

(How to Understand the KJV Bible) 25 Psalm 136

by Keith Simons

Psalm 136 is a psalm that gives 26 reasons to give thanks to God, declaring that his mercy endures forever.

Duration: 26:51

Scripture: Psalm 136:1

Topics: "KJV Bible", "God's Mercy", "Thankfulness"

Description

Keith Simons teaches on Psalm 136, emphasizing the importance of giving thanks to God for His enduring mercy, which is highlighted throughout the psalm. He explains that the psalm lists 26 reasons to be thankful, starting with God's goodness and culminating in His acts of kindness towards Israel, including their deliverance from Egypt and provision in the wilderness. Simons notes that God's mercy is a central theme, repeated in every verse, reminding us of His eternal kindness and care for all creation. The psalm serves as a call to gratitude, recognizing God's sovereignty and love in both creation and redemption.

Transcript

Welcome. Psalm 136 gives 26 reasons to give thanks to God, but for all those reasons it declares that the purpose of them is that his mercy endures forever. My name's Keith Symons, I'm a Bible teacher from England, and this is the 25th in our series of talks on psalms, showing you how to understand them in the King James Bible.

Please take a look at some of the previous episodes, but today's episode, as I say, is Psalm 136. There's no title in this psalm, and so it begins with verse 1, the declaration, O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. Let's look at it word by word and verse by verse.

The psalm begins with that word O, just one letter, and usually we see that when the Bible is talking to someone particularly, and it says O and their name, but here it's just the word O, and it's there to tell us that it's talking to, well it's all, it's talking to everyone, and it's giving us a command, an instruction, and that instruction is to give thanks unto the Lord. Be thankful to God, you should come to him with thankful hearts for all the good things he's done for you and for all people. You give thanks unto the Lord, the word Lord there is in block capitals, because that is God's special name, it's a name that the Jewish people didn't pronounce, because they considered it such a sacred name.

It's to God, the true God, who you must give thanks. The reason? He's good. God is a good God, a God who cares for his people, a God who does good things in the world, who doesn't have any shade of evil in him, any desire to do wrong or bad things.

He alone is perfectly good, therefore you should give him your thanks. But to that statement the author of this psalm adds another reason, and it is such an important reason he repeats it in every verse. We might imagine that this psalm was sung by two choirs, one choir singing each statement and the other choir replying with the bold declaration, for his mercy endureth forever.

His mercy, that is the word which in Hebrew is often translated kindness and sometimes loving kindness. This is a kindness God shows because of his great love, and it's kindness that continues. The word endureth is in italics, slanted type in our King James Version.

It's not in the Hebrew, that's what that special type means when you come across it in the King James. So the translators could have written for his mercy is forever, and that would have been an equally good translation, but seeing we're talking about forever, the King James translators decided to translate it or put in the word endureth to link the thought of his mercy and forever. In other words God's mercy continues forever, his love never fails, his kindness never ends, so it's good to give thanks to him because God is good.

Verse two, O give thanks unto the God of gods for his mercy endureth forever. So he's God of course, but he's the God of gods. What does that mean? Well of course there are many idols that people worship and many things that people pretend or imagine to be God, but the true God alone is God, and these things that people worship instead of God, well God is greater than them.

But the Hebrew word God can also mean a powerful person, a mighty judge, a ruler, and God of course is greater than any God in that sense, any great ruler. God is the greatest and most powerful and strongest ruler of all to whom his honour is always due, and he's a great God because his mercy endures forever. And with the same thought, verse three says O give thanks to the Lord of lords for his mercy endureth forever, and you'll see there unlike in verse one, Lord is not in block capital letters, it's in normal type.

God is the Lord, he's the master that means, the master who rules over every master. There's no employer however great, no boss however powerful who is more powerful than God. So just as we spoke about God's great strength and God's great power in that sense in verse two, so now we're talking about God's great authority in verse three.

A God is someone who has strength, a Lord is someone who has authority. Now from this point on the psalm doesn't repeat the words O give thanks until it reaches its final verse, but they're implied and the psalm more simply begins to him, to God that is. Verse four, to him who alone doeth great wonders for his mercy endureth forever.

God alone does wonderful and mighty things. We're soon to realise that the author of this psalm is thinking particularly at the moment about the creation, about how he made heaven and earth. These wonderful works, these great wonderful works, they're something which God alone does and he's shown this kindness to his people because his mercy is forever.

So what is the first of these great wonders we list? Well verse five, to him that by wisdom made the heavens for his mercy endureth forever. How did God make the heavens? By his wisdom, by his

understanding, by his intelligence. He didn't do it by hard physical work, no it was his wisdom that put the heavens in place.

Heaven where God lives, but the heavens, the skies, the place where the stars are, the air above us, all this he put in place by his infinite wisdom and he did it as an act of kindness because his mercy is forever. Verse six, to him that stretched out the earth above the waters for his mercy endureth forever. Just as we had the heavens in verse five, we've now got the waters with an s on the end in verse six.

There's a great water in the sea but there's also the pools of water under the ground which you can access if you dig a well or which comes to the surface in springs and yet God in this place of waters made solid ground so that his people could live on it. He stretched out the earth above it and in the higher place because of course if he stretched out the earth in the lower place below the waters then people couldn't have lived there, so God made the land because of his mercy, his kindness which is forever. And in the course of this great work to him that made great lights, he made great lights, he didn't make a world of darkness because what could we do and what hope would there be for us in darkness? No, God made a world that was full of light and the brightest light for his mercy endureth forever.

In this great work he was showing his care and his love for people, he was showing his great mercy. Of course the greatest light that we have in the sky is verse eight, the sun to rule by day. And why did God provide the sun with its heat and its light? It was an exercise of his goodness, it was an exercise of his kindness to people, to provide people with a good earth that they could live on, where their plants would grow, to provide them with food and their animals could feed on the plants.

This was his wonderful plan and he divided the authority of the sun and the moon and the stars. He arranged that the sun would have power over the day but the dimmer lights, verse nine, the moon and stars to rule by night for his mercy endureth forever. So that man's work would not be continuous, so that people wouldn't continually have to work in the heat of the sun, but that they would have the night as a quiet time to rest and to sleep and to recover their energy.

And that was an exercise of God's kindness, yet even the night he didn't leave without light, because he placed the moon and the stars in place, because his mercy is forever. Verse 10, there's now a change in emphasis of this psalm. We've been talking about the work of creation as reason to give thanks to God, but if God showed his goodness in creation to all people, how much more did he show to his special people, Israel's people, who he rescued from slavery, who he brought into their own land and gave them the promised land to be their home forever.

So that's the subject for the second part of the psalm from verse 10. And it begins, remember we've got that implied, oh give thanks to the Lord at the beginning. So give thanks to the Lord, to him that smote Egypt in their firstborn, for his mercy endureth forever.

That was last and greatest of the ten plagues, by which God freed Israel from the power of Egypt, where they were kept as slaves. And he did it by striking their firstborn. The first child in every family died, their firstborn sons all died in a single night when God smote or struck Egypt.

And that was how God set Israel free, because of his kindness to his people, because his kindness to them was an eternal kindness, verse 11. And God brought Israel out from among them, for his mercy endureth forever. He didn't just act against Egypt because of its pride, that wouldn't be enough to set Israel free, to make God's people into their own people.

No, God had to complete the work and bring out Israel, the people, the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom we call today the Jewish people. He brought them out of Egypt because of his kindness to them, which is an eternal kindness which lasts forever. Verse 12, we've got quite a few implied words here, we're giving thanks to God, to him who smote Egypt and brought out Israel.

And how did he do it? Verse 12, with a strong hand and with a stretched out arm for his mercy endureth forever. Think of a strong soldier, how he fights with his strong hand holding his spear or his sword. And think of how he stretches out and he reaches out his arm to attack.

That's how God acted. God acted with strength and reaching out, reaching out to Israel's people to help them in their time of need. It was something he did once, yet it shows God's mercy to them is forever and ever.

That rescue, that one rescue was to save his people for all eternity. Verse 13, give thanks to him, to God, which divided the Red Sea into parts for his mercy endureth forever. And we read in the book of Exodus how God separated the Red Sea into two parts when Israel's people were being chased by the army of Egypt and Israel's people walked through the Red Sea on dry ground.

It's curious we call it the Red Sea, the Hebrew word really means the Reed Sea. Reeds are the plants that grow in the water, but the sea in that region has since ancient times been called the Red Sea and that's the reason why the King James translators have translated these words which more properly mean the Reed Sea as the Red Sea. Verse 14, and God made Israel to pass through the midst of it for his mercy endureth forever.

Israel's people, the whole nation, walked through the sea on dry land, through the middle of the Red Sea. We don't mean by the midst there, the middle of the Red Sea as it's in the map, we mean the middle of the two parts which the water was divided into. With water on either side of them, they walked through the Red Sea to freedom because God's kindness to them is an eternal kindness.

God's kindness lasts forever, but God at the same time defeated his enemies. Verse 15, but God overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea for his mercy endureth forever. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt.

His host, the word host means his army. Pharaoh and his army were overthrown, they were overcome in the Red Sea. The sea, the water of the sea, came back when they chased after Israel's people in order to try and defeat God's plans to set free his people, but God defeated them instead because his kindness is forever.

So Israel's people crossed the Red Sea at the time of Moses and they found themselves in the wilderness, the desert, and they were without food and without water, but God provided for them. He provided for them there for in the end 40 years and he guided them in that situation. He sent Moses as their leader, but he led his people through with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to him which led his people through the wilderness, verse 16 says, for his mercy endureth forever.

And now we're coming near to the promised land and we read how God gave over the land to Israel's people. So verse 17 declares, to give thanks to him, that's to God, which smote great kings. He defeated great kings in Canaan in the land that he'd promised his people, for his mercy endureth forever because God wanted to provide a permanent home for his people in the promised land.

Verse 18, and slew famous kings. God defeated kings who were well-known, not just rulers over little villages, but powerful and important kings because his mercy to his people Israel is eternal, forever. And now there's mention of two kings particularly.

Sihon, king of the Amorites, verse 19, for his mercy endureth forever. We read about Sihon in Deuteronomy chapter 2 and verse 30 onwards. Sihon, Israel's people just wanted to pass through his land.

They offered to pay properly for what they needed and promised that they wouldn't interfere with his land. They explained to him that God hadn't given them his land, but that the promised land was beyond his land. Yet Sihon attacked them with his army.

He fiercely attacked and God defeated him. And after they'd passed the attack from Sihon and his army, they came up with an even worse enemy. Verse 20, and Arg, the king of Bashan.

Read about him in Deuteronomy chapter 3. He's called the last of the giants. He ruled 60 ward cities, each one of them with high walls and gates and bars. This powerful, this fierce enemy.

And yet God defeated him for his mercy endureth forever. Verse 21, and God gave their land for heritage. He was giving his people a home, a permanent home.

And now that Sihon and Arg had been defeated, he added their land to the promised land on the west side of the Jordan, which he'd promised to Israel's people for his mercy to them endureth forever. Verse 22, even a heritage unto Israel his servant for his mercy endureth forever. And here Israel is called the servant of God.

A heritage means an inheritance, a permanent home God was giving them in the land called Israel, land that is theirs again today. And then there seems to be a change in emphasis in verse 23, because as the psalm continues, the author of it thinks of God's greatness to us. He's not now discussing what happened in the past to Israel's people, although he belongs to them.

He's not now discussing the creation of the world. He's remembering God's kindness to us. And if you know God's kindness, it's to you too.

Verse 23, who remembered us in our lowest state, in other words, in our desperate state, in our time of need, in our time when we needed help, God remembered us. This is a special meaning of remember. It means he remembered and he showed his kindness to us.

He acted to help us, to rescue us, to save us from our problems. Why? Because God's mercy to his people is forever. Verse 24, and hath redeemed us from our enemies for his mercy endureth forever.

The King James Bible translates as redeemed, the word which really means to break away. God broke us away from our enemies. He freed us from our enemies.

He rescued us from our troubles. That is our great God, whose mercy and kindness is forever and ever. But his kindness is not just for us who serve him.

Let's remember his kindness. Verse 25 is, for everyone, God giveth food to all flesh. To every nation in the world, their food comes from God.

And to the animals too, their food comes from God. God is the God of kindness. His kindness endureth forever.

So in verse 26, he sums it all up. Oh, give thanks unto the God of heaven, the God who rules heaven above us, the God who continually from heaven showers his blessings upon all the people of the earth, because his mercy, his kindness endureth forever. In a moment, I'm going to read you the whole psalm, but first, here's my email address.

It's 333kjb at gmail.com. That's 333kjb at gmail.com. Now, here's the whole psalm. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. Oh, give thanks unto the God of gods, for his mercy endureth forever.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his mercy endureth forever. To him who 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 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, for his mercy endureth forever.

With a strong hand and with a stretched out arm, for his mercy endureth forever. To him which divided the Red Sea into parts, for his mercy endureth forever. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it, for his mercy endureth forever.

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 smote great kings, for his mercy endureth forever.

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

And gave their land for an heritage, for his mercy endureth forever. Even an 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.

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