

Psalm 107 “Redeemed from Exile!”
Psalm 107
1 Peter 2

September 23, 2018

Today we are starting a series on Book 5 of the Psalms.

The Psalms are not just a random compilation of poems.
They were very carefully put together –
and the order and structure communicates a lot!

The five books are as follows:

Book One is Psalms 1-41

Book Two is Psalms 42-72

These two books focus on the Davidic Kingdom.

They presuppose a situation when the Davidic king
is sitting on the throne.

In Book 3, that all changes!

Psalms 73-89 are songs about the Exile –

a time when there was no Davidic king –

a time when God’s people were scattered and helpless.

Book 3 ends with Psalm 89 –

a Psalm that asks *How long, O LORD? Will you hide yourself forever?*

How long will your wrath burn like fire?...

Where is your steadfast love of old,

which by your faithfulness you swore to David? (89:46, 49)

Book 4 (Psalms 90-106) then reply by *demonstrating* God’s faithfulness.

God is King.

The LORD reigns!

His kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalms 104-106 conclude Book 4

with a series of historical Psalms

that recount the history of God’s people from Creation to the Exile.

Many have noticed that Psalm 107 fits well with this pattern –
as Psalm 107 is all about *return* from Exile.

Just like Psalm 89 (at the end of Book 3),

Psalm 106 (at the end of Book 4)

states the *problem* that still remains:

“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.”

Book 4 recognizes that the *exile isn't over yet* –
we have seen the hand of God in the midst of the exile –
so we *know* that the LORD reigns –
that his rule is over all things.

But we are still waiting...

And so Book 5 begins with Psalm 107 –
a song that answers Psalm 106 –
Psalm 106 ended

“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.”

Psalm 107 begins:

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for his is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble
and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.”

And then the four stories of Psalm 107 all speak of the LORD's deliverance –
and calls the people of God to “thank the LORD for his steadfast love.”

Sing Psalm 107 (stanzas 1-7)

Read 1 Peter 2

Peter identifies *us* as sojourners and exiles.

We are living in the middle of Psalm 107.

Those four stories of Psalm 107 are *our stories* as well.

The mercy and grace of God *to exiles* –

to those who were helpless – to *us* who were helpless!

And the response of gratitude – giving thanks to God,

and offering spiritual sacrifices – acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

And then at the end of 1 Peter 2 –

all of this is applied to Jesus.

Jesus is the innocent sufferer who suffered unjustly –

who endured affliction without reviling – without threatening –

he simply entrusted himself to “him who judges justly”

and bore our sins in his body on the tree.

And by *his wounds* you have been healed.

This is the redemption that Psalm 107 is ultimately talking about.

All other redemptions point to this *one*.

All the redemptions of the OT point forward to Christ.
All the redemptions ever since point backward to Christ.

And so we join with the Psalmist in singing:

Introduction: Give Thanks to the LORD for Redemption! (v1-3)

*Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!*

² *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
whom he has redeemed from trouble^[a]*

³ *and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.*

In Psalm 106, the Exodus was the context for the language of redemption and gathering.

But the prophets had spoken of a new Exodus –
a day when God would restore, redeem, and gather his people from the lands.
Verse 2 speaks of how God has redeemed his people from the hands of their foe –
language that Zechariah – the father of John the Baptist –
will use in his song in Luke 1.

Because while the restoration from Exile brought the Jews back to the land –
it did not restore the Davidic Kingdom –
while it brought back the temple –
it did not bring back the glory of the LORD *in the temple*.

Psalm 107 is giving whole-hearted thanks to God for a *partial* redemption –
a partial deliverance from trouble.

And what we have in Christ is *so much better* than what Psalm 107 had!

But as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13 –
“For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes,
the partial will pass away...
For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.” (13:9-10, 12)

We walk by faith – not by sight.

As Martin Luther once put it,

“This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness,
not health, but healing;
not being but becoming;
not rest but exercise.

We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it.

The process is not finished, but it is going on.

This is not the end, but it is the road.

All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.”

(Luther, Defense of All the Articles)

1. Four Kinds of Exiles That God Redeems (v4-32)

Verses 4-32 provide four examples of how God redeems exiles.

By following the same pattern for all for examples,
the Psalmist shows us both the common features to how God redeems –
but also that constant pattern reveals the differences as well!

The common pattern is this:

Some people have one sort of problem
(and the Psalmist describes their situation).
Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
(and then the Psalmist describes the deliverance).
Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!
(and then the Psalmist describes how and why they should praise God).

As we go through these four stories,

I would encourage you to ask yourself, “Where am I in Psalm 107?”

First, which situation am I in?

Am I the innocent sufferer – wandering in the wilderness?
Am I the rebel who is now sitting in darkness and the shadow of death?
Am I the fool who now suffers affliction because of my sins?
Or am I facing natural disasters – the common wrath of God –
the miseries of this life?
Or maybe a combination of several!

But then as you think about where you are –
remember that there is *one* response:

cry out to the LORD in your trouble!

Lord, have mercy!

Make haste, O LORD, to save us!

Prayer is *always* the right answer!

Last week, when talking about Paul’s exhortation to work hard,
I encouraged young people to *plan* for their future.

But a friend of mine commented that I missed the *most important thing!*

Pray for your future!

You can plan all you want (and planning is good!) –
but *your plans* will only bear fruit

under the wise and sovereign mercies of God!

And then when God delivers you –

give thanks!

Those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb
should always be a grateful, thankful people!

If God has redeemed you from hell,
then the sufferings of this life are properly called,
“light momentary afflictions” (2 Cor 4:17).
Indeed, Paul says that “this light momentary affliction
is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”

Suffering is not incidental to the Christian life.

Suffering – affliction – being conformed to the cross of Christ –
is the path that God has ordained to *prepare for you* an eternal weight of glory.

So let’s think about these four stories:

a. Some Wandered in the Desert: The Innocent Sufferer (v4-9)

i. They Cried to the LORD – He Delivered Them and Gave Them a City

ii. Let Them Thank the LORD – for He Satisfies the Longing Soul

⁴ *Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to a city to dwell in;*

⁵ *hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them.*

I call these the “innocent sufferers” –

not because they are sinless, but because the text finds no fault with them.

If you prefer, you may call them the “helpless sufferers.”

They are lost in a trackless waste –

The problem is not “aimless wandering” –
the problem is that there is no path!

“Finding no way – no path – to a city to dwell in”

“They were lost – with nowhere to go” (Goldingay, 250).

Is that you?

If you had a path – you could walk on it!

But you don’t see any path!

If there was a place to go – you could go there!

But there is no place to go!

Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

When you have nowhere to go – nothing to do –
it is easy to get discouraged!

The hungry soul – the longing soul – of verse 9
includes all sorts of hungers – all sorts of longings.

What do you do when you are hungry?

If your answer is, “Eat!”

Then you are missing the point of the Psalm!

When you are hungry

Pray.

Cry out to God.
That's why Jesus taught us to pray,
 "Give us this day our daily bread" –
 so that we might learn to man does not live by bread alone,
 but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God –
 so that we might learn to trust God
 for a competent portion of the good things of this life
 and enjoy his blessing with them.

⁶ *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

⁷ *He led them by a straight way
till they reached a city to dwell in.*

At the Red Sea, the people of Israel cried out to the LORD.
All through the book of Judges it speaks of how Israel cried out to the LORD
and he delivered them from those who oppressed them.

God has done this over and over again throughout history.
He *hears* when his people cry to him!
He may seem slow to respond sometimes.
 He is not a cosmic genie who does our every bidding!
He is *God* – the Creator and Ruler of all things!

Prayer is not *our way* of manipulating God to get him to do what we want.
Prayer is *his way* of conforming us to his will!
 And in that way, prayer changes us
 and makes us his instruments in bringing redemption to all the earth!

Think about it this way:
 Bad stuff happens.
 We rail against God and live contrary to his word.
 Our words and actions turn us against him and against each other.
 End result – judgment, despair, and death.

Okay, let's try again:
 Bad stuff happens.
 We cry out to God for him to have mercy and deliver us.
 Our words and actions turn *towards him* and towards each other in love.
 End result – blessing, hope, and life.

In that way, *prayer* – crying out to God in *faith* –
 is part of God's means of salvation –
 as we are conformed to his will –
 so that we become his instruments in bringing salvation to the ends of the earth.

And thus (verse 8):

⁸ *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

⁹ *For he satisfies the longing soul,
and the hungry soul he fills with good things.*

I like how one commentator translates verse 9 –

“Because he sated the scurrying person, filled the hungry person with good things.”

Or if you want a more poetic version:

“He satisfies the scurrying soul.”

The idea here is that we are running around –
scurrying after all the things of this life.

And the Psalmist says STOP IT!!

All of your scurrying – all of your longing – cannot bring you rest.

Cry out to the LORD!

He is the one who is able to do wondrous works –
he will be faithful!

And in Jesus Christ, that is what God *has done!*

If you have trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation,
then he has delivered your soul from death.

And so, because God has delivered you –
because he has satisfied your scurrying soul –
give thanks to him!

b. Some Sat in Darkness, Imprisoned for Their Rebellion (v10-16)

i. They Cried to the LORD – He Delivered Them and Set Them Free

ii. Let Them Thank the LORD – for He Breaks the Bars of Iron

Our second story looks at those who have rebelled against the LORD.

These are those who have refused to live the way that God says.

¹⁰ *Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
prisoners in affliction and in irons,*

¹¹ *for they had rebelled against the words of God,
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.*

¹² *So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor;
they fell down, with none to help.*

Maybe this is you.

You know that God says not to live that way.

And yet you have “spurned the counsel of the Most High.”

You have insisted on walking contrary to God’s Word –

and now you find yourself “sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

This is not simply addressed to “worldly people” *out there*.
The whole point of *rebellion* is that it comes from *inside*.
So I’m not talking about rebels “out there.”
I’m talking about rebels *right here*.
I’m talking about *you*.
I’m talking about *me*.

Every time you consciously, willingly sin – this is *you*.

When I refuse to listen to what God says – this is *me*.

And so we sit in darkness and in the shadow of death – prisoners in affliction and in irons –
with none to help!

What shall we do?

There is only one thing that we *can do!*

¹³ *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

¹⁴ *He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
and burst their bonds apart.*

It is *never* too late to cry out to the LORD!
You may feel as though you are chained to your sin –
imprisoned in your patterns and habits of rebellion.

It’s too late for me – I can never change...

You’re right.

You can never change.

If you are shackled with iron –

You cannot break the chains that bind you!

“If only I could set myself free – then I could serve God better!”

But you *cannot* set yourself free!

You have to humble yourself before the LORD!

LORD, help!

O LORD, have mercy!

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me, a sinner!!

And he delivered them from their distress –

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death
HE burst their bonds apart!

¹⁵ *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*
¹⁶ *For he shatters the doors of bronze
and cuts in two the bars of iron.*

And this is what he *has done* in the resurrection of Jesus Christ!
Jesus has shattered the door of bronze –
 he has broken the grip of sin and death in his resurrection from the dead!
And so every time that we wander back and offer ourselves to sin –
 we are putting on the broken handcuffs that Jesus had smashed!
But you are no longer under the dominion of sin and death!
 So cry out to the LORD –
 and *thank the LORD* for his steadfast love –
 for his wondrous works in Jesus Christ!

Our third story is *like* the second – but with a twist:

- c. Some Were Fools and Suffered Because of Their Sin (v17-22)**
 - i. They Cried to the LORD – He Delivered Them and Healed Them**
 - ii. Let Them Thank the LORD – and Tell of His Wondrous Deeds**

¹⁷ *Some were fools through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;*
¹⁸ *they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.*

These people are also suffering because of their sin.
But whereas the previous section focused on rebellion and bondage,
 this section talks about sin and sickness.
Not only are we helpless prisoners in need of deliverance –
 but we are also sick – with a sickness unto death –
 and we are not able to bring healing to ourselves!

We are poor, sick sinners – with no hope except in the mercy of God!

¹⁹ *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*
²⁰ *He sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from their destruction.*

Notice *how* the LORD saves!
 He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.

The Word of the LORD is precisely what the rebels of verse 11 had refused to hear!
 But the very Word that we ignored
 is the Word that brings healing and deliverance.
 Because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The Word that in the beginning spoke all things into existence –
is now the Word that speaks life, and hope, and peace to us!

And so:

²¹ *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

²² *And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!*

Because this *is* what God has done in Jesus Christ!

He has delivered us – by his wondrous works in raising Jesus from the dead!
He has shown his steadfast love – by pouring out his Holy Spirit upon us,
so that we might be joined to the resurrection life of his Son!

And so we should bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God.

In the OT, this meant bringing an animal for sacrifice –
and you and your family and friends
would all partake of the sacrifice together.

In other words, this is talking about a feast!

(and in the OT, the Levite, the poor, the sojourner were all to be included).

So a sacrifice of thanksgiving means that you are not just inwardly thankful –
but that your thankfulness to God
overflows into practical, outward signs of gratitude
that bless others around you!

When you are thankful to God for what he has done –

you should express that gratitude in tangible, practical, outward ways

(and while that can include giving to the church –
don't just think about 501(c)3 ways of giving;

think about how to express your gratitude to God

in all sorts of ways that bless and help those around you –
and *particularly*, those in need!)

And then also we should tell of his deeds in songs of joy!

That's why singing praise to God is such an important part of our life together!

But that singing is not just something we do in church –

it should also be a part of everyday life!

As Paul says, “speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs
with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3)

Paul says that these songs should be so much a part of us –

that they overflow into everyday life!

I suspect that all of us have songs that we can sing or hum in daily life.

How do they get there?

Because you hear them – over and over and over – on your ipod

or from movies, advertisements, and the like.
But this is why God gave us the Psalms.
He gave us these songs so that *they* might sink into our hearts and lives!
But if that is going to happen,
then we need to work hard at getting them into our hearts and lives!
If 90% of the music in our lives is coming from other sources –
then 90% of the music in our hearts is going to be something else!

Our fourth story goes in a different direction –
out to sea!

d. Some Went Down to the Sea in Ships: Natural Disasters (v23-32)
i. They Cried to the LORD – He Delivered Them and Stilled the Storm
ii. Let Them Thank the LORD – and Praise Him in the Assembly

²³ *Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the great waters;*
²⁴ *they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.*
²⁵ *For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.*

This has caused some debate – because the Jews were *never* a sea-going people.
But when you read the prophets –
Isaiah often speaks of the promise of salvation to “the coastlands” –
the peoples of far countries.
And so when Psalm 107 speaks of those who “went down to the sea in ships”
it may well be speaking of the Gentiles.

But certainly if you want to see the wondrous deeds of the LORD in creation –
spend time watching the sea!

Few earthly forces have such power as the mighty oceans!
And few earthly forces are so terrifying as a storm on the high seas!

²⁶ *They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their evil plight;*
²⁷ *they reeled and staggered like drunken men
and were at their wits' end.*

Even a skilled sailor will look like a drunk when he is crossing a ship's deck
in a powerful storm!

But no matter what your situation –
no matter what mighty power you face –
whether hurricane, tornado, earthquake, or other force of nature –
the response must always be the same:

²⁸ *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*
²⁹ *He made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.*
³⁰ *Then they were glad that the waters^[c] were quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.*

The disciples did this when they were on the Sea of Galilee.
They cried out to the Lord – and the Lord Jesus stilled the storm.
Do you trust him?
Are you willing to cry out to him?
Because he is able – and he *will* deliver you from your distress!

Because Jesus is risen from the dead!
And he will deliver you from all your fears and sorrows!

And so:
³¹ *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*
³² *Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

When God delivers you, make sure that you confess him before others!
Praise him in the worshiping assembly –
praise him also in the assembly of the elders.
What is the “assembly of the elders”?
That’s the city gate.
The marketplace.
In an ancient city, the town elders would gather at the city gate
where business would be done – and judgments rendered –
it’s a combination of a marketplace and a courthouse.

Praise him in the public square.
Praise God in your economic and legal communities –
in any place where you can bear witness to the faithfulness of God.

2. A Lesson in Redemption and Vengeance (v33-41)

In verses 33-41, then, the Psalmist describes what is common in all these four situations.
What does God do in bringing redemption to his people?

Well, first, he brings judgment against the wicked:

a. Rivers into Desert: Judgment Against the Wicked (v33-34)

³³ *He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,*
³⁴ *a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the evil of its inhabitants.*

The wages of sin is death.

The fruit of sin is misery.

When humanity does what is evil, the result is misery, destruction and death.

But thanks be to God, that is not the end of the story!

b. Desert into Pools of Water: Blessing to the Hungry (v35-38)

³⁵ *He turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.*
³⁶ *And there he lets the hungry dwell,
and they establish a city to live in;*
³⁷ *they sow fields and plant vineyards
and get a fruitful yield.*
³⁸ *By his blessing they multiply greatly,
and he does not let their livestock diminish.*

God has mercy on the hungry –

he turns the desert into pools of water –

he transforms barren, desolate land into fruitful, bountiful land –

and his blessing prospers them greatly.

You may think of your life as barren and desolate.

But God has a habit of taking barren and desolate lands –

barren and desolate wombs –

barren and desolate people –

and making them fruitful *by his grace!*

Because:

c. The LORD Raises the Needy Out of Affliction (v39-42)

³⁹ *When they are diminished and brought low
through oppression, evil, and sorrow,*
⁴⁰ *he pours contempt on princes
and makes them wander in trackless wastes;*
⁴¹ *but he raises up the needy out of affliction
and makes their families like flocks.*
⁴² *The upright see it and are glad,
and all wickedness shuts its mouth.*

God pours contempt on princes and helps the needy.

Why?

Because princes tend to be the ones oppressing the helpless!

God has mercy *on the needy*.

Who are the needy?

Those who sincerely recognize that they *need* help!

If a prince should recognize that he is truly helpless and in *need* of God's help,
then he would be one of the needy whom God helps!

That's why David often speaks of himself as "poor and needy"!

Because David was one of those rare princes who understood that he was helpless!

But when God raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks,
then all the upright see it and are glad.

And God has raised up Jesus from the dead and seated him in glory –
making his church one great flock – one new family.

Conclusion: Are You Wise? (v43)

⁴³ *Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things;
let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.*

Verse 43 concludes the Psalm with a challenge –
almost with a question.

What are you going to do with this?

Psalm 107 has given us a pattern to consider.

This is God's way of dealing with his people.

But here's the question:

What if my experience does not bear this out?

What if my experience is that the wicked prosper – and the righteous suffer –
and I cry out to God for help – and nothing happens!

Psalm 107 is saying: *you need to take the long-term perspective.*

The wise will not judge by the experience of the moment –

but by considering God's mighty deeds over years and centuries.

After all, Israel had been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years (Psalm 105).

For 400 years – for a dozen generations – every faithful Israelite cried out to God,
and nothing happened.

But then God raised up Moses and delivered his people.

Can you wait 400 years?

Can you teach your children – and your grandchildren –

to be patient and wait – trusting that God *will* do what he promises?

We live in a day where *we have to have it now!*

But that way lies folly...
and madness!

Are you wise?

Can you wait with patience?

Can you cry out to God – with humility?

Trusting him to deliver you – in his time? In his way?

*Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things;
let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.*