food to all flesh.

## Vs26

So in His mercy He’s good *to* us, He’s delivered us, defends us, protects and provides *for* us, He is faithful and gracious *toward* us.

“Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven! For His mercy endures forever!”

## Prayer Points:

Father God we praise You and we thank You for Your overwhelming goodness; for Your grace, and Your mercy, Your loyal love, Your lovingkindness that endures forever...Inject us with a fresh perspective and thankful hearts; may praise and thanksgiving spring forth from our hearts to Yours in abundance. We thank You for Your word.

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<sup>11</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Jn 1:12–13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.