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Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- March 7, 2023

That the Lord be with you.

Hey. How about some good news? Would you like some? Well, I've got good news for you. You did nothing to make God love you, and you can't do anything to make him stop. That's the clear message of a Psalm I'm looking at today and that I wanna pass on to you. This is a psalm that in Jesus day was a favorite, one that they often sang. We don't talk about this so much today, and I think that's because it is so repetitive that is... It just keeps saying the same thing over and over again. It keeps on saying, The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.

No matter what you've done, no matter what you have gotten yourself into, the steadfast love of the Lord for you endures forever.

Today, I'm looking at Psalm 136, and I'm going to read just the first few verses, and I think that'll give you a feel of what the psalm is about. Beginning in verse one. Oh, give thanks. You can feel the intensity, Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good for His steadfast love endures forever. Oh give thanks to the God of gods, for His steadfast love endures forever. Oh, give thanks to the lord of lords, for His steadfast love endures forever. Who alone does great wonders for His steadfast love endures forever. How... You probably know what the next line is going to be, don't you? For His steadfast love endures, to reiterate, and it goes on like that for 26 verses, repeating again and again, his steadfast love endures forever.

Just to give you an idea of how important this Psalm was in Jesus day, it was sung every Sabbath, every Hanukkah, every Passover. It was a song that Jesus and his disciples saying at the conclusion of the last supper as it was a part of Passover, it was sung by families around the dinner table, it was sung at the dedication of Solomon's temple, at the dedication of the second temple after the exile. In fact, 2 Chronicles 5:13 says that it was the duty, it was the duty of singers and trumpeters in the temple to raise the song, his step as love endures forever.

It seems that God wants these words embedded in the lives of His people, that His love for you and me, it never stops, it never runs out, it is a forever kind of love, and God wants us consumed with his love. Now I don't know about you, but there's certainly been times in my life when I was afraid that I might have exhausted God's love, but no, His steadfast love in endures forever.

Now, if we took the time to look at all 26 of these verses, we would see that they are praising God for mighty acts on behalf of those people, these mighty acts demonstrate His steadfast love,



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that our God does these great works from the beginning of creation, all the way through to the climax of redemption, and all the way through where you're seeing that God's steadfast love endures forever. That God's love for you is indestructible.

Here's how Paul puts it in Romans 8, nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus. Nothing. Now, I wanna take just a moment to look at these two words, steadfast love... As these two words translate, the Hebrew word hesed, that's H-E-S-E-D. Now I was raised on the King James, that translates hesed as mercy. It said that his mercy endures forever. Other translations, the render hesed with words like loving kindness, faithful love, loyal love, covenant love.

Now, when you get these different translations of one Hebrew word, that tells you that we do not have an English word, they can get its arms around, it can encompass the rich meaning of hesed. In Bible times, hesed has to do with making and keeping a covenant. So when two parties enter into covenant, they swear hesed to each other, that is, they make vows to be faithful, to be steadfast, to be loyal to the other unconditionally, that's hesed. It's much like a marriage today that is based on a covenant, covenant vows to be faithful to the other... Come what may. In sickness and in health, in plenty and in want. I will be there for you. That's the idea of hesed, it's steadfast, faithful forever loyal.

Now note that a covenant. Unlike a contract, a covenant is unconditional. That is, I will keep my part of the agreement regardless of what you do or don't do. Contract on the other hand, is conditional, that is, you do your part and I'll do mine, and if you don't do your part, hey, I'm calling my attorney.

Thank God that He did not enter into a contract with us that would be conditional on our performance, but God entered into covenant, and he swore to forever be faithful to us. So you can get a feel for what it means, and that God is saying unconditionally, he is pledging. I will be faithful to you, I will always be here for you. Robert Davidson, in his commentary on Psalms, he describes hesed like this hesed speaks of a divine commitment and loving concern, which remains un- changing in the face of all human frailty and fickle-ness.

Hey, the good news of the Bible is that God has entered covenant with you and me, a covenant that is unconditional, by which God pledges to always be faithful to us. This is what Paul was talking about in 2 Timothy 2, verse 13, where he says, If we are faithless, God remains faithful for He cannot deny himself. That's hesed, God's steadfast love that endures forever.

People make promises and break them all the time, but not God, God never gives up, God never breaks His promise. And that's what this song, Psalm 136 is all about, why it is constantly repeated. That steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.

That's why I began today with good news. You did nothing to make God love you, and you can't do anything to make God stop. Now, I'll wrap up today. Where Psalm 136 begin and where it



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ends... Oh, give thanks to the Lord for His steadfast love endures forever. That is something to give thanks for isn't it?

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler on the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening. Until next time.