

# It Is He Who Remembered Us

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Date: 27 June 2010

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, we are continuing on our sermon series in Psalm 136, and I invite you to turn to the green sheet that was handed out to you in the bulletins.

And Psalm 136 is there, and on the back, I want to remind you that there are exercises that you can do to strengthen your prayer life and to allow the psalm to shape your prayers.

And as it says in those exercises, the psalm is about bringing into your heart and mind God's abiding love by remembering God's powerful work and His great goodness.

And that is what Psalm 136 is about. We chose this because it is a psalm of remembrance. It does that very specifically, bringing to our mind God's powerful work so that we can trust Him, so that we can have afresh in our minds the understanding of His abiding love for us, the love that never ends.

Memory was very important for the Hebrew people. The only way they could know who they were as a people was to remember. It was to remember that God had created them as a nation.

[ 1 : 1 8 ] To remember that they were His people and that He was their God. That God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt and brought them into a land that He had prepared for them, a place where they would know God's presence with them.

To remember that God had made promises to them that He would bless them and that through them they would bless the world. And also that God in His Word, these promises that God would reveal how to love and obey Him, which He does in His Word as well.

Without these things that the Hebrew people had to remember, they would suffer from spiritual amnesia and they would die spiritually.

If you look at the Old Testament, forgetting God is the same as sinning against God. When God sent His people into the Promised Land the first time, Moses said to them, don't forget that God was the one to rescue you.

When things are good, when you have blessings in abundance, don't say it's the work of your hands or your own gifts that have created this. But remember the Lord your God and be faithful to Him and follow Him.

[ 2 : 3 2 ] Know His love for you in rescuing. This is something that we deal with all the time as Christians as well, that sin of forgetting.

And I know how important this is for the Hebrew people because our neighbor in our duplex is Jewish and we've become very good friends with the family.

Their grandchildren are our kids' age. And he is very involved in his local Shabbat house and the place where they go on the Sabbath. And his role there is to be a storyteller.

He's not the rabbi, but he's the storyteller. And his role is to tell stories, especially to the children, to remind them about how important it is to know the Hebrew Scriptures and to follow the things that are commanded in them.

And he said the reason it's so important is because if they don't know who they really are, then they lose their identity and what they are all about.

[ 3 : 34 ] And there's this great challenge in culture, he said, that says it's not important to know your past. It's not important to observe things that are commanded. So that's a challenge that's there in this present day.

And it was a challenge for the Hebrew people as well. When Psalm 136 was written, many generations had come and gone since God's great work of rescue from Egypt.

And there were humiliating defeats during that time in those generations. There were times of exile. There were times when people were abandoning their faith because they didn't know who they were.

They had forgotten. And so it was crucial for the Hebrew people that God's word was very carefully memorized and passed down from generation to generation since Moses.

And it's why it was accurately written down. Psalm 136 is a joyful and beautiful way for God's work in the past to be constantly brought into their present for them to praise God for it and to know this essential fact in their relationship that God's steadfast love endures forever.

[ 4 : 48 ] Now, we all have had experiences where we have had songs that we have heard that get stuck in our memory. And sometimes those songs are no good. You know, jingles of commercials or pop songs or things that you try to get out of your head.

But there are other songs as well that they are a blessing to have go through your mind over and over again. And it may be because they remind you of people that you care for.

It may be because they remind you of times of great blessing in your life. It may be because of the words that are very, very meaningful. And of course, that's why music in church is so very, very important because the word of God can go deep into our minds and our souls through those kinds of songs that get into our heads.

Now, one of the things that's striking about Psalm 136, it is one of those good songs that get into your head. And so the striking thing about Psalm 136 is the refrain.

You know, 26 times, for his steadfast love endures forever. But the great thing about that refrain is that it is a truth that we cannot hear too much of.

[ 6 : 04 ] They are words that mean that God's love has no end. And they actually flow in the Hebrew. You know, there's only six syllables. So they just come through every time we hear of God's work in the world for his love, his steadfast love endures forever.

It is a love that doesn't end. And it continues through all of the experience of the Hebrew people. And so what we have in Psalm 136 is God, by his Holy Spirit, inspiring this writer to use that refrain to bring that truth of God's love into our hearts.

And to know that that is the motive for everything that he does. That his love runs through his power and his goodness. It's a love that can't end because God, it comes from God, originates in him, and it's part of his very essence.

So I want us to read verses 1 through 3 together because there's a call to give thanks. And this is meant to be read by the whole congregation. So let's read Psalm 1, verses 1 through 3 from your green sheet together.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods for his steadfast love endures forever.

[ 7 : 21 ] Give thanks to the Lord of lords for his steadfast love endures forever. You see what this is saying? This says, give thanks, give thanks, give thanks.

Why? Because of God's goodness. He is good. He is the source of all goodness. And goodness flows from him into the world. That he is the one true God, the God of gods.

That he is over every authority in this world. He is Lord of lords. And what is behind all of that is his steadfast love enduring forever.

And that word, that line that we've repeated for steadfast love, it's a covenant term. The Hebrew is *hesed*. And it's very much a relational term.

It refers to God's love. But more than that, it speaks about his grace and his faithfulness, his goodness and his mercy in that relationship.

[ 8 : 17 ] You know, the closest thing that we can come to as a picture of that is the devotion between a husband and wife in a good marriage. This approaches what that word means.

Of God's utter loyalty and love and self-giving grace. And what this means is that the one who is the source of all that is good and who has all power loves you.

This God brings his goodness to us. He shows us his mercy and his powerful grace. He is thankful. He is faithful to us. And there's a strong invitation as this psalm opens for us to read about God's character and his power in the Bible.

And to hear it preached about and to study that. Not in a dispassionate way. Not in a way that says, okay, yep, God is good. He is all powerful. He is authoritative over everything.

But you can't just give assent to that. This psalm says, praise God for it. Know that it is an expression of his love for you that endures forever.

[ 9 : 27 ] And goes through all situations that we might experience. It is a gospel phrase, that refrain.

Because, you know, John 3.16 says, God so loved the world that he gave his only son, Jesus, so that everyone who believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.

So we hear there in the gospel that Jesus came so that the world would know and experience the steadfast love that endures forever. That they would have eternal life. And that's what that refrain is pointing to.

And I think that this is very, very important for us in our Christian life today. Because this is a truth that Satan consistently attacks in our lives.

That may be something that you are struggling with today as you're reading this psalm. It may have been something that you have struggled with in the past. But that struggling has to do with questioning God's love.

[ 10 : 28 ] Have I disqualified myself from his love? Is God's love really steadfast? Does it really endure? Is it forever? And many times that was a question that the Hebrew people asked.

When they experienced slavery in Egypt. When they experienced military defeat. When they experienced exile. When they experienced a vast percentage of their people abandoning God.

Does God still love us? Well Paul knew the power of the gospel over Satan. Who is the accuser of God's people. And he probably it came from Psalm 136 as well.

But he says in Romans chapter 8 verse 33. Who shall bring that charge? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? Well no one.

It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Paul asked. No one. Because Christ Jesus is the one who died. More than that. Who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God.

[ 11 : 31 ] Who is indeed interceding for us now. And he goes on to say that I'm sure. That neither death nor life. Nor angels nor rulers. Nor things present.

Nor things to come. Nor power. Nor height. Nor anything else in all creation. Will be able to separate us. From the love of God. That is in Christ Jesus.

And so you can see that that refrain of Psalm 136. Points directly to Jesus. Jesus is God's final answer to sin and death. That would separate us from the love of God. In Jesus God's love is steadfast.

And it endures forever. And that is the melody line of our lives. That God's love would endure forever.

Now I think that one of the very helpful things about this psalm. Is that it understands that you and I are forgetful people. We are prone to the sin of Israel.

[ 12 : 30 ] Of forgetting God. And his grace. And even people who have great memories. Have spiritual amnesia. What Psalm 136 does.

Is it gives us the gift of hearing. And seeing with our hearts. What we may have forgotten. So that we can praise him. So that we can give him thanks. So that we can live in his grace.

And so I want to look at briefly. What this psalmist calls us to remember. What he calls the Hebrew people to remember. And there are two basic things.

And the first thing is. He calls them to remember that God in his love. Has created the world. And the way he puts it. He calls us to thank God.

In verse 4. For his unique power in creation. He says that any great wonder. He alone can do. He alone has made.

[ 13 : 26 ] No one else could have done it. And then he goes on to praise God. For his infinite wisdom in creation. In verse 5. It's by his understanding that he made the heavens.

And this is something I think maybe. Scientists and physicists. Understand very very well. You may know that billions of dollars. Have been spent on a collider in Switzerland.

For the one purpose. That. Well there's probably more purposes. But for a very big purpose. That physicists can find a God particle. That can answer questions like.

How does matter form. From things that are immaterial. From that which is immaterial. What gives particles their mass. And how do they stick together. You know these are basic questions.

Of creation. And the amazing thing is. That when they find the particle. If they do. They will be looking at a tiny piece.

[ 14 : 23 ] A tiny fraction. Of God's wisdom. And his understanding. And hopefully. They may not realize it. But I hope they do. They will realize.

That they are looking at an expression. Of God's love. That is steadfast. And endures forever. Forever. This is the fact. That God's understanding.

His wisdom. Is involved in creation. And then finally. The psalmist says. Thank God. For the life. And the beauty. Of the world. And he puts it.

In a very creative picture. He says that. God spread out the earth. Over the water. It's the word picture. Of spreading dry land.

Over the water. Like a potter. Forming clay. And making. Making all of the shapes. Spreading it out. Over the water. It is God's creative.

[ 15 : 20 ] Loving work. And then he gives. It says. The gift of life. To him who made the great lights. In other words. That God gave life. To the world. And he gave beauty.

To it as well. So that even at night. You see. Lights. In the heavens. And so what he's calling us. To do here. Is to say that. When you see. All that is good. In creation.

That is the time. To remember. That God has made it. In his wisdom. And that he sustains it. By his power. That all of creation. That is good. Is an expression.

Of God's steadfast love. And it constantly. Surrounds us. And that should shape. Our prayers. The psalm says. To you and me. When you see. All of those things. Constantly.

Give God. Thanks. Praise him for it. Now the interesting thing. Is he goes right. From the creation. Of the world. To the creation. Of the people. Of God.

- [ 16 : 14 ] In verse 10. And I think the reason. He does that. Is because. He is telling us. That not only. Does God. Create everything. But God.
- Rescues his creation. When it is subject. To evil. When it is subject. To the corruption. Of evil. In it. And so. Verses 10. Through 24. Are reminders. Of how God.
- Saved his people. From slavery. From bondage. From being corrupted. By evil. And bringing them. To a new life. In the promised land. So every time.
- They sang this part. Of the psalm. The people of God. Would have their memories. Restored. They would have remembered. How God saved them. Over and over again.
- So let's look at those verses. Briefly here. Look at verse 10. Through the judgment of Egypt. God brought out Israel. As a nation. And then he has the image. Of a strong hand.
- [ 17 : 11 ] An outstretched arm. In verse 12. That reminds us. That the rescue. Was very personal. And very powerful. As well. And we have these words.
- That God personally. Cut. Divided the Red Sea. Into two. And that he. He made Israel. In verse 14. Pass through the midst of it. And then he himself.
- Overthrew Pharaoh. And his host. Into this Red Sea. He just shook them off. And then he led his people. Just as a shepherd would. He led his people. Through the wilderness. And when he got.
- When they got. To the. To the promised land. He struck down. All of those powers. That opposed God. And his plans. For his people. So King Zion.
- And Og. Were kings. That were the first. The first kings. That Israel defeated. When they came. Into Canaan. And the remembrance. Ends.
- [ 18 : 06 ] In verses 21. And 22. With a reminder. That God. Gave that land. As a heritage. Something that is ongoing. Something that. Keeps going. On and on and on.
- A heritage. A heritage. To his Israel. His servant. The place. Where they were. In good harmony. And fellowship. With their God. Well now.
- The question is. As you know. These 12 verses. Unfold that great. Act of rescue. Which was in the memory. Of the Hebrew people. Why. Sing about it. Constantly.
- You know. This was something. That was emphasized. There was a festival. Of Passover. The law. Taught constantly. About. God. Freeing his people. From Egypt. So why. Sing about it.
- Why have a. Refrain. That goes over. And over again. Steadfast love. Endures forever. Well. It is because. Of that refrain. And what we are being. Taught here. Is that the same.
- [ 19 : 01 ] God. Who loved his people. And rescued him. Them from Egypt. That same God. Loves his people. Now. He rescues them. Now.
- He leads them. Now. Through spiritual. Danger. He gives victory. Over their enemies. And he brings them. To the promised place. Of a restored relationship.
- With him. Now. He is the living God. Whose love. Is steadfast. And endures. Forever. And that's very important. For us. Because for the Hebrew people.
- Remembering. Was the way. That God brought. What their ancestors. Experienced. Of God's. Saving work. Into. Their own life. Love. So. Remembering.
- Was much more. Than reflecting. It's actually. Participating. In God's. Saving work. And experiencing. Now. His love for them. It was knowing.
- [ 19 : 55 ] That God. Continues. To save them. And to care for them. He is their living God. And they are his people. That is their identity. Right now. And that's why.
- If you look at verse 23. And 24. The psalmist. Says. He remembered us. Us. In our low estate. He rescued us. From our foes. You see. It turns. To the people.

Who are singing. The song. We know. He is powerful. And ready. To do it. Again today. Because. Each day. In verse 25. He gives food.

To all flesh. To everything in the world. That needs to eat. God. Sustains it. He is the living God. Who is active. In our world. And he. Will save us.

Now. And I want to close. By. Thinking about. How this applies. To us. Because it is. A gospel song.

[ 20 : 48 ] It is the beautiful song. Of remembering. That Jesus himself. Fulfills. We're going to have. Holy communion. In just a few minutes. And in.

That. Service. We will see. From God's word. That Jesus took bread. And wine. And he said. And he said. These words. This is my body. Which was given for you.

Do this. In remembrance. Of me. This is my blood. Of the new covenant. Which was shed for you. And for many. For the forgiveness. Of sins. Do this as often. As you shall drink it.

In remembrance. Of me. And you see. What Jesus is doing here. He's not giving the church. The gift of holy communion. Just to reflect. On what he did.

He is inviting us. In this. Sense of the psalms. To participate. In his saving work. Now. To really know. That he frees us. From the bondage of sin.

[ 21 : 43 ] Now. That he leads us. Through spiritual danger. Right now. That he gives us. Victory over the world. The flesh. And the devil. Now.

And that he brings us. Into that place of salvation. Today. Jesus wants us. To experience. His steadfast love. That endures forever. As we remember.

Forever. And that's why. This. You know. You want to think practically. What this is teaching us. This psalm is teaching us. That the reading of the Bible. And prayer.

Go together. So. As we read the Bible. We are remembering. But it's much more than remembering. Much more than reflecting. On the facts. That we read in scripture.

Of God's. Great work of rescue. In Jesus. Dying for us. And rising again. Again. We are called. To participate in it. We are called. To pray. That the Holy Spirit.

[ 22 : 38 ] Would help us. To know Jesus. And to know his saving work. In our lives. As we read his word. To pray. And to give thanks. That the things that Jesus did. On the cross.

And rising again. Comes into our life. Right now. His rescue. Is for us now. And his steadfast love. That was. That was. So. Clearly revealed.

On the cross. Is being poured out. Into our hearts. Now. By his Holy Spirit. And if we take one thing away. From this. This. This message.

Of Psalm 136. It is that God. Remember. God has done. All things. Because his steadfast love. Endures forever. He has done everything. From the motive of love.

Because his love. Never ends. He will continue. To multiply. Those deeds of love. In the world. And in your lives. Because. Of Jesus Christ.

[ 23 : 32 ] Who is our risen Lord. And that's why. We are called. To follow. The command of the Psalm. To give thanks to the Lord. Unto the Holy Name of God.

Forever and ever. With all of our hearts. With all of our minds. And with all of our strength. Amen.