

Pillar Passages – Psalm 135

Jed Brown

July 6, 2021

Today we are looking at Psalm 135. This Psalm is unique in that every verse is a quote from another Scripture passage somewhere in the Old Testament. This also makes it unique in that we often don't pray this way. We pray our own words. But we will see it is a sign of maturity to sing God's own words after Him. I call this, 'The Prayer Meeting Psalm.' This is our template for when we come together to pray in corporate public prayer. This psalm is a picture of what mature praying with the saints looks like. Let's look at it specifically stanza by stanza.

First, verse 1-4. In verse 1 and 2 there's a call to others to praise this God, asking others to come and praise Him with him. The reason for this is stated in verse 3, because He is good. His goodness is manifested. People should sing to His name because His name is pleasant. It is beautiful. He, Himself, is beauty. He, Himself, is the source of all beauty. But, the most striking, the most vivid way He has demonstrated His beauty is by choosing—by electing—Jacob for Himself. By choosing a people—the offspring of Jacob—as His own possession. Out of sheer grace, He choose Israel as His own possession. He elected Israel by His sovereign love. Not because of anything they did. Not because they were attractive or strong or anything, as God says elsewhere, but just out of His sovereign love by His electing choice to be His own people. This itself is a reason for praise—the reason for praise. A reason for praise because some many other things issue forth from this.

The next section, beginning in verse 5. He is above every other so-called god anywhere. He's above all other gods. The reason for this (verse 6) "He does whatever He pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps." He does whatever He wants. He brings common grace—He brings general grace—common grace to all people. By bringing forth the wind from the storehouses, by bringing the rain for humanity, for crops, He brings general grace. He does what He pleases. But He also bring specific grace out of His electing love, He struck down the firstborn of Egypt. He delivered Israel from their enemies, from their bondage in Egypt. Then after this, He did more than just deliver them *from*—He did more than just deliver them out of their bondage. This is a God who has more than just sentimental feeling in His love. His love issues forth in might acts that deliver, that save. But then He goes and does more than that.

Verse 10-12. He doesn't just deliver *from*, but He uses all of His sovereign power to deliver His people *to* a land of milk and honey. His love goes from end to end. It is total. It is unyielding. He wants to give His people a heritage, a place, where His people may dwell forever in a land of milk and honey. When this God's love rests upon you, it is total. It is complete. It goes from deliverance to deliverance. From deliverance from evil to delivering to all good. His love goes from end to end.

Thus, His name (verse 13) must endure forever. His renown, His fame, His glory, His reputation in the world, it must endure forever and ever. And it will, because of how strong and how great

His love is. Thus, His people now, may continue in the present, to live a life of hope. A hope in two in thing continuing and then coming to a final completion at the end: vindication and compassion. He will vindicate His people, and He will never stop having compassion on them. As we saw in a recent sermon, this compassion—we saw in the parable of the Good Samaritan—is God seeing us and seeing what we need. Seeing what His people need and having pity. Seeing what we were designed for, what we need, and then feeling a jealousy for us that we would have it. Feeling a pity, and then sacrificially and inconveniently moving to provide it for us. And where did He do that? Where did He sacrificially move to provide His people the vindication that we needed? He did this on the cross. He continued to work until one day He brought forward Israel's son—His own son, Jesus—who went the cross and died for us, was raised from the dead for us. That sequence of events led to our vindication. Or another way to put it, as Paul put it, our justification. You see this in the last verse of Romans 4.

This hope—this hope is worth celebrating. Thus, in the meantime, verse 15-18 He will continue in this work. His work of compassion to do good to us until the day when we are final vindicated, and we are raised from the dead with Him, and we will meet Him in the air. All of our faith, on that day, will be vindicated. And all of His works toward us will be vindicated before all of heaven and all of earth. Then we will enjoy His glories, His goodnesses, His pure goodnesses, His beauty forever, and ever, and ever.

Thus, until then, verses 15-18, we must think and see clearly about idolatry. About the false gods that would lure us away from Him if they could. Thus, we watch, especially in these days, where our heart rests. Because those who make idol become so like them, so to all (verse 18) who trust in them. If our hearts come to rest on idols, we will become lifeless and dumb like them. Having eyes but not seeing. Having mouths but never speaking truth. Having ears but not hearing. We will become idols if we rest upon them. If we rest with faith. So we watch were our hearts rest. With faith. That is what our job is today, for God does everything for us in His sovereign love.

In closing, verse 19-21, the only way forward is worship. Paul Tripp once said, "We worship our way into sin, and we will worship our way out of it. And more than that, we will worship our way home." The way forward is quite simply; worship. Worship of Him in all aspects of life. But especially with the people of God. With Israel. With His people. In common and in joint praise.

That is the Psalm. Carson writes of how this kind of prayer differs from the common prayer that we often give in the way Beethoven differs from *Mary Had a Little Lamb*. And the point there is not that one is complex, and the other is simple, but it has to do with maturity. This is what true maturity in Christ looks like. That the Word of God is filling us and informing us such that we come to Him, and we live by praise in His name for what He has done for all of His people, not just for us. And for the hope that we have, and for His superiority over our lifeless substitutes, and we praise Him for Himself. Because He is the God who is there with sovereign, gracious, powerful love. This is mature prayer. This is mature praise. The kind that we are called to draw others into.