

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:
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11/25/07

Psalms 107:1-32 (read vv.1-2, 8) “Oh, That We Would Give Thanks to the Lord”

Intro. This past Thursday we had our Thanksgiving holiday. It is an annual reminder that we should give thanks to the Lord. Did it serve its purpose? Did you spend time giving thanks to God for all His blessings? Or were you focused more on the food, the football game, family, friends, or finding deer in the woods? You may not have *felt* very thankful. In fact, you may have felt like complaining. You may have had the Thanksgiving blues. Perhaps you have suffered sickness this past year. Perhaps you have suffered a job loss. Perhaps you have gone through some other great trial or loss this past year. Perhaps someone was missing from this year's Thanksgiving table. Cheryl's dad was not present this year. This was the third Thanksgiving that my sister was not present due to her untimely death. My mother has not been present for Thanksgiving since 1999. There were others missing from this year's Thanksgiving table.

We could have focused on our losses, trials, and difficulties. Instead, we chose to give thanks to the Lord. I'm thankful that those loved ones are written in the Lamb's book of life. I believe they are enjoying the blessings of heaven. Furthermore, our losses and other trials are opportunities for God to work, as we shall see in our text today.

What about you? Were you thankful this Thanksgiving, or did you complain & gripe? Well I wanted to conclude the Thanksgiving holiday with a call to give thanks to the Lord. Psalm 107 has much to say about giving thanks to God. Keep in mind that the psalms made up the Hebrew song book. They were written to be sung in worship to the Lord. Psalm 107 was a psalm leading worshippers to give thanks unto the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” If you want to please God, and to be in the center of His will, you must have a habit of giving thanks to God. So let us look into this Psalm, and receive instruction about giving thanks to the Lord. Now the first thing I want you to do based on this Psalm is this:

I. HEED THE APPEAL TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

What we have here is an opening call to give thanks to the Lord in v.1, “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Then, the Psalmist gives 4 testimonies or illustrations of the saving work of God. And after each of those testimonies explaining why God is to be thanked, a refrain is given in vv. 8, 15, 21, & 31, “Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!” It is probably true that a choir would sing the refrain each time. Notice that in v.8 we see that a true child of God wants to see people praise the Lord. On the other hand, it grieves us to hear people blame God for their troubles, or take His name in vain.

Another call to give thanks to the Lord is found in v.2, “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so...” It is likely that those words point back to v.1. The word “so” is in italics; it is not in the original Hebrew. So the Psalmist is saying, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say, ‘Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.’” So instead of saying, “Let the

redeemed declare that they are redeemed,” it is, “Let the redeemed give thanks, for He is good.....” Whatever others may think or say, the redeemed should give thanks to the Lord.

Yet another call to give thanks is found in v.22, “Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.” Giving thanks is one sacrifice we should offer to the Lord. You do not have to wait to go to church to give God a sacrifice: that is, the fruit of your lips giving praise to God. Hebrews 13:15 says, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

Application: How often do you give thanks? Every meal is an opportunity to give thanks. But let us give thanks for more than just our food. We should give thanks to the Lord with great regularity. Let us be at all times fervent in giving thanks to the Lord.

Yet some are not very motivated to give thanks to the Lord. They don’t even see much reason to give thanks to the Lord. So the second main point I want to bring out from our text is this:

II. CONSIDER THE REASONS TO GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

In this Psalm we are told just some of the reasons why we should give thanks to the Lord. First of all, we should give thanks:

A. For His Goodness – In v.1 the Psalmist says, “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!” Likewise, the same Hebrew word is used at the end of v.9 where he says that God “fills the hungry soul with goodness.” God is good by nature, and proven to be good in all His acts. We will see many examples of His goodness in just a moment. Furthermore, in vv. 35-38 we see that the Lord provides for our needs.

Oh, let us thank the Lord for His goodness. Isn’t God good? Indeed He is. We should also thank the Lord:

B. For His Loving Kindness – Six times the Psalmist praises the lovingkindness of the Lord. He uses the Hebrew word *cheched*, which refers to lovingkindness, faithfulness, & goodness. It is translated “lovingkindness” only once, in v.43. The word is translated “mercy” in v.1. In fact, the emphasis in Psalm 107 is upon God’s mercy & lovingkindness in spite of man’s sin. It refers to a love that addresses man’s need, not merit. Our sin required that goodness should display itself to us in the form of mercy, and it has done so. Elsewhere it is translated “goodness” in the refrain that is used 4 times in this Psalm (vv.8, 15, 21, 31). What is amazing is that His mercy is not limited to the covenant people, because the Creator-God is kind to “the children of men,” (v.8-*ben adam*), literally, “sons of mankind.” All people are recipients of the goodness of God. In fact, Romans 2:4 says, “the goodness of God leads you to repentance.”

Furthermore, His mercy is not a transient thing, but according to v.1, it “endures forever.”

So remember that God’s goodness is displayed in His mercy and grace. Reflect on His goodness and grace, and give thanks.

Furthermore, we should give thanks to God:

C. For His Redemption – V.2 says, “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” Who are the redeemed? The concept of redemption is introduced in the books of the law. When a family member became too far in debt & could not

pay, the property would be sold. They could even be sold into slavery for several years. But God provided that if a near kinsman was financially able, he was to redeem the lost property. The story of Ruth is an example of this. Boaz was a wealthy kinsman of Ruth's first husband, and so Boaz married Ruth and restored his kinsman's property to Ruth & Naomi, something they could never do for themselves. So redemption implies a loss of some kind, and it implies a payment or sacrifice to effect restoration. Whatever the nature of one's "trouble," the Lord is able to "redeem," and those whom He delivers are "the redeemed."

We believers in Jesus Christ have been redeemed in the highest sense. We were lost in sin, but Jesus shed His blood, paying the price for our redemption. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says, "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish" Jesus died to redeem you from the slave-market of sin. He shed His blood to restore what the human race lost through the transgression of Adam & Eve. Indeed, Jesus said in Revelation 2:7, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." Paradise was lost through Adam, but restored by Jesus. Believers in Jesus Christ make up the redeemed.

As we see in v.2, a people redeemed and gathered by the Lord are called upon to give thanks to the Lord, and declare His goodness. Salvation obligates us to give thanks. If you are a Christian, tell others how good God is. He is good, but He doesn't have a good name out in the world today. If anyone is going to say that God is good, it will have to be His redeemed ones. There are few to take the witness stand and say a good word in His behalf.

So far we have heard the call of the Psalmist to give thanks to the Lord. I have sought to motivate you by giving you some reasons to give thanks to the Lord. Now I want to conclude the message by asking you to:

III. HEAR THE TESTIMONIES OF THE REDEEMED

The psalmist illustrates 4 examples of redemption & salvation by the Lord. In each case, the intervention of God was not deserved, but was the result of His mercy & grace. That makes thanksgiving even more of an obligation. First of all, in vv. 2-9 we have the testimony of:

A. The Returning Exiles - In Deuteronomy 28:64-65, God already warned the Israelites that they would be scattered if they sinned against Him: "Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other.... And among those nations you shall find no rest...." However, God also promised that if they repented of their sin & turned to Him, He would gather them and restore them to their land. So in vv. 2b-3 he says, "Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south." In v.47 of the previous Psalm the people of God prayed that the Lord would gather them from the nations. This prayer was heard, and in the providence of God, the Jews were given permission to return to the land of Israel.

However, the journey back was not easy. V.4 says, "They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way...." This probably refers to the desert places they passed through on their way to Jerusalem & Judea. Many of these travelers became lost on their journey, and they were lost in the worst possible place. They went astray in a desert wasteland and were unable to find their way to a settlement where they could rest and refresh themselves. The supply of food was soon

eaten, the water in their bottles dried up, and there were no streams in the desert. As a result, they became hungry & thirsty (v.5).

So in v.6 the Psalmist said, “Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.” They could not help themselves, or find help in others, and therefore they cried to God. Indeed, it was not until they were in extremities that they prayed (cf. vv.13, 19). However, prayer that is forced out of us by stern necessity is none the less acceptable with God. If hunger brings us to our knees it is more useful to us than feasting.

Next we see that deliverance follows prayer. The Lord delights to come in when no one else can be of the slightest help. In v.7 we see that the Lord led them out of the wilderness by the right way, and led them to a city as a dwelling place. *They* found no city to dwell in, but He found one easily enough. In the refrain the psalmist adds a wonderful truth in v.9, “For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.” God answered their prayer, and led them to food & water. We see that satisfaction only comes through the Lord.

Have you ever been lost? Have you even been homeless? Have you ever been hungry, thirsty? I remember being getting lost in the woods one time as a child, along with a few of my friends. After wandering for hours, we finally found out way home just before dark. I hope we gave thanks to the Lord. If none of this has ever happened to you, you should certainly give thanks to God as well.

Even if you have never been lost physically, you were lost spiritually. But many of us can say that God reached down in the wilderness of this world and saved us. And we have awaiting for us an eternal home in heaven. What a glorious Shepherd must he be who thus collects the blood-bought flock from the remotest regions, guides them through countless perils, and at last makes them to lie down in the green pastures of Paradise.

If you are still lost in sin, and can't find your way to heaven, remember what Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” He will save you, if you turn to Jesus, and call upon His name. Then you will have great cause for giving thanks to the Lord.

Next, the Psalmist gives another illustration of the goodness & mercy of the Lord. In vv.10-16 we see that He has redeemed:

B. Prisoners - Next mentioned are those who have been miserably fettered in dark prisons. Their misfortune was not accidental but resulted from an intentional breach of faith with the Lord. According to v.11, they were in prison “Because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High.” Likewise, v.17 says, “Fools, because of their transgression, And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.” God's words are not to be trifled with, and those who venture to rebel against the Lord will bring themselves into bondage. We know that some Jews were imprisoned during the Babylonian exile (2 Kings 24:12). In most cases, people who end up in prison do so because of their own sin and rebellion. If you want to stay out of prison, give heed to the Word of God, and the laws of men.

Prison conditions were far worse than they are today. Not only did they lose their freedom, but also any rest. We read in v.12 that prisoners were frequently forced to labor as well. Some would fall down exhausted, but not would offer help.

Now notice in v.13 what happened, “they cried out to the LORD in their trouble.” We pray best when we are fallen on our faces in painful helplessness. Once again God responded in mercy and lovingkindness. In v.14 we read, “And He saved them out of their distresses. He

brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their chains in pieces.” He delivered them, in spite of their past rebellion. The Lord breaks the strongest gates and bars when the time comes to set free his prisoners. He brought them forth from the darkness and deep shadows and struck off their bonds. This is a great illustration of the goodness and mercy of God. Even though they deserved to be in prison, God delivered them after they called upon His name.

I wonder if any of the Jews who were in prison during WW2 read from this psalm during or after their imprisonment in the death camps?

If you are ever imprisoned in spite of being innocent of a crime, you can have even more confidence in the Lord’s intervention on your behalf. Remember how God brought Simon Peter out of prison and how He delivered Paul and Silas at night? Our own Howard Coleman was sent to a prison camp during WW2, and God delivered him from prison, and from death. Oh, let us give thanks to the Lord.

Few of us have ever been imprisoned, but all of us have experienced the prison house of sin. Sin condemns us & binds us. We cannot break free from the power of sin on our own. But if we call upon the Lord, He will forgive us, and deliver us. He even has the power to set us free from the prison of death & the grave.

Next, in vv. 17-20 we read of another group of the redeemed that should give thanks to the Lord:

C. Foolish, Afflicted Sinners – Here we read of those whose sinful ways showed them to be foolish, and who suffered as a result of their perversities. For example, v.17 says, “Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted.” They are “fools” (cf. Prov 1:7), because they go astray in their love of wrong (“their iniquities”).

Now in this case, their “affliction” was a sickness to death, for v.18 says, “Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.” When you become sick, you usually lose your appetite. Death is metaphorically described as “the gates of death” (cf. 9:13; 88:3). Their condition is also described in the last of v.20, where the Psalmist refers to their “destructions.” This renders the rare Hebrew word which literally means “their traps” or “their pits”. “Pit” is a poetic form for “the grave.”

Now the lesson is clear. When you sin against God, you invite trouble & hardship, including sickness unto death. Moses warned in Numbers 32:23, “be sure your sin will find you out.” The apostle Paul warned in Gal. 6:7, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” If you violate God’s laws regarding sexual immorality, especially homosexuality, you may get sick & die from AIDS or some other disease. If you get drunk from alcohol and become an alcoholic, you will likely get sick and die years earlier.

Paul Harvey told of a criminal who eluded police & escaped into the woods. They searched for him, but could not find him. You see, he had climbed up a tree, and was hidden in the leaves. But at some point his watch sounded the top of the hour. The search party looked up, and there he was, in the tree.¹ Be sure your sins will find you out.

Though the people in our text had been foolish, we read in v.19 that they finally wised up, “Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble....” Too often, it is only in times of trouble that people pray, but God does not rebuke a sincere prayer uttered in desperation. Even so, when you become sick you should call upon the Lord. Prayer is as effectual on a sick bed as in the

¹ Told in 1999. Story recorded from memory, & original source not documented.

wilderness or in prison; it may be tried in all places and circumstance with certain result. What He has done for others, He may indeed do for you, "He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." What the people deserved they did not get. The Lord "saved" them too when they cried to him in their "distress" (v.19). Man is not healed by medicine alone, but by the word which proceeds out of the mouth of God. I believe their healing resulted from their forgiveness. When it says, "He sent His word and healed them," he is speaking of the word of forgiveness, which sets the sufferers free from their sin. This reminds me of the life of Jesus. He just spoke the word & the centurion's servant was healed (v. 20; Mt. 8:8).

The Lord has a pardon for you. In the Lord Jesus Christ we have forgiveness of sins and a pardon for our iniquities, but we have to accept it. Have you accepted your pardon yet? Are you delivered from sin and from the penalty for sin?

Once again the lesson is clear. When God heals your body or your soul, you should respond with thanksgiving. Let the good Physician have his fee of gratitude.

The Psalmist has told us how the Lord has redeemed the homeless wanderer. He has redeemed many prisoners. He has saved foolish sinners from death by sickness. Finally, in vv.23-30 the Psalmist also tells of the Lord's redemption of:

D. Sailors - This final testimony of deliverance concerns sailors who had narrowly escaped shipwreck and a watery grave. This matter of being a sailor in the days of the psalmist was a dangerous business. They did not have radar, GPS navigation, or even radio weather reports. A man who went on a voyage couldn't be sure if he was coming back or not. Verses 23-30 parallel the section of the wanderers in the desert (vv.4-9) and complement it because "desert" and "sea," denote the farthest regions. The Lord's power is so great that He easily stirs up a storm simply by speaking a command (vv.25-27; cf. Jonah 1:4). Then the glassy surface of the sea is broken, and myriads of white heads appear and rage and toss themselves to and fro as the wind blows upon them. Then, according to v.26, as the ship is borne aloft on the crest of the wave, the sailors and their vessels appear to climb the skies. As the ship is being tossed about like a plaything, the seafarers, unable to do anything about their lot, become dispirited and terrified. Their heart melts and become like water. All their skills at navigation are ineffective before the power of the storm and the waves. At that point they are at their wit's end. Literally, all their wisdom is "swallowed up." They do not have a clue as to what they should do next.

Once again, in desperation someone wises up. The sailors prayed in their distress (v.28). Prayer is good in a storm. We may pray when we are at our wit's end. Notice that the Lord responded to their prayer. He calmed the hurricane to a whisper, and the waves bowed in silence before the King of the Universe (v.29; cf. Jonah 1:15). Then in v.30 we see that God brought the seamen safely to their destination, or "desired haven." The rougher the voyage, the more the mariners long for port. Even so, heaven becomes more and more "a desired haven," as our trials multiply. Our heavenly haven shall ring with shouts of grateful joy when once we reach its blessed shore.

Of course, this reminds us of what happened when the disciples were caught in several different storms on the Sea of Galilee. They tried to do all they could to save themselves. But when it appeared that they were about to go under, they would call upon the Lord. They either woke Jesus up (Mt. 8:25), or Jesus came to them walking upon the water. Then Jesus rebuked the

winds and the waves on several occasions. Then there was great calm (Mt. 8:26). We have seen so many examples of the fact that God answers prayer.

Now when the Lord intervenes like that, and saves the praying soul, we should expect the kind of reaction we read about in v.30, “Then they are glad because they are quiet...” They should also give thanks to the Lord, as stated in v.31. Such deliverances as we have read about demand worship. Furthermore, our thanksgiving and worship should not be private, but publicly declared. V.32 says, “Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the elders.” Let us thank the Lord for His gracious works in public worship. There the elders will surely be gathered, and they will rejoice in hearing even more examples of the goodness of God.

When God saves you physically or spiritually, you should give thanks, not only privately, but also publicly. You do so by coming to a public worship service and singing praise & thanksgiving to the Lord. You should also look for opportunities to give testimony of the Lord’s goodness in a small group setting, such as in a group at work or school, or in S.S., or even to the whole church, if we give you opportunity. In fact, our annual men’s testimony service is coming up soon, and 2 men will be given opportunity to give testimony of the Lord’s goodness in their lives. Will you accept that opportunity?

Conclusion:² In light of the Lord’s goodness & mercy in saving so many from physical and spiritual harm, shouldn’t we give thanks to the Lord? In fact, in v.43 the Psalmist said, “Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.” Be wise, and contemplate the goodness of the Lord. Respond with public worship and thanksgiving. If you need to be saved, now is the time to repent of your sins & trust in Him as your Savior. Then, make your decision public, and give thanks to the Lord for the salvation that He has provided publicly.

Sources: John I. Durham, *The Broadman Bible Commentary: Psalms*, Vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman, 1971); Steve Felker (sermon tape of 11/21/99); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2007; Willem A. Van Gemeren, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 2 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1982); G. Campbell Morgan, *Notes on the Psalms* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1947); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979 reprint), 398-406. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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² I could conclude by giving the audience or a select group the opportunity to give additional testimony of the Lord’s intervention in their lives.