



The Redemption in Psalm 136

- The question is often put to Christians,
 - “What about those who have never heard the Gospel, even once, are they still guilty?”
- The answer is that they are guilty of sins committed regardless of what they know,
 - God’s law has still been broken.
 - A murderer cannot say I’m not guilty because I have never heard of the ten commandments.
 - The truth is they’ve sinned against their own conscience and the law of God written upon their hearts.
 - No one actually deserves to hear the Gospel.
- But here's another question;
 - If a person has spent their whole life resisting the Gospel message that God has graciously repeated over and over to them in multiple ways, then are they beyond redemption - irredeemable?
- Not necessarily, according to this Psalm - 136
 - They are certainly Gospel hardened
 - But hopefully not judicially hardened so that their will can never turn.
- The psalm can be divided roughly into three subjects in the middle, with an introduction at the beginning and a summing up at the end:-
- It may not be immediately apparent how the three subjects relate to salvation though.
 - The subjects are:
 - The creation of the heavens and the firmament.
 - The exodus from Egypt.
 - And the victory over the kings in Canaan.
- But it's only *not apparent* if you fail to see the spiritual application of these things.
- Firstly we cannot fail to notice the repeated refrain “his mercy endureth for ever”
 - It's repeated throughout the psalm after each fact is stated.
 - So we can see from this the overall subject of the psalm is God's mercy.
 - Unless the psalm is about salvation from God's judgement of sin, this doesn't make much sense.
 - What's creation, Egypt and Canaan got to do with your soul?

- Therefore it's important for us to establish what Biblical mercy actually is.
 - Some equate it with Grace (and it is very similar)
 - but there's an important difference, and it's a difference of direction and action.
- Grace is the giving of undeserved merit or favour.
- Mercy is the refraining to punish that which is deserved.
 - In many ways, mercy is the other side to grace.

- **So let's quickly consider the opening section:**

“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 to the Lord of lords:

for his mercy endureth for ever.”

- The overall reason for this redemption is established first.
 - It is to worship God for one of His attributes - His **goodness**.
 - Thanks and praise of God is the point of it all, because He is worthy of it.
- The psalm goes on to give three historical examples.
- But first it just states the facts
 - He is **God of gods**, and **Lord of lords**.
- God is stronger than all the idols people might have chosen instead.
 - He is the God of gods
 - Over all things we might choose to live for
- He is greater than anything people will have chosen to be their ruler and guide
 - He is the Lord of lords.
 - Better than anything we might choose to trust in to rule us.
- Next the first of the three historical reasons to give thanks to God, which all relate to the salvation of a person's soul.

The first is His work of creation:

“To him who alone doeth great wonders:

for his mercy endureth for ever.

To him that by wisdom made the heavens:...

To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:...

To him that made great lights:...

The sun to rule by day:...

The moon and stars to rule by night:

for his mercy endureth for ever.”

- This is intriguing
 - The creation of the heavens and the earth.
 - I don't know about you, but I always considered Genesis 1.1 to relate exclusively to the physical realm.

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"

- But it's interesting that here it is linked to the stretching out of what is called in Genesis the "firmament".
- Clearly here the *heavens* and the *firmament* are two different things.
- I used to think that God creating the heavens was space and the earth was a watery formless blob within space.
 - But that interpretation runs into difficulty when you consider the stretching out of the firmament between the waters below and above, and what God puts within that firmament.
 - You see, what He is said to put there are the sun, the moon and the stars.
 - And we know that they are in space.
- So if the firmament is space then what are the heavens in Gen 1.1?
- Many old commentators have always thought that it describes the creation of the spiritual heavens - what we usually think of as heaven.
- And the earth is simply describing all physical aspects of the universe initially together in one formless mass of matter and energy.
- This is important considering it being mentioned here in this Psalm.
 - For it divides existence into the spiritual and the physical.
 - A physical realm and a spiritual behind it all divided by mysterious 'waters' -
 - maybe symbolised by the 'crystal sea' in the book Revelation.
- The creation of heavens and earth and the stretching out space as the firmament, mirrors the creation of Human life with its dual aspect - body and soul.
 - After all He made not only our minds and bodies, through which we perceive all space and time, but our soul and spirit.
 - He made the heavens and earth.
- We can also see some spiritual application in the mention of the sun, moon and stars.

It says

"To him that made great lights:...

The sun to rule by day:...

The moon and stars to rule by night:"

- They are obviously physical creations, but are often taken figuratively in Scripture.
- **Light** speaks of spiritual understanding
- **The Sun** speaks of God
- **The moon and stars** speak of the Church and its people.
- And **day and night** can speak of spiritual life or not.
- Thus, for someone redeemed, they live by the light of the Sun in the day - In the light of a relationship with God.
- But for someone not yet redeemed they must only get their light from the teaching of the Church in this dark world - in the light of God's Word spoken, especially in the Gospel.
- **Next we look at the second historical fact: The exodus from Egypt.**
 - You may say, "That was a remarkable historical event, but what has it got to do with the salvation of the soul?"
 - Well, the whole event is supposed to be a picture of God meeting our deepest need.

- Indeed, before the reality of the cross of Calvary, it was the most significant event picturing spiritual salvation in all Scripture - repeatedly being referred back to (as it is in this Psalm).
- You may ask, "How so?"
 - Well it pictures a people in bondage of slavery to a cruel tyrant.
 - Just like we are slaves to sin and Satan.
 - Coming out of Egypt is like coming out of spiritual bondage and freed from the plagues which are the consequences of a sinful life.
 - It pictures a great deliverance by the hand of God through a man - Moses
 - Just like we can be delivered by the God-man Jesus Christ.
 - The angel passing over those with the blood of the sacrificial lamb on their doorpost
 - picturing the judgement passing from us to our sacrificial lamb of God - Jesus Christ.
 - It pictures freedom for captives in Egypt from a man (Pharaoh) whose will was so stubborn that even when God took his firstborn he came to take the people back.
 - Just like it seems almost impossible for us to change our state and condition in the grip of our sinful nature and stubborn will.
 - But it pictures the miraculous crossing through the Red Sea
 - like passing from unsaved to saved via the miraculous process of conversion.

"To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:...
 And brought out Israel from among them:...
 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:...
 To him which divided the Red sea into parts:...
 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:...
 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:...
 To him which led his people through the wilderness:...
 for his mercy endureth for ever."

- **Our third historical picture is similar to the last:
The coming into the promised land of Canaan.**
- The crossing of the Red Sea and then the crossing of the river Jordan is what we call a 'double type' or shadowy picture of a future reality - in this case - conversion.
 - The coming out of Egypt looks back from what we are saved from.
 - The coming into the promised land of Canaan looks forward to what we are saved into from this wilderness world.
- God's goodness is seen in that He cleared the promised land of powerful, wild, fear inducing kings, who were worldly wise, and morally bankrupt.
- If He can do that then there is no one beyond His redeeming hand.
 - A person's temptations and appetites are not too strong for God to overcome and change
 - Their enemies are not too fierce.
 - Even their own stubborn will!
- Victory over the kings in Canaan pictures all our sins being mortified, a new relationship with sin resulting in sanctification
- In Christian typology, the nations, kings, and conflicts in the land of Canaan are rarely viewed as just ancient history.

- Instead, theologians and commentators historically interpret them as spiritual blueprints representing the internal and external struggles of the Christian life.
- Here is what the prominent nations and kings of Canaan typically represent:

The Land of Canaan itself represents the new Christian life.

- The Spiritual Life / Rest: Canaan represents the life of faith and spiritual maturity,
 - even our rest in the kingdom of heaven whilst still on earth.
 - It is a land of abundance that must still be fought for and conquered step by step.
- The seven native nations of Canaan represent **root sins** or **demonic strongholds** that believers must overcome.
 - **The Hittites (*Spiritual Terror/Faint-heartedness*):** Symbolised the crippling fear or anxiety that paralyzes a believer from making spiritual progress.
 - **The Gergashites (*Dwelling on Clay/Earthly Mindedness*):** Symbolised materialism and being deeply fixated on temporary, earthly things rather than the eternal. The tendency to return to earthly thinking.
 - **The Amorites (*The Bitter Ones/Pride*):** Symbolised arrogance, boasting, and the bitter rebellion of the ego against God's law.
 - **The Canaanites (*The Merchants/Lust & Greed*):** Symbolised a soul that "barter" its purity for worldly pleasures or transactional, carnal desires, unclean habits and addictions.
 - **The Perizzites (*The Scattered/Lawlessness*):** Symbolised a lack of self-discipline, representing a life without boundaries or spiritual vigilance.
 - **The Hivites (*The Serpents/Deceit*):** Symbolised heresy, hypocrisy, and false doctrines that subtly poison the church or the mind.
 - **The Jebusites (*The Down-Trodden/Hatred & Malice*):** Symbolised deep-seated anger, resentment, and the spiritual blindness that tramples peace.
 - [From Augustine and Oregon]
- The Notorious Kings of the Region could be seen to represent our three great enemies the Flesh, the Devil, and the World.
 - **King Og of Bashan & King Sihon of the Amorites** (mentioned in this psalm): These two giant kings blocked Israel just before they crossed the Jordan. Typologically, they represent massive, intimidating spiritual barriers or foundational sins that must be defeated before a believer can enter into true spiritual maturity. The Amorites often are seen as a picture of **the flesh** - our own sinful proclivity and old nature.
 - **Adoni-Zedek (King of Jerusalem during Joshua's conquest):** His name means "Lord of Righteousness," but he resisted God's people. He represents false righteousness, hypocrisy, or religious spirits that mimic true faith but oppose the moving of the Holy Spirit. We might see him as the lies and opposition of **Satan**.
 - **King Jabin of Hazor: Mentioned in both Joshua and Judges (with his general Sisera),** Jabin represents systemic oppression and long-term spiritual bondage that attempts to re-enslave a believer after they have already experienced freedom. We might see this as the influence of this **World** system opposed to God. A world we might have trusted once, but that doesn't deliver on its promises.

When five of them are trapped in a cave by Joshua Augustine interprets them as representing the five carnal/fleshy senses that can be easily corrupted in unholiness:

- **Sight (Visions):** Can degrade into **lust of the eyes**, vanity, or a fixation on superficial beauty.
- **Hearing (Sounds):** Can open the mind to gossip, flattery, or destructive, deceptive ideas.
- **Smell (Odours):** Associated with luxury, over-indulgence, and sensory pampering.
- **Taste (Flavours):** Directly linked to the vice of **gluttony** and a lack of physical restraint.
- **Touch (Sensations):** The primary engine for **lust**, physical laziness, and carnal comfort.

The truth is we are only saved from all these by Christ THE KING

- Joshua (like Moses) is a direct type of Jesus Christ (both Joshua and Jesus share the Hebrew name *Yeshua*, meaning "Yahweh saves").
 - Joshua leads the people into the Promised Land, representing Christ leading believers to victory over sin.
- The divine command to utterly destroy these nations is typified as the radical mortification of sin.
 - It teaches that believers cannot compromise or make peace with secret vices; compromise leads to spiritual downfall.

"To him which smote great kings:...

And slew famous kings:...

Sihon king of the Amorites:...

And Og the king of Bashan:...

And gave their land for an heritage:...

Even an heritage unto Israel his servant:...

for his mercy endureth for ever."

- **Then we have the final summing up:**

"Who remembered us in our low estate:...

And hath redeemed us from our enemies:...

Who giveth food to all flesh....

O give thanks unto the God of heaven:

for his mercy endureth for ever."

- This is why we should worship God, because He doesn't forget us, leaving us in the misery of our low state and condition, but remembers us, as it were.
- Do you understand that without reconciliation with God we are in a low estate, grubbing about on the earth.
- Some men call themselves stars, but they are really dust of the earth!
- He saves us by
 - buying us back from slavery (He paid the price- purchased by His blood)
 - And He feeds
 - our starving souls.
 - This is Redemption and Provision.
- Do you feel enslaved by your own sins and appetites sometimes?
- Are you aware that what this world tries to feed you with doesn't satisfy your everlasting soul?
 - Well, look to your Deliverer, pictured by Moses and Joshua, but far greater than these mere men.
 - Repent of your sins and look to Christ, like coming out of Egypt.
 - He won the battle over the world, the flesh and the Devil, so you may cross *your* spiritual river, baring the way to a new victorious life.
 - Don't look back at the old life of bondage, look forward to the promised land
 - even heaven, where there is no night, but glorious day, and God is our Sun.
 - Then you'll give thanks to the God of heaven because His mercy endureth forever,
 - That righteous wrath of judgement upon sin is mercifully held back, because the punishment was taken by the Lord of lords
 - He paid with His life so that those who are found by Him might go free in redemption.
 - Call out in prayer so He might hear and come for you.
 - And once He finds you, He'll always keep you secure.
 - You can never lose such a salvation as this.
 - And there is no other way of salvation because I didn't mention in verse 4

"To him who alone doeth [these] great wonders"

- I hope you've seen wonderful things today in this psalm, and you'll apply them to your own souls.