

Psalm 135

We have gotten past the 15 Psalm of Ascent. The annual journeys for all of the worldwide believers to the temple in Jerusalem was long. Everybody has also come from a different place. Some of the faithful are leaving hardships at home. Others are leaving a daily existence that does not seem to have anything noteworthy happening. Now, all of the believers scattered across the world gather again, in unison to thank God for the blessings that they have experienced. The pilgrims have finally arrived at the temple. All of us end up experiencing *the highs and lows* of life together; as if there are the same forces working on all of us. It is common to have a bad week; and discover that my brothers in Christ also had a similarly bad week.

We think little about our preparations as we arrive at church. The journey is part of the process. Our desire has to be cultivated. The bible describes our heart like a field that needs to be plowed to break up the hard spots.

For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:

“Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, AND take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, *Because of the evil of your doings.*” (Jeremiah 4:3-4)

We get in trouble wanting *microwavable* faith experiences..

We will become bored with church or bible study or prayer if we treat it like a form of *entertainment*. We know that the word is true, but our emotions seem to be working against us. Our flesh usually responds with a feeling like *this all is so cliché*. I am still alive, and I have what I need today. It can be hard to get excited about the freedoms and blessings that I have. It is almost like we need to emerge from yet another challenge to re-gain our appreciation for God.

Our cars have warning lights on the dashboard that let us know that we are *low on oil*. That condition must be dealt with right away. We are the same. Our *numbness* to God's blessings is an indicator that we have a leak. The fellowship in the Holy Spirit has to be ongoing, because the glory fades.

For me, taking an inventory of my blessings is an ongoing necessity. Otherwise, I just revert to thinking about my needs. This psalm is providing some reasons that men should praise God.

Only God is Good

Read Psalm 135:1-7: We have used the word *praise* so much that we can lose track of what it really means. The Thesaurus provides some other words that can help us define what *praise* is about. They include approval, acclaim, admiration, appreciation, cheer, commendation and compliment. Sometimes it's helpful to come at it *a different way* to see things afresh. The definition of *acclaim* is something that is praised all over the world. To *acclaim* is to say it is something that matters and is immediately relevant. It also includes things that are recognized and admired. Maybe we should acclaim the LORD.

To praise *the name* of the LORD is to praise *his character*. We study the word of God to become saved, and to learn about God. That is just the beginning. His word leads us to *his ways*. In other words, we begin to see *why* God says what he says and why he does what he does. You could say that the Bible is like a diary of a man who we have not met. We study the author's comments to try to understand him and his motivation.

Job-#1 is to understand enough to get saved; which includes knowledge that I am a sinner, and that Jesus is the only path to salvation.

For You have magnified Your word above all Your name. (Psalm 138:2)

Job-#2 is to get to know God better. You could say that his word is his path to salvation...and that his name is his character.

I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. (1 John 2:12-13)

Many believers want to comply with God's word in order to receive eternal life and blessings. That is like buying *fire insurance*. There is nothing too personal about it. In fact, you can just do it online. As our relationship with God grows it becomes more about wanting to *please God* and get into what he is doing.

You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. (John 15:14-15)

This psalm is loaded with reasons to praise God. Psalm 135 quotes four other Psalms, two passages from Deuteronomy, two passages from Jeremiah, and two verses from Exodus.

We are told that God is *good*. Can people claim their idols are good...or just accommodating to anything they want? “Is what I want even good?” After all, idols are the creation of our self-will. The bible tells us that idols are a reflection of whoever invented them. We invent idols to tell us that we are good, and that we are free to obtain what we want. False prophets and false teachers pander to that notion. It is not a coincidence that all world religions (except Christianity) are about becoming *a good person*. In Christianity, only God is good. We are wounded healers, helpless guides, misbehaving teachers and anything that is the antitheses of what we represent in God. God wants us to be clear on who he is and who we are. He is good with that if we are operating as apprentices his in truth and sincerity and his love.

God created a perfect planet, unique to our solar system. It is the only place that man can survive. Survival and mutual freedoms include societal boundaries. God has laid down some hard boundaries for those who do not respect human life. That alone is hugely significant. We only have to be obedient and follow God. He will hold the universe and our atoms together.

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; (Deuteronomy 30:15-19)

So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. (Mark 10:18)

Part of obedience includes hope. Hope is not really gravy, or an option. We cannot have zeal and energy in our quest to honor God if we really don’t have expectations of blessings.

I experience a lot of messy progress and kicks in the shins during my blessings. I am happier if I do not expect a trouble-free day. God wants me to keep praying and keep pushing against all odds. I experienced a small, but typical example this week. I have been covering a job at Vandenberg Air Force Base that is needing to close out for the last 2 months. It has been a very problematic and money-losing

and reputation-hammering job from the beginning. Our Superintendent took 2 months off; so I prayed about God pulling together and orchestrating these seemingly innumerable show-stoppers. God allowed me to witness failures from many of our subs. Somehow, as I drove away, everything came together according to the prayers towards a nice close out. It was a lot of drama, but God delivered me once again.

Praise for Your Own Health

The bible tells us that praise is enjoyable. If we are not enjoying the experience, then that means we are not *really praising* God. For starters, we have to recall and *inventory* the good things that God has done for us. We tend to dismiss the past, and live in anticipation of the future. Reflection of blessings in and of itself is very valuable.

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Psalm 103:1-5)

God also dwells in our praises; so it brings us to him and together with fellow believers

But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. (Psalm 22:3)

We can talk about God or we can talk about what we have going on. It is healthier to talk about God than to talk too much about ourselves.

Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words. (Ecclesiasts 5:2-3)

God is intervening all day long to bless us and keep us going. No matter what path we take, there will be an end of the trail. The bridge is out somewhere, no matter which road I choose.

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Read Psalm 135:8-12: God showed his power to the world during the Exodus as a memorial and a pattern. The ancient Jews had reason to celebrate; and we also have reasons. God also is rescuing us all day long.

His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the LORD has destroyed them to this day; what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel— but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which He did. (Deuteronomy 11:3-7)

And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.’ ” So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. (Exodus 12: 26-27)

Read Psalm 135:13-21: The real God is different than the pretend gods.