

Psalm 136:1-26

“O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. The sun to rule by day: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: and brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: and slew famous kings: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: and gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: *even* an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.”

Introduction

“Psalm 136, one of the great, if not the greatest of the antithaphul Psalms where the priests and the Levites would all sing part of it, and then the congregation would answer the other part of it. And this particular Psalm, some call it the great hillel in Hebrew tradition, this is not one of the Hillel Psalms specifically, this was a Psalm that brings us face to face with the idea that his mercies endure forever. We know that they’re new every morning, we love that. Interesting that it comes from the Book of Lamentations,

where there's lamenting and there's heartbreak. But the writer says, Jeremiah says **'his mercies are new every morning, they're without failing.'** And we have that written twenty-six times in this Song, we look there, it says **"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:"** then it says **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** (verse 1) Not just that his mercy is there, but it endureth, to me that's an important word relative to human nature, that **'his mercy endureth for ever.'** And really in the Hebrew, there's only three words, not **'for his mercy endureth for ever,'** some translations say **"for forever his mercy"** probably the correct way, the emphasis is **'O give thanks unto the LORD, unto eternity his steadfast love.'** And that translates better in the English **'his mercy endureth forever.'** So that's where we are when we look at this particular Song. And the way it would go, is, the priests, the Levites would all say **'Give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good,'** and then the congregation that was gathered there, they would all cry **'for his mercy endureth for ever.'** And that's what you're gonna do. You've already got your part memorized, it's one line, and you'll get a sense of it, so I'll read the first part of every line, I have my priestly garments on, and then you, you'll answer your part, and try to imagine this with thousands upon thousands, what it must have been like. So, let's go into this together. **"O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"O give thanks to the God of gods:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"O give thanks to the Lord of lords:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"To him who alone doeth great wonders:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"To him that by wisdom made the heavens:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"To him that made great lights:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever:"** **"the sun to rule by day:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever:"** **"the moon and stars to rule by night:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever:"** **"and brought out Israel from among them:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"With a strong hand, and a stretched out arm:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** **"To him which divided the Red sea into parts:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever:"** **"and made Israel to pass through the midst of it:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever:"** **"but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:"** **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** He you guys, you're running out of gas, some of you are thinking *'Oh come on, do we have to keep saying this?'* Normally I read this Psalm anyway, but this is a good place to stop, we're about halfway through, but look, if you were the children of Israel that were

brought out of Egypt by the LORD's strong hand, if you were the children of Israel who saw the Red Sea part, if you were the children of Israel who were led through the midst of the Red Sea, you wouldn't be running out of gas singing this song, you got me? So let's do this like we're the beneficiaries, I'll back up here to verse 11, and let's do this like we mean this, [and his congregation got real loud in their response, that's the way it should be] **"and brought Israel out from among them:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "With strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "To him which divided the Red sea into parts:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "And he made Israel to pass through the midst of it:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "To him which led his people through the wilderness:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "To him which smote great kings:" "for his mercy endureth for ever:" "and slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:" "Sihon king of the Amorites:" "for his mercy endureth for ever:" "and Og the king of Bashan:" "for his mercy endureth for ever:" "and gave their land for an heritage:" "for his mercy endureth for ever:" "even an heritage unto Israel his servant:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "Who remembered us in our low estate:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "And hath redeemed us from our enemies:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "Who giveth food to all flesh:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." "O give thanks unto the God of heaven:" "for his mercy endureth for ever." (verses 1-26, read aloud by Pastor Joe and alternately the congregation)** Now, let me ask you a question. What do you think the truth the Psalmist is trying to communicate is? Because it's the thing that we forget all the time. It says here, **'you know, he took his people out, he took his people through, and he took his people in, he took them out of Egypt, out of bondage, he took them through the Red Sea, through the Wilderness, he took them into his Promises.'** And that's what he's done in our own lives, he's taken us out of the bondage we were in, he's taken us out of the addictions, he's taken us out of death and the grave and hell, he's taken us through this Pilgrimage, he's with us in our journey, and he's bringing us into glory, you know. Paul says of God's grace that **'God's grace has appeared, bringing us salvation, and teaching us in this earthly journey to deny ungodly lusts, and it causes us to look forward to the coming of our great God and Saviour,'** so he's the same yesterday, today and forever. And in our difficulties and our circumstances, it's hard for us to remember some days because they seem to contradict what it's saying here, that his

mercy endures forever. You know, sometimes he delivers us in, when we want to be out of [you ain't kidding], sometimes he delivers us through, when we'd rather just jump past, go back to Go and collect 200 dollars. Sometimes he delivers us then into the things he would that he would say to us. We'll look at this Psalm.

Three Different Names For God In The First Three Verses

Ah, the first three verses we have the name of the LORD, verse 1, Jehovah, the covenant God, verse 2 we have Elohim, the Creator God, God of power, verse 3 we have Adonai, the Lord, Lordship, ruler, sovereignty. We have a covenant God who created us, and who now lords over us, rules our lives. It says, **“O Give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good:”** that's all he can be, **“for his mercy endureth for ever.”** **“O give thanks to Elohim of elohims:”** *‘the God of gods,’* the pagan gods were all around them, but he is not only the Lord of lords, he's the God of gods, and here in his power in regards to creation, **“for his mercy endureth for ever. O give to the Lord [Adonai] of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.”** (verses 1-3) and then the Psalmist takes us into the creative acts of God,

God's Creation

And it says **“To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.”** and the verse is really **“to the maker of the heavens”** the only time in the Book of Psalms he's identified that way, where it says **“made the heavens”** it's really **“to the maker of the heavens, who doeth by wisdom: because his mercy endures forever.”** (verses 4-5) **“To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.”** (verse 6) that's a good thing. **“To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: he made the sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.”** (verses 7-9) The whole hydro-system, the whole environment we live in, he made great lights. You know, it tells us the universe is geocentric, because he creates the heavens, he creates the earth, he does all this, it's not till the fourth day that he sets the stars and the planets and everything else in their places and says *‘they're there to mark off seasons and so forth.’* There are seven days in the week. Why? and all around the world it's the same thing. You know, God sets all of these things in motion. He sets in heaven the great lights, it says there, **“the sun**

to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever.” the time it takes you to read that verse, our sun has burned off 12 million tons of mass, that many seconds, ***‘the sun to rule by day, for his mercy endures forever.’*** the sun just burnt off 12 million tons of mass. That’s a great light. You’d think, *‘Wow, it’s getting smaller, it’ll burn out by the time this Sunday gets over.’* The immensity of that is incredible, the plasma, the things that take place at the center, the nuclear fusion and the things [photons] that work to the surface, it’s actually just incredible [for a layman’s explanation, access somehow, it’s an older book, Ben Bova’s *The Milky Way Galaxy*]. We’re still coming to understand, you know, he sets that ball out there, 93 million miles from earth. They try to say the earth is millions of years old, you take 400,000 tons of mass a second that it burns, and you back that up a hundred thousand years, the seas on earth would be boiling, you back it up a million years and the surface of the sun is touching the surface of the earth. [I know where Pastor Joe is going with this, the literal 6-day Genesis 1:1-31 creation interpretation. But he doesn’t understand solar astronomy very well. As the mass of a star burns, the force of the intense fusion and photons pushing outward and the gravitational forces pulling inward balance out, keep our very stable small star the same size, regardless of how much matter is burned off, for billions of years. As more mass is burned off, the weight of the sun changes, and it’s gravitational inward pull decreases, in balance with the decreasing outward force of photons, due to the decrease in number of those photons, creating a harmonic balance of forces that help the sun and all stars to maintain their relative size over billions of years. It’s just plain simple stellar physics, which he doesn’t understand. I’m an astronomy buff, and so I do understand this. Ben Bova’s book brings this out. So the sun and earth can be billions of years old, allowing for all the various epochs of life to have occurred (dinosaurs anyone?). For some different takes on the creation of Genesis 1:1-31, and how it might have come all about, see http://www.unityinchrist.com/Does/Genesis_1_1-31.html. None of these differing interpretations get in the way of the fact that God is real and that he created it all. The complexity of cellular life proves God created cellular life all at once, and that it couldn’t have evolved (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/dinosaurs/molecularmachines.htm>, and fulfilled prophecy proves the veracity of God’s Word being divinely inspired by a Supreme Being that dwells outside Space-Time (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/ProofOfTheBible-FulfilledProphecy.htm>)). So, 6-literal days by our standard of days, or 15.75 billion years, six-days by God’s standard outside of

Space-Time, it doesn't matter, God still did it all, and God exists.] So you know, he sets this thing there, one day it will burn out, but that's long after, we'll be done with it before that ever happens [cf. Revelation 21:1]. It has a shelf-life, an LED, it only lasts so long. But we take it for granted. In Israel the other week, just watching the sunrise on the Sea of Galilee. Usually I'm busy in the morning, and sometimes in the summer I take the time to do it, I don't take the time to do that all the time. But you think, you know, if the sun only rose once every fifty years, everybody would be up to watch it [half the earth would be frozen, and half would be frying], big pictures of it, every artist would be drawing pictures of the sunrise, everybody would be oohing and aahing, every color, everything that happened on the earth. It happens every day, everyday. **"To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: the sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever." (verses 7-9)**

The Deliverance Of His People

And he moves from creation now to deliverance. **"To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever: and brought Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever." (verses 10-11)** Smote their firstborn, mercy, those ideas are hard to put together there. But remember, there were nine plagues before then, there was constant warning to Pharaoh and his army, constantly God saying, **'Just let my people go.'** Constantly, over and over, even finally in that tenth plague, the LORD brought the angel of death, the Pesach, the Passover, it was only the firstborn. He could have slaughtered all of Egypt, and he didn't. And he gives us now this picture, Israel, God's ancient people, Israel, by the way, is the only, I watch them on the news, Israel is the only people on the planet with a complete history. That is, we know their past, we know their present, we know their future [history, Israel in the news, prophetic history]. Only Israel. As Americans we already know, ah, is America in prophecy anywhere? [If America is one of the 10-lost tribes of Israel, it is, but that story is for another time and place, this website doesn't deal with that speculative doctrine, which can be found in the Bible, by the way.] Are we going to be around? We don't know that. We got a past, we got a present. Our future is not written out. Israel is the only people in the world with a complete history, besides you and I, besides you and I. Our past is written, our present is written, and our future is written out, it's written out, it's unchanging (cf. Revelation 2-3; Revelation 5:9-10;

Revelation 19:7-9; 20:4,6; 21:1-23). You know why? Hey, come on you guys, you're supposed to be in the loop here! This is an interactive thing, and here you guys are supposed to be paying attention. **"To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever: and brought Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever."** (verses 10-11) So he delivers in, he delivers from, among them, **"for his mercy endureth for ever."** He did it **"With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever:"** (verses 12-13) so sometimes he delivers from, now look in **verse 14**, **"and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever."** Sometimes he delivers "through." I don't think Israel was real excited "through," I don't think Israel was real excited about this "through" thing. They never saw the movie, they didn't know who Charlton Heston was, and they never read the chapter. Imagine heading down into, it tells us in Isaiah, **'like the beast goes down into the valley, and the walls of water on either side,'** imagine the sensation of that, imagine having your wife all the way through saying *'Are you sure? This Moses knows what he's doing?'* you know, the kids are screaming, just imagine. But sometimes he delivers "through," and we're thinking *'Can this really, am I going to get to the other side? Lord, I feel like I'm not going to get to the other side, it's wearing me out, Lord.'* **'He made Israel to pass through the Red Sea, for his mercy endures for ever.'** **"But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever."** (verse 15) If Pharaoh and his army had been spared, the slaughter would have been unimaginable, what would have happened. **"To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:"** (verses 16-20) these were two notable kings, as the children of Israel come, after forty years, to the edge of the Promised Land. We know that there are 60 cities of the giants in the area of Bashan, I have a book called *The Great Cities of Bashan* written in the 1860s by archeologists that excavated some of those structures with 16 and 20-foot ceilings with 15-foot stone-post-and-pin doors that you could still push with your finger and open, just what they found there. And Og himself, it either gives us his sarcophagus or his bed, was 13-feet long. So imagine Og of Bashan, imagine somebody you know whose strong and strappy, 6-foot tall, and this

guy doubles them in height and weight. Sihon, evidently, these kings were the Nephilim, they were something that was an aberration. When the children of Israel, after two years, came to Kedesh Barnea, and they sent the 12 spies, and 10 of them came back and said **'the Anakim are there, the Nephilim, the sons of the giants, we're like grasshoppers in their sight.'** And they turned away, and that generation was lost in the Wilderness. Joshua and Caleb said **'Let's go in and get 'em, God's given them to us, let's go and take 'em.'** In fact, Caleb at 85, 38 years later, takes Hebron where the giants were dwelling, he's been waiting 38 years to get at 'em. And so it's interesting, 38 years later, as they come to the edge of the land, there's the Horim, the Zamzumin, the Avim, there's the Raphim, and Anakim, there's tribes of giants, again, trying to dissuade the children of Israel, and God gives them incredible victories over Sihon of the Amorites and Og of Bashan, because his mercy endures forever, destroying these aberrations of biology, these Nephilim kings. **"And gave their land an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever. even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever."** (verses 21-23) You and I also in this, remembered us in our low estate, that's why he brought us out and brought us through, and brought us in. **"And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever."** (verse 24) You gotta love this, **"Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever."** (verse 25) that's a good thing, right? He's compassionate, his mercy endureth for ever, and the Psalmist ends, **"O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever."** (verse 26) alright guys, thank you there, it's an easy one to remember, you got half of the Psalm memorized in one night.

Psalm 137:1-9

A Psalm of David.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my

chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.”

*They're Not Just Thinking About What They Lost,
But What They Had Lost Needlessly*

“In some ways interesting, making great contrast to the two Psalms around it. It says **“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.”** (verses 1-9) So this song of captivity, the question, was it actually written in captivity, or was it written remembering the captivity. I doesn’t matter, in one sense, look, it’s like the entire Bible, *The Tale of Two Cities*, you know, you go through the Scriptures, the tale of Jerusalem, and the tale of Babylon, those are the two cities mentioned more than anything else, Babylon, Isaiah 13, 14, Jeremiah 51, 52, Revelation 17 and 18, in six chapters we know more about Babylon by far than any other picture of a city and of a people in the Scripture. The antagonist of God’s heavenly city, of God’s people, Jerusalem. And they’re mourning, look, three times there’s a remembering here in verse 1, a remembering in verse 6, a remembering in verse 7, and in their remembering, it says they’re weeping, they’re sitting by the willows, maybe this is why we get “weeping willows,” the idea. They’re sitting there in Babylon, and their grief, their weeping is not just over what they have lost, **they know it’s over what they had lost needlessly.** They didn’t have to lose Zion, they didn’t have to lose Jerusalem, they were warned and warned and warned. Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Prophets, they were spoken to. And they say here it was by the rivers plural, Tigris, Euphrates of Babylon, here

in Ezekiel the River Chebar [Ezekiel 3]. **“there we sat down, yea, we wept,”** notice **“when we remembered Zion.” (verse 1)** And that is the story of many people, you know. You have to understand, Babylon was the wonder of the world. Babylon was the place with the Hanging Gardens, you study those, you read about them, there hasn't been anything like that since. Babylon was an imitation of the City of God, you know, it measured kind of foursquare with a river running through the middle of it like the Holy City of Jerusalem [i.e. the New Jerusalem, cf. Revelation 21:1-23]. Satan has kind of imitated it. It said it had two sets of walls, vineyards and fjords and fields inbetween the walls. And the walls on top thick enough for five or six chariots to race side by side around [on top] of the walls of Babylon. The bars of brass [barring the access through the rivers going through the walls] you know, mocked the enemies that would come. More gold than anybody could imagine, more luxury, more beauty, more prestige, it was everything that can get into our mind and get under our skin, *‘I just think, If I had that, if I made more money, if I had more pleasure, why should I follow the Lord if I'm struggling, what about this, what about that, all those things that are out there.’* That's what Babylon was. [And when God released the Jews 70 years later from this captivity, a lot of them didn't want to go back to Judea and Jerusalem, they stayed behind. They didn't want to leave the wealth.] And God finally said to his ancient people, ***‘You know, you want to worship idols? You want to worship what the world worships? That's what you want?’*** he finally says ***‘I'm going to let you have it. You haven't celebrated the Sabbatical year of the land for 490 years, it needs a rest for 70 years anyhow, so you want idols, I'm going to send you to the capital of idols, for 70 years.’*** And it tells us in Ezekiel sometimes God will do that, in a picture of spiritual adultery where his people were being unfaithful to him, it says if we just fight with God and grieve his Spirit, I want something, I want something, I want something, God sometimes finally says ***‘Alright, I'm going to bind you over to it, and let you have it till your sick of it, till it comes out your nostrils, till idols are coming out your nose.’*** But it's so interesting that he takes the children of Israel, the southern tribes now [Judah, half of Benjamin and Levi], he had carried away the [ten] northern tribes, but the picture is, you know, they're carried away to Babylon, and as they're remembering Zion, they're sitting remembering the beauty of it. It had a reputation, you have to understand that. When it was established under David and Solomon, there were over 60,000 square miles that Israel got, reached out and took, they took all of their enemies around, the wealth of it was unimaginable. The queen of Sheba when she came said ***‘The half has not been told me.’*** It says

there was so much gold in Jerusalem in those days that silver was counted as like rocks, didn't even matter. Jerusalem was known for its courses of priests and courses of Levites, and to hear their screaming over the walls **'For his mercy endureth forever.'** It was a musical court and a musical worship, and the joy and the wonder of it was known throughout that world, they were famous for their worship, for the priests, for the Levites, for the musicians, for the glory of the Temple. So as they're sitting there in Babylon weeping, now that they have what they thought they always wanted, not only are they remembering the beauty of Zion that had slipped through their fingers, they're remembering the burning of Jerusalem, the sacking of the city, the tearing down of the walls. ***They're not just thinking about what they had lost, they're thinking about what they had lost needlessly.*** And that happens to us when we backslide, you know. We think *'I want what's out there, I want Babylon, I'm tired,'* and we get out there and we realize, not only are we bummed because we, we realize *'This is needless, it didn't have to happen, I was warned, I was told, the Lord spoke to me.'*

*When Backsliders Are Correcting You, About Being Away
From The Precincts Of God's House, You're In Trouble*

And then the funny thing is, it says when they get out there, then those who carried them away say, **'Sing for us one of the songs of Zion, sing for us one of those songs of mirth'** which is "joy" in the Hebrew. They knew it was joy, the surrounding nations knew that the worship and the Temple in Jerusalem was known for joy and praise and for a whole people that screamed **'for his mercy endureth forever.'** Now they're in Babylon, and the Babylonians who have everything they thought they wanted, are miserable and saying to them, **'Hey, sing us one of the songs you guys sung, aren't you one of them? You were going up to that Calvary Chapel, weren't you, singing those songs, those Happy Jesus folks?'** *'No, no, that was my twin brother, you got me mixed up with somebody else.'* When backsliders are correcting you, about being away from the precincts of God's house, you're in trouble. That's how you know you've gone too far, when the world is telling you you're bad for backsliding. **'Aren't you one of those, weren't you a Bible-thumper, weren't you talking about Jesus, all that joy, singing? I want to hear about that. You thought I had it? You came out here? I don't have it, I want you to sing one of those songs for me.'** And the heartbreak of it, really, is that it's needless. It isn't just what's lost, it was needlessly lost in this picture here. **"we sat down, yea, we wept, when we**

remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us mirth,*” “*joy*” “*saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.*” (verses 1b-3) ‘*we’re empty, let us hear what you had.*’ And the sad thing is today, there’s I think a lot of Christians that are living without songs, living only with memories. You know, I’m praying that there’s a great outpouring of the Spirit, that we see armies of prodigals returning, that have grown cold. You know, I remember in the last great move, the JESUS Movement, you know, we were talking about it with staff, everyone had this incredible expectancy of the Lord’s return, there was a great sense of being set free, it was the late 60s, early 70s, the Beatles, LSD, I mean, I loved LSD, it was wrong, I’m not saying it’s good, I’m saying that’s how deceived I was, and you know, the Beatles and Ravi Shankar, when mysticism started to be introduced into a whole culture of young people, it was Babylon [it’s worse now]. And mercilessly, God cut right through the middle of that, pouring out his Holy Spirit with the JESUS Movement, and millions of us, millions of us turned to the Lord, from all of that emptiness to something that’s finally real, you know. [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophets/Zephaniah/REVIVAL.html> to see why this revival happened, this move of God, and that the time is right for another great revival and outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit.] The things I think were prominent in those days when I think about it, were, worship, it was contemporary worship, but the emphasis was on worship, not on contemporary. There was no doubt about the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church [greater Body of Christ, but especially within the emerging Calvary Chapels, the Messianic Jewish movement and yes, too, the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God]. It wasn’t charisma, where people were doing weird stuff to override [the Holy Spirit], we all agree on orthodox Christianity, it isn’t that it replaces that, but Jesus said, again, ‘***you have to worship me in Spirit and truth.***’ To have the truth, and then have the power and the presence of Christ in the middle of it made it all is so real. I think evangelism was everybody’s job. Everybody evangelized, and that evangelism from what I remember was attached to prophecy [same thing within the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God, big-time]. Everybody was excited about the return of Jesus Christ, and it was a huge motivation in sharing Jesus with everybody. And I think about those things, and I think you know, in some ways the Church is ambivalent, we have more evidence on the news, in periodicals, on radio that we are right at the place the Lord said we’d be when he came, and surprise us all with his coming. We have way more evidence than we had in 1970 and

1972, early 70s. And yet we seem to be cooler, disengaged in prophecy and what the Scripture says about the days we live in—it should be filling us with wonder. But you know, when it happened then [back in the 70s], it was a sovereign move of God. And I think we so desperately need to see that again. We so desperately need to see it again. And they [the Jews just before the Babylonian captivity] had grown cold here no doubt. There are many today, like I say, they're living without a song, living on memories, so that's the way it was, when there needs to be a present reality of Jesus' imminent return.

*The Jew Has Always Had This Ache In His Heart To
Return To Zion*

And the question **“How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?” (verse 4)** and then **“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.” (verse 5)** and the truth is, when Cyrus made it possible, when Babylon changes over to Persia, for the Jews to return to Jerusalem, and that took in all of Assyria, Babylon under the Persian Empire, that was all 12 tribes, what was left of them [most of those other 10 tribes had already migrated northward into the Caucasus, becoming the western Scythians and later on, the Parthian empire. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kings/3.html> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/mathew/Matthew%202-1-23.htm> and read through that OT history section]. It was such a small percentage that returned. Because they became comfortable in Babylon, they settled down [this is the Jews alone] in Babylon, they had businesses in Babylon, they didn't want to leave, they didn't want to make the journey sadly. **“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” (verses 5-6)** In other words, returning to Zion. And the Jew has had this ache in his heart through the centuries. What happened in 1948 was a miracle, I've been there several dozen times. And you get over there, and the Jews that live in Jerusalem, they consider it a privilege to live in the ancient city. I mean, you know, you go with your guides and you tour the land, and you come up over Mount Scopus or the Mount of Olives and you see Jerusalem for the first time, you see these people that live there, they still get tears in their eyes, when they pull up over the hill and look at that city. And you hear this cry, **“If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy...then let tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.”** And we can get to that place where we get away from the Lord, we get in

Babylon, we start thinking, *'I want to get back there, I don't want to forget that, I just want to get back again, I want to sing with God's people again, I want to be in the house of God, I didn't have everything Babylon had, but I had joy, I didn't have everything Babylon had, but I had peace inside, I had something.'* And listen, if you've been away, there isn't anything that is forbidding you from coming back to the Lord, don't let Satan condemn you, don't let anybody tell you that you've gone further than his blood, he has paid the price for you, and you can come back tonight, and everybody here can tell you why, because, that's right, you can come back tonight if you've been away.

A Curse On Edom And Babylon...Why?

And here this cry, ***'We're weeping, we're away, it dawned on us, it come on us, at such a dear price, and it wasn't just what we lost, we lost it needlessly, we thought Babylon had everything we wanted, and there was nothing there, it was emptiness, O if I forget thee O Jerusalem,'*** And now the cry to the LORD in **verse 7**, ***"Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in that day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof."*** When the Babylonians carried away Judah and Jerusalem, Edom, who is part of their family, said, ***'Level it, level it,'*** the idea is, level it to the ground. [Who is Edom? See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophets/edom/Edom%20in%20Prophecy%201.html>] And then the voice is raised, ***"O daughter of Babylon,"*** notice ***"who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewarded thee as thou hast served us."*** Hadn't happened yet, isn't that interesting? Everything that you think you want, ***"O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewarded thee as thou hast served us."*** (verse 8) Isaiah prophesied in *Isaiah 13, the burden of Babylon, that Isaiah the son of Amos did see,* and in *verse 16* it says ***'thy children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes, their houses shall be spoiled,'*** and so forth. Here, ***"O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."*** (verses 8-9) That wasn't Israel, that was the Medo-Persians. But the cruelty we see today of ISIS beheading people and so forth, it isn't anything new, isn't anything new. We had friends that lived up on the border of New York, Pennsylvania that survived World War II, I used to listen to them and talk to them, they talked about being taken into custody by the Nazis, husband and wife, a two-year-old baby, the baby started to scream, and the

father went to reach for the baby, and they bashed the husband on the head with the butt of a gun, knocked him cold, and then the baby screamed more, they picked him up by his ankles, smashed his head on the floor, his brains went out across the floor. This is nothing new, this is man's inhumanity to man, it is, the news is rife with this very same kind of godless Babylonian thing that goes on all over the world. When people don't love, when people don't, they have no peace, they have no joy. God sent his Son, he loves them, but here it ends with this imprecatory you know eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth kind of plea to the LORD. Now, Psalm 138, we'll lighten it up a little bit, ok?

Psalm 138:1-8

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

"I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD. Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands."

The God David Loves Answers Prayer

"Notice this was a Psalm, it says, of David, and he acknowledges the fact that the God he loves answers prayer, God cares about him. And because of that he has anticipation of great things that will happen and will come, and he talks about his assurance of those things. Let me read it, and we'll back up. He said, **"I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD: when they hear the words of thy mouth. Yea,**

they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD. Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. The LORD will perfect *that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.*” So, David here begins to praise the LORD, he said **“I will praise thee with my whole heart”** just acknowledging, thanking God right off the bat for answered prayer, and he says ***‘I’ll do that before the gods’*** plural, pagan gods and so forth, **“will I sing praise unto thee.”** Vastly different than what’s happening in Psalm 137, wherefore worshipping those gods, and getting involved in idolatry, God has carried them all away to Babylon. You know, very interesting, the first time I went to Israel in 1982, things were much more open then, and I’m walking down the Kidron Valley, everybody else is going through Hezekiah’s Tunnel getting wet and sloppy, I didn’t have any desire to do that. And so I’m walking around to the far end where the Pool of Siloam is, and there is Chuck Smith, kind of fumbling around in this hill behind all these barriers that say “KEEP OUT”, you know, and he says *“Hey Joe, come on up here!”* and so I climb up with him (Chuck called me up there, so I can’t get in trouble). And it was very interesting, all these excavations, and here’s the side of this big hill, and there’s this big thick black line running through it, and up about 5 or 6 foot, another black line, and Chuck says *“See this black line here? This is where the Babylonians burnt Jerusalem, that’s the black line.”* So he said, *“If you dig right under there”* and I’m thinking *‘Don’t dig too much, this thing will fall on us,’* he said, *“You’ll find all the little idols, they find all the idols right under this black line.”* He said, *“That is what Israel was involved in.”* And Nebuchadnezzar finally came and leveled the Temple and burnt the city, and it’s mute testimony that’s still sitting there saying the same thing. David said, you know, earlier, way before this captivity David says ***‘Hey, LORD, I’m going to sing praise unto you, I’m going to do it before the gods, I got nothing to hide, I got nothing to hold back,’*** **“before the gods will I sing unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”** (verses 1b-2) King James says **“I will worship toward thy holy temple”** the Hebrew says ***“Let me worship at thy holy Temple,”*** the idea is, David is looking to the right place. They (in Psalm 137) talk about losing the city of Zion. David is looking in that direction, and he says ***‘LORD, let me worship at***

your Temple, I'm not sure if he's away from the city as he writes this, but for one reason or another he says **'Let me worship at thy holy Temple,' "and praise thy name"** very interesting, the idea here is two things, he's going to praise him for, **"for thy lovingkindness" 'for thy great mercy' "and for thy truth:"** you know, if you have mercy without truth, you end up in trouble, you have immorality, you decline from the standard God has if there's mercy without truth. If you have truth without mercy, you have legalism, you have a painful form of being legalistic. [The legalistic churches have the truth, many of them have the Holy Spirit within their members—**but it's painful to be a part of them.** Let's not make the mistake of throwing the baby out with the bathwater by calling them false churches or cults (which is a form of blasphemy against the what the Holy Spirit is doing within them), they have the truth, it's just painful to be a part of them because they lack mercy. Most of the Sabbath-keeping Churches of God fit into this category.] God is in his very makeup filled with both of those things, mercy and truth. Now, how needful they are to be together in our lives, and David says, **'You know, I'm going to praise you for your lovingkindness and for your truth:'**

'LORD, You're A God Of Your Word'

"for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." (verse 2c) Now, you know, we can make different applications of that. You can't get it out of the text, it says that in the language. Maybe for David, he's saying **'LORD, you've magnified your Word above your name, filling all of it's promises and it's claims,'** because David is looking at the nation united again, David is looking at the history of the people, and God has brought them there, David is looking at the fact that he had reigned in Hebron for seven years, and now in Jerusalem the whole nation is gathered, it's united. David is looking at some very remarkable things. And in that, in David's own mind, **'You've honored your Word above your name, I see it in it's claims, and I see it in its promises, LORD, your Word, it's alive, it accomplishes, and LORD it's visible, it's tangible, it's right in our face,'** and in that, no doubt, he's saying **'You've honored your Word above your name.'** And by the way, we're living in those days too, if we look around at the world, and we see how clinically God dissected the days that we're living in, all of it is seen around us. We're right where the Scripture said we would be in, again, **'he honors, in that sense, thy word above thy name.'** How wonderful to have that much confidence in God's Word.

'In The Day I Cried Out To You, You Strengthened My Soul'

He says, **"In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."** (verse 3) Look, that's a good thing. Because lot's of times, it isn't the day we cry unto him that he answers us. Sometimes it's the next day, sometimes it's the next month, sometimes we feel like we've been crying for four months, and he hasn't answered us yet [boy oh boy, I know what that feels like]. It's a wonderful thing when we say **"LORD, in the very day that I cried out to you, you answered me"** you like those kind of returns, spiritually, I do. What we do is this, we really cry out to the LORD with something we pray, and then it happens, then we say 'LORD, is that you?' You know, 'I can hardly believe you do what I ask you for, really, you actually did it.' [God makes me work so hard in waiting and praying that I never say that when I get an answer, I'm more inclined to think 'Boy, it's about time' before I wipe that thought from my brain and try to replace it with gratitude for the answer.] I don't feel bad about that, because the LORD said to Jeremiah **'Look, your cousin Hananeel is going to come to you and try to sell you this piece of land, I want you to buy it from him, because in 70 years it's going to be returned,'** and Jeremiah said, **'What do you know, Hananeel came to sell me the land,'** and he says **'I didn't know the LORD was speaking to me.'** You're Jeremiah the Prophet, you're supposed to know before your cousin Hananeel comes, who would make up that story and tell you that? I look at this and I think, **'God's Word, he honors it above his name, he says, in the very day I cried unto you, you answered me.'** He's rejoicing in that. But look what he says, he said, you **"strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."** (verse 3b) He doesn't say he removed the difficult circumstances, he doesn't say he took me out of battle, he doesn't say he removed my reproach, he says **'you strengthened me in my soul. LORD, you changed not my outward circumstances, but my inward tendencies, what you did is you strengthened me in my very soul.'** So that whatever circumstance he was in he was able withstand, he was able to have hope, he was able to trust the LORD. It doesn't say **'LORD, you removed all the tough things going on in my life, that's why I was crying out to you.'** How many times do we cry out to the LORD, and he removes every problem in our life the same day? What he did the same day for David was, he strengthened his soul. That's what he did the same day. Because no doubt David wasn't saying **'O LORD, remove this, remove that, make this happen, make that happen,'** David must have been saying **'LORD, I know I should trust you in this, I know I should do this the way you**

want me to do it, I'm inclined to cut somebody's head off here LORD, I'm a warrior, I know I should do this, this way.' He says, *'What the LORD did, that very same day he answered the prayer that he cried out, and he did it by strengthening him in his soul, giving him that intestinal fortitude he worked within his heart.'* You know, that sounds great. But honest, I'm a wimp, some days I'd rather say *'No, no, no, no, don't strengthen me in my soul, get rid of the headache. You can strengthen my soul tomorrow, today I could just use a breather.'* But he said **'He strengthened me in my soul,'** I love that.

The Day Is Coming

And then he says this, he says **'You know, the day's coming when'** **"All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth."** (verse 4) it's gonna come...and here's David saying **'The kings are going to praise you, they're going to do homage to you, but you listen to me and answer my prayer the same day,'** he says, **'because you have regard to the lowly.'** Isn't that interesting, all the kings, the entire world, **"All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth."** (verse 4) Won't that be something, when there's only one mouth that matters? I mean, I watch the news, I get tired of all the mouths, I don't know about you guys, too many mouths, too many people saying too many things. He says the day is coming when all of the kings of the earth, they're going to fall down, and they're going to give homage when they hear the words of his mouth. That's the day of his [2nd] coming. Imagine that. Lord of lords, King of kings, No Supreme Court justices, just one Supreme Judge, no Senate, no House of Representatives, just One Representative, our Lord, our Father, just imagine what that will be like, no injustice, no wrong, ruling with a rod of iron, you'll be able to go to bed at night and not lock your door, leave your keys in your car, nobody stealing cars, you don't have to worry about loosing your keys. Get some gorilla glue, put it on the key and just put it right in the ignition. [Don't think I'd go that far, kids, even little ones, can do some crazy things.] The kids playing with cobras, no problems. Let your kid goes out in the morning and you say *'Come back by next weekend, have fun.'* It says old people will walk in the streets, in those days 800-year-olds. Children will play in the streets, kids are not going to Head Start programs, they're doing what they're supposed to do, they're playing in the streets, in the Kingdom, that's what kids are made to do. Just the pictures that we have that he puts in front of us (cf. Isaiah 11:6-11). In those days **"all**

of the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.” (verse 4) can’t wait. “Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.” (verse 5) all the kings of the earth.

The LORD Sees With Concern The Lowly, He Stoops Down To Us In Remarkable Ways

“Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.” (verse 6) the idea is, he’s above all, **“yet”** is wonderful **“hath he respect unto the lowly”** your translation might say he has **“regard,”** the Hebrew actually says **“though the LORD is high, he sees”** that’s the Hebrew, but it’s with the implication, it implicates **‘he sees with concern.’** So **“in regards”** is a good translation there, **“hath respect”** is the Old King James that means **‘he has regard, he sees, he watches over us, he sees.’** It tells us in Psalm 56 there isn’t a tear that you shed that he hasn’t recorded and put in his bottle. In the loneliest time of your life, the loneliest place you’ve ever been, cried and thought nobody cared, it tells us in Psalm 56 he saw every tear, recorded every one, and saved every one. There’s no lonely tear that’s ever been shed, when the most God-forsaken you’ve ever felt that he hasn’t accounted for, recorded and put on the record. **“Though the LORD be high, yet hath he regard unto the lowly” ‘he sees, he stoops all the way down to us, in just remarkable ways.’ ‘But the proud, he holds them afar off, at a distance.’** **Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.” (verse 7)** he just said that, **‘he strengthened my soul, the inner man.’ (verse 3)** How wonderful.

‘He Who Has Begun A Good Work In You Is Going To Complete It’

“The LORD will perfect” or **‘accomplish, complete’** is the idea **“that which concerneth me:” (verse 8a)** we just read that in the first chapter of *Philippians*, **‘He who has begun a good work in you is going to complete it, unto that day.’** David knew that intuitively, **‘The LORD will accomplish or complete or perfect that which concerns me.’** He’s gonna finish the work he started in this, good things. **“thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.” (verse 8b)** I like that, **“forsake not the works of thine own hands.”** And we looked at tonight, those hands set the great lights in their places,

the hands that created, because his mercy endures forever, those were the hands that stretched out on a wooden cross, let the nails go through them. Those are the hands that in glory are the hands that are holding us up today, those are the hands in glory that will rule the earth and universe in grace and in glory, in mercy and truth. So, **“forsake not the work of thine hands”** I love that, as it ends here.

In Closing

Let's have the musicians come, we'll sing a last song. I would encourage you, several things we go through, remember rough days, things cooking, you're not sure why. You know this, his mercy endures forever. In that mercy his plan may be to strengthen you in your inner man. May not be to remove you out of the circumstance, he may be delivering you from, he may be delivering you through, he may be delivering you into, but he works within, he gives us strength in the inner man, raises up. I would encourage you, there ain't anything new out there, there ain't anything new out there. There's nothing new under the sun. They're doing out there now what I was doing 40 years ago. It's more lethal now, you get A.I.D.S. now, crack cocaine, you get hooked using once or twice now, it wasn't as lethal then, but it ain't any different. There isn't anything out there for us, look, if I backslide I'm not gonna be a brain surgeon or an astronaut, that's not backsliding, that's front-dreaming. If I backslide I'm gonna be what I was, good for nothing, an idiot, and a dog. There ain't nothing new out there. If you want to go out there, you think that Babylon is great, you come back 10 years later with just the snot beat out of you, and we'll still be here telling the same story, we don't change, because his mercy endures forever. We're still going to be here telling the same story. You come back, a little bit worn, worse for the wear, but hopefully wiser. I don't begrudge somebody having their own Damascus Road experience, when they finally have to fall down and say *'Lord, what do you want?'* We have his Word. The most grieving thing is not just what we lose, but what we lose needlessly, that we never have to lose, that he's put in our hands by grace. We can sometimes become so accustomed to, like familiarity can breed contempt, it just becomes routine. I'll tell you something, this is not routine. What we experience is not routine, not for the world, and not for a large part the Church. The freedom we have to study his Word, to sing his praise, to gather in prayer-meetings, just the things that go on, is not routine. First we get together this weekend, a couple thousand men, it's not routine, don't ever take it for granted, ever. Amen? Let's stand, let's pray. You guys did good tonight, by the way. with

this interactive thing, we should work with that a little bit...[transcript of a connective expository sermon on Psalm 136:1-26; Psalm 137:1-9 and Psalm 138:1-8, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

related links:

1. God's Creation: see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/Does/Genesis%201%201-31.html> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/dinosaurs/molecularmachines.htm> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/ProofOfTheBible-FulfilledProphecy.htm>
2. It is time for another Revival. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophets/Zephaniah/REVIVAL.html>
3. Where did the 10 northern tribes of Israel go? For some historic hints, see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kings/3.html> and <http://www.unityinchrist.com/mathew/Matthew%202-1-23.htm>
4. A curse on Edom and Babylon...Why? see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/prophets/edom/Edom%20in%20Prophecy%201.html>