

No God is Like Our God!

Psalm 135

Intro: In Psalm 103:2 David, the gifted songwriter and King of Israel, reminds us, “Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me” (NLT). Forgetfulness is all too common for the people of God, a people who have been blessed with grace upon grace from the LORD who is good (v.3, 136:1) Psalm 135 is a hymn of descriptive praise of God the creator (vv.5-7) and the Lord of history (vv.8-12). Willem VanGemeren notes, “the reader will be struck by the many allusions as well as the direct citations to other passages of Scripture” (*Psalms*, vol.5, EBC, 940). Alec Motyer points to the psalm’s close relationship to Psalm 136 and writes, “The two psalms are ‘orphans’ in that no authorship or other attribution is made. The only reason for attaching them to the songs of the Great Ascent is suitability; both psalms sketch the great pilgrimage of Yahweh’s people from Egypt to the promised land (135:8-14; 136:16-12), and it is easy to imagine their use by festival pilgrims” (*Psalms by the Day*, 390). As the people of God marched their way up to Jerusalem, Psalms 135 and 136 would help them not forget who had delivered them and from what He had delivered them. They would be reminded of the abundant reasons they had for praising and blessing “the name of the Lord” (v.17).

Before we jump into the text, it is worth observing the beautiful structure of the Psalm. It highlights certain truths and it would also be an aid to memorization.

Michael Wilcox's design is helpful:

Praise to our electing Lord (vv.1-4),

the 'making' God who gives life (vv.5-7)!

Pharaoh's servants have been vanquished (vv.8-9);

with the gift of the land (vv.10-12),

Yahweh's servants have been vindicated (vv.13-14).

The 'made' gods bring death (vv.15-18);

praise to our indwelling Lord (vv.19-21)!

(Michael Wilcox, *The Message of Psalms 73-150*, BST, 247).

Our study of this psalm will be influenced by Wilcox's outline.

I. Praise the Lord because He is Good 135:1-4

Like Psalm 134, the worship of God's people is led, but not restricted, by the priest "who stood in the Lord's house at night" (134:1; see also 113:1). In both psalms, they are called "you servants of the LORD" (134:1; 135:1). Repeatedly, they are told to "praise the Lord" in verses 1-4. Why? Because 1) "the Lord is good" (v.3), 2) His name "is delightful" (v.3), and 3) He "has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel as his treasured possession" (v.4). Our God, the LORD, is good and delightful

(ESV, “pleasant”) in general but also in particular. The evidence is His sovereign and gracious choosing of Israel (See Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Ps. 114:2; Mal. 3:17). Commenting on this truth, Calvin writes, “The mercy was surely one of incomparable value, and which might well stir them up to fervent gratitude and praise, adopted as they were into favor with God, while the whole Gentile world was passed by... [God] bound the posterity of Abraham to him by a closer tie, such as that by which he now adopts men generally into his Church and unties them with the body of his only-begotten Son” (Calvin, Comm. Vol.6, *Psalms 93-150*, p.172). The God we serve is a very good God! He is worthy of our praise. He sets his electing pleasure on undeserving sinners like Jacob; like you and me.

II. Honor the Lord because He is the Creator 135:5-7

Not only is the LORD good (v.3), He is also “great; greater than all gods” (v.5). This is something the psalmist “knows” beyond a shadow of a doubt. Allen Ross informs us, “These are words that Jethro used in Exodus 18:11 when he met Moses and Israel after the great deliverance from Egypt. It is the kind of confession of faith than any believer could make ...” (*The Psalms*, vol.3, 766-67). The pagan nations worship false gods who can do nothing. In stark contrast, we worship a God, “the LORD who does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth” (v.6). The LORD is the sovereign Creator “in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths.” He controls the clouds, lightening, rain and wind (v.7). He has absolute

and total control and authority over what he has made. Nature responds to His every command; as should we! John Piper provides a helpful theological insight on these verses when he says,

“whenever God acts, he acts in a way that pleases him. God is never constrained to do a thing that he despises. He is never backed into a corner where his only recourse is to do something he hates to do. He does whatever he pleases. And therefore, in some sense, he has pleasure in all that he does ... [therefore] we should bow before God and praise his sovereign freedom — that in some sense at least he always acts in freedom, according to his own “good pleasure,” following the dictates of his own delights. He never becomes the victim of circumstance. He is never forced into a situation where he must do something in which he cannot rejoice.” (“The Pleasure of God in All He Does,” 2-1-87)

Our God is the Creator. And, He is a sovereign Creator with absolute and complete authority over all that He has made.

III. Thank God because He fights for His people 135:8-14

The LORD is good (vv.1-4) and He is great (vv.5-7). He is also gracious (vv.8-14). This is made abundantly clear in his deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt in the Exodus (vv.8-9), and the Conquest of the Promised Land (vv.10-12). In summary

fashion the psalmist notes God's victories over Pharaoh and the Egyptians, particularly in the 10th plague (vv.8-9; cf. Ex. 12:29ff); over "many nations" as He "slaughtered mighty kings" (v.10), specifically "Sihon king of the Amorites" and "Og king of Bashan, and all the kings of Canaan" (vv.10-11; cf. Num. 21:21-26, 33-35; Deut. 2:30-33; 3:1-6; Josh 12:21-24). Having fought for His people and defeated their enemies, the Lord "gave them land as an inheritance, an inheritance to his people Israel" (v.12). They did not deserve it and they did not earn it. It was a sovereign act of His goodness and grace.

In response to this recounting and remembrance of God's gracious acts, the psalmist breaks forth in praise of the "Lord's name" that "endures forever" and the "Lord's reputation" which will endure "through all generations" (v.13). Once again we are reminded that no God is like our God. His mighty Name will never be forgotten. And, "the Lord, will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants" (v.14). Derek Kidner's comments fit so well when he writes, "These verses allude to Exodus 3:15 and Deuteronomy 33:36. The latter (from the Song of Moses) makes it clear that the rescue of God's people will be wholly undeserved: the saving of fools and apostates from the predicament they deserve to find themselves in" (*Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 456). This is compassion on the undeserving. This is pure grace showered on the Lord's servants. And, we should not miss this, verses 13-14 "look to the future as the previous verses looked to the

past.” As James Boice says, “the God who has been gracious in the past will continue to vindicate his people and have compassion on them in days yet to come (v.14). God’s love will indeed endure forever (Psalm 136, refrain) God does not change” (*Psalms 107-150*, 1177). God is forever good, He is forever great and He is forever gracious. No God is like our God. Never forget that!

IV. Worship the Lord because He is the one true God 135:15-18

The Psalmist now wishes to draw a comparison and contrast between the one true God and the false idols this world (“the nations”) so foolishly construct and worship. The spiritual insanity could not be more evident. Drawing from Psalm 115:4-8, the songwriter is clear and concise in his Polemic against the false gods we so often are seduced by. First, they are “made by human hands” (v. 15), even the most valuable (“silver and gold”). They are creations not the Creator. Second, they are mutes! “They have mouths but cannot speak” (v.16). Third, they are blind! They have “eyes, but cannot see” (v. 16). Fourth, they are deaf! “They have ears but cannot hear” (v.17). Fifth, they are dead! They have no life! There is no breath in this mouths” (v.17). Those who foolishly bow down to them and put their “trust” and hopes “in them” are destined to be “just like them” (v.18). Commenting on this truth Spurgeon writes, “Idolaters are spiritually dead, they are the mere images of men, their best being is gone... Their mouths do not really pray, their eyes see not the truth, their ears hear not the voice of the Lord, and the life of God

is not in them” (TOD, vol 3, 188). How absurd and foolish to forsake the worship of the One true God.

V. Bless the Lord Because He lives among His People 135:19-21

Psalm 135 concludes with a 5-fold call to praise (“bless”) the Lord. Each occurrence of the Word “bless” is an imperative and the verses draw from Psalm 115:9-11; 118:2-4. By piling up the names of Israel, Aaron and Levi (vv.19-20), the psalmist “makes it clearer that the people who revere Yhwh are the people as a whole” (John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol 3: *Psalms 90-150*; BCOT, 585). This observation is supported by the concluding phrase of verse 20, “You who revere (ESV, “fear”) the LORD, bless the LORD!” Respect and reverence are natural and appropriate responses in recognition of this good, great and gracious God who is like no other gods! The psalm ends with a personal and comforting word. The God of Israel, Aaron, Levi and Jacob (v.4) is a God who is intimate with His people. He is the “the Lord we bless from Zion; he dwells in Jerusalem” (v.21). The God who can “localize” His omnipresence chose as an act of grace to live among His people as their God. He is here not there. He is near not far. No wonder God’s people shout with praise “Hallelujah!” “Praise the Lord” (cf. vv.1-3). We have come full circle. We end as we began.

Con. The words of the wonderful expositor Warren Wiersbe provide a very fitting conclusion to the psalm that teaches us, “No god is like our God!” He writes:

“Israel could praise the Lord because He was present with His people. No other nations could claim that distinction. His glory led Israel through the wilderness, and that glory resided in the sanctuary until God had to depart because of the nation’s sins (Ezek. 7-11). What other nation had the glory of God dwelling in their midst (63:2; Rom. 9:4)? The Lord is not a distant God; He is a “very present help in trouble” (46:1). Jesus is “Immanuel—God with us” (Matt. 1:20-25; 28:20). ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’ (Heb.13:5; Gen. 28:15; Josh. 1:5; Isa. 41:10, 17). Praise the Lord!” (*The Bible Exposition Commentary: OT Wisdom and Poetry*, 361)