

A Psalm of Thanksgiving

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References: **Psalm 107**, 1 Thessalonians 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:1-2; Psalm 106:47-48; Romans 1:21; Deuteronomy 1:2; Hebrews 11:10; Hebrews 11:13-16; Hebrews 13:15

Introduction to Psalm 107

Shall we turn in our Bibles, please, to Psalm 107.

Now, I'm not terribly familiar with the way that the books in the Psalms have been split up, but Psalm 107 is the first of the fifth book of the Psalms, and as such, it has been compared to the book of Deuteronomy, which is the fifth book of Moses. We'll look at Psalm 107, but I'll maybe just give some introductory comments. It's a psalm that largely deals with thankfulness.

In the New Testament, there is a familiar verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

[1 Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV] - in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

However, 2 Timothy 3, verses 1 and 2 says:

[2 Timothy 3:1-2 NKJV] - ¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

And the list goes on.

2 Timothy 3 would indicate that in the last days, people would be unthankful. So, in spite of that verse that we read earlier, "in everything give thanks," men would be unthankful, and unthankfulness would be a characteristic of the last days.

In Canada, we have a holiday called Thanksgiving. Now, I came to Canada not having been familiar with that particular holiday in Europe, and I came as a non-believer, and actually an evolutionist. It is good to have a grateful disposition and to be grateful to your parents and to those around you, but there are many things that we can only give God thanks for. Without acknowledging His presence or even His existence, Thanksgiving can be rather empty and meaningless.

Now, if we turn to Psalm 107, before we read it, just again some further opening comments. Psalm 105, 106, and 107 together sometimes have been called a trilogy. They recount the history of God's dealing with the children of Israel as they came out of Egypt, through the wilderness journey, and into the Promised Land. Each psalm tells the story from a different perspective:

* **Psalm 105** deals with the faithfulness of God and hardly mentions the failure of His people.

* **Psalm 106** is a sad record of the failures, including the many sins, the murmuring, the complaining, and the unbelief that was characteristic of the nation of Israel as it traveled through the wilderness, in spite of God's constant care for them.

* **Psalm 107** is a psalm of thanksgiving for God's wonderful works to the children of men.

Following a brief introduction, there are two main parts:

1. The major part pertains to God's goodness in delivering His people from trouble (verses 4 through 32).
2. The remaining part pertains to God's providential government of Israel and the world (verses 33 to 43).

In the main part of the psalm, verses 4 to 32, there is a pattern of five things: first, trouble is portrayed, whether it is as wanderers, as prisoners, as the sick, or as seafarers.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 107:2-43

[Psalm 107:2-43 NKJV]

- ² Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,
³ And gathered out of the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.

- ⁴ They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way;
They found no city to dwell in.
- ⁵ Hungry and thirsty,
Their soul fainted in them.
- ⁶ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He delivered them out of their distresses.
- ⁷ And He led them forth by the right way,
That they might go to a city for a dwelling place.
- ⁸ Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- ⁹ For He satisfies the longing soul,
And fills the hungry soul with goodness.
- ¹⁰ Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Bound in affliction and irons--
- ¹¹ Because they rebelled against the words of God,
And despised the counsel of the Most High,
- ¹² Therefore He brought down their heart with labor;
They fell down, and there was none to help.
- ¹³ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He saved them out of their distresses.
- ¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
And broke their chains in pieces.
- ¹⁵ Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- ¹⁶ For He has broken the gates of bronze,
And cut the bars of iron in two.
- ¹⁷ Fools, because of their transgression,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.
- ¹⁸ Their soul abhorred all manner of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.
- ¹⁹ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He saved them out of their distresses.
- ²⁰ He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered them from their destructions.
- ²¹ Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!

- ²² Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And declare His works with rejoicing.
- ²³ Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters,
- ²⁴ They see the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
- ²⁵ For He commands and raises the stormy wind,
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.
- ²⁶ They mount up to the heavens,
They go down again to the depths;
Their soul melts because of trouble.
- ²⁷ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.
- ²⁸ Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brings them out of their distresses.
- ²⁹ He calms the storm,
So that its waves are still.
- ³⁰ Then they are glad because they are quiet;
So He guides them to their desired haven.
- ³¹ Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness,
And for His wonderful works to the children of men!
- ³² Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people,
And praise Him in the company of the elders.
- ³³ He turns rivers into a wilderness,
And the watersprings into dry ground;
- ³⁴ A fruitful land into barrenness,
For the wickedness of those who dwell in it.
- ³⁵ He turns a wilderness into pools of water,
And dry land into watersprings.
- ³⁶ There He makes the hungry dwell,
That they may establish a city for a dwelling place,
- ³⁷ And sow fields and plant vineyards,
That they may yield a fruitful harvest.
- ³⁸ He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly;
And He does not let their cattle decrease.

³⁹ When they are diminished and brought low
Through oppression, affliction and sorrow,
⁴⁰ He pours contempt on princes,
And causes them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way;
⁴¹ Yet He sets the poor on high, far from affliction,
And makes their families like a flock.
⁴² The righteous see it and rejoice,
And all iniquity stops its mouth.
⁴³ Whoever is wise will observe these things,
And they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

And I trust the Lord will bless the reading of His Word. Amen.

The Goodness and Mercy of God

Now, the way that verse 1 starts out:

[Psalm 107:1 NKJV]
Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!
For His mercy endures forever.

It's actually a very fitting sequel to the previous verse from Psalm 106, which says in verse 48:

[Psalm 106:48 NKJV]
Blessed be the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD!

It actually continues in that wonderful theme. It says, "O give thanks unto the Lord." And what is the reason? Well, what does verse 1 say? **He is good.** God is good, and His mercy endures forever.

Now, the word mercy is a word that is often translated as "lovingkindness"—the Hebrew *chesed*. And it endures forever. Why? Because love is not just something that God does, but it's actually what God **is**. The Scripture says, "God is love." God so loved the world, yes, but it's the fact that He loved the world because God is love. God is eternal, and forever lasts a very long time; it actually never stops because God does not change. Some people think that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God in the New Testament, but actually, the Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He says, "I change not."

"In everything give thanks," because sometimes things don't work according to our plan, but God is still in control. God is able to use even our failures for His glory. God is good, and that is His consistent nature. He doesn't change whether things work out or whether they apparently don't work out in our lives. God is still good.

It's easier to forget God when everything goes well and smoothly. But when we get in trouble—as these sailors were in the last of these four sections—they call out to God. When there are other troubles in our lives, it often reminds us that we need God. We need God when things are going well, and we need God when things are not going well.

Let the Redeemed Say So

Verse 2 says: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy."

The word redeemed, according to Webster, is to pay off or to deliver. We were in the slavery of sin, but God has paid off our debt for us, having paid the price for our sins with the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died in our place and is now risen and seated at God's right hand.

It's not just enough to know that God has redeemed us and to have a grateful attitude, but it actually says, **"Let the redeemed of the LORD say so."** We actually need to verbalize it and praise the Lord, as we are called to do in the last verse of the previous psalm.

Now, in Romans chapter 1, it states that all people know something about God through His creation in terms of His power and His Godhead. But it follows and says:

[Romans 1:21 NKJV] - because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

The world is full of sadness today because people have lost their way, having rejected God from their thoughts. This is in spite of the fact that we were born with a God-consciousness. I say this as a former atheist—at least having claimed to be an atheist.

Now, verse 3 answers and says: "And gathered them out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south."

Verse 47 in the previous psalm says this:

[Psalm 106:47 NKJV]

Save us, O LORD our God,

And gather us from among the Gentiles,

To give thanks to Your holy name,

To triumph in Your praise.

The prayer was that God would gather from among the nations all the people that had been dispersed. So when it says that He gathered them from the lands of the east, west, north, and south, that is an answer to prayer. I believe that has a future aspect, but it also had a past aspect.

The Fourfold Pattern of Deliverance

Throughout these paragraphs of verses:

1. **Trouble is portrayed:** whether as a wanderer in the wilderness, as a prisoner in a dungeon, as a sick man at the gates of death, or as a mariner in a storm.
2. **Prayer is resorted to:** as a cry to God—"Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble," a repeated phrase.
3. **Divine help is given:** "And He saved them" or "delivered them out of their distresses" (verses 6, 13, 19, and 28).
4. **Praise is called for:** "Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

However, the reality is that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. That's what Romans told us. Even with God's multiple deliverances:

* Israel in the wilderness wandered and complained.

* After Israel was delivered from their captivity, some mounted a rebellion to turn back to Egypt. The bonds had been released, and yet they wanted to go back; they weren't grateful

to God.

* As we see when the ten lepers were healed, nine did not return to the Lord to give thanks.

* Many who have seen the intervention of God in their lives are often known for their foul language and immorality; they often have not thanked God for what He has done.

1. A reason for thankfulness is given:

2. In verse 9: "For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."

God is very, very good, even to the wanderers in the wilderness who were complaining and lacking trust in God.

3. In verse 16: "For He has broken the gates of bronze, and cut the bars of iron in two."

For those in the dungeon, captive as prisoners, to have the gates broken and iron cut in two was great news—God had set them free!

4. In verse 22: "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing." You and I have been called on to give the sacrifice of praise in Hebrews 13:15:

[Hebrews 13:15 NKJV] - Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

- In verse 32: "Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the elders."

There are two instances in which we are called to exalt the Lord: not just privately—it is wonderful to have a private time of worshiping the Lord—but also as we are gathered together, that we collectively might exalt the person of God, that indeed He might be glorified in our midst. We have a privilege like that as we gather to break bread, that we might exalt the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then also in the assembly of the elders: older men and older women also need the encouragement that younger men are coming up, taking on the work of continuing the testimony in the assembly.

Wandering vs. Faith

In verse 4, it uses the word wandered: "They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way."

The word wander really is the word to go astray; it is also the word to stagger like a drunkard. This is not a good word. They wandered aimlessly; they missed their way and persisted in unbelief and mistrust.

A journey which might have been completed in a matter of days—if we look at Deuteronomy 1:2:

[Deuteronomy 1:2 NKJV] - It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea.

That is not a terribly long journey, but it took them forty years of wandering around aimlessly. Yet God showed His faithfulness over those forty years:

- * He provided them manna six days a week, and on the sixth day enough for the seventh day as well.
- * He provided them water.
- * He provided them oil.
- * He kept their clothes and shoes from wearing out.
- * He protected them from their enemies.
- * When they entered into the land, they were given houses they hadn't built and vineyards they hadn't planted.

In verse 4, it also says, "They found no city to dwell in," and as a result, they kept on wandering. This is quite different from Abraham. In Hebrews 11:10:

[Hebrews 11:10 NKJV] - for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

And then it continues in verses 13 through 16:

[Hebrews 11:13-16 NKJV] - ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.

Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Abraham didn't aimlessly wander around because he hadn't found the city; he saw it by faith, trusting God. Even though he had not received the full realization of the promise at the end of his earthly life, he looked for that city and aimed for it. That is very different from those who wandered in the wilderness.

Understanding the Lovingkindness of the Lord

Four times the phrase is repeated: "Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses." It is followed by the refrain: "Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

When God speaks once, we need to pay attention. When God speaks twice, we need to pay close attention—for example, when God says, "Abraham, Abraham!" Abraham had better listen, because he was about to strike his son with the knife, but God stopped him. But when God speaks **four times**, as He does in this psalm, we had better pay very close attention.

Psalms 136 also speaks of the fact that His mercy endures forever. That lovingkindness of God endures forever. Don't miss out on understanding the lovingkindness of God!

God is like a gentleman who doesn't push Himself on us, but who gives us the choice to walk in harmony with Him, even though some reject Him and tumble into foolishness, trying to explain the universe with blinders on to the God who created it and desires fellowship with them.

What is involved in praise? It literally means to give thanks, to offer loud praise, to confess the name of God. Webster defines praise as "to commend the worth." As we praise God, we acknowledge His worth and the wonderful aspects of His character. We glorify God by telling the great things He has done—not only as recorded in Scripture, but also the wonderful works God has done in our own lives.

God allows us to experience great troubles—whether the circumstances of the Israelites wandering through the wilderness, being captives in a dungeon, receiving a prognosis of cancer from a doctor, enduring a storm at sea, or facing financial or marital collapse. In God's lovingkindness, He allows us to experience trouble to bring us back to Himself, so that we will cry out to God, experience His deliverance, and praise the Lord for His goodness.

Verses 33 to 42 reveal that the Lord is able to reverse what is naturally prosperous and instead bless that which is barren, based on righteousness or wickedness.

Finally, verse 43 states: "Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD."

1. **We need to observe:** If we want to be wise, we observe—we give heed and pay attention to God.

2. **We need to understand:** To discern the lovingkindness of the Lord.

We can miss so many things. So often I have prayed and received an answer, yet failed to discern that God actually answered my prayer, failing to give thanks to the Lord. But God wants us to be discerning.

Closing Prayer

You care enough for us as Your little children to hear us when we pray. Father, we want to thank You, Lord, that we can pray that Your kingdom might come, that Your will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Father, we do pray, O Lord, that indeed Your name might be greatly exalted. We pray, O Lord, again for these various ones that we would expect to come during the next week. Father, we pray that the Spirit of God might convict and convince, and that there might be much salvation in many of the children. Father, grant that moms and dads and aunts and uncles and grandparents, too, might hear of the truth of the Word of God—that they might hear of a Savior who loves to seek and to save that which was lost.

Father, we give You thanks tonight as we commit ourselves to You, in the wonderful name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.