

The Lord is gracious ... Part 1 (Quality very good)

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Preacher: Delves, Stanley (1897-1978)

[0 : 0 0] as the Lord may help me I will speak from the 145th Psalm the 8th verse the Lord is gracious and full of compassion slow to anger and of great mercy the 145th Psalm the 8th verse the Lord is gracious and full of compassion slow to anger and of great mercy this Psalm is entitled David's Selm of Praise we don't regard the headings and titles of the Selm as having any inspiration they were subsequently added to the Selms but still they are sometimes worth just noticing this is David's Selm of Praise it is throughout praise there is not in this Selm any expression of prayer or supplication but holy but holy of praise and thanksgiving and the reasons why David felt so led out to honour the Lord all David's Selms were not Selms of praise

David was a man and the Lord our very varied experience in these matters he comes to the mind that one Selm I cannot remember which is headed a prayer of the afflicted when he poureth out his complaint before God David knew what those feelings were when his spirit was burdened distressed and the only ease he could feel was to pour out the burden of it for that's what it meant not complaining in a rebellious sense but in a burdened sense before the Lord but it wasn't always like that there were times when David was favoured so to feel the goodness and graciousness and mercy of the Lord upon his soul that he couldn't but praise him and he would call on others to praise him too oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men my friends it is good when we are able to praise him with feelings of thankfulness and gratitude in our souls it is good it is good to sing praises unto the Lord and praises comely nothing becomes a child of God more than to show forth the praises of him who has called him out of darkness into his marvellous light it is good to do that it is not only that it is incumbent upon the people of God so to do but it is good it is uplifting in a right way there are some ways in which we need to be kept from being uplifted but to feel the uplifting influence of the Lord's praises in our heart well that is a good feeling it is uplifting it is enlarging too much dwelling upon ourselves tends to make us self-centered and self-centering is a contracting of the heart within itself but the Lord's praises enlarge our hearts because we have in them a sense of his goodness and favour and that does indeed cause our hearts to expand and mind you this this is not only so good in itself so good to feel but it is so acceptable in his sight the Lord loves the praises of his people it might seem to us sometimes if we look at it in that way that nothing that we could bring forth could really be anything in his sight he is so great so high above all gods he is so infinite he is so majestic he is so supreme and we are such worthless worms such insignificant creatures that nothing that we could bring forth would really be anything in his sight who is so great but we are otherwise instructed in the scriptures although the Lord hath no need of our praises angelic praises

far exceed our poor tributes and the praises of the spirits of just men who are gathered to his glory they far exceed our praises far exceed them I mean exceed them in fervency in purity in fullness of feeling and love but the Lord does love the praises of his people in this world though that they are so poor comparatively and so far beneath what he is worthy of he disdains them not it is something in his sight whether his people seek to honour him or whether they disregard that whether they show forth his praises or more or less ignore that and confine themselves to their own matters and their own needs and the like he loveth praise and remember this that this is one end why the Lord has a people in the world at all that he should have praises even in the midst of this sinful and fallen creation that the creator shall not be utterly destitute of a people in the world to glorify his name this people have I formed for myself and they shall show forth my praise he has a people that he forms for himself to this end that they shall show forth his praise and you may know whether the

Lord is forming you that way because if he forms you to show forth his praise his praise will be good to your soul you will find that in you that goes that way desires it loves it seeks it for what the Lord forms his people for he makes that good and desirable in their souls and when you further consider this that this is all we can render to him for his infinite goodness and grace and mercy and forbearance towards us all we can render is to praise him for it we can return nothing by way of merit or deservedness the best returns for one like me so wretched and so poor is as the

Sel mist says to take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord and seeking to impress the subject a little on the mind of the friends I will add this that the high praises of the Lord are one end for which he has appointed the assemblies of his people that they should gather together in his name it's not the only end but it is not the least end it is one of the most important enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise be thankful unto him and bless his name the Lord's praises are not confined to the assemblies of his people wherever we feel our hearts affected by his goodness there's a response of thankfulness but there's something in the public assembly of those that fear the Lord and they're joining together in his praises in singing his praises that really is conducive to that end the united feelings of the

[10 : 28] Lord's people as they are expressed in their public worship we've entered into his courts once more within the Lord's gates we've entered into the gates of Zion we've come before him this day the Lord grant that we may feel the spirit of that word enter into his courts with thanksgiving and into his gates and into his gates with praise he is most worthy of it he is worthy to be praised only he is really worthy to be praised there is everything in him that calls for adoration for admiration for love for thanksgiving for to praise the Lord is to ascribe honor and glory to his great name with feelings of affection thankfulness and spiritual devotion in our souls

I suppose that is as near as a child of God can get in his feelings in this time state to the heavenly state because heaven is full of praise their unceasing honor arises to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit heaven is unceasing praises to the Lord well now it is good if we can feel some responsiveness to that in our hearts below if the first notes of heaven's praise sound in our souls now ER but it might be said this is not all that easy to us to feel devotion it is impossible to feel it without certain essential things are granted to us there are three things most essential to enter into the spirit of this psalm of praise there must first and this is the root of everything that's spiritual in us there must be spiritual life in our souls the living the living they shall praise thee as I do this day

I know of course that in that word some regard is paid to the recovery of Hezekiah's life from impending death he meant I know that his life was spared to praise the Lord but still if there's no spiritual life in the soul all that can be offered to the Lord can only be in a formal and more or less fleshly manner but spiritual life in the soul is essential the exercise of spiritual life in the soul is always ultimately towards the God who imparted it spiritual life in the soul is always Godward in its exercises and its desires and its feelings it never gravitates to this world nor the things of it it always arises to God and the things of God and it rises to God in two ways in a way of prayer and supplication in a way of praise and thanksgiving prayer and supplication is the expression of need want desire burden often repentance and the like it arises spiritual life being in our souls from something needed but praise arises in our heart from what the Lord is in himself and what he has shown himself to be in a way of grace to us

I must not stay longer only I will add this that as well as spiritual life we do need the Holy Spirit to animate that life with his quickening influences spiritual life and grace in the soul where it is imparted is not self-operative we always feel to need if we have experience of these things we always feel to need an enlivening influence to make us feel lively spiritually if that enlivening influence is withholden we get very dull and very low and very flat as much so as it may seem sometimes to raise a question whether there really can be spiritual life in our hearts at all but the Holy Spirit revives the life he first gives his influences are animating whenever we can feel anything in spiritual ways or any feeling of the Lord's goodness and grace upon our soul that's the Holy Spirit that's his influence in the word upon our hearts and we need him to give us understanding sing ye praises with understanding if there's no understanding our praises are more formal or or misdirected than acceptable than acceptable if we praise his name we need to understand what his name really means that we should praise it now this is David's psalm of praise every day will I bless thee and I will praise thy name forever and ever

I must come just to make a remark upon this that it is the name of the Lord that the psalmist felt his spirit so enlarged to praise I will praise the name thy name forever and ever the psalmist saw with his understanding enlightened that in the Lord's name that attracted the devotion of his soul and he felt the Lord's name to be truly precious to him at that time what is the Lord's name it is the Lord's name that is to be praised from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised the Lord's name means the revelation the declaration to us of his very nature the Lord's name is the declaration of his nature he is what his name declares him to be his name is the declaration of his nature all the perfections of his nature are combined in his name his name expresses the perfections of his nature now I know

[19 : 25] I'm touching something very deep at this point but it lies at the very heart of the subject the name of the Lord the name of the Lord means then the perfections of his nature his wisdom his grace his love his compassion his mercy his truth all these divine perfections are expressed in his name and that's why it is his name is to be honored and praised what a declaration of the Lord's name he gave to Moses the Lord proclaimed his name saying the Lord God merciful and gracious long suffering and abundant in mercy and truth and that will by no means clear the guilty it will seem as though surely that brought a discordant note into the declaration of the

Lord's name that he is gracious long suffering abundant in mercy and truth that's beautiful but then and will by no means clear the guilty it will seem as though that was a discordant note in the Lord's gracious name well we may understand this from the introduction of that word into the Lord's declaration of his name that is graciousness his long suffering his abundance in mercy abundance in mercy is not to be taken advantage of to sin there's nothing in the name of the Lord that permits anyone to sin that his grace may abound but of course we understand that in the gospel light that the

Lord will by no means clear the guilty because of his just character but the guilty are cleared because the Lord Jesus Christ having borne the sins of all who are pardoned and ever will be pardoned in his own body on the tree has made full and complete atonement for them Calvary teaches us that God will by no means clear the guilty or Jesus Christ wouldn't have suffered there but that he did suffer there shows that God is so gracious so long suffering and so abundant in mercy and truth it is the perfect blending of divine perfections that make the name of the Lord so beautiful and so glorious if I may bring this into the subject what an illustration of this that beautiful phenomenon of nature the rainbow is it's a scriptural symbol and I saw a rainbow round about the throne

John said in Revelation the rainbow shows a variety of colors beautifully blended together in this way that the bow does not present to the eye just one color but varied colors but those varied colors are not seen distinct one from another but blending one into the other it's the blending of the various colors in the rainbow without confusion so that they can be distinguished as being different colors but not separated one from the other that causes that phenomenon in nature to present such a beautiful appearance to the eye if all the colors of the rainbow could be seen distinctly and separately the effect would not be the same if they were so blended that there could be no difference of color observable then the effect would not be the same my friends the glory of the name of the

Lord is that every perfection is blended without confusion and yet every perfection bears its own glorious characteristics the name of the Lord is his glorious perfections all blended together and all blended into one eternal inexpressible and glorious holiness holy holy holy lord god almighty but now here is something more affords dr.

[25 : 31] watts says all our powers to bow and sing his endless grandeur and his grace than for me to discourse further upon the name of the Lord how are we to know his name they that know thy name will put their trust in thee there are two ways in which the name of the Lord is known made known to us first in the holy scriptures consider my friends if it were not for the sacred scriptures we should know nothing of the nature of the Lord and therefore nothing of his name the being of God would be an impenetrable mystery to us if it were not for the scriptures it could be known from creation that there must have been a creator the invisible things of him from the foundation of the world are clearly known being known by the things revealed being known by the things which are made even his eternal power and

Godhead so that men are without excuse for their ignoring the being of God but then what could have been known of his name it could be known by the things that are made that there's a supreme being a God who must be almighty infinite in power and wisdom to give being to the whole universe and creation but what would be his nature we should never know we should never have known that he was a God of grace compassion mercy tenderness and love by anything we could learn from creation for God in the scriptures has condescended to instruct us as to his nature and secondly the name of the

Lord is revealed to us in a person as well as in the scriptures revealed to us in Jesus Christ God has said concerning him my name is in him this is very beautiful the name of God the invisible immortal eternal God is made known to us in the person of Jesus Christ in our nature not in the person of Jesus Christ in his eternal divinity for that again would be an impenetrable mystery but in our nature Jesus Christ came down into this world amongst other wonderful purposes of God to declare the father look my friends what

Jesus Christ was in his spirit that God is in his nature what Jesus Christ is and what was and still is that God is and God in the person of his son has all his wondrous works out done that's a beautiful word of Dr.

Watts Jesus in whom the God heads raised beamed forth with milder majesty was Jesus Christ gracious that was the graciousness of God was Jesus Christ full of compassion he was he was moved with compassion that was the compassion of God in Jesus Christ was he of great mercy was he merciful that was the mercy of God in Jesus Christ but there's another point I want to emphasize it is only in Jesus Christ that the graciousness of God his goodness his mercy his compassion could ever come to us poor sinners only through

[30 : 42] Jesus Christ the fountain is in God the fountain of graciousness and mercy and compassion is in God but to us it could never flow down but through one channel and that is the person and redeeming work of Jesus Christ Christ it was Jesus our friend when he hung on the tree that opened the channel of mercy for me and if I may carefully add this that the graciousness the compassion the great mercy of God coming to us through Jesus Christ and through the merit of his atoning sacrifice and precious blood and it can only come that way is all the sweeter because it comes that way it is as though the streams of God's grace and mercy and compassion flowing to sinners through his precious son and the precious blood of his son gathers into it of the preciousness of the channel through which it flows and brings that with it into our hearts the commencing hymn this afternoon I felt was so good it seemed to give me just the start that I was feeling to need just a touch to send my feelings moving thy mercy my God is the theme of my song the joy of my heart and the boast of my tongue and as it goes along it set out just the path of my mind it was Jesus my friend when he hung on the tree to open the channel of mercy for me mercy is sweet but mercy coming through that precious person is sweeter still pardon is sweet to feel to a burdened soul but pardon through that precious blood is sweeter still this is the name of the

Lord his divine perfections blended revealed in his dear son and shining towards us poor sinners in our needy low and lost condition in so sweet a way and blessed is the man that knows this joyful sound who feels that this gospel is something heavenly to his soul and who feeling it can walk in the light of the Lord's countenance and feel his spirit exalted in his name the Lord is gracious and full of compassion slow to anger and of great mercy here are not all but some of those divine perfections so blended grace is grace compassion is compassion forbearance is forbearance mercy is mercy there's some distinction here but it's such gracious compassion it's such compassionate forbearance it's such forbearance blended with mercy that's the theme

I've come to it towards the end of the time for me to speak this afternoon it was on my mind if I should be so directed and enabled to speak of my text in two ways first in a way of consideration that is if I might be helped to consider the truth and meaning of these expressions of the Lord's name and then secondly it is on my mind to draw some inferences from this consideration which I hope might be profitable with the Lord's blessing to bring the subject somewhat to bear upon our hearts in a way of application but I've only a few minutes to speak to you now this afternoon the

Lord is gracious he is that his very nature is of a gracious nature I don't know that it's easy for me to define the graciousness of God's nature I don't know there's any need for me to do because all who have any understanding and feeling in the things that God know something of what that term gracious means we might certainly say on the negative side that it means that the Lord is not hard he is not implacable he is not of that nature that once offended will never on any account forgive he is kind and tender gracious he is full of grace all that grace is and I hope we know something not only in regard of terminology but something with regard to experience and feeling

[37 : 41] I hope we understand something of what grace is we know it's most suitable to us and nothing so suitable that it meets our need enters into our condition is a means of much blessing to us grace well he is that God is that in his nature he is gracious and you see my brethren nothing can ever alter the nature of God nothing can ever alter the nature of God the very work redeeming work atoning work of Jesus Christ could never alter the nature of God it is exactly as the verse puts it it's the revelation of his nature it's the channel through which his grace and mercy flows it never alter the nature of God

Jesus Christ never died to make God gracious but because he is gracious and that he might be he never died to make God merciful but that God might show mercy justly upon that ground and through that person he never died to make God full of compassion he died that streams of compassion should flow from that fullness into our poor needy hearts he is gracious and it's good to consider of our God as being of that nature gracious but if the nature and being of God is so profound that we cannot by searching find out that great depth of mystery we may say this that his ways show how gracious he is towards his people you think of the whole blessed purpose and plan of salvation doesn't it show how gracious he is it was grace that first inspired the plan first move first form the plan of salvation salvation by grace you are saved in the purpose of God before we ever came into this world at all to have our being in it grace first contrived the way to save rebellious man and the nature of the plan of salvation is all on the same principle of grace anything in the way of desert or merit or worthiness doesn't enter into it it's all of grace and grace all that work shall crown to everlasting days it lays in heaven the top most stone and well deserves the praise and so it is written in the prophecy of

Zechariah that his hands shall lay the foundation of this spiritual building and temple and his hands shall finish it and they shall bring forth the top stone saying grace grace unto it you see it's all grace beginning to end in plan and purpose in foundation and structure in top stone and glory it's grace grace to it the Lord is very gracious in his ways and dealings with his redeemed and chosen people he chose them in grace he gave them to his dear son in grace and he deals with them in grace beginning to end are they called they're called by his grace it's the operation of his grace upon their hearts through the word making the word effectual that it is the means of their ever being called from darkness to light and from the kingdom of Satan unto God at all it's a gracious calling and does he humble their proud rebellious spirits and bring them to repentance that's grace that's the influence and power and operation of grace subduing their natural state of mind and heart and bringing them down into that true humbled repentance that is so essential well all the operations of God upon the hearts of his redeemed people say the same he must be gracious to them to deal with them like that if he guide them it's such gracious teaching correction if he correct them it's such gracious correction never hard never vindictive it's such gracious correction if he supports them oh how they need it especially in times of a special distress and weakness or sorrow its grace sustains them my grace is sufficient for thee if he sanctifies them and he does because without holiness no man shall see the Lord it's his grace that sanctifies them and happy truly is that man that can trace

God's graciousness in his own experience and looking back and say in some measure as good old Jacob said after all his bad ways and wanderings and the like the Lord hath dealt graciously with me what a simple tender God honoring tribute the Lord hath dealt graciously with me and why because he is gracious you see because he is gracious for God could never deal with anyone otherwise than what he is in himself his purposes in salvation and his personal dealings with his people all show that the Lord is gracious and because he is so gracious he is so worthy to be praised the Lord is gracious and full of compassion slow to anger and of great mercy if I could be helped to honor and to exalt his name

I would be thankful and you would be thankful you are spiritual you would be thankful to hear his name exalted no one has ever spoken too highly of his great name exalted his grace shown forth his mercy sought to honor him too highly too fervently for your feelings you would say indeed not may his name be honored and glorified now I must leave it there this afternoon and the Lord helping resume again in the evening may the Lord add his blessing I'll just mention that the collections will be for the support of this cause of truth him 202

[46 : 45] John O's will number 201 now may the Lord reveal his face and teach our Samaritan tongues to make his sovereign reign in grace the subject of our songs 202 now may be country THE membership what Spain Glove tone Places ear hear do harm recruitment hj % Him says Saud The Holy Graving Way That's not yet all our songs

Now scream our love Yet early life That children have to sing For those who pray The glorious reign Of our rich love and king They change through love And dreams of change To know the heart of God

And all the broken world begins In the death of God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God

The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God And the holy God The holy God The holy God The holy God May the holy God The holy God May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ May the love of God The holy God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.