

## Psalm Genres (Part Five): Psalms Of Praise

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If we were to ask someone off the street, just any old person, what kind of songs comprise the book of Psalms, the odds are that that person would say that the first genre that would come to mind would be the songs of praise. I mean, why not? Christians are always going on, you know, saying praise God and praise the Lord. Our building there in Fort Mill is just a couple of miles away from the old PTL Club. Jim and Tammy Faye Baker were there in Fort Mill long before us. And PTL means praise the Lord, and luckily they are gone but a little bit of our history.

And a lot of people who are not Christians or just nominal Christians, that is what comes to mind when they think about what Christians do. They are always praising God. People know that Christians sing hymns in their churches as part of worship, and worship has a lot to do with giving God glory, and praising and thanking Him for His many blessings. Ergo, most people probably think that psalms of praise are the most numerous of the psalm types.

Well, we know, as we saw last time, they would be wrong because psalms of lamentation or complaint are the biggest genre among the 150 psalms in the Psalter, so that means that more than one-third and as many as about 60 of all psalms are laments, sad songs, and praise songs actually come quite a bit down the list, even though they are the second most common, it is hardly in the running against psalms of lament.

Now if you could say just praise *elements*, then we could say that praise elements are found in 74 psalms. Well, you would expect that because even in psalms of lament you get toward the end and their lamentation is turned into praise because they have suddenly thought things through and they have concluded, "Yeah, I shouldn't be so depressed here. God is still God." So you find a lot of psalms have a bit of hallelujah in it.

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But only 44 of those 74, and as few as 26 of them (the genres are a little bit sketchy sometimes), but only 44 at the most make up the core of what are called psalms of praise. That is, psalms in which praise is the dominant element, that they were written as a vehicle to praise God. Now all of these numbers depend on how broadly or specifically these psalms are categorized by individual scholars or students of the Bible. And every person, it does not matter, scholar or just lay member, everyone has a different method of saying this is a psalm of praise or this is a lament or this is Messianic or what have you, because the criteria for making those decisions are all over the place.

Clearly, I am going to give you my SPS here. We are going to be covering the fifth genre of psalms, the psalms of praise. This is "Psalm Genres, Part 5: Psalms of Praise." Now these psalms celebrate God's worthiness through what He has revealed of Himself, both in creation, as it says there in Romans 1, as well as throughout the entire Bible.

The Bible is the chief vehicle where we learn about God in His fullness. I mean, obviously we can look out on the world and see a wonderful world that He has given us. A tremendous environment. We can see that there is so much symbiosis that gives us the understanding that there was one Maker and He made all of this to work together. So, obviously we can learn great things about Him just from that fact. You look at the beauty, you look at everything, all the laws working to make an environment where we can grow and learn and have wonderful lives, if we did not get our attitudes in the mix.

But we can see a lot about God in what we see in on the earth, and praise Him for that. But the Bible gives us a lot of extra detail about Him and obviously about His character. It says it right out in the Bible what He is like. We can read it. It is very literal about what He is. And so we can have a great education within the pages of this Book about who God is. That is why He had these men write this Book and preserve it for all these years, centuries, millennia.

So we have those two methods, mainly, in which we can learn about God. And the end result of that, if we are thinking properly, is praise. We glorify Him for what He is and what He has revealed to us.

Praise psalms also enumerate God's many wonderful deeds. Not just the fact that He is a Creator, but that He has done so many wonderful things in the world, for Israel, for the church, for us as individuals. And He does it for good, all the time. Even His judgments and His punishments are ultimately for good. And so we can praise Him for those things that He has done.

Now, as a whole, the book of Psalms, and I could probably say the whole Bible, assumes that it is our primary function to offer praise to God, offer praise in worship. And the idea builds throughout the book of Psalms, and I could say the idea builds throughout the Bible that ultimately all creation will join in praising Him. I mean, if you look at Psalm 150, the last of the psalm summaries from 146 to 150, it is a great crescendo of praise in which all the angels and all the hosts and all the people and all the animals and everything praises Him, and it ends with praise the Lord, "Hallelujah!"

So that is, if you want to look at it this way, our ultimate purpose: to give glory to God, to praise Him for what He is, what He has done, and how He is going to bring everything together.

Now let us think about this word praise. Always good to start off with everybody thinking in the same direction. If we think about this from our standard English-American definition of praise, then we would consider it to mean to laud, to glorify, to magnify, to acclaim, to honor with words or singing. That is how we generally think of this word praise.

But if you take praise back to what it originally meant, then you get another idea. Not something that will cancel out what our normal definition is, but an additional idea to add in. And it answers the question of "why?" Why we praise. And that is the original definition of praise meant to appraise. And over the centuries in English we dropped the 'ap' at the beginning of appraise so it just became praise as an additional verb.

Now we could also say not just appraise but to assess or to set a value on. That is where we get our words, our nouns, appraiser, assessor. Usually you think of taxes when you think of assessors. Or valuers or evaluators. Now what do all those words have in common? Well, we go back to the original

word that praise comes from and that way, doing this, we have to go back to the Latin. And the Latin word it came from was *pretium*. Spells just like it sounds. And that word was the Latin word for price.

Do you want to buy a cow? There was a certain price. That was your *pretium*. And the verb form was *pretiara* and that word means to prize, or to value highly. So the noun meant a price. The verb means to prize or to value highly. So putting this all together, praise then is recognition and admiration of value or worth. When we praise someone or something, we are recognizing that person or that thing's value or worth.

So when we praise God, we express our estimation, that is another valuing word, our reverence, and our gratitude for all of what He is and all that He does, all His beneficial qualities toward us. And He does not have any bad qualities toward us. They are all beneficial, and we can praise Him for them all.

Now let us go to the end of the Book. This is in Revelation. We are going to be reading two passages here, Revelation 4, verses 9 to 11, and then we will skip into Revelation 5, and read 8 through 12. These two chapters are showing us a glimpse into the throne room of God. Chapter 4 focuses on the Father mostly, and then chapter 5 focuses on the Son, or the Lamb as He is called there.

**Revelation 4:9-11** Whenever the living creatures gave glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

So what are these angels doing? They are casting themselves to the floor. They are throwing their crowns. They are talking, they are praising Him in these sublime words because they value Him, that He is worthy. And so being worthy, then our job as creatures who are *not* worthy, not nearly in the same league as the Father, then our job is then to abase ourselves and proclaim His worthiness.

Let us go down to verse 8 in chapter 5. Now this is praising Jesus.

**Revelation 5:8-12** When He [this is Jesus] had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying [Here it is again.]: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

You are probably singing the song in your head.

So the angels here praise the resurrected Jesus Christ because He is worthy. It is as simple as that. He has qualities and abilities and accomplishments that merit or deserve this glorious recognition. Thus, praise represents our response to the worthiness of this great Someone, this one who is Jesus Christ, and in the earlier chapter, God the Father.

We should, once we are faced by Jesus Christ because of what we see in Him and what we know of Him, be our automatic reaction: to fall down before Him and say, "You are worthy. You're worthy of all good, everything that is Yours, and that's everything. You are worthy, and I praise You for it!" And since in Scripture the object of praise is always God ultimately, the imagery in the psalms of praise, and we will see this as we go through a few, tends toward the sublime, like here, the exalted. Because God has the mostest of the bestest, if you want to say that.

He is just on top of everything. We cannot imagine how good He is, how loving, how strong, how foresighted, how He plans everything and makes everything work together. How merciful and gracious He is, how forgiving

He is. Our minds cannot comprehend it. And this is why our reaction always must be praise, worship, abasement, humility. I mean, we have nothing of our own to stand before God. We are, as David said, worms compared to Him.

Now, as we know, praise to God, not just in the psalms, occupies a central place in biblical worship. This is why we worship, to give Him praise and glory; to learn about Him and all His marvelous attributes. He deserves it. He deserves our worship all the time.

And I should add, in terms of worship, obedience, submission, they are acts of worship as well. So being transcendent in all things, and we, as mere creatures dependent upon Him in everything, must resort to praise all the time. I mean, that is just how big a gap there is between His worthiness and our unworthiness. And this is why David said, "Why do You even think about us? We're measly ants, you know, we are grubs in the earth compared to You. Why would I treat, make a covenant with the worm?" But He does.

And this is just part of His worthiness, that He condescends to even speak to us, to teach us, to give us the things that we ask for. But He is God. And the wonder of Him should just flabbergast us every day.

Now I have gone over this a little bit already, but I want to emphasize it. In Scripture and especially in the psalms of praise, God generally receives praise for three main activities. 1) is His work in creation and in nature. 2) He is given praise for His intervention in history, where He has come down from heaven in one way or another and He has changed things or made things work. 3) He generally receives praise for is His gracious interactions with believers. Because He has chosen a certain subset of people that He works with, He interacts with, that He has plucked out for a special purpose.

So those three things are: His work in creation and nature. Secondly, His intervention in history, and third, His gracious interactions with believers or the elect, the ones He has called.

He is praised for making us and our environment. He is praised for having personal interest in and interacting with us, providing for us, rescuing us from enemies, saving us from sin, judging us and our enemies, and on and on

and on it goes. I just put an etc. there because He does so many things for us and we only know of a few. We can only see a few, but He is always providing for us, always helping us, always keeping an eye on us. And we are so limited we just do not recognize it all the time what He is doing.

We do not know that He gave us a flat tire. Oh, that is a terrible thing, but it saved us from a wreck up the road that would have killed us, or stuff like that. Things that happen, and we say, oh, what a lucky break. It may not be luck, it may not be coincidence. It may be God's direct intervention to make something work in our lives. Oh, you did not get that job, you know, out in Podunk (I will not say a state) but had you gotten that job, maybe it would have taken you out of the church. Who knows?

God works in mysterious ways. God does not have to tell us everything He does for us. He just does it because He loves us. Do you not do that for your kids? You do not tell them every good thing you do for them. You just do it because you love them, you want them to grow straight. You want them to grow strong. You want them to have this certain thing or this certain experience. And so as a loving Father, God does that for us too. As a loving Head of the church, Jesus Christ does that for us.

Now, as you will notice, if you think about this for a little bit, one of the things I left out about what we praise Him for, but it is a major one so I made it its own paragraph on its own here, but psalms of praise also extol Him for His character. And particularly they extol Him for His *hesed*, His lovingkindness. This word *hesed* in Hebrew appears 127 times in the book of Psalms. So that is a lot. If it was one time every psalm, that would be about two-thirds of them have the word *hesed* in it.

This word is variously translated as lovingkindness or mercy or steadfast love or constancy, or just plain old love or unfailing love. You see that a lot. It would be nice if they could just use one word so you could say, oh, that is it. But normally they use all these different ones thinking that one is better than the other and the word, granted, has different nuances and that is why they use different words in English to translate it.

But *hesed* is what scholars call a covenantal term. I mean, it has to do with a covenant. And it means the love, kindness, grace, or mercy that God bound

Himself to give to us because He made a covenant with us. See the little nuance there. It is not just because He loves. It is not just because He is gracious. The nuance is that He made a deal with us. He signed His name to a covenant. He gave His Son's blood, "This is the New Covenant in My blood," that He would fulfill the terms of a contract, of a compact, a covenant. And in doing so, He required Himself to do these things.

Now He did not need to require Himself. He would do this because that is His character. He would hold Himself to doing these things. The deal, the contract, the compact, the covenant, however you want to call it, is for us so that we can see, we can flip through the contract and say, "Oh, it's right here, where He says He'll love us." Or "It's right here in this other clause that He'll heal us." Or "It's over here in this other clause where He says He'll fight our battles for us." And over here it says, "He'll save us by the blood of Jesus Christ," and "It says over here that He is going to bless us and help us and keep us safe and watch over us" and on and on and on.

The terms of the covenant are so broad and so wonderful that we should be able to see in reading the contract that that is awesome. And He is going to do so many things for us. And so what we have here in *hesed* is a reminder that God is going to fulfill what He said He was going to do because He made a covenant.

Let us go to Psalm 33, verse 5 and look at one of these occurrences of *hesed*. I am just going to pull this one verse out. Just a little bit of knowledge that you need to tuck away about God as a covenant God.

**Psalm 33:5** He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

*Hesed* there is goodness. That is that covenant love that expresses itself in good responses from God. So He loves to do these things for us. He loves His righteousness, His way. He loves when we live the way of God, when we imitate the way of God, and He loves it when we show justice, and He will certainly show justice to us. And so the whole earth is full of examples of His covenant goodness, if only we would recognize them. And what is our response? Praise, among other things.

Let us look at chapter 98, verse 2. This is in a whole string of praise songs, but we will just pull out this verse.

**Psalm 98:2** The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has openly shown in the sight of all nations.

So He has made known to us the wonderful deliverance He is going to give to us by calling us out and moving us along the path of righteousness. He has openly shown this. He has not hidden it. And this is something that we need to understand, that God is working very openly with us. And we are His witnesses. And He is going to use us to show the way of salvation to others in time. But this is all what He has done in order to show His covenantal love to us.

Now, we have to understand that *hesed* has a lot of (I have already explained this) nuances of meaning and it helps when you look at a verse, you will see that it is parallel with various other things that help us to understand what He means. Like Psalm 23:6.

**Psalm 23:6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Here the word mercy is *hesed*, and it is paralleled with goodness. And so you will see that we could look at it both ways, that His mercy is good and His goodness shows as mercy. And these occur all throughout the psalms.

**Psalm 85:7** Show us Your mercy, O Lord, and grant us Your salvation.

The parallel clauses here make the word mercy, which is *hesed*, equal to or very close to the word salvation. So His salvation is merciful. It is part of His covenant obligation to give us salvation. We can find this also in chapter 89, verse 2 and also Psalm 100:5, which we will get to. But there it is parallel to faithfulness. So His faithfulness is an act of love, or act of *hesed*. In Psalm 103:17, the parallel term is righteousness. And in other places (for some reason I did not put down a citation here) but the parallel is to truth. And the Hebrew word for truth has intimations of reliability or loyalty or

trustworthiness. I mean, you trust a person who tells you the truth, right? That person is reliable.

God's *hesed*, His lovingkindness, His covenant loyalty or covenant love, is something that we can trust. He is going to do what He said He was going to do because He is true. He is the embodiment of truth.

So the psalm's authors: David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, Solomon, Moses, and any of the others that may have written psalms, they realize that our God is unlike the capricious gods of other nations. They know He is different and they praise it all the time because they are just overjoyed that our God is the greatest of all the gods.

He listens. He responds. He helps. He watches. He guides. He does so many wonderful things that the gods of the other nations cannot do because they are not alive, they do not exist. Or they are the demonic spirits that they worship in their ignorance, and they do just bad things to their people. And so they understand that because God is what He is, a God of *hesed* in all these different ways, that He is true to His promises. He is faithful. He is consistent in behavior. He is merciful and all those other things, and thus they could have faith in Him.

That is where the rubber meets the road for an individual. Can you trust your God? Can you rely on Him? Can you take what He says and put it into action and reap the rewards? Because He backs up what He says. So if you can take those things that He said and do them in faith, then you will get the blessings that come from that.

You know how I can say that? Let me give you a Book and see all the examples, God's word, God's promises, where He says He will do it. And He says, "Test Me. Test Me in this. Try Me. Just do what I ask you to do." And see how the Lord blesses. And you know what? He has not failed yet—because He is true. True to Himself, true to what He says.

End of section on *hesed*. That is the basis for how we have to understand praising God. Because He is what He is. He is worthy, and He has this love for us that is boundless. And He has written it in the contract that He is going to be this way and you do not have to worry. Just trust Him.

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Now which psalms are hymns of praise? I am going to give you 30 here, but they will not sound like 30 because I am going to give you some of them in clumps as they appear in the psalms. So you know, lick your pencil and here we go.

Psalms 8, 19, 29, 33 (sounds like I am doing bingo or something), 47, 65 and 66, 78, 93, 95 through 100. (We took care of six right there.) 103 to 106, 111, 113, 114, 117, 134, 135, and of course, 145 through 150. So, study them all, you will have a test tomorrow. Just kidding.

The structure of the psalms of praise is fairly consistent and that is how we can identify them pretty well. Usually they are in three sections. The first one is an opening call to praise or to worship. So, it will start out, you know, all of you Levites sing praises to Him or something like that. So, in this one, it may specify who should be giving praise and how. All you Levites sing to the Lord with trumpets and timbrels or something along that line.

The second section is one highlighting God's praiseworthy deeds and qualities. God (this is one that happens a lot) stopped Pharaoh at the Red Sea and allowed us to pass through. Praise Him for that. Or God showed lovingkindness to His people and gave them manna in the wilderness. You see what I mean? The psalmist takes something out of history or something that occurred to him personally or some act of God and expands upon it in the second section. So it highlights God's praiseworthy deeds and qualities.

The third section is usually the concluding element. Not always; we will see one in a bit that we will see that it does not conclude it exactly. But it does provide some kind of closure to the psalm and it can be in different formats. It could be another call to praise. You know, all you priests, stand up and shout to the Lord, or you know, all you birds tweet to the Lord, and all you cows moo to the Lord (I am being a little facetious), but that is kind of how it is, especially when you get to the end and all the creatures are praising God's name.

But it might not be a call to praise. It might be a benediction, a blessing upon Israel or something like that. Or it sometimes is a prayer. Oh God, hear my voice and help us in this situation.

We are going to study a couple of these psalms of praise in a little bit more detail now through the end of the sermon.

Please turn with me to Psalm 100. This one is a short psalm, only five verses long, but I think it gives us a fairly good idea of the structure of these psalms of praise. This one is actually the final one of six psalms of praise in a row, from Psalm 95 to 100, they are all praise songs. And it follows the pattern pretty well. I think you will be able to see it. Let us just read the whole thing.

**Psalm 100:1-5** Make a joyful shout to the Lord all you lands!  
Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

I believe this one is in our hymnal. I cannot remember which one it is, but we do sing this now and then. (Rex and Ginger are looking it up. Yes. "Sing to the Lord with Cheerful Voice" page number 76.)

Let us go through this and pull out the structure. Verses 1 and 2 are the call to praise. "Make a joyful shout to the Lord!" That is telling somebody what to do, how to worship God, how to show praise to God, and the person or the thing or the people who are supposed to do this is "all you lands." This is everyone on earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness. This is the how. "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." Remember, the first one is an opening call to praise, which may specify who should praise and how, and Psalm 100, verses 1 and 2 fulfill all that. Make a joyful shout. Serve, that is, worship with gladness. Approach Him in song. So the psalmist here is rousing the land, mostly it would of course be the land of Israel who know this God that has chosen them. But it is as encompassing as all the lands. And it is telling us what we should do: serve and come before His presence. This is worship language. And we should do it with gladness and singing.

Often it is great; it is best for our psyche if we come before God in joy. Not all the time. That is why there are so many psalms of lament in here, because a lot of times things are not going well. But the psalmist here (and we are not told who it is), is telling us that normally though, it is good to come before God with joy because that is what He brings. He brings joy, and we should reflect joy back to Him in our worship and in our service to Him, in our songs. Like I said, we do not always sing joyfully. I know that sometimes when you are down, singing a sad song actually picks you up and helps you get your mind straight on things. And that is why there is so many laments.

But the flip side of that is to come before Him with joy. The emotions of praise psalms are, as one might expect, the opposite of the laments. They are kind of the spectrum of ways to approach God. And here, the praise psalms, they emphasize joy instead of grief. Positivity rather than dejection, thankfulness instead of uncertainty. And these positive attributes or positive ways of approaching Him are the proper response to God's faithfulness toward us. Positive gratitude and joy for what He has given. For His magnanimous providence toward us.

Verse 3 is the middle section of the structure, that is, a section highlighting God's praiseworthy deeds and qualities. So we get one verse here in this particular psalm, "Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Now each one of those lines is something different. A quality, an attribute of God, something that He has done that we should be thankful for. We should be joyous. We should sing songs of praise to Him because of what He is. So the psalmist here is pointing out God's worthiness on these specific points. And they are threefold.

1. His worthiness is the fact that He is God. He is God Most High. He is the sovereign Lord of all. He is the highest in the universe. He is the great governor of all things. And so He is worthy of great respect, honor, glory, and all the praise that we can give Him.

2. The psalmist points out that not only is He the great God overall, but specifically He is Creator. He made all things, and we owe Him everything because without Him, we would not exist. He made us and everything

around us, and if He did not do that, where would we be? We would not even be. So that is a great thing to think about and something to praise Him for. That He decided not only to create us but to give us so much as our environment, as a way to bless us, and to help us prosper.

3. We need to praise Him because He chose us as His people. He made us separate from others on the face of the earth through His calling. And not only that, not only did He call us, but He went even further, and He tends and keeps us as a shepherd cares for his sheep. The psalmist is saying He went the next step. He went the extra mile and not only called us, but He is there all the time helping us, watching over us, blessing us, moving us, you know, whatever we need. Go back to Psalm 23 and see what the shepherd does to his sheep. And this is encapsulated in just one line in the psalm that yes, He chose us and He treats us like the sheep of His pasture. So that is worthy of praise.

Verse 4 in Psalm 100 is the concluding element and it restates the call to praise that we saw in verses 1 and 2, "Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." And then we see a repeat in verse 4, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name." So we are told after hearing what God has done and all the wonderful things that He is, well, we need to thank Him. And the idea here is to enter His house, His gate. When we came here to James' and Tammy's house, we had to go through a gate. And that showed where their property began. And so the same thing as with God's house. He has gates on His house, and we have to approach His gates and come into His gates to worship Him.

So this is a call to worship at the Temple, as it would have been sung in Jerusalem at the time it was written. But for us, we can think of it in terms of coming before Him at church services or any time we would come before Him in prayer. Do it like this, with thanksgiving and praise and be thankful and bless His name. I mean, the idea in the psalm here, as you get to the end of verse 4, is that we have everything to praise Him for. We have everything to be thankful for. And so we should glorify Him all the time. Not just in times of worship like on the Sabbath day, but He is like this all the time, and we should praise Him for it all the time.

But what about verse 5? Normally in a psalm of praise, if it went according to the structure, it would have ended at verse 4. But this psalmist, whoever it was, decided that was not quite enough. I am going to give them another reason. "For the Lord is good; and His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations." It was like, "I can't stop. There is so many good things that we could talk about God, say about God, praise Him for, and so I am just going to add another verse here and leave it for the people to kind of chew over as they end the song." You might think of it as a kind of a coda on the end of a song here. Something to leave us with maybe, like *selah*, but with actual words here that we can end the song with. It is a final thought to think about. And so it provides additional reasons for praise and worship.

I mean, think about it. Our God is good. God is endlessly, consistently good. And He is merciful. There is *hesed*, translated merciful here. It says His mercy is everlasting. It is eternal. It does not quit. I mean, how many of us have gone through life and are glad, overjoyed that His mercy is everlasting? Because we should be all just grease spots for the things that we have done. But His mercy, His grace, His kindness, His love just keeps going on and on and on.

So He is not only good, consistently good, He is consistently and eternally merciful, and here is that truth again. "His truth endures to all generations." So He is constant in His realness is one way you can put it. He is constant in being actual. Do you understand what I mean? He is always there, always true to what He says and what He is. So not only is He the divine sovereign Creator God who chose us, He also has unchanging, sterling, loving character.

What we come away with as we end this psalm is that no people have ever had it so good! With a God like our God we should never cease praising Him. I mean, this is in five quick verses it lays out all we need to know. I am being a little facetious here, but all we need to know about how wonderful He is and how He has given us so much and helped us in so many ways that we should not ever stop praising Him.

Let us go to another one. We will go to Psalm 135 and we will read the whole psalm. You need to read the whole psalm to get the flavor of this. It is

only 21 verses. We will be able to see some similarity to Psalm 100 because it fills in the format with a lot of the same reasons to praise God. Things like His goodness, His supreme greatness and sovereignty, choosing His people, etc. So let us go ahead and read this.

**Psalm 135:1-21** Praise the Lord! [This is the Hebrew word hallelujah.] Praise the name of the Lord; praise Him, O you servants of the Lord! You who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God, praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant. For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure. For I know that the Lord is great and our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasuries.

He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. He sent signs and wonders into the midst of you, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh and all his servants. He defeated many nations and slew mighty kings—Sihon, king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan—and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to Israel His people.

Your name, O Lord, endures forever, Your fame, O Lord, throughout all generations. For the Lord will judge His people, and He will have compassion on His servants.

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; nor is there any breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them. So is everyone who trusts in them.

Bless the Lord, O house of Israel! Bless the Lord, O house of Aaron! Bless the Lord, O house of Levi! You who fear the Lord, bless the Lord! Blessed be the Lord out of Zion, who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the Lord!

Another song from our hymnal, page 101, "Praise God's Name." It is one of my favorites.

As I said, as we went through there you should have been able to see the different elements of the structure as we went through them. You know, the first part was a call to praise. The second part is the reasons why we should praise Him, and then the third element is some sort of closing, and in this one, like in Psalm 100, it was a call back to worship again to praise and bless the Lord.

Now chapter 135 adds several new reasons though that we should praise Him for His worthiness. And I will just give these to you fairly simply.

Psalm 135 in verses 6 and 7, "Whatever the Lord pleases that He does, in heaven and earth, in the seas and in all deep places. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasuries." Those comprise His worthiness in His omnipotence. He has full control over His creation and He is ultimately responsible for all its functionality, all the upholding of the laws, all the ways things work together. You know, He is the one that makes the water system work on the earth. It falls on the land, it comes down through the streams and the rivers to the sea, and it gets evaporated up, and there is this cycle of how water cleans itself up. All of that is His doing. He is responsible for it all. Everything we see in nature, other than the effects of sin, those things that underlie all of His creation. That is Him. He did that.

The second one is found in verses 8 to 12 and that is, He is worthy because He is our Savior. Now this is where they went through history here. Again, an unnamed psalmist. He went through what happened in Egypt and what happened in the wilderness, that God used the ragtag Israelites to defeat great nations. Obviously doing that was His doing because they were a slave people and they were defeating the Sihon and Og and all the kingdoms of Canaan when they actually came into the land. So they are saying that God saved them. God brought them out of Egypt. He was their Redeemer and He led them all the way through the wilderness and gave them superiority over their enemies and brought them into the land.

The third reason He is worthy here is that He is infinitely superior to any so-called god, especially to these stupid idols. This is in verses 15 through 18. I mean, when you compare the great God of creation, the great God of the universe, to these stupid idols made of metal or wood or stone fashioned by men's hands—they do not talk, they cannot hear, they cannot see. They are nothing.

And so our God is infinitely superior, and is that not a good thing? We have a God that hears us, reacts to us, helps us, leads us, guides us, and He promises to make us into His Son's image and bring us eternal life in His Kingdom. That is so much better than a stupid god that is on a shelf. What did God show when the ark was taken by the Philistines? Dagon fell over. It looked like he was worshipping the ark, or the One who sat on the ark. And they re-erected Dagon, and the next time they came in, he was broken up. That is not the only difference, but that just shows the difference between our God and these silly idols of the nations.

Did you notice when we went through there, the reasons why God is worthy of praise, that I skipped two verses, 13 and 14? They do not conform to the structure and they are very important. I will be spending the rest of the time pretty much on these two. Hopefully I can get through it because this is probably the most important part of the sermon.

These two verses, 13 and 14, "Your name, O Lord, endures forever, Your fame, O Lord, throughout all generations. For the Lord will judge His people, and He will have compassion on His servants." This is an additional reason why He is worthy, but it does not come across, at least in some ways of reading it, as a good thing. He will judge His servants?! With compassion, but He is going to judge His people. Usually we do not think of judging us in a good way. That sounds pretty negative if we are going to be judged. But the psalmist puts it as a reason why we should praise Him.

So, these two verses come at the end of the five-verse section pointing out God's acts of deliverance of Israel. Remember it was, He destroyed Egypt, He brought them out. He brought them away from Pharaoh, He defeated many nations, etc. And then it says, "Your name, . . . endures forever, Your

fame, . . . throughout all generations." And then he adds on, "the Lord will judge His people, and He will have compassion on His servants." These are good things.

These two verses, 13 and 14, act as a kind of conclusion taken from what God did for Israel: from Egypt, their redemption in Egypt, to their conquest of the land. It is as if the psalmist, when he was going through these historical things, sat back, kind of thought a little bit after writing that, and considering God's acts of salvation there, and he said to himself, I need to make this point plain. God saved our forefathers but they did not deserve it. It happened because God is God. So he remarks about His name. He remarks about His fame. He remarks that God is Judge and that He is compassionate.

We need to know something. If you look in the margin, if you have marginal references in your Bible, it will tell you that these two verses come from two verses in the Pentateuch. Verse 13 alludes to Exodus 3:15. We are going to go back there. If you know your chapters, Exodus 3 is "Moses meets God." The burning bush and where God reveals His name to Moses.

**Exodus 3:14** God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Here is verse 15.

**Exodus 3:15** Moreover, God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'

That last bit, that last sentence in Exodus 3:15 is what the psalmist copied over into Psalm 135:13. "Your name, O Lord, endures forever, Your fame, O Lord, throughout all generations." We have to understand the significance of a name to the Hebrews. We think of a name as something that identifies a person. But in Hebrew, a name not only identifies, but it encapsulates or represents everything about that person. I mean, you think of anyone, any name, and your mind will begin to build not just a picture of the person, but

all the deeds you know about, the things that they have said, their character, a lot of different things, and that is why the word 'name' is so significant in the Bible. The name of the Lord means a whole lot more than just Yahweh, you know, an identifier. It means everything about God, all His character.

And so when the psalmist repeats Exodus 3:15 and says, "Your name, O Lord, endures forever," he is bringing out a far greater point than maybe just on the surface. So when God said His name to Moses as the I AM or I AM WHO I AM, not only is His name permanent, and that is the name that the Israelites will use forever for Him, but He is also referring in a slightly offhanded way to us that His holy righteous character, what He is, is also eternal. It does not change. It is constant. So what He says about Himself in Exodus 34, when Moses again was able to see God's hind parts and He preaches him that sermon, He gives him a listing of characteristics of Him. And those characteristics are going to be eternal. They will not change either.

**Exodus 34:6-8** And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation." And when Moses heard that, he made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.

So not only the name of God as Yahweh, the I AM is a permanent name as Israel's God's covenant name, but all the character of God that goes with that name will also be everlasting. You remember in Malachi 3:6 it says,

**Malachi 3:6** "I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob."

That is very interesting and that is part of what we are getting at here in Psalm 135:13 taken from Exodus 3:15. What He is saying in terms of His name being everlasting is that He can be trusted to do what He promises because He never changes. It is eternal. It is everlasting. And what He has promised is to save. Because—simple answer—He is what He is—*always*. And because He is a gracious, merciful, loving, covenant-keeping God, then

He will save us. He is not fickle, and that is why Israel is not consumed even though they deserve it. God is essentially saying, "If I were any different, Israel, you'd be dead. You'd be those grease spots on the road. But because I'm a loving, gracious, merciful, covenant-keeping God, you're not consumed because I chose you for salvation." And He says the same thing to us. It is all based on Him, who He is, what He is. And that He is true.

Now what about the next part about His fame? "Your fame, O Lord, throughout all generations" back in 135:13. I think the better word would be renown here for fame. I actually like better than that is what was said in Exodus 3:15, memorial or remembrance would actually be better terms here. Because it is a quote of what was said back there in Exodus 3:15.

So what does it mean that His remembrance or His memorial endures to all generations? It is not as simple as saying that all generations will remember Him or His acts. You can get that from that, His remembrance to all generations. But we do not know Hebrew and we do not know the word there that is used and so we do not know all the nuances of the word. The Hebrew word is *zeker*. It has the sense of memorial name. It actually has the idea of a name right in it and that is why it is parallel to God's name there in Exodus 3:15. That His name is forever and His memorial name is to all generations.

So the idea of memorial name has intimations of remembering or making known, or professing and praising. Thus using God's name in this way would bring His covenant-fulfilling acts to mind forever. His memorial name, His remembrance name should function as a way to bring to mind all that God has done for us and that, then, should lead to praise, to praising Him, because when we remember what He has done for us, then we say, "Oh, He's so worthy. He's worthy of praise and thanks." Because look, everything He has done has been for our good. Even the things we thought were bad were good because He was doing something through His will that was going to bring good things *ultimately* rather than good things right now. We love instant goodness, do we not? But God often says He has a little bit different timing, and if we stick with Him, endure to the end, it is all going to turn out great and the best that it could turn out.

In this way, the psalmist is saying, as he concludes this section on God's deeds and character, he is saying remember just who we are dealing with here. Do not be blasé about this. Do not forget that this is the God of all the universe who has chosen us, and He has given us His personal name. A name only for us, those who have made the covenant with Him. This is the God who was, is, and always will be. He is never changing. He is holy and righteous. And this God chose us and made a covenant with us. This is who we are dealing with. Never forget that. He is awesome!

Now what about verse 14? (That was just verse 13.) What is He saying in verse 14? "For the Lord will judge His people, and He will have compassion on His servants." I need to get through this really quickly. Now this comes from Deuteronomy 32:36 and it is basically word for word. It is an exact reference, "For the Lord will judge His people and [He will] have compassion on His servants." It is part of the Song of Moses. And then it goes on to tell about what God will do to His people, not for—to—His people in judging them. And you know what He does? He creams them. He annihilates them. But I want to go back to Deuteronomy 32 and just to show where this ends. Let us just start in verse 42.

**Deuteronomy 32:42** "I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the head of the leaders of the enemy."

So He is judging the enemy here, but He is also judging Israel. If you go back, verses 37 through 38 show that the people were sinful and false, but He says,

**Deuteronomy 32:43** "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people."

This is the good part of God judging His people, His having compassion on them. Because even though God does terrible things to Israel—well, He did terrible things to them because they did not keep their end of the covenant. And so He gave them what the covenant promised, which was curses and

destruction and scattering, exile. And so, He says, "that's what you deserve," but He is going to have compassion on them and bring them back at some point to the worship of the true God. And He says then that what He does is that He will provide atonement for them. And you know how He did that? With the blood of Jesus Christ. Because we get to Romans 9, 10 and 11, and what does Paul say there? He said, "Yeah, Israelites are His people, but they just went astray!" And so He had to bring Syria on Israel and Babylon on Judah, and then they just got smeared. You do not even know who the Israelites are, the people out in the world do not, and it looks like they are entirely cut off. But God through Jesus Christ will re-graft them into Israel. They had to go away and be like the Gentiles, and He will treat the Gentiles and the Israelites alike and graft them back into the root. And He does that through the atonement made by Jesus Christ.

I mean, He is not going to let Israel off the hook. If they sin, they go against the covenant, He is going to give them what they deserve. But after they are judged for their sins, if they repent, they can come under His grace and mercy through Jesus Christ—the atonement. All they have to do is believe, repent, and accept it, and submit to God. Is that not what we all have to do?

In the midst of this psalm of praise, he is bringing this sobering lesson to them. And he is saying, "Israelites, you better praise God that He's going to judge you and then have compassion on you. Because that's who He is. And all this that has happened to you in the past, it's not going to mean a thing if you don't obey Him, if you don't keep the terms of the covenant."

And who knows? I do not know when the psalm was written. It could be that the psalmist was seeing Israel go off the rails here and he was trying to bring them back. But he says, "God is going to ultimately bring this around to good, and He's going to do this through the atonement." And we should think of this in terms of ourselves. We have even more to praise Him for. We were entirely cut off. But He gave us a calling and He gave us what we needed to accept that atonement, to accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior.

I just want to end here. I have gone over time. I am sorry about that. I am *always* sorry about that. I think most people think that I like going overtime, but I do not. But I would like to read Psalm 149.

**Psalm 149:1-9** Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name with the dance; let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp. For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron [he saying all this to the saints]; to execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His saints. Hallelujah!

And I will leave it right there for you to think on and praise God for these things.