

# He is Worthy of Worship

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Psalm 135. Would you turn there? Psalm 135. What a joy it is as I have rediscovered the Psalms. Studied through it, preached through it many, many years ago and there's such rich, rich blessings here. Psalm 135. We'll just cover the text as we go through it and then we'll cut things off and have our time of family business in just a few moments.

We call this "He is Worthy of Worship" and that's what the psalmist wants to evoke out of those who are reading this. He wants you to be caught up in what he's saying about God: God's goodness and then God's greatness. Now, they can certainly overlap because he's great in his goodness and he's good in his greatness but we'll separate them because I think that's where the psalmist goes with this.

First of all, in verse 1 we see something of a threefold hallelujah. Look at it there, "Praise the LORD!" Secondly, "Praise the name of the LORD." Thirdly, "Praise Him, O servants of the LORD." Now, I think it's rightfully a threefold praise because God is a threefold God. He's one God in 3 persons. Three persons but one God. He's God the Father. He's God the Son. And he's God the Holy Spirit. And of course, he should receive all of our praise from our spirit, our soul and the service of our bodies. Also, we should praise him for the past, all he's done; for the present, all he's doing; and for the future, all he has promised to do. By the way, you can praise God for the future because he has promised good for the future. There is a thing called future grace and that's what makes it so challenging as you think about what might be ahead as you don't yet have the grace you're going to get when what gets ahead gets here or what is ahead gets here. It's going to be there when you need it and we can praise God that he is faithful for what's coming. I talked to 2 people, just run into them, this week. Church members. One's a faithful attender and plans to be a church member and just difficulties and persecutions from really some mean-spirited people have come their way because of their commitment to God and to truth. Sometimes we wonder, "What's going on?" Well look, God has a plan and the psalmist is talking about how we can praise God and trust in all that he is doing, all that he has done and certainly all he's going to do.

So he's invoking us to praise God and let's look at what he's saying: why we should praise him. We see first of all we should praise him for his goodness. Beginning in verse 1, going through verse 4 and I'd like to first of all point out the range of his goodness. The range of his goodness. What I mean to all lengths. The lengths God goes in blessing and

caring for mankind. In verse 2 he says, Him "who stand in the house of the LORD." Of course, the context is: you praise the Lord. If you're one of those Levites and you work in the house of the Lord, you praise the Lord. Now, that's kind of the inner sanctum. That's where the holy place was and, of course, the high priest went all the way into the Holy of Holies. You might say, "Of course they should be praising the Lord." But he goes further than that.

Second phrase, verse 2, "In the courts of the house of our God!" Now, the courts of the house of our God included the Gentile court and the point of the outer court was that any person of any nationality from any place, any culture or any land can come and learn of God in the outer courts. God's reach goes all the way to all men: all peoples, tongues, tribes and nations. Indeed, Revelation 5 tells us that worshiping the Lamb on the throne is going to be those he has redeemed with his own blood from all peoples, tongues, tribes and nations.

The reach of his goodness. You know, every day the sun rises on the just and the unjust. Think about the reach of that. He doesn't have to do that but in common grace, the sun rises on the just and the unjust. In common grace, he sends the rainfall to bless the crops of the righteous and even the unrighteous. That's the goodness of God. Every day we have air to breathe. All mankind has that. The goodness of God. All men can look at and enjoy the beauty of creation. All men can have and enjoy the blessings of family and friends. These are common graces that show the reach of God's goodness and God is absolutely no respecter of persons. The blood of Jesus Christ extends to all and everyone from the wino in the gutter to the wealthy in his glitter. God reaches to all. His goodness goes from the house where the priests serve to anyone who might be extended out into the outer courts. It goes to everyone.

His love ranges all the way through all social classes, through all economic statuses. His range reaches to the down-and-out and to the up-and-out, from the president to the peasant. It doesn't matter. No one, nowhere is outside the range of the love of God. It knows no bounds. Now, in a moment, we're going to see something of sovereign election but you listen to me: God will save and receive anyone anywhere who will turn to him and trust his Son. It's as if God stands in heaven and opens his arms wide and says, "Look what I've done for you through my Son." Unfortunately, no man in his own ability will respond so God took the initiative. We'll talk about that in a moment but right now, the range of his goodness.

Notice, something a little different here in verse 3, the reach of his goodness. The range, I wanted to talk about the lengths he goes to, the reach is the depths he goes to. He talks about in verse 3, "Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely." What does he mean when he says his name is lovely? Well, I think it denotes that when you understand the love of God for the most unworthy and undeserving, you have to know this God is lovely. There is a loveliness to him that is above and beyond anything we know, experience or could understand here on this earth. It's lovely because his love reaches down to the depths of sin and woe. It reaches down to the most undeserving and most ungodly. We think about men like John Newton. John Newton was

a slave trader. The story goes that when John Newton was a little boy, his mom was a godly lady and she said, "John, just promise me, whatever you do," she was sick and about to die but she said, "John, whatever you do, promise me you'll never be a sailor." That's about the first thing John Newton did and then he became a captain and he hauled slaves in his ship from Africa and the Caribbean over to England and who knows how many lives he damaged and how many lives were lost at his hands. But John Newton, I believe because of the faithful prayers of his mom and the faithful preaching of the Gospel he was under, came under deep, deep conviction of his sin and his lostness and came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. John Newton, a slave trader. He never got over the depths of his wretchedness and his wickedness and his sin but John Newton also grasped hold of the truth that God has freed me and forgiven me in Christ.

You know what he wrote. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found. Was blind but now I see. T'was grace that taught my heart to fear." Oh, John Newton was a Calvinist. "Grace taught my heart to fear." By the way, he was a full-bore, committed Calvinist. "Grace taught my heart to fear," he wrote. "I wouldn't have even known I was a sinner to dread God's wrath if grace hadn't helped me to see that I was a sinner and needed to dread God's wrath." "T'was grace that taught my heart to fear and then grace my fears relieved." Grace let me put faith in Jesus and relieved that dread of God's wrath against me. "How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." Oh my goodness, the reach of his love to the depths. There is a Southern Gospel song, "When the Savior reached down for me, he had to reach way down for me. I was lost and undone without God or his Son. When the Savior reached down for me."

Some years ago, I don't know if it was on television. I don't know if I read it but it was quite popular for a little while. There was a boy, I think he was still a teenager at this time but from an early child with corrupt parents, he became a committed Satanist and in his worship of Satan, he murdered another boy to honor and please Satan. He was incarcerated, found a Bible and began to read the Bible and came to a wonderful saving faith in Jesus Christ and became a vibrant witness, always willing to testify of the wretched wickedness of his heart but of the great grace of God that...look, Jesus has great descending reach to his goodness and love. Oh, the reach of his goodness.

Let me ask you tonight: how far down are you? Where have you been? What kind of muck and vile and filth? What kind of gutters have you wallowed in? Well, I want to tell you there is no depth that God in his goodness can't reach. There is none. The psalmist wrote, "Oh, he's lovely. He's lovely. He's lovely that he would do that for me." You see, we can't comprehend that. Everything that you do for someone is because a little something is done for you. They do something. They are precious to you because they are a grandchild or they are precious to you because you've just gotten to know them. You've heard their story and something evokes you but here's the thing about God: every single thing about us fallen sinners is repulsive and offensive to him. Everything, yet he chooses to love us and declare us a special treasure. You see, you can't comprehend that because that's God's love. He's lovely beyond what we can comprehend.

Oh, the great, great, great range of his love and the great reach of his love. Thirdly, under his goodness notice the great result. The great result. He says in verse 4, "For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His own possession." Now, here he uses this word "chosen." It's the very same concept that we have in the New Testament when it speaks of us being chosen before the foundation of the world. The very same truth. He chose me before I chose him. That's very interesting. In all the years I've been preaching and pastoring, now, our former pastor was a five-point Calvinist. He taught me these great doctrines and it's kind of funny, nobody had a problem with these great doctrines for years and years and years and then somebody ran up the flag of alarm all of a sudden and said, "Oh my goodness, there are people who believe in the sovereignty of God in salvation." And all of a sudden it became a big, big issue. But in all the times and all the places and in all the issues, I've never heard one person who said they had a problem with God choosing Israel. Have you? I mean, they'll fight you over that one. "Yes Sir, they are God's chosen people. God chose Israel," to which I say, "Amen. It's true. I believe God's got a future plan for a redeemed, remnant Israel when he returns again." God looked down and of all the nations and all the peoples and of all the countries he said, "I choose Israel. You're my elect." Listen, by the way, it was unmerited favor. It was unmerited favor. It wasn't deserved or earned.

Why didn't God choose any of the hundreds of other ancient peoples to be his select chosen people? Well, I can tell you why he did it. Look at verse 6. We'll look at this in just a moment. Verse 6, "Whatever the LORD pleases, He does." In other words, "Shut up and get over it." He's God. As a matter of fact, if you can go over to Ephesians and when you have that long list of the great glories of sovereign grace in Ephesians, it talks about predestinating, choosing and all this. Do you know what he says? He did it according to the kind intention of his own will. He says, "I don't have to explain anything to you." Here's my point: the result of God's love is when God through his Son said, "Whosoever will may come," and all alike turn aside. Romans 3, "No one does good, no not one." Now what does that mean? That means no one would turn to Christ on their own. None would do it. You just will not do it. Your children and your grandchildren and your great grandchildren are not going to come to faith because of the creativity and the cleverness and the fervor and the devotion of Matt Fowler or David Young or Steve McAllister or Jeff Noblit or Tom Clay. God must change them by his power. If he doesn't reach them, they'll not be reached.

It's his work. God says, "Come. Come. Come." But no one turns to God. No one does good so God says, "Look, my glory is too great for it not to be illustrated in the most magnificent and perfect ways so to illustrate my love which is radically greater than man's love, to illustrate my grace, mercy and forgiveness which man has no comprehension of, I'm going to choose to reach out and change some of them to have a heart toward me." Isn't that what the text says here? Verse 4, "For the LORD has chosen Jacob." The last time I heard, Jacob didn't go out in the wilderness and say, "Would you send an angel down here for me to fight with because I want to get my heart changed?" No, the angel showed up and they fought and the angel won and Jacob came to a humility and a faith in God's promised provision.

Now, what's one of my favorite words? If I was to say to you, "You can bet Brother Jeff is going to use this word almost every sermon," what might that favorite word be that I'm going to use almost every sermon? Can anybody just shout it out? Lord help me, something's going right around here. Balance. Balance. What's the balance of biblical truth? Here's the balance of biblical truth: we witness to all men everywhere, urge all men everywhere, call all men everywhere to repent and believe on Christ and if they will they will be saved. Amen? That's the balance.

But I'm not leaving either one out. Are you with me? I'm not leaving either one out and if they get saved, we turn around and say, "God chose you before the foundation of the world or you would have never believed." But before they get saved, I'm telling them, "You'd better repent and believe and if you will, God will save you." Well, which one is true? Well look, they look like they are in contradiction. I don't try to reconcile, old friends. The responsible will of man and the sovereign election of God are 2 truths that will come together in a higher understanding one day when we have the mind of God.

Well, in his love, God reached down and said, "I must have a people that will know me and bear my name and glory in my grace and mercy," so he chose Jacob. Now, I believe the word Jacob here and the word Israel here has to have a little fuller understanding than just the whole nation at large. I believe it means the remnant of Israel because Jacob was the saved remnant. Jacob was truly, genuinely converted. He represents the true Israel, the believing Israel. He represents the Israel that's going to truly trust Christ when Christ returns at the end of the tribulation and sets up his kingdom with a redeemed and remnant Israel on the earth.

Well, I'm spending too much time. There is a ballgame on. You've got your recorder going. I know you want to get to it. Somebody, Al Jackson down in Auburn said to his church this morning, he said, "The Patriots may have a deflated football but the Gospel is not deflated. Come hear it tonight."

Well, in Exodus 19:5, we have a statement. Let me just read that. I think I've got it marked. Let me just read that real quick. In Exodus 19:5 as Moses comes down from Sinai with the law, "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession." Now, that phrase "you will be My own possession" is the same phrase as Psalm 135:4 where he says he chose Israel "for His own possession." Now, that's an interesting statement because Moses comes down and says, "God said if you will do these things then you'll be his precious possession." Actually, it means, "He'll treasure you as his very own." Well, that's a little bit of a problem, isn't it? "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." When you tell me I've got to keep the covenant of law to be God's special, precious possession and treasure, then I'm weary and heavy laden because I can't do it. But my elder brother, Jesus, represented me before the judgment bar of God and where I failed in the law he succeeded perfectly. Not only did he fully, completely keep the law in my stead, he went to the cross voluntarily out of a devotion to please his Father's will to bring great glory to their names by saving an unworthy people to show what they could accomplish. Through Jesus Christ dying on the cross, Jesus paid the full, divine penalty

that was owed for all of our sins. So in Jesus Christ, I have kept the whole covenant of the law. I'm not just me, I'm Jeff in Christ and you're Tom in Christ or Joe in Christ or Mark in Christ. We're not just us, we're in Christ. And in his provision and in his merit, we stand before God as those who have perfectly kept the law and on that basis because he chose us, redeemed us through his precious Son, now we therefore are the objects of his favor and blessing and we are his precious, cherished treasure. We're his treasure. So we are the result, if you will, of his goodness.

Now quickly, let's go to the second thing: his greatness. His greatness. First of all, the greatness of creation in verses 6 and 7 and then something of his authority over creation in verse 6, "Whatever the LORD pleases, He does." I love that. I love that. He didn't discuss it with the Southern Baptist Convention. He didn't consult the Pope in Rome. Look, truth is objective. It's outside of us. God is truth and he has revealed it. It is for us to humble ourselves and find it and obey it through the provision of his Spirit. God does whatever he pleases, verse 6, "In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps." So the psalmist says, "Certainly we glory over the great range and reach and results of God's unfathomable goodness toward us but also we glory in what we see him doing in creation." He has authority over it. He does whatever he pleases. He sent the flood on the earth to destroy the wicked in the days of Noah. Why did he do that? Because he can do whatever he pleases. It's his creation. It doesn't belong to man. You can cry about global warming all you want, I don't know if there's anything to that. I seriously doubt there's much to it. I think there's a long cycle of warming and cooling that goes on and we're all going to be fine. If we're not all going to be fine, God controls that and we belong to him. Was it in the paper today that they said our real problem is cattle? Are you kidding me? That cattle actually, they're messing the whole ozone up. I mean, it is humorous. It's just ridiculous. I mean, we can't even go there in the church. It's just ridiculous what they're coming up with.

God sent fire and brimstone from heaven to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness, primarily the wickedness of homosexuality because God does what he pleases. If he wanted to destroy part of the earth, he destroys it. Korah rose up against Moses. Remember that? Korah was a man of renown, a man of distinction, a man of respect in Israel. He didn't like Moses getting all the attention. He didn't like Moses being the benevolent dictator he was so Korah got some people to join him and said, "Moses, we don't know that you're leading this thing right. We want to have a little meeting. We're going to call a business meeting at church. We've got to fix this thing." And Moses said, "Do what you want to do. I didn't start this, God did. I didn't call me to do this, God did." And so what did God do? He opened up the earth, swallowed up Korah and all of his followers and the earth closed back up on them. Why did God do that? Because he can do whatever he wants to in the earth. He does whatever he wants to in the earth. He killed Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 to purify the church because he does whatever he wants to in the earth. And on and on and on we can go.

I think about this place here. Why did God take a handful of people pushing 40 years ago and start a church? Not many of those folks left, by the way, but build something that

would bear his name and be a witness for him, to some degree to the nations. Because God does whatever he pleases in the earth.

You know, ancient pagans always divided the universe up. They said there's Jupiter and Jupiter rules in the heavens. There is Neptune and Neptune rules over the sea. Pluto, he rules over the under regions under the earth. But that's not true, Jehovah rules over it all. No knowledge can match his omniscience. No power can match his omnipotence. No being can match his omnipresence. He is personally and presently ruling and reigning over all the universe and everything functions according to his will and always has and it always will. He has authority over it.

Now, not only his authority over it, in other words, he does what he pleases, also in verse 7, the acts that he has created within the creation, if you will. Notice it says, "He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth." Now, you just read that in passing in your quiet time and you just don't think about it but think about that. He's talking about one of the thousands of phenomenon within the created order that's absolutely overwhelming and shows the greatness of God. I looked that up. You know, scientists tell us it takes 10 square inches of the ocean surface and 12 hours to yield 1 cubic inch of water, that's if you condense the water vapor back down. Therefore a square mile of water yields 6,914 tons of water vaporized per 12 hours. A square mile of water service, 6,914 tons. And you think that just happened by evolution? The psalmist said, "No, God designed that to work that way." It shows the greatness of God. The Mediterranean Sea during one summer's day would pass in invisible vapor 5,000 million tons of water and it's just a yawn, another day passed. Amazing things God has done. Scientists have calculated that a pool of water 6 inches deep and 1 mile square would require the combustion power of 30,000 tons of coal to vaporize it. To evaporate all the water of the earth it would take the combustion energy of 6 trillion, that's 12 zeros, 6 trillion tons of coal which is more coal than 6 earths could hold. Yet evaporation like this is going on every day and has been going on for thousands of years and we silently just don't pay no attention to it. But when you look back and look at what God has done in creation, you see the greatness of God. The greatness of God.

Hurriedly, his compassion. His compassion speaks of his greatness. Not just creation but compassion. Notice his deliverance in verses 8 and 9, "He smote the firstborn of Egypt, Both of man and beast. He sent signs and wonders into your midst, O Egypt, Upon Pharaoh and all his servants." So here we have an interesting thing that God, the psalmist wants to bring out that great and mighty deliverance when the nation of Israel was released from Egyptian captivity and bondage. You remember the death angel was sent by God over all of the Egypt and the Egyptians killed a spotless lamb and they applied it to the doorpost and to the lintel, the blood of the spotless lamb. And every house where the blood was applied, the death angel didn't visit. It passed over those houses, thus the Passover feast. But to all the Egyptian homes that didn't apply the blood, the death angel came to their house. The firstborn in every house where the blood was not applied was killed that night. Then in like fulfillment of that typology, God gave his firstborn Son, the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, and through him the wrath of God passes over us through the provision of his merit and his blood. His deliverance. Deliverance of Egypt

literally and physically in antiquity but also deliverance for all who look to God and God's Son, Jesus Christ, for salvation.

Now notice, not only deliverance but notice defense. Verse 10, it says, "He smote many nations And slew mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, And Og, king of Bashan, And all the kingdoms of Canaan." Verse 12, "And He gave their land as a heritage, A heritage to Israel His people. Your name, O LORD, is everlasting, Your remembrance, O LORD, throughout all generations." So all the enemies who rose up against Israel, unless God was using them to discipline them, about to get to that, God was a defense against them and preserved his people. Again, that is a type of how in Jesus Christ we have a defense against all our enemies. Do you not realize, folks, that as we are in this post-Christian era and more and more difficulties and persecutions and underminings and assaults against our faith is going to come that God is defending us and going to use every one of those for our good in his glory? Every one of them will be for our good and his glory.

Now, discipline. Verse 14, it interesting, changes things, "For the LORD will judge His people," and in balance, "And will have compassion on His servants." In other words, he disciplines us for our own good. God knows that sin will destroy and sin does great robbery to both God and to man so God for the good of man, that is his own children and for his own glory through his children, he brings disciplines into our lives. How does God discipline? I don't know but he knows how to do it. He knows how to humble us. He knows how to get our attention. He knows how to bring us to the end of ourselves so that we might be more humble and repentant and more honoring of him. The psalmist, David, said on one occasion, "It was good that I was afflicted. It was good that I was afflicted that I might learn thy statutes." He said, "Somehow the Bible is just richer when I'm suffering. I learn more, the word better, in difficult seasons."

Well, the last thing. Greatness of creation. Greatness of compassion. And now greatness of condemnation. I see 2 points here. When God brings condemnation on those who reject him and those become idolaters, by the way, everyone who rejects God is an idolater. They may not build a statue like the old idolaters of antiquity but they worship and honor things other than God. They make idols in their hearts. They make idols of their own knowledge or wisdom. Today we have a idolatry of science. We think, "Well, if science says it, it's okay." And on and on and on we could go. But those who turn to idolatry instead of to God, first of all, under condemnation they will receive a delusion. A delusion. A deluded stupor will come upon them. Verse 15, "The idols of the nations are but silver and gold, The work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; They have eyes, but they do not see; They have ears, but they do not hear, Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths." Now, here's the phrase, verse 18, "Those who make them will be like them." In other words, they'll be spiritually stupid. They'll be spiritually stupid. They'll be diluted and deceived by the very act of God. God will not enable them to be able to see the truth. Because of their own willful sin, he reacts to sin a delusion so that they can't understand the truth and turn to God. In Romans 1, the Bible says, "Because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved and for this reason," now listen, "God will send upon them a deluding influence so they might believe what is



false." They run deeper into false, man-centered, godless philosophies and they put their hope in it because God sends them a delusion, a deluding influence, if you will, and they're unable to come to the truth. There is a deadline God has with sinners.

I'm telling you, they become hardened and obstinate and revilers and mockers and railing. Have you seen these folks? I remember when the lesbian and gay and transgendered and bisexual crowd came after one of our young businessmen in our church and I read some of the things they would say. It was just the most reviling. It wasn't logical. It wasn't meaningful. It was just a railing against them. We can expect some more of that because God is sending this deluding influence that they might believe what is false.

So those who go on in unbelief will become just like the idols they make: dumb and unable to understand. Concerning those who reject Christ in Romans 11:8, Paul further says, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes to see not and ears to hear not down to this very day."

So under condemnation, there is a delusion and lastly, there is a destruction. The last part of verse 18 he says, "Those who make them will be like them." Well what are they? They are dead. They are lifeless. There is no spiritual life. There is no physical life. And certainly there is no eternal life in those old dead idols. And he said, "Those who worship idols," he said, "haven't come to God through Jesus Christ, will end of just like that."

Now, the Psalm began with the threefold hallelujah, "Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD; Praise Him, O servants of the LORD," now it ends with a fourfold blessing. Verse 19, "O house of Israel, bless the LORD; O house of Aaron, bless the LORD; O house of Levi, bless the LORD; You who revere the LORD, bless the LORD. Blessed be the LORD from Zion, Who dwells in Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!"

Let's pray together.