

## **Psalm 107—The Steadfast Love of the Lord**

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### **I. Introduction**

- a. What causes a person to consider something?
  - i. If you get one of those telemarketer calls they are attempting to make you consider a purchase.
  - ii. You weren't thinking about it, that person who called hopes to put the idea in your mind.
- b. There are other reasons why we consider things.
  - i. We have kids going to college so you naturally start considering where that might be.
  - ii. If your bank continues to make small mistakes, you consider changing before they make a big mistake.
  - iii. Your primary car is back in the shop and you wonder how many more of these repairs can you endure so you consider buying a different car.
  - iv. You get the picture.
- c. So if you are in the military called to active duty, those first few weeks are sort of dangerous because you do not know what to expect. However you are on high alert.
  - i. You begin to learn the system and you are able to do your job.
  - ii. However, there's another dangerous portion and that comes during those last few weeks before coming home.
  - iii. You become complacent and unaware. Your mind is somewhere else, understandably but very dangerous.
- d. We've just finished the book of Hebrews and it should have left us with a real sense of awareness.
  - i. Where are you in your journey with Christ? Are you drifting? Disobedient? Foolish? Have no hunger for God?
  - ii. Or are you growing and trusting and enduring in the power of the Holy Spirit?
  - iii. Is it dangerous to drift? Absolutely.
- e. This morning, we will explore four—call them stories or illustrations—of God's steadfast love.
  - i. It might surprise you HOW God's steadfast love actually works itself out in real life.
  - ii. This Psalm is meant for you to consider the steadfast love of God. Will you do that with me?
  - iii. Your response will determine whether you are considering the steadfast love of the Lord or you think he has given up on you.

### **II. Main Point**

- a. The main point is the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever!

### **III. Outline**

- a. The call to worship because of who God is
- b. 4 stories of the steadfast love of God
- c. The gospel reversal

d. Pay attention to the steadfast love of the Lord

#### IV. Exposition

a. The psalmist commands us to give thanks and tells us why.

- i. Ever since the beginning, human beings have doubted God's love for them. We doubt God's love by looking for love in all the wrong places. Our hearts are idol factories. It cannot be satisfied with anything.
- ii. We do not know what is good for us. Most parents see this on a daily basis. Our kids think they know what is best for them. Many days they would settle for being the dumbest person on earth just to go play. If we let them have their way every time then we would be on vacation 24/7 365 days a year. Kids do not know what is best for them. They must be taught and sometimes persuaded. Other times (though rarely) we say you are just simply going to have to trust that we love you and want the very best for you.
- iii. Furthermore, I don't know what's best for me either. The stories we are about to encounter prove that. But God knows what we need and the very best thing he can give us is himself.
- iv. Indeed, our hearts will never be satisfied until they are satisfied in God through Jesus Christ by faith.
- v. That's why the bible says...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt. 6:21).

b. As we dig into this psalm, the larger context of the Psalms gives us some clues on how to understand it.

- i. Back in Psalm 104:30, it ends by describing how the Lord will renew the world.
- ii. The covenant with Abraham is celebrated in Psalm 105 as it readies us to see the new exodus where God rescues people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation. Indeed, God promises to bless the nations through a son of Abraham, who we know is Jesus.
- iii. But even more details come from 106 where it ends by asking in verse 47—Psalm 106:47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.

1. That's exactly what happens in Psalm 107.

iv. The psalmist gives reasons why the redeemed should give thanks TO the Lord.

1. Because he is good
2. Because his steadfast love endures forever
3. Because he has redeemed us from trouble
4. Because he has gathered us from all our wanderings

v. Isn't it odd how we worship things that aren't good? Strangely we love things that continually disappoint us.

vi. But for the redeemed, those who have been delivered from the chains of sin and the darkness, we are keenly aware that we do not deserve God's grace. Therefore we give him praise. We can't pay him back. We are humbled before him and all we can do is give him the glory.

vii. Our lives should be marked by continually giving the credit to God for everything. Our lives should reflect that we are people who never want to live our lives in such a way that dishonors the One who redeemed us.

- c. Now. We've heard the call to worship for the redeemed. But maybe you are not convinced. Maybe you need to see some redemption stories to know if God really does continue to love even when we mess up. What follows in this psalm are four stories of grace. In fact, this is the steadfast love of the Lord on display for you to see.
  - i. If you will, notice that all four examples begin the same way. v. 4 some, v. 10 some, v. 17 some, and v. 23 some.
  - ii. Who are they? They are those gathered in from the lands there in verse 3 that came from the four corners of the earth. God has sought his people with his steadfast love.
  - iii. Indeed, he is the good Shepherd.
  - iv. They are also those he has redeemed from trouble.
  - v. Each story has a similar pattern. They find themselves in trouble. They cry out to the Lord and he delivers them which results in praise to God for his steadfast love.
- d. The first story must be understood as wandering exiles. As you know, God saved his people from Egypt and gave them the land of promise. To keep the land of inheritance, the people of God had to obey the covenant.
  - i. Another way to say steadfast love is to say covenant love. God had made promises to Israel and bound himself to them by way of a covenant. However, they continually did not hold up their end of the deal.
  - ii. Over and over they broke God's law. He would warn them by sending the prophets saying, "If you do not repent you will be kicked out of the land."
    - 1. As you know, they were dragged off to other lands. They were strangers in a foreign land.
    - 2. Those whom God sent to take them into exile, made Jerusalem into a desolate place.
      - a. One of those reversals we will talk about at the end.
    - 3. The exile was meant to turn their hearts back to God. For some, it did that very thing. For others, they wandered on.
      - a. Spurgeon comments, "Solitude is a great intensifier of misery. The loneliness of a desert has a most depressing influence upon the man who is lost in the boundless waste. The traveller's way in the wilderness is a waste way, and when he leaves even that poor, barren trail, to get utterly beyond the path of man, he is in a wretched plight indeed. A soul without sympathy is on the borders of hell: a solitary way is the way of despair."
  - iii. This first story is that of wandering exiles looking for a city. As they wander in desert wastes, they find no city to dwell in. Hunger and thirst set in which causes their souls to faint.
    - 1. Spurgeon said of this hunger, "If hunger brings us to our knees it is more useful to us than feasting; if thirst drives us to the fountain it is better than the deepest draughts of worldly joys; and if fainting leads to crying it is better than the strength of the mighty."
  - i. Their hunger led them back to the Lord. What a blessing!
    - a. Take note of this Proverb: Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, <sup>9</sup> lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God. (Prov. 30:8-9)

- ii. Hunger made the soul hunger for God. That's what fasting is supposed to do. Indeed, in this story of grace, it does so for some. In verse 6, they cry out to the Lord and he delivers.
- iii. Take note that God met their needs in his deliverance. They wandered their own crooked path. But He led them straight. They were longing for a city and he led them to a city to dwell in.
- iv. Then they praise him for the deliverance. Amazingly, though their soul had fainted in verse 9 it says that God satisfies the longing soul, the hungry soul. They were empty of food and water and he fills with good things. He continued to love them.
- v. The same pattern continues. Verse 10 it says that some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. They were prisoners in affliction and in irons. They were in trouble.
- vi. How did they get there? Verse 11 says they disobeyed God's word and spurned his counsel. What happened when they disregard the Word of God? God humbled them. Notice verse 12, "so he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help." (Ps. 107:12)
  - a. It was good they had none to help. They were left with no option. That is God's steadfast love to turn them back.
- vii. They were not Psalm 1 people. They walked in the counsel of the wicked. But God knew where to find them and how to bring them back. None to help leads them to cry out to the only help left—God himself.
- viii. Notice the deliverance matches their need again. They sat in darkness but he brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death. They were in bonds of iron but God burst their bonds apart.
  - a. Why should they thank God? Because he shattered their prison doors and cut the bars of iron in two.
  - b. That's why we sang, "Long my imprisoned spirit lay Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee.
  - c. Are any of you relating to these stories yet? This doesn't necessarily mean prison. I think these examples or illustrations point to the larger idea of spiritual darkness and imprisoned by sin.
- ix. These stories are about their souls and their salvation. We understand the basic story but they like the parables...They mean to point us to Christ!
- x. Verse 17 tells us that some were fools. It is foolish to do it your own way. Did you see it?
  - a. Some were fools through THEIR sinful ways. Because of their sin they suffered afflictions. Praise God for the afflictions. Where would they be if God continued to let them go their own way?
  - b. Sin makes us stupid. Do you remember the story of Hugh Freeze when he was at Ole Miss years ago? When he got caught he blamed it on the previous administration. Sin made him stupid. He kept digging deeper. We've seen this pattern many times in our own lives. We are blame shifters.
  - c. Sin makes us dissatisfied. They even loathed any kind of food and it lead them to the gates of death.
  - d. With nowhere else to turn they cry out to God and he delivers them from THEIR trouble and THEIR distress.

- xi. How did he heal them? <sup>20</sup> He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. (Ps. 107:20)
  - a. Oh my! What an allusion to John 1 of God sending the WORD. Who is the word? Jesus!!! The Word became flesh to deliver us.
  - b. How were we healed according to Isaiah 53? By his strips, we were healed. That is, Jesus' strips. The WORD healed us!
- xii. What does the deliverance result in? That's right, praises of thanksgiving. Again, we hear the only thing we have to offer the Lord are sacrifices of thanksgiving. Verse 22 commands us to tell of his deeds in songs of joy!
  - a. God did it all!
- i. Now the last example. <sup>23</sup> Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; <sup>24</sup> they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. (Ps. 107:23-24)
- ii. I think this illustrates the normal circumstances of life. They were just drifting along the river of life and didn't notice where they were. The scary thing is they saw the deeds of the Lord and his wondrous works in the deep but they did not seem to affect them in any way. It is dangerous not to praise God when you see his amazing glory. The heart becomes dull then numb.
- i. Yet, the storm causes them to take notice of God.
  - a. <sup>25</sup> For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. <sup>26</sup> They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; <sup>27</sup> they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. (Ps. 107:25-27)
  - b. It seems they were too dependent on their own abilities and not the Lord. He raised the storm to melt THEIR courage, which he calls an evil plight. He brings them to their wits' end.
    - i. If they had been able to manage the storm with their own skills, they would not have considered God's steadfast love.
  - c. Praise the Lord for storms. Derek Kidner comments, "The hurricane shakes us into seeing that in a world of gigantic forces we live by permission, not by good management."
  - d. We lose our fear of God until he flexes his muscle in the heavens. "Sometimes Christ calms the storm. And sometimes he lets the storm rage and calms his child." —Matt Smethurst
- ii. Bringing them to their wits' end leaves them with the only option left—God. that is a display of the steadfast love of God. They cry for help and the Lord delivers from THEIR distress.
- iii. The Lord raises the storms to bring them back and then he calms the storm he raised. <sup>29</sup> He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. (Ps. 107:29)
- iv. What was the result of the calming of the storm? Gladness! <sup>30</sup> Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. (Ps. 107:30)
- v. They are now commanded to thank God for the wondrous works they paid no attention to before. <sup>31</sup> Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! (Ps. 107:31)

c. The Gospel reversal

- i. Verse 33 should remind us of the Garden of Eden. We see the effects of sin as God curses the ground. Essentially, does this... <sup>33</sup> He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, <sup>34</sup> a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants. (Ps. 107:33-34)
  1. The good creation is now under a curse because of sin.
- ii. This is what evil does. If that were the end we would have no hope. Because of the gospel, the reverse can happen by faith in Jesus.
  1. <sup>35</sup> He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. <sup>36</sup> And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; <sup>37</sup> they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. <sup>38</sup> By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish. <sup>39</sup> When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, <sup>40</sup> he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; <sup>41</sup> but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. (Ps. 107:35-41)
  2. Salvation in Christ is described like this in Ephesians 2:1-5 <sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked...<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.
  3. In Colossians 1:13-14 <sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

V. Conclusion

- a. I want to know if you see the steadfast love of the Lord in these stories. <sup>42</sup> The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. <sup>43</sup> Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD. (Ps. 107:42-43).
- b. Has Christ made you alive? Has he transferred you from darkness to light?
- c. Have your sins been forgiven? Did Jesus heal you with his death on the cross?
- d. Pay attention to the wondrous works of the Lord. Give him praise!