Psalm 135 • Your Name, O Lord, endures forever

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Psalm 135. Let's pray before we get into the Word here tonight, shall we?

Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for the opportunity this evening to come together as the body of Christ. And Lord, we just...It's so nice to be able to start this time with worship, to make declarations of faith, to speak to You, Lord, about things that are important. To be reminded tonight, that the way we live our lives is important. And living our lives for self is a dead-end. And living our lives for You is what it means to walk with You day-by-day.

Lord, I thank You for the power that You give us through Your Holy Spirit to live our lives in Christ. Without Your Spirit, Lord, we would be lost and certainly powerless. So we thank You. We thank You for the life that is only found through Jesus Christ, our Savior. The One who has saved us from our sin. The One who deserves our praise. LORD, we praise You. We praise You this day. In Jesus precious name we pray, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Psalm 135. This, in fact, the Psalms that we're going to be looking at here tonight, I'm hoping that we're going to get through four Psalms this evening. But we'll see how it goes.

But the Psalms that we're going to be looking at are really going to be talking a lot about praise. And praise is a theme that we've seen come up, obviously, a lot in the Psalms throughout the course of this very lengthy study. But it continues to be an important subject to talk about. Because I think there's a lot of people, a lot of Christians, who frankly find it difficult to praise.

And if you don't find it difficult, you may find it difficult to keep your... Keep a freshness, perhaps to your praise. I think there's probably times in our lives when something cool happens. We call them praise reports. And we're usually pretty good at being fairly happy about that. And our happiness translates into praise. And we're praising as long as we're happy. But when that winds down or wears off, if you will, suddenly we're finding it a little more difficult to come up with words of praise because we're maybe not happy.

Well, hey, let's praise the Lord! Well, I don't really feel like it. Why not? Well, I'm not very happy.

Well, that's a misunderstanding of what praise is and what it's all about. It's not about being happy. It's not about something you do when you're happy. There's so much more to that.

I want you to notice how this Psalm begins here; chapter 135 in verse 1.

It says,

"Praise the LORD! (It doesn't, say anything beyond, just *Praise the LORD!*)
Praise the name of the LORD," (ESV)

Remember biblically speaking the name of the Lord, or the name of anyone, speaks of the character. It speaks about everything really they've ever said about themselves, every declaration they've made about themselves. To praise the name of the Lord, is to praise who He is.

"give praise, O servants of the LORD,

2 who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God!"

This is an encouragement for those who would serve in the temple to praise God. Can you imagine having a job where your job was to praise the Lord? You imagine that's your job, got to go to work, honey. You got my lunch packed? Okay, great! Thank you. Heading off to work. Going to go praise the Lord. I'm going to praise; we're just going to praise all day long. We're going to praise the Lord. We're going to do good.

Can you imagine that getting a little old by maybe the, fourth or fifth day? Never mind a week, or whatever the case might be. How do we keep praise fresh? How do we keep it fresh?

When we understand the fact that praise is not something that simply comes from an emotional response. It's not about emotion. Happiness is all about emotion. But happiness should not be the thing that fuels your praise.

Since we understand that praise is not about emotion, we can now begin to say, okay, how do I keep it fresh? Especially if I'm struggling. I mean, it's one thing to just be lackadaisical about it and say, well, praise the Lord. (Pastor Paul imitates a dissatisfied person) Somebody gets up here, like Jordan did tonight.

Picks up a guitar, starts to go through these songs. And we're, yeah, I don't really... Things are not really going real great right now in my life.

What is going to be the impetus that is going to encourage me to praise God? How do I keep it fresh, especially when I'm struggling? Well, you have to understand something about praise. Praise is really giving voice to our faith in God. It's something you do by faith. Again, it's not by emotion. It's more by faith.

We pray. And especially when you're going through a hard time, if you're going to praise God with any genuineness, it really comes from faith. I believe that God is worthy of my praise. I believe that it's a good thing to praise the Lord. I'm going to praise Him even though I don't feel like it. And even though things around me are pretty rotten right now.

If we're having trouble praising the Lord, since it is an expression of faith, it could be a sign that your faith is running low. And that's something that you need to consider. Maybe my faith is just really needing a boost. And that's one of the reasons why I'm having a hard time praising God.

But I got to thinking about praise. And I got to thinking about keeping your praise fresh. And I started thinking that well, one of the antonyms of fresh is stale. And it could be that maybe our praise has just gotten old. Or, somehow we're just going through the motions of what we've done in the past and it needs some new input. Sometimes our praise, or just the ministry of praise that we give to the Lord... And I want you to understand that I used that word very purposely. Our ministry of praise sometimes needs some fresh input.

One of the reasons that I like to go to pastors conferences is because, it's great, first of all, to get away. And usually I can get away with Sue. She normally comes along with me. And we can go to a place like that. And we can be together. And we can talk ministry. And we can hear from other pastors. And many times you get a real good fresh perspective, when I go away to conferences.

Well, I go to conferences because being a pastor is my ministry. Since praise is your ministry, among probably other ministries. But it's one of our ministries together. What is one of the ways that you can be fresh; stay fresh in your praise? Well, do the same thing that I do when I go to pastor's conferences, get some fresh input. And this is where the Psalms, and frankly, other Scripture, references passages throughout the Bible, come in really, really, really handy.

I think one of the things that is really, can really boost our life of praise is when you're reading through the Scripture, to write down things from that passage, from the verse maybe that you're looking at reasons to praise. You can take a simple passage like Ephesians 2:8 and 9, for it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.

And you can begin to write down things like, okay, what can I praise God from this? Well I'm saved by grace. Grace means I didn't deserve it. I'm saved by faith, not of myself, but by a gift. God, I thank You that my salvation is not dependent on me, to earn it, or to keep it, by my works, my effort. I praise You Lord. Write those things down.

Some of the verses and passages that we've been reading or seeing on a regular basis, are great input if we start thinking about them, and pondering them, and meditating on them. New input to praise. Just whenever you read the word, take note of the things that it's talking about. Even if it's a passage on judgment.

Even if it's a... You're reading through the book of Jeremiah or something like that. And God's talking about, "I was going to judge Israel for their idolatry," or something. Say, Lord, thank You, God, that judgment for me is passed! Because Jesus took my judgment. There's always reason to praise the Lord.

Let me show you something that Paul wrote to the Philippians in the fourth chapter of that letter to them. He said,

Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Why? Because that's going to be really good input that is going to fuel your ability to praise God. If you and I are constantly thinking about what bums us out... And it seems like some people gravitate to those things. It's like always thinking about some negative thing. And you got to ask yourself the question: maybe my input is wrong. Maybe I need to stop...

Can I admit something to you? And I confess this as a weakness. All right. I had to stop watching the news. I used to be a news hound. I mean, I literally, I

would watch the news every day. I would, on my laptop, I had all kinds of news services that would send me information all the time.

And I suddenly realized it was depressing me. It was just, it was really weighing me down badly. And I thought to myself, you know what? I don't need this. Because I need my heart to be in a better place to minister to other people, and to minister the Word of God, and so, forth. And I stopped watching the news.

Do you know what? This is going to shock you. The world has just continued to turn without me knowing every little nuance of its turning. And every little political intrigue that is going on. I'm clueless. I really am.

I mean, Sue tells me things. She keeps me up. And she says, did you hear about what's going on down in Florida? No, tell me. So she.... Okay, good. Thanks. I appreciate that. And I'm up to date.

I realized my input was always negative and it was dragging me down. And it was affecting my praise. It was affecting the way I approached God. And I was coming constantly with this heaviness. Boy, I tell you. You just stick around the news and politics these days if you want to have a heavy heart.

I mean, our nation is so divided, so incredibly divided. And as Christians, we know that you can't have that division without it ruining the whole thing. Jesus said it, any nation, kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand. There's very serious things going on. But if I sit and just feed myself with that negativity all day long, instead of looking into the Word...

Paul says, if there's anything that, if it's true,... That pretty much takes the news out, all the way right there. The fake news is a thing. Right? He says, if anything is true, if it's honorable, if it's just, if it's pure. He says, if it's lovely, whatever is commendable, excellent, worthy of praise,... Put that in! Think on those things. Let that input feed your heart. Let it bolster your soul. Stop being so negative. Stop feeding yourself with constant negativity. It's very important.

One of the other keys...I'm going to move on here. I promise I'll try to get through all the Psalms that I'm going to. One of the other keys I think of keeping praise real and current is just to remember, that what we've already alluded to and actually mentioned to that is that, God is worthy of our praise. And it's good for us to praise the Lord! I believe that we were created to praise God. I really do.

I think we were created to praise Him. Because He's worthy to be praised and we are His creation. And it's just, it's good for me. I take vitamins in the morning just because it's good for me. It's not a wacky sort of a thing. I just take a daily vitamin. And during cold and flu season, I might even add a little bit of something to it. Little vitamin C or something like that. I think a lot of people do that. Why do you do it? It's good for you. It's good for your body. Right?

Well, what's good for your heart and soul and spirit? To praise the Lord! To praise is good for you. Right? You say, well, yeah, well, pastor Paul, but sometimes I just don't feel it. I know. And that's when it's a sacrifice of praise. That's when you offer a sacrifice. Lord, I offer You this. I praise You. I praise You.

Let me tell you something that can set you free in a very difficult season. When you're going through a hard, hard time, to just praise Him in the midst of that hard time. To bring that hard time to Him and say, God, I praise You. This could be a million times worse. I praise You. I praise You for who You are. I praise You for Your faithfulness. I praise You for Your goodness. I praise You for Your love that never ends. I praise You, Lord, that You always hear my prayers. I praise You that judgment is passed in my life. Sacrifice of praise is a good thing.

Verse 3, he goes on,

"Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;"

There's another good reason. Praise the LORD, because He's good. In fact, he says,

"sing to his name, for it is pleasant!"

It's pleasant to do it.

"4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his own possession."

Now, of course, these are psalms songs that the Israelites used to sing. But you and I can say the same thing. I can say, I'm going to praise the Lord because He's chosen me. He's chosen me. Right? The Bible says that, He chose those whom he foreknew. (Romans 8:29) And I just thank You God, that I've been chosen.

Verse 5. Look at what the psalmist says here,

"For I know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD is above all gods.

6 Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and (in) *all deeps."*

And here in these two verses, the psalmist is now emphasizing God's sovereignty. And he basically says, that He is... There's nobody above God. Wouldn't that be crazy? Wouldn't that be crazy to have nobody above you? I mean, if that were you or me, we'd probably all be dead. Because we just can't be trusted with that kind of sovereignty.

But when you think about God being sovereign, there is no one above Him. There's no one to tell Him, hey, don't do that. There's no one to stop Him. There's no one to restrain Him. And that's what the psalmist is saying.

And he's praising God for His omnipotence, for His power, His all power. He says, You are the God over all gods. And he says, You do whatever pleases You in heaven and on earth, in the seas, whatever. You are sovereign. You are all powerful.

These are good reasons to praise. If you're looking for reasons to praise, this psalm has given them to you.

Verse 7,

"He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses."

In other words, he's the God who controls creation. There's another good reason to praise God. I thank You that you control all of creation. You are in control.

Verse 8,

"He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,"

What's the psalmist going to talk about now in these verses - through verse 12. He's going to talk about how God has faithfully taken care of Israel during the course of their history. He says, God is the one who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, talking about that first Passover.

"both of man and of beast;

9 who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants;

10 who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings,

11 Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan,"

You remember that Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan. They were the kings that were over on the east side of the Jordan, where some of the tribes decided to stay. And then there were all the other...The area of Canaan, which was over on the other side of the Jordan. And he says, and You conquered all of those kings on our behalf.

And he says in verse 12,

"and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel."

When you and I are reading these verses and we're looking for input, for praise, we can talk about our inheritance. Israel got land and it's nice land. And I'd like to visit Israel someday. I've never actually been there. I actually been looking into it.

But I got... You and I, we got a better inheritance than Israel did. Because theirs was a physical covenant with physical inheritance. Ours is a spiritual covenant with a spiritual inheritance. Better covenant. Better covenant promises. That's what the writer of Hebrews says. (Hebrews 8:6)

In fact, he goes into great time to elaborate on the fact that we have a better covenant. It's a better covenant and we have a better High Priest. One who doesn't have to be changed out every time the current High Priest dies. Because our High Priest ever lives. And so we have better promises, better blessings.

Here's these... Here's this recounting in these verses 8 through 12, about all that God has faithfully done to bring forth the inheritance to Israel. And you and I, we can talk better praise than this. Because we got better promises. We have eternal life. We have the Holy Spirit living within us.

Israel didn't have that. The Holy Spirit was living powerfully within the temple. Now, you and I... You and me, were the temple, right, of the Holy Spirit. Better! It's better! Better inheritance. Wow! Hey, that's a reason to praise.

Look at verse 13.

"Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, (or your Bible may say, fame,) *O LORD, throughout all ages.*

14 For the LORD will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants."

And did you notice here in these two verses, he talks about the fact that the Lord, and His name, are everlasting. Not going to go away.

And he talks about God's compassion. And God is compassionate. Wow! God is compassionate? Do you ever stop to just think about the definition of words? I do. I read a verse in the Bible and I think, I use the word compassionate all the time. But sometimes it's good to go back and just look it up and see what it says.

Compassionate: Feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others. God is eternally compassionate. Yeah, that's new input, by the way, for your praise opportunity. Okay.

Verse 15,

"The idols of the nations are silver and gold, (And they still are today.) *the work of human hands.*

16 They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see;"

Now he's talking about those little figurines that they worship. The real genuine idols that the pagans would worship.

He says in verse 17,

"they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths."

And here's the tragedy of all that. Look at verse 18,

"Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them."

Don't think for a moment that idolatry is gone. Because idolatry is simply whatever your master passion is to this day. You can easily make an idol out of

anything: could be a person, could be your goals, your job, could be sex, money, whatever. Anything can be an idol.

But you know what's interesting about those things? Is that whatever those things are that we run after, whatever… Whether it's sexual pleasure or, money, or drugs, or whatever it is, it's all spiritually dead. It's all spiritually dead. And if you run after it, you will become like it. Meaning, spiritually dead.

And that's what the psalmist says here, those who make them - those idols - they become like them. But you know what is...You know what the converse of that is? The more we follow Jesus, the more we run after Jesus, the more we look to Jesus, the more we hope in Jesus, the more we put our emphasis and our attention on Him, guess what? We become like Him. We are being made in the image of Jesus Christ, God's Son.

And that is happening progressively in our lives, but it happens as we run after Him. As we pursue Him, like the world pursues their idols, we pursue the Lord. And just as they are becoming like their deaf and dumb idols, we are becoming like He who is alive and ever-living.

Verse 19. We finish out the final verses of the Psalm. It's just a final call to praise.

"O house of Israel, bless the LORD! O house of Aaron, bless the LORD!"

Remember the *"house of Aaron,"* was the high priests.

20 O house of Levi, bless the LORD!"

They were the servants to the priests. Or the Levitical priests, if you will, but could not be a high priest. He says,

"*You who fear the LORD,* (you too, as well) *bless the LORD!* (or praise the Lord.)

21 Blessed be the LORD from Zion, he who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!"

So, you have this final call to *"Praise the LORD!"*