

Be Thankful to the Lord! His Faithful Love Endures Forever!

Psalm 136

Introduction: 1) It is one of the most precious phrases and promises in all of the Bible. It will appear 26 times in Psalm 136. Patrick Reardon notes, “The litany-like refrain makes it one of the easiest psalms to memorize and sing spontaneously on every occasion” (*Christ in the Psalms*, 271). Its depth of meaning is revealed, at least in part, in how various English translations render the original Hebrew text.

*CSB*: “His faithful love endures forever.”

*ESV*: “His steadfast love endures forever.”

*NIV*: “His love endures forever.”

*NASV*: “His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

*AMP*: “His lovingkindness endures forever.”

*CEB*: “God’s faithful love lasts forever.”

*GNT*: “His love is eternal.”

*KJV*: “His mercy endureth forever.”

*The Message*: “His love never quits.”

2) Put them together and we might grasp the depth and breathe of what the psalmist is saying like this: *Yahweh* (LORD), our God (*Elohim*), is faithful in His

everlasting covenant love toward His people. Indeed it is a love that will endure forever, never ever coming to an end.

3) This attribute of faithful love is at the very essence of who our God is. He is “faithful love.” He is everlasting lovingkindness. How do we know? The psalmist takes us on a magnificent 26 verse tour to make what I would call an irrefutable case. Derek Kidner points out, “every verse of this psalm either echoes, quotes or is quoted by some other part of Scripture” (*Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 455). What an appropriate conclusion it is to the “Great Hallel Psalms” (Psalms 120-136).

I. Praise the Lord for His faithful and everlasting love because of who He is

136:1-3

Our theology of God (Theology Proper) should always begin with who God is, His character and attributes. This powerful psalm on the Lord’s faithful, forever love does exactly this. Though our God possesses many marvelous attributes, the psalmist highlights two in verses 1-3 (cf. Psalm 135:3-5). He does so utilizing the phrase, “Give thanks,” in each verse (cf. also v. 26).

1) He is good

136:1

We should praise or “give thanks to the LORD” (*Yahweh*) because he is good.” This word occurs more than 700 times in the Old Testament. Alan Ross writes, “This word embraces everything that is beneficial for life,

pleasing to life, and harmonious with life....[God] is good because what he creates and what he gives is all good” (*Psalms*, vol. 1, 753).

2) He is sovereign

136:2-3

The Lord is good and He is also sovereign. He is the “God of gods” (v. 2) and the “Lord of lords” (v. 3). These verses echo Deuteronomy 10:17 where the Bible reads, “For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awe-inspiring God, showing no partiality and taking no bribe.” It also anticipates the Second Coming description of Jesus in Revelation 19:16, “And he has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” Our God alone is Lord!

II. Praise the Lord for His faithful and everlasting love because of what He has done

136:4-25

The psalmist now moves from who God is to what God has done. Verses 4-25 focus on the mighty acts of our mighty God. They constitute the heart of the hymn, and they focus on the twin themes of creation and redemption (cf. Rev. 4-5). I like the way Nancy de Classé-Walford puts it, “As the singers of Psalm 136 enunciated the words of the psalm, they brought the past powerfully into the present. God who created is creating. God who delivered is delivering. God who sustained is sustaining” (*The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 952).

1) The Lord made everything

136:4-9

Verses 4-9 are a creation hymn within the larger hymn of Psalm 136. Our God does “great wonders” (*NLT*, “mighty miracles”). By means of His supernatural power our God “made the heavens skillfully” (*ESV*, “by understanding”; cf. Prov. 3:18; 8). “He spread the land on the waters (v. 6; cf. Psalm 24:2). “He made the great lights (v. 7), “the sun to rule by day” (v. 8) and “the moon and stars to rule by night” (v. 9). Our God is the Creator God of Genesis 1-2 who brought into existence all that is. This creation gives witness to God’s power and wisdom. It gives evidence to his faithful covenant love that endures forever. From the original creation to the new creation (Rev. 21-22) God’s steadfast love sustains all that He has created.

2) The Lord saves His people

136:10-16

Verses 10-24 rehearse the great redemptive acts of God on behalf of his people. Verses 10-22 parallel Psalm 135:8-12, recounting the Exodus and conquest. The psalmist begins in verse 10 with God’s signal act of redemption in Israel’s history and then moves forward. The Lord “struck the firstborn of the Egyptians” (v. 10) in the tenth plague (Ex. 11-12). He then “brought Israel out from among” the Egyptians (v. 11). He did this “with a strong hand and outstretched arm” (v. 12). This deliverance was an act of

divine power pure and simple. But that was not all! God “divided the Red Sea” (v. 13). He “led Israel through” (v. 14), but in contrast, “hurled Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea” (v. 15; see Ex. 14-15). The Lord then “led his people in the wilderness” (v. 16). God saved and sustained his people because “His faithful love endures forever!”

### 3) The Lord blesses His people

136:17-22

Verses 17-22 continue the redemptive theme of verses 10-16 drawing attention to specific kings the Lord took down and the inheritance of land Yahweh gave to His people. Our Lord defeated and “struck down great kings” (v. 17). He “slaughtered famous kings” (v. 18). Two examples are given: “Sihon king of the Amorites” (v. 19) and “Og king of Bashan” (v. 20). Their defeat is recorded in Numbers 21:21-35. Having beaten Israel’s enemies, God “gave their land as an inheritance” (v. 21), “an inheritance to Israel his servant” (v. 22). This was an inheritance given out of a “faithful love that endures forever.” It was also an inheritance with responsibilities as the Lord’s servant.

### 4) The Lord remembers and rescues His people

136:23-24

Our God and his faithful, ever enduring love is especially precious when we are humbles and humiliated. It is good to know God “remembers” us at those

times (v. 23). Alan Ross notes this may refer to the time of the Judges, or “it could simply be a general reference covering from the time of the settlement in the land until the restoration from the exile” (Ross, *Psalms*, vol. 3, 782). Regardless of the time or times, we can be sure our God has not forgotten us “in our low estate” (v. 23, *ESV*). He remembers and he “rescues us from our foes” (v. 24). Regardless of our situation, the Lord’s faithful and enduring love marches forward on behalf of His people.

5) The Lord provides for everyone

136:25

As the psalm moves toward its close, “the hymn returns to a reflection on God’s goodness as the Creator. His “love” to all creation is evident in that he continually cares for his creatures” (Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, EBC, 948). God is covenantally committed in covenant love to His creation. Therefore He provides and “gives food to every creature.” Israel and the nations! Humans and animals. His faithful, enduring, forever love extends to all!

III. Praise the Lord for His faithful and everlasting love because of where He is

136:26

Michael Wilcox summarizes well this indescribable psalm, “From the beginning of creation to the climax of redemption, from the first making of the

heavens to the final inheritance of the saints, all is to be seen against the background of the love of God. That love is both indestructible, because it is covenant love, and boundless, because it endures forever. As you look around all that he has made, and follow through all that he has done, at every point the psalm is saying ‘Covenant love did this.’” (*The Message of the Psalms 73-150*, BST, 251). In light of this remarkable truth, what is our proper response?

1) Remember our posture

Thankfulness! This is our proper response and posture before such a great and awesome God. He is good (v. 1). He is the God of gods (v. 2). He is the Lord of lords (v. 3). Psalm 136:1, 15 anticipate the directive of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

2) Remember His position

The God we worship and to whom we give thanks is “the God of heaven.” This is the only time “God of heaven” appears in the psalms. We do find it in Ezra 1:2; Nehemiah 1:4 and Jonah 1:9. It emphasizes or draws attention again to God’s sovereignty as the Creator and Ruler over all things. Nothing is outside His lordship. As Abraham Kuyper so eloquently put it, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which

Christ, who is sovereign overall, does not cry, Mine!” (*Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James Bratt, Eerdmans, 1998, 488).

Conclusion: God’s *hesed* cannot be captured in a word as Psalm 136 makes clear. It takes many words. It is actually captured best in a person, the Word (John 1:1), the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture ascribes to Him absolute Lordship (Phil 2:9-11, Rev. 19:16). It tells us He is the Creator (John 1; Col. 1; Heb. 1) and He is the Redeemer (Rom 3; Rev. 5); the Sustainer of the whole Creation (Col. 1). It all flows fully and freely from the One who in His very being and essence is love (1 John 4:8, 16). To such a God I will give thanks. To such a Savior I will worship now and forever. Afterall, His faithful, steadfast, enduring, never ending love is forever!