

Give Thanksgiving to God Part 1

by Chuck Smith

Psalm 136 emphasizes the importance of remembering God's mercy and goodness, and encourages the reader to sing praises to God in all circumstances.

Duration: 25:03

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 16:34, Psalm 136:1, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 5:20, Colossians 3:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Topics: "Thanksgiving"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith teaches on the importance of giving thanks to God. He begins by discussing Psalm 136, which is an antiphonal Psalm meant to be sung back and forth between the priest and the congregation. The Psalm highlights God's mighty acts, such as dividing the Red Sea, leading the Israelites through the wilderness, and defeating great kings. Pastor Chuck emphasizes the enduring and deep mercy of God, which is demonstrated through His creative acts and His faithfulness to His people. He encourages listeners to recognize and give thanks for God's mercy, which endures forever.

Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you
With His Spirit and His love
Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul
Oh, let Him have the things that hold you
And His Spirit like a dove
Will descend upon your life
And make you whole
This psalm is one of those which are known as an antiphonal psalm. That is, it was to be sung back and forth. The priest, it was thought, took the first part and then the congregation would answer the second part.

That is, for His mercy endureth forever. And so it would go in sort of a rhythmic antiphonal kind of a way in which in their gathering and their worship to God it would be back and forth. And so let's, before we analyze the psalm, let's go ahead and read it through.

But I'll act like I'm one of the priests. And I'll read the first part. And then you, in unison, answer, For His mercy endureth forever.

And you'll get then the idea of how this was used in the worship by the Hebrews. O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. For His mercy endureth forever.

O give thanks unto the God of gods. For His mercy endureth forever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords.

For His mercy endureth forever. To Him alone doeth great wonders. For His mercy endureth forever.

To Him that by wisdom made the heavens. For His mercy endureth forever. To Him that stretched out the earth above the waters.

For His mercy endureth forever. To Him that made great lights. For His mercy endureth forever.

The sun to rule by day. For His mercy endureth forever. The moon and the stars to rule by night.

For His mercy endureth forever. To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn. For His mercy endureth forever.

and brought out Israel from among them, with a strong hand and with a stretched-out arm, to Him which divided the Red Sea into parts, and made Israel to pass through in the midst of it, but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, for His mercy endureth forever. To Him which led His people through the wilderness, for His mercy endureth forever. To Him which smoked great kings, for His mercy endureth forever.

And slew famous kings, for His mercy endureth forever. Sihon the king of the Amorites, for His mercy endureth forever. And Og the king of Bashan, for His mercy endureth forever.

And he gave their land for a heritage, for His mercy endureth forever. Even a heritage unto Israel, His servant, for His mercy endureth forever. Who remembered us in our lowest state, for His mercy endureth forever.

And hath redeemed us from our enemies, for His mercy endureth forever. Who giveth food to all flesh, for His mercy endureth forever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for His mercy endureth forever.

Now what truth do you suppose was impressed in their heart by the time they finished that Psalm? And yet, what truth of Scripture are we more prone to doubt? How many times has Satan come to you declaring that you've gone too far, that you went over the boundary, that God isn't interested in trying to help you anymore, that God's given up on you, that you've expended the mercy of God, that God's mercy is no longer available for you. And yet, the truth that God wants to implant deep and indelibly within our hearts is that His mercy endureth forever. All you have to do is call upon the Lord.

His mercy is available for you. And it really doesn't matter what the sin may be, how serious your infraction, how great your rebellion. If you will turn to God and ask His forgiveness, you will discover that His mercy endureth forever.

O, give thanks unto the Lord. Notice the Lord is in all caps, which means that it is that name for God by which He revealed Himself to the Jews, the Yahweh or the Jehovah, the name for the Lord. O, give thanks unto Yahweh or O, give thanks unto Jehovah, however it is pronounced.

And then the second name for God, the Elohim, but He is called the God of gods. That is the recognition in the Bible that there are many gods that people worshiped. There are sensual type of gods where a person would deify his sensuality or his emotions or some power in the universe.

But the God of gods or the God who is above all gods. Before his death, Francis Schaeffer was saying that the time has come when you just can't refer to God because there are so many gods that have really invaded our Western culture. We are looking into doing a video series on the pagan invasion of the West

and show how that our Western culture has been invaded by paganism.

Tremendous invasion of witchcraft from England, the occult from Europe, an invasion of the Eastern mysticisms and how our Western world has been invaded by paganism. And you'd be shocked at how deep the penetration has been. Satanism, this pagan invasion of our Western Christianized kind of world has been invaded by paganism.

So Francis Schaeffer said, you just can't say God anymore because God means so many things to so many people. As the result of your mysticism and the invasion of Hinduism, when you say God, a person may be thinking of a beautiful rose. They may be thinking of a lovely waterfall, a quiet forest.

And so he said, we need to more or less define the God that we are talking about when we make reference to God. He said, we should say the true eternal living God in order to define the God that we are speaking about because God means so many things to so many people and it's just an essence, it's just a kind of a atmosphere or whatever. And people say, oh, that's God.

But you have to then define, I'm talking about the eternal living creator of the universe, the God of gods. And then the third Hebrew word that is ascribed to him is Lord, capital L, small o-r-d. And this is the Hebrew word Adonai.

And Adonai is a title of lordship. It is the equivalent of the Greek kurios, which also is a title of lordship. But he is the Lord of lords.

And of course, that's one of the titles that is given to Jesus in the book of Revelation, king of kings, or that is king over the kings and Lord over the lords. So in the first three, the three names of God from the Old Testament, the Yahweh, the Elohim, and the Adonai. Then the praising of God or the acknowledging of God in his creative acts.

He does great wonders. By wisdom, he made the heavens. He stretched out the earth above the waters.

That is, he caused the dry land to appear. To him that made the great lights, that is the sun to rule by day, the moon and stars to rule by night. And so for his creative acts, they are recognized.

The God who created these things is the God whose mercy endures forever. That's the longevity of the mercy of God. It endures forever.

But what about the depth of the mercy of God? How much will it cover? And we have another psalm that declares, for as the heavens are high above the earth, so high is his mercy towards those that fear him. Now, the science of astronomy has been advancing rapidly with the advent of new telescopes and new ways of probing into the universe. It's interesting that with the development of these new telescopes, a lot of the old theories are being cast aside.

And they say, well, we were wrong in that. We have discovered that what we believed is no longer provable, and thus theories have changed. And then they say, you see, because we are able to change, that means we are true scientists.

And so what we teach is true because we're able to change it. When we discover that changes need to be made. In reality, it's a lot of theory.

And the theory of the red shift and all of this, it's theory. No one actually can go out there to measure the speed at which the star is traveling and how fast it is moving away from us. But some of the latest guesstimates are now 15 billion light years.

Some of those galaxies that they say are out there. And it's exciting to realize how vast the universe is. Because the more they discover, the higher and the greater God's mercy is towards me.

And when I feel, man, I must be at the limit, then they discover that it's another three billion light years further out. And I breathe a sigh of relief and say, all right, I think I can go for a while longer. It'll cover for a little more.

And so God's mercy, it endures forever. And it's as high as the heavens. Now, turning from the creative acts of God and the extolling of God's mercy, the God who is the creator, he is also the God who established the nation of Israel for his purposes.

And in the establishing of the nation of Israel, he smote the Egyptians. He brought Israel from among them. With a strong hand and a stretched out arm, he divided the Red Sea.

And he made Israel to pass through the midst of it. But when Pharaoh attempted to do so, he was overthrown. He led his people through the wilderness.

And then he smote the great kings that inhabited the land, the famous kings, Sihon, Og. And he gave their land to his people as a heritage. And he remembered us in our lowest state.

And he has redeemed us from our enemies. He gives food to all flesh. God feeds the animal kingdom.

He is the God of heaven. And his mercy endures forever. And so the repeated truth for emphasis that it might be implanted deep in our hearts and deep in our minds and never, never, never should we question whether or not God will be merciful to forgive us our sins or our transgressions.

His mercy endures forever. His mercy is without limit. His mercy will cover you.

Psalms 137 is a psalm of captivity. When Israel was carried away as a captive to Babylon, slaves, as they left Jerusalem, it was a horrible scene. The city was on fire.

The enemy troops were breaking down the walls. They had destroyed the temple. They were crashing down the walls of the houses, setting the whole thing on fire.

And the Edomites, who were the perennial enemies of Judah, were there encouraging the Babylonian soldiers. They were crying out, raise it, raise it, wipe it out. And so their last scene as they're being driven in chains, bound, and taken captive to Babylon, their last scene of Jerusalem was a bitter scene.

Many of their children had been dashed in the streets by the Babylonians. The women with child were ripped up. It was a horrible, bloody mess.

And those that did survive, they killed off the rest and those that they felt would make good slaves, those that were fittest, they put in chains to take them away to Babylon as slaves, and they were captive. And so when they came by the river, that would be the Euphrates River that ran through the heart of Babylon, by the rivers, plural, the many canals that went out from the Euphrates, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion, thinking back to that horrible scene of bloodshed and destruction. We hung

our harps on the willows in the midst thereof.

That, I think, is where the weeping willow got its name, sitting by the rivers, weeping in Babylon, hanging their harps there on the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song, and they that wasted us required us a party, saying, sing us, to us, one of the songs of Zion. They wanted them to sing one of these psalms that David had written.

Now, for the most part, the Israeli music is upbeat. They have their dances, and it's exciting music. It's always an exciting time to be around a bunch of Israelis when they start singing their folk songs, because it's just good, upbeat, exciting music, and they're great singers, and they have some fabulous songs.

And so, they're in Babylon, said, hey, sing us some of your songs, you know. Let's have a happy party. But they said, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? How can we sing praises to God under these conditions, the Lord's song, here in this strange land? And then, the declaration, if I forget the, oh, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

That is the cunning, skillful playing of the harp. Let my right hand forget how to play on the harp cunningly if I would forget Jerusalem. I don't want to sing.

If I would forget what I saw in Jerusalem, that terrible bloodshed, if I forget that, then let my right hand forget its cunning. I don't want to sing about it. If I do not remember thee, then let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

In other words, I don't want to sing. Let my tongue just get stuck at the top of my mouth, making me incapable of singing. And if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Jerusalem was and is a city that is the chief joy of so many devout Jews. There are those Jews that are living in Jerusalem today who feel that they are the most fortunate, blessed people on the face of the earth for the privilege of being able to live in Jerusalem. There is a charm about the city that is sort of unexplainable.

Those truly devout Jews feel that those Jews that live in Tel Aviv are almost atheist. Living outside of Jerusalem, being content to live in Tel Aviv, they feel is almost blasphemy that every true Jew will not be content until he is living in Jerusalem itself. And so this love for Jerusalem, this deep devotion goes way back even to biblical times if I do not prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy.

We'll return with more of our First by First venture through the Bible in our next broadcast as Pastor Chuck continues his study of the Psalms. And we do hope he'll make plans to join us. But right now, if you'd like to secure a copy of today's message, simply order Psalm 136, verse one when visiting thewordfortoday.org. And while you're there, be sure to browse through the many additional biblical resources by Pastor Chuck.

You can also subscribe to the Word for Today podcast or sign up for our email subscription. Once again, that's thewordfortoday.org. For those of you wishing to call, our toll-free number is 1-800-272-WORD. And our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific time.

Again, that's 1-800-272-9673. If you prefer to write, our mailing address is The Word for Today, P.O. Box 8000, Costa Mesa, California, 92628. And now, on behalf of The Word for Today, we'd like to thank all of you who share in supporting this ministry with your prayers and financial support.

And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck continues his verse-by-verse study through the Bible. That's right here on the next edition on The Word for Today. Now, once again, here's Pastor Chuck.

I pray that God will make this a very special week for you, that you might follow after the things of the Spirit, that He'll protect and shield you from those influences of the world that are so prevalent. We're surrounded by them on all sides, but may the Lord just put a shield around you. And may you walk in holiness and in purity and in righteousness before Him.

May your life be committed fully unto Him. And may the love of Christ just dwell in your hearts richly as you experience His love and power working in and through your life. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Guess what I found? Pastor Chuck's Old and New Testament study guides are available to download as eBooks instantly to your phone or mobile device. Now, whenever you need to find the meaning to a scripture reference quickly, you can.

Pastor Chuck has written great little Bible commentaries to help anyone come to a better understanding of God's Word. To find out more and to read a book preview, visit thewordfortoday.org and click on the link to download the Old and New Testament study guides by Chuck Smith. Or if you would like to order these books in print, call The Word for Today at 800-272-WORD.

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