

His Everlasting Love

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Verse: Psalm 136
Preached on: Tuesday, May 3, 2022

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Well, you've chosen a wonderful night to be with us especially if you come this evening with a weary soul for whatever reason the case may be. We have a wonderfully refreshing time in God's word from Psalm 136 as we focus on the loyal love of God to his people. Psalm 136 and I'm going to read the entire Psalm before I preach through it. It is written in the sense that it makes you think that it was almost a responsive reading when in its use and intention because there is a refrain that is repeated in each verse that will become obvious as we go through it, but I want to set the Psalm in your mind before we go through it verse by verse.

So beginning in verse 1,

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Give thanks to the God of gods, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 4 To Him who alone does great wonders, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 5 To Him who made the heavens with skill, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 6 To Him who spread out the earth above the waters, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 7 To Him who made the great lights, For His lovingkindness is everlasting: 8 The sun to rule by day, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 9 The moon and stars to rule by night, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 10 To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 11 And brought Israel out from their midst, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 12 With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 13 To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 14 And made Israel pass through the midst of it, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 15 But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 16 To Him who led His people through the wilderness, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 17 To Him who smote great kings, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 18 And slew mighty kings, For His lovingkindness is everlasting: 19 Sihon, king of the Amorites, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 20 And Og, king of Bashan, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 21 And gave their land as a

heritage, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 22 Even a heritage to Israel His servant, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 23 Who remembered us in our low estate, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 24 And has rescued us from our adversaries, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 25 Who gives food to all flesh, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 26 Give thanks to the God of heaven, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Twenty-six times we hear "For His lovingkindness is everlasting," and it's obvious if not painfully obvious that this is the theme of the Psalm, this is what our takeaway is to be, and it probably tells us something, we're tempted to forget this and we're tempted to question God, we're tempted to fall into discouragement and despair when life starts to go awry on us, and so we need this repetition, we need this repeated reminder to call it to our minds and to impress it deeply on us and Psalm 136 certainly does that.

Notice the opening and closing verses of the Psalm, they are identical. Well, not entirely identical. Verse 1 uses the proper name Yahweh, "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting." Then verse 26, "Give thanks to the God of heaven, For His lovingkindness is everlasting." The bracketing phrase "Give thanks to the LORD" establishes what the focus of this Psalm is to be. So many of the Psalms are like that, they identify that theme for us in the way that they open and close, and right there gives you a sense of what it is that the psalmist is leading us into, what it is that we should be processing and what the goal of this Psalm should be should be to produce in us a grateful heart, a heart that is giving thanks outwardly and vocally to the Lord. And the repetition "His lovingkindness is everlasting" establishes the ground of the thanksgiving. It tells us why we are to give thanks, we are to give thanks to the Lord because his lovingkindness is everlasting. It never ends. It never stops for his people. He is always this way. This is his disposition toward his people without exception.

Now before we proceed through the text, I want to take just a moment to define this central term in the Psalm, this lovingkindness. It's an interesting word. It translates the Hebrew word "chesed" and there is no single English term that is its exact equivalent. There's no English word that embraces the totality of what this Hebrew term means and if you compare different translations, English translations, you'll see, you'll get a clue that that is the case. Here in the New American Standard it's translated lovingkindness. In the English Standard Version which many of you use, it's translated steadfast love. In the New International Version, it's translated simply love. In the King James Version and in the New King James Version it's translated mercy. So you see just the variations in the translation give you a sense that there is something beyond the English language in the use of this term.

In our exposition of the Psalms here at Truth Community Church, we have used the phrase "loyal love" to try to get at the meat of what this term is saying. God loves his people and he is loyal to them. If you are a Christian here and you are suffering in life, you are struggling in your way through difficulties of whatever kinds of adversity the Lord has seen fit to bring to you, understand that through them all and through all of the

ups and downs of your emotional reaction to it, sometimes you're up, sometimes you're under the weight of them, understand that through them all God is unchanging in the midst of them. One of the key perfections of God is that he is immutable, that means that he is unchanging, he's not subject to mutation, he is not fickle like you and I are, he's not fickle like the world is, he's not fickle like some people in the church are. God is constant. God is steadfast. God is unchanging in his loyalty to his people and he is always caring for us even if at times it seems like he is distant from us.

One commentator speaking about this term "lovingkindness" or the Hebrew "chesed" said this, said when this term is applied to God, it speaks of a divine commitment and loving concern which remain unchanging in the face of all human frailty and fickleness. Let me say that again. I like technical definitions sometimes and this is one of them. When applied to God, this term speaks of a divine commitment and loving concern which remain unchanging in the face of all human frailty and fickleness. Beloved, if God has saved you and brought you to faith in Christ, if you've been born again and you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ and he belongs to you, there is an unchanging commitment from God to you to ensure your ultimate well-being and nothing can change that, nothing can cause that to deviate. God has adopted a posture toward you, God has graciously bestowed upon you a status as a child of God which can never be altered, it can never be changed. This word in and of itself is a refutation of the Arminian idea that someone could lose their salvation. That's impossible because to lose your salvation would mean that God had at one point given his love to you and placed his love upon you but then in response to your sin he withdrew it. Does that sound like loyalty to you? I mean, we expect human spouses to be loyal to one another through difficulties and obviously the prevalence of divorce shows that that's not the case, but certainly within a Christian marriage we expect spouses to be loyal to one another through the ups and downs. We take each other for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, till death do us part. Are we suggesting that the ordinance of marriage that God established has a greater level of commitment than God himself does to his people? That's nonsense and I know that many of you come from those kinds of backgrounds, come from Nazarene backgrounds and what a blessed privilege it is to come to God's word and have the truth cleanse and clarify your mind to give you a sense that God's love is unlike human love. God's love is unchanging. God's love is an eternal commitment to his people that does not change even when you and I sin and sin even greatly against him.

It's a remarkable thing to consider and you can see that aspect of God's lovingkindness, that chesed, that mercy, that steadfast love, that loyal love, you can see it in a really critical text in Exodus 34. Look over at Exodus 34 with me and if your finger slips over to Exodus 33, that's even better because whenever I refer to this passage I like to bring out the context of it. The Lord is speaking to Moses in Exodus 33 and Moses is pleading with him to go with the people and in verse 17 of Exodus 33, "The LORD said to Moses, 'I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name.'" Now that could be said of every true Christian, God knows you by name, Christ died for you by name, Christ stood in your place at the cross by name as your substitute receiving the specific penalty that was due to you for your sin, Christ knowing you by name stood in your place at the cross, hung in your place at the

cross and bore your sins in his body in order that you might be forgiven. Now when we say that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, you start to get a measure of the greatness of the love of which we speak.

Now with that said, in verse 18 Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" "I want to see your glory," he says. And God answers him in verse 19, "He said, 'I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion.'" The glory of God in relationship to his people is manifested in a unique particular way by his gracious disposition toward us and the compassion that he shows to us in our affliction, and even more the compassion that he shows to us in our sins. Did you come in tonight feeling the weight and guilt of your rebellion against God? Perhaps you come in knowing a lifetime of rebellion and knowing how deeply you've sinned against God and it seems like there's no way forward and there's no hope for your soul because of how deep your guilt is, and how conscious and intentional your sin against him has been. Well, here is God saying, "I'm gracious and I'm compassionate," and it's wrapped up with his glory.

Now as you look to Exodus 34 just as God had said that he would do, in verse 5 you see and read this, "Yahweh descended in the cloud and stood there with [Moses] as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him," which is just what God said he would do, "I will make all My goodness pass before you," in Exodus 33:19. So we are seeing, this is what's so important, beloved, we are seeing the fulfillment of God displaying his glory to Moses. Moses said, "Show me Your glory." God says, "I will pass by you and display My goodness to you." And what happens as he does that? Verse 6, "the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in,'" there is our term again, "'abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness,'" twice in this manifestation, this declaration of the glory of God, twice God speaks of himself as being a God of loyal love, a God who has a divine commitment and loving concern for his people. This is part of the excellency of his perfection and the excellency of his glory that God is like this. He is a God of loyal love. And look at what follows, look at what is closely tied to this idea of God's loyal love there in verse 7, he "'keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.'" God's loyal love is a manifestation of his glory and his glory and his loyal love is shown particularly in the way that he forgives the sins of his people. This tells us something very critical that we need to go back to again and again and embrace and understand. If you are in Christ, beloved, your status with him and your security with him is not kept by your performance and your obedience. If it was you wouldn't last for a moment. If salvation depended on you and your performance for even a moment, you would be horribly and instantly lost. You cannot for a moment attain to the perfection that is manifesting God. You cannot for a moment keep the perfection of his moral law as expressed in the 10 Commandments. You never could, you never will. It was never about that. The reason God saved you, the reason that you continue on in Christ is not because of any goodness in you, it's all about the goodness of God, the merit of God, the righteousness of God, the loyal love of God because he is the one who shows unchanging love to his people.

So beloved, if Christ died for you at the cross and Christ secured your salvation at the cross, that's not going to change. If God chose you in eternity past as Ephesians 1 says that he did, his choice is not subject to change and revocation. Christ died for you 2,000 years ago, that's not subject to reversal. The whole point of the resurrection was to show that he had accomplished justification for his people. If the Spirit caused you to be born again, if the Spirit imparted new life to you and turned your heart to Christ so that you believed in him when you were dead in your trespasses and sins, are we to think that suddenly the Spirit of God changed his mind, decided that that was a mistake and has to reverse regeneration and take it away, has to reverse the application of redemption at the cross to your soul, has to reverse the electing choice of God? This makes a mockery of Scripture and a mockery of Christian theology to think such things, and the fact that there is a branch of Christianity that teaches that and holds their people in bondage with such threats is not a recommendation or any proof that it might be true. No, it would all be a violation of the loyal love of God. Should we read Psalm 136 again from beginning to end to reinforce this in our hearts and minds? His lovingkindness is everlasting. His lovingkindness is everlasting. His lovingkindness is everlasting. And that lovingkindness, as we saw in the passage in Exodus, is manifested particularly in his willingness to keep and forgive and to cleanse his people from their sins.

Look over in the New Testament for this idea in 1 John just shortly before the book of Revelation in 1 John. Beloved, the whole point of salvation is that God is a forgiving gracious God. That's the whole point. In fact, Jesus said, "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." It's because he's showing graciousness to sinners. So we read in 1 John 1:7 for example, "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." It is a comprehensive term. There's not sin in a believer's life that is outside of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." That does a pretty lethal blow to the false doctrine of perfectionism, doesn't it? Then in verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He is," what? "He is faithful, he is righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we bring our sins to our gracious God, Scripture tells us in unqualified language that he's faithful to us and he's righteous, in other words, he keeps his word and he cleanses us from not only the sins that we confess but all of our other sins as well. This is the nature of God, his lovingkindness is everlasting, his loyal love never ceases.

So beloved, it is the nature of God to show loyal love to his people even when they don't deserve it. You could probably go further and say it is the nature of God to show loyal love to his people especially when they do not deserve it. Now listen, that does not cause us to want to sin, that does not give us a license to sin, that thought is abhorrent and that's what Paul speaks about in Romans, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." No. No, the one that the Spirit draws to Christ for salvation is someone who wants in the first instance to be delivered from sin, he wants to be free from sin, not simply free from the punishment of sin, he wants to be free from the power of sin. "God, this sin controls me. I need to be delivered from it. God, I am a rebel against You. I need to be forgiven. God, I fear Your holiness. Be gracious to me, the sinner." The whole

premise of genuine conversion is that someone is turning away from sin in order to find forgiveness and new life in Christ.

So the last thing that this truth about the forgiving nature of God does is harden someone in sin. What does it do? It doesn't make us rebels. Beloved, what's the framing language of Psalm 136? Give thanks to the Lord for his lovingkindness is everlasting. When you understand the loyal love of God, it makes you grateful, it humbles your heart, it inclines you toward obedience. So the nature of God is to show loyal love to his people and, beloved, especially for those of you that came in weighed down by sin and I know there are some in our church that have just suffered as they've struggled with a besetting sin and trying to overcome it and feeling the weight of recurring failure, understand that it is the nature of God to show loyal love to his people and his love is not a passing sentiment, it's not an emotion that comes and goes, that rises and falls based on your performance. His loyal love is rooted in his own eternal unchanging character. His loyal love is an unchanging perfection of his character that is expressed in his acts of creation, redemption and preservation. We need to let that sink deeply into our hearts and minds. This is what sustains us when we struggle. This is what sustains us in adversity, even the deepest of adversity is a recognition that God is loving me through this. God has a purpose of love in my struggles and in my adversity that he will accomplish. This is what sustains us when people turn against us, when spouses betray us, when children turn against us, when opportunities fall by the wayside and things that we've worked our lives for fall away. This is the unchanging element that gives us the strength to carry on, his lovingkindness is everlasting. That is the focus of thanks in Psalm 136.

So what I want to do in the remainder of our time here together is to look at four points from this Psalm that we can glean and we'll go through these rather quickly. This Psalm, first of all, for your first point tonight, we can see the call to give thanks. The call to give thanks. The Psalm opens with this call to give thanks and you see it in the first three verses, not just the one that I've already read. Verses 1 through 3,

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Give thanks to the God of gods, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 3 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Now one writer says this about the phrase, the verb "give thanks," he says this, he says it is not the whole meaning of the word. It basically means confess or acknowledge and therefore calls us to thoughtful grateful worship, spelling out what we know or have found of God's glory and his deeds. So to give thanks is to openly acknowledge the greatness and the glory and the goodness of God to us and to rehearse what he has done on our behalf, who he is and what he has done on our behalf. We give thanks to him for that.

So you could start anywhere, you could start anywhere in giving thanks. I always think it's a good place to start if you're a Christian to say, "God, let me thank You again for my salvation in Jesus Christ. Let me thank You again for Your inerrant, infallible word. Let

me thank You again for Your indwelling Holy Spirit. Let me thank You for the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness on my behalf. Let me thank You again for the security of my salvation. Let me thank You again for Christ coming to earth for His love and His mercy, for His redemptive death on the cross. Let me thank You again." And if you just get started in that, pretty soon you can be lost in wonder, love and praise at just the multifaceted ways that God has been good to you and is deserving of your thanks.

Well, this is what the psalmist is telling us to do, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks to him. Thank him. Don't simply pray for the sake of gaining his favor or gaining help in the midst of your difficulties. If you had children that all they did was ask you for stuff and never showed any kind of affection to you, well, that starts to get kind of old because you realize you're just kind of being used here in the relationship. God's people, God's children should be of a mind, "Father, thank You. I acknowledge that, I confess that You have been good to me. I confess that vertically privately to You in the silence of my prayer closet. I'm glad to confess it openly before men as well, glad to gather together with people in small groups, big groups, and give thanks to God and to thank Him for his word and to do whatever I can to express my very imperfect loyalty in response to His perfect loyalty to me." This is life-changing, beloved, isn't it? You go from a worried, anxious, bitter, ungrateful, suspicious frame of mind toward life, toward people, toward God; you replace that kind of carnality in your mind and you put that aside and replace it with this kind of gratitude, I want to tell you it'll change your life. This will change your entire disposition about life.

And not only that, I like to say this when the context is right, you know, this is the spirit of mind, this is the frame of mind that lets a Christian approach death without fear. You know, and we're all getting older, some of us more quickly than others it seems. But to be lying on your deathbed, just picture that, picture you're aware that life is ebbing out, that you're about to pass over, perhaps your body is racked with pain as you do, as you approach the departure from this life. Well, what sweeter words could you have on your lips than, "Jesus Christ, His lovingkindness is everlasting," and to be resting in that and trusting in that at the most dire hour a human could face, leaving this life and going in and stepping into the so-called unknown of the next? "Why, I can't do that without any fear at all." Why? "Because His lovingkindness is everlasting. He was showing me loyal love when I was 22 and He saved me then. He's been faithful to me for decades since then and now I come to the time to depart, there's nothing for me to fear. There's no reason for fear. There's no reason for dread. I can rest and I can breathe easy and I can be at utter calm and peace because His lovingkindness is everlasting." This truth equips you for everything in life and that's why it's emphasized with such great repetition throughout Psalm 136.

Now in this section, in this three verse section that I read, the call to give thanks, notice that he uses three different names for God in this section. You see in verse 1 the all caps LORD, "Give thanks to the LORD," the divine name Yahweh. Verse 2 you see, "Give thanks to the God of gods." Then in verse 3 you see the lower case, "Give thanks to the Lord of lords." Each one of those terms, all caps LORD, God, and lower caps Lord, all

three of those terms are different names for God in this section. In verse 1, the term LORD describes God as Israel's covenant-keeping Redeemer. He is a God of faithfulness to his people. In verse 2, "Give thanks to the God of gods," it's the Hebrew term Elohim indicating that God is powerful and transcendent. Then in verse 3, "Give thanks to the Lord of lords," the Hebrew term Adonai indicating that he is a God of authority. And you see different aspects of the character of God and the essence of God being expressed by these different names that are being used, and we embrace them all, we take them all in and get a fuller picture of God by the different names that are used for him.

So we see him in his faithfulness, we see him in his power, we see him in his authority in these three terms. In faithfulness, power and authority we give thanks to him. We give thanks for his faithfulness. We honor his authority. We give thanks for his power. And look there in verse 2 and 3 where it says, "Give thanks to the God of gods. Give thanks to the Lord of lords," beloved, when we come to the God of the Bible and we study his attributes and perfections together, we understand this: he is sovereign over any other competing authority. The highest man on earth is under the authority of God. The greatest of kings finds another King over him. There are no gods beside him. He is the one and only true God and so we give thanks to him and we recognize his holiness by which we mean he is separate and apart, he is unlike any other, and we give thanks to him. But beloved, he's unlike any other not just in his power and majesty and dwelling in unapproachable light, there's no one like that, there's no one like that anywhere in the universe, but he is also separate and apart and distinct in his lovingkindness, in his loyal love. There's no one like that and so we give thanks to him.

So this opening section, these first three verses of the Psalm, they boom with the majesty of God and the refrain honors him for his loyal love in response. "God, we recognize Your exalted majesty," this Psalm says, "and we recognize and we give You thanks because in Your exalted majesty Your loyal love is unchanging and everlasting." You could use these theological terms to describe it, just in these three verses, he's the Lord over all lords, he's God of gods, Lord of lords. God is transcendent and he is also immanent, those are two good theological terms for you to know. He is transcendent in the fact that he is exceedingly above everything else. He is beyond our comprehension. He is separate and alone in the throne room of the universe, so great is his majesty and exaltation and yet he is immanent, meaning that he is near. This is incomprehensible to the human thinking for infinity is beyond the capacity of a human finite mind to grasp, let alone a sinful mind, and God is infinitely above us. He is transcendent. He is the God of gods and Lord of lords and that's true and yet when Scripture tells us that his lovingkindness is everlasting, his loyal love never changes and never ends, we see that he is near.

Look back to Psalm 23 with me and think about it in these terms, this nearness of God, the highness and nearness of God, you could say. This lovingkindness of God theologically expressed as a manifestation of his immanence toward his people found in Psalm 23, "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of lovingkindness For His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of

the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me," in other words, "You are near. You are immanent. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows." What's he expressing in verse 6? What is Psalm 23 telling us about? Why is he using the metaphor of a shepherd and a host to describe a spiritual reality? What's the spiritual reality that he is describing through those metaphors? Verse 6, "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." God's loyal love because he is my shepherd, because he is my host and I'm a guest at his table, this tells me that his goodness and his loyal love will attend me all the days of my life and then I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

If you belong to him, if you are a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, that's spiritual reality, that's what's true. This is what we can take to the spiritual bank, so to speak, and the psalmist in Psalm 23 in that most familiar Psalm says the loyal love of God is going to attend me all the days of my life and so we give him thanks. I mean, it's really, beloved, really, it's really overwhelming to contemplate and to meditate on these realities that God is like that to us as his people. Why would he be like that when we are so fickle? Why would he be like that when we sin and stray so easily? Why would he be so loyal to us when we doubt him so readily and easily at the slightest of provocations? It's because his lovingkindness is everlasting, and you start to realize that this loyal love of God, this belongs to a different realm, this is a different dimension, this is outside human experience and so all we can do is acknowledge it and give thanks to him for it.

So there's this call, overall call to give thanks, that's our first point here. Point number 2, he goes on and he makes it specific and in point 2 we see him giving thanks to the creator. He gives thanks to the creator and as he is expressing these thanks and emphasizing the loyal love of God, he literally goes back to the very very beginning to show his gratitude. He recounts his thanks and he goes beyond his own lifetime and he goes to second one of the beginning of the universe and time when he says in verses 4 through 9, look at it with me,

4 To Him who alone does great wonders, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 5 To Him who made the heavens with skill, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 6 To Him who spread out the earth above the waters, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 7 To Him who made the great lights, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 8 The sun to rule by day, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 9 The moon and stars to rule by night, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Here in these six verses, he is closely following the account of creation found in Genesis 1 and, once again, he is speaking of the transcendence of God, God in his mighty majesty creating the heavens and earth by his spoken word, and God does all of this, he does these great wonders with skill, with unspeakably great and impeccable ability, and God does this and no one can do this. No one can create a universe. No one can speak worlds into existence by their mere spoken word. No wonder that atheists and so-called scientists try to bring God down and to promulgate false theories of a big bang starting creation, to

rob God of his glory in creation. They don't want to give thanks to the creator. This is Romans 1 type of stuff.

Well, not for his people and you see, once again you see him expressing the transcendence of God as the creator and tying it to his immanence, i-m-m-a-n-e-n-c-e, his immanence as one who is near, and creation testifies to his glory. Look over at Psalm 19. I don't really have time to do this but I'm going to do it anyway. Psalm 19. The psalmist in Psalm 136 looks at creation and gives thanks to God and honors him. In Psalm 19 we see this expressed as well. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard." In other words, it's a silent testimony that the heavens give to the glory of God. "Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their utterances to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber; It rejoices as a strong man to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, And its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat." Creation testifies to his glory. God with great skill made a great world, made great heavens that display his glory, and as he displays his glory he is displaying also his lovingkindness that is everlasting.

So he gives thanks to God as the creator of the very environment, the very world, the very universe in which we exist. He looks outside of himself and sees creation and he acknowledges God as the one who made it and gives thanks to him for his loyal love, give thanks to the creator. Now he continues on as you make your way through the Psalm and he gives thanks, point number 3, he gives thanks to the protector. He gives thanks to the protector and now at verse 10 there's a pivot, he's still giving thanks to God, he's still giving glory to God, he's simply moving on to a different ground upon which to give thanks to God. So he has given thanks to God as Lord because he's good, he's given thanks to the God of gods, Lord of lords, he's given thanks to him as the creator, now he gives thanks to God as the protector of his people, speaking specifically of the protection he gave to his people when they were in Egypt. Look at verse 10 where he says,

10 To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 11 And brought Israel out from their midst, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 12 With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 13 To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 14 And made Israel pass through the midst of it, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 15 But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

This summary, this quick summary of biblical history is direct and to the point. It assumes that you are quite familiar with the account of God delivering the people Israel from Egypt in the book of Exodus. So it assumes that you know how God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt when they were under harsh taskmasters and they were suffering greatly and crying out to him and had suffered in that condition for 400 years. It

assumes here in Psalm 136 that you know how he struck the Egyptians with 10 different plagues and how he delivered his people at the Red Sea and parted the waters so that they walked through on dry land but when Pharaoh's army pursued them, he released the waters to cover them up and the greatest army in the world at that time was utterly defeated at the hand of Yahweh, at the hand of the God of Israel, the greatest army in the world was utterly destroyed and disabled.

So here in this section and we're just treating it in a very summary fashion, he just looks at those details and he identifies and he goes through one by one and he says each time that God was acting, each act of deliverance that he made for us in Israel, every aspect, every aspect of that great miraculous deliverance, every aspect of it, you get the idea that I'm trying to emphasize every aspect? Every detail was a display of God's loyal love to his people. The first plague, God being loyal and loving to his people. The second, the third, on through the tenth as they marched out away from the people of Israel, all of this showing God's loyal love to his people. Every plague, the exodus from Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea and the drowning of the Egyptian army, every one of them individually and then collectively it all shows forth the loyal love of God and that he is a God of covenant faithfulness to his people. He was good to them. They were unworthy, complaining people suffering under bondage to a human taskmaster, unable to do anything for themselves and God reaches down and delivers them and brought them into freedom. You see, that's what God does for his people.

If we can look at that from a spiritual dimension, from a Christian salvation perspective, that's exactly what God does for his people today. That's what he did for you if you're in Christ. You were in bondage to your sin, you were in bondage to Satan, you were in bondage to a world system dead to anything relating to spiritual life. Maybe you loved your sin, maybe you were suffering in it, you were blind to the danger that you were in, but what did God do? What did God do? Based on the work of Christ, the Spirit of God somehow brought the word of God to you, awakened you to your spiritual need, and brought you out of slavery to sin and Satan and into the wonderful freedom that belongs to those who are sons of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. God delivered you from bondage. For Israel it was a physical bondage to a literal nation. For us it was bondage to a spiritual taskmaster; we were all enslaved by Satan and subject to do his will. And what did God do? There in that place of misery and danger, God reached down and showed love to you, brought you out from slavery, brought you into his kingdom, brought you into, metaphorically speaking, his Promised Land and has blessed you ever since.

So whether we look at Egypt or whether we look at Christian salvation and the different aspects that led up to our conversion thereafter, each event shows forth in its own right, in its own particular detail, each event is showing a different aspect, a different sparkle to the diamond of the loyal love of God. He did it all out of the love that resides in his own eternal character and, once again, you step back and you say, "Well, what am I to say in response to that? All I can do is give thanks to Him, acknowledge that these things are true, that God has been good and that God is great and glorious and is a God of loyal love and to give thanks to Him for that because He is the protector of His people."

So we see the call to give thanks in the first three verses, we see a call to give thanks to him as a creator, verses 4 through 9, a call to give thanks to the protector of his people, verses 10 through 15, and now in point number 4 we give thanks to the provider. We give thanks to the provider and you could just as easily join this in the third section but I didn't want to do it that way. Give thanks to the provider. He now moves on from the exodus from Egypt into the wilderness wanderings of his people in verses 16 through 22. So he says, now remember they're out of Egypt now and what came next? Well, he didn't abandon them. Verse 16,

16 To Him who led His people through the wilderness, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 17 To Him who smote great kings, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 18 And slew mighty kings, For His lovingkindness is everlasting: 19 Sihon, king of the Amorites, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 20 And Og, king of Bashan, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 21 And gave their land as a heritage, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 22 Even a heritage to Israel His servant, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Now as you know if you've read the book of Numbers, if you've read your Old Testament at all, you know that the time in the wilderness was actually a time of stubborn rebellion by the people of Israel toward God, so much so that an entire generation died in the wilderness and only two, Joshua and Caleb, survived to go into the Promised Land because they alone God found faithful. Well, here in Psalm 136 the psalmist is not focusing on that aspect of the human rebellion of that time, rather he is highlighting God's faithful provision even for people like that. As they wandered about grumbling and complaining and rebelling against him, God still provided for them. They still had manna six days a week. God still provided for them and gave them guidance through a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God never left them and his constant presence with them, his constant provision for them was a manifestation of his great loyal love.

So he provided for them, he drove out great nations to clear a space for his people. Now notice just very quickly, put your finger on verses 19 and 20 of Psalm 136. I just want you to see this, that the immediately prior Psalm, one of the links to Psalm 135 is the fact that these kings are mentioned in Psalm 135 as well. Verse 10 of Psalm 135, "He smote many nations And slew mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, And Og, king of Bashan, And all the kingdoms of Canaan." The psalmist in this section of the psalter is emphasizing God's power over human kings and kingdoms in order to deliver his people. So God has displayed his power as God Almighty to his people and God's ability to drive out foreign nations from their land to establish a place for his people shows his sovereign might, and at the same time it shows once again his loyal love for his chosen people, and the repetition of the refrain drives that point home to everyone.

Now the verses that follow in verses 23 through 25 expand out this care and show a summary of God's care through all of the ages, and now the psalmist makes it personal. He's looked back at history, looked back at creation, looked back at Egypt, looked back at the wilderness wanderings and said, "Do you see the threat of God's loyal love through it

all?" And now he makes it personal to the readers as you read in verse 23 as he joins his readers in together with himself, verse 23,

23 Who remembered us [he remembered us] in our low estate, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 24 And has rescued us from our adversaries, For His lovingkindness is everlasting;

It's not just that God was good to Israel back then, he's been good to us, he's shown loyal love to us, he's rescued us from our adversity. And so we give him thanks ourselves for our own independent experience of the loyal love of God in our own lives. He remembered us. He took note of us. He showed kindness to us.

So you see here in this section of the Psalm that the psalmist is calling you to your own personal responsibility to join in the gratitude that is expressed to God for his lovingkindness because it's everlasting, and you especially if you are a Christian, you have experienced this personally. God wasn't just faithful to his people in the past and now it's different, God is faithful now, he loves us now, he's delivered us now, he's been good past, present and future. And so we give thanks to him because his lovingkindness is everlasting.

He goes on in verse 25 and expands it to the entire circle of all humanity. All humanity should give thanks to the God of the Bible who is known exclusively through the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that you're in a false religion does not excuse the obligation. Verse 25,

25 Who gives food to all flesh, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Matthew 5 Jesus said God sends his rain on the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Acts 14 talks about how he sends the seasons and provides food for all as a manifestation of his love. He's a good God. This in the face of unspeakable rebellion against him. He sustains the life of all the world and as creator, protector and provider, this God of the Bible, the God of Israel, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he deserves the highest thanks that we can possibly give him and that's where the Psalm ends up in verse 26,

26 Give thanks to the God of heaven, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Colossians 3:17 speaks of this obligation in the Christian era to give thanks to God. 1 Thessalonians 5:18, this is the will of God, that you give thanks to him, and beloved, we've seen in this Psalm that we have every reason to do so.

Thanksgiving, not the holiday, the spirit of gratitude, the conscious attribution to God of thanks and worship for his goodness, that is a critical part in the life of a true Christian and so, beloved, I can only ask you after we've seen so much laid out for us from the word of God tonight: are you thankful? Do you express gratitude to Christ? What can we

say to such love and mercy and grace and goodness not just to people in general but to us specifically? What can we say? How about give thanks to the Lord for his lovingkindness is everlasting.

Let's pray together.

God, we do thank You, we thank You for this word from Scripture, so encouraging, so helpful, so necessary to us in the difficult challenging lives that some of us live in this awful world environment that is so full of evil and wickedness. Father, how gracious of You to give us Psalm 136 to call our attention to Your goodness in so many ways, filled out by New Testament revelation that shows us Christ in such perfect splendor of love, mercy, goodness, patience, and grace toward us. O God, we look at the past, we look at creation, we look at Israel, we see how You led Your people through the Old Testament and then even more we look at Jesus Christ our lovely Lord, our lovely Savior, our faithful friend, what a friend we have in Jesus, what a perfect God and Savior You are, O Christ. And so we give You thanks and we freely and gladly and without reserve acknowledge that Your love is everlasting. Help Your people to be faithful and thankful in response. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.