

The God Who Saves

Meditation and Application of God's Steadfast Love

I. Introduction

Do you ever feel hopeless and confused? Do you ever doubt God's goodness? These are issues that every person will wrestle with when faced with suffering. As the creature, we have a hard time understanding what God the sovereign Creator is doing in and through our suffering.

Psalm 107 is helpful because God reveals how He works in the midst of suffering in order to help us understand His goodness, to dispel confusion, and to give us hope! It describes four different scenarios of suffering making it a practical psalm that will apply to anyone no matter what kind of difficulty they are facing.

Psa. 107:1 ¶ *“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!”*

Psa. 107:2 *Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble*

Psa. 107:3 *and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.*

1. What is the central idea and command of this psalm (i.e. What does the psalmist want us to do)? What reasons does the psalmist give for this command? (vv.1-2, 43)
2. What is God's steadfast love (e.g. what's described by these two words)? How was it displayed to the Israelites? (cf. Deut. 7:7-9)

Psalm 107 is the beginning of the 5th and final book division in the collection of the Psalms, but it is also the conclusion of a four-part summary of God's work on earth up to the time of its writing (Pss. 104-107). This means that Psalm 107 is referring to specific historical events in Israel's past.

3. Many of the major Bible translations translate verse 2 more fully to say ***“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary”*** (NASB; emphasis added). Who was the enemy that Israel was redeemed from? How does verse 3 help answer this question? (vv. 2-3; cf. Ps. 106:40-42, 47)
4. Why would Israel's redemption historically, and God's steadfast love, be an encouragement to believers today? (cf. Rom. 8:28ff.)

II. Scenario #1: The Needy Are Satisfied! (vv. 4-9)

Psa. 107:4 ¶ *Some 'wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way "to a city to dwell in;*
Psa. 107:5 *hungry and thirsty,
their soul "fainted within them.*
Psa. 107:6 *Then they 'cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*
Psa. 107:7 *He led them by 'a straight way
till they reached "a city to dwell in.*
Psa. 107:8 *'Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*
Psa. 107:9 *For he 'satisfies the longing soul,
'and the hungry soul he fills with good things.*

1. What kind of trial is described in this passage? (vv. 4-5; cf. Num. 14 - Josh. 2)
2. The verb “wandered” portrays lack of direction, roaming, or staggering around. What was God’s purpose for the Israelites wandering in the wilderness? (v. 4; cf. Deut. 8:2-5) What does this reveal about God’s purposes for difficulty in our lives? (cf. James 1:2-4)
3. How did the Israelites eventually respond to the trial? (v.6a)
4. How did God respond to their prayers? (vv. 6b-7)
5. How should the redeemed respond? (v.8) What was the comforting promise that motivated such a response? (v. 9)
6. How do we teach and cling to the promise of verse 9 without sounding like “health, wealth, and prosperity” teachers? (cf. Ps. 34:10; 146:7) How does Jesus fulfill this promise for believers today? (cf. Is. 55:1-3; Matt. 5:3, 6; Matt. 6:31-33; Jn. 7:37-38)

III. Scenario #2: The Imprisoned Are Released! (vv. 10-16)

Psa. 107:10 ¶ *Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
prisoners in affliction and in irons,*

Psa. 107:11 *for they had rebelled against the words of God,
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.*

Psa. 107:12 *So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor;
they fell down, with none to help.*

Psa. 107:13 *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*

Psa. 107:14 *He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
and burst their bonds apart.*

Psa. 107:15 *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

Psa. 107:16 *For he shatters the doors of bronze
and cuts in two the bars of iron.*

1. What were the distresses of the Israelites in this scenario? (vv. 10, 12a; cf. 2 Chron. 36:20-21)
2. What were the reasons for their suffering? (v.11)? Does this mean that this is the reason for all suffering? (cf. Job; John 9)
3. Who is the ultimate cause of the Israelite's suffering? (v. 12) What are His purposes for using suffering in the lives of believers? (v. 12; cf. Ps. 119:67, 75; Heb. 12:3-12)
4. How did the Israelites eventually respond to their suffering? (v. 13a)
5. How did God respond to their prayers? (v. 13b-14) When did God's deliverance come? What does this mean for us when considering God's timing?
6. How should the redeemed respond to God's use of affliction and His rescue? (vv. 15-16)
7. How does Jesus ultimately do this for believers today? (cf. Lk. 4:18-19; Rom. 6:6-7; Gal. 3:13-14)

IV. Scenario #3: The Sick Are Healed! (vv. 17-22)

Psa. 107:17 ¶ *Some were fools through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;*
Psa. 107:18 *they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.*
Psa. 107:19 *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*
Psa. 107:20 *He sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from their destruction.*
Psa. 107:21 *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*
Psa. 107:22 *And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving,
and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!*

1. What were the dangers faced by Israelites in this scenario? (vv. 17-18)
2. What was the reason for their suffering? (cf. 2 Ki. 20:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:28-32)
3. What new word does God use to describe the sinful Israelites? What does this word mean? (v. 17; Ps. 14:1; Prov. 1:7; Rom. 1:18ff.)
4. How did the Israelites eventually respond to their near-death experiences? (v. 19a)
5. How does the Lord respond to their prayer? (vv. 19b-20)
6. How should those redeemed from these circumstances respond? (vv. 21-22)
7. Why might believers be tempted to refrain from praying for deliverance from suffering that is brought about by their own sin? Why does this scenario and the previous scenario bring so much hope to believers?
8. How did Jesus exemplify this kind of redemption and grace toward sinners during his earthly ministry? After His earthly ministry? (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 21:3-4)

V. Portrait #4: The Storm-Tossed (vv. 23-28)

- Psa. 107:23 ¶ *Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the great waters;*
- Psa. 107:24 *they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.*
- Psa. 107:25 *For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.*
- Psa. 107:26 *They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their evil plight;*
- Psa. 107:27 *they reeled and staggered like drunken men
and were at their wits' end.²*
- Psa. 107:28 *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.*
- Psa. 107:29 *He made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.*
- Psa. 107:30 *Then they were glad that the waters³ were quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.*
- Psa. 107:31 *Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
for his wondrous works to the children of man!*
- Psa. 107:32 *Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

1. What calamity befalls the Israelites in this scenario? (vv. 23-27)
2. What pattern, or cycle, do you see emerging in these different scenarios? What does this pattern teach us about God's character?
3. What is the counsel that people should heed based on this pattern? (c.f. Ps. 55:22; 1 Peter 5:6-7)

VI. God's Sovereignty in Providence (vv. 33-42)

Psa. 107:33 ¶ *He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,
Psa. 107:34 a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the evil of its inhabitants.
Psa. 107:35 He turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.
Psa. 107:36 And there he lets the hungry dwell,
and they establish a city to live in;
Psa. 107:37 they sow fields and plant vineyards
and get a fruitful yield.
Psa. 107:38 By his blessing they multiply greatly,
and he does not let their livestock diminish.*

Psa. 107:39 ¶ *When they are diminished and brought low
through oppression, evil, and sorrow,
Psa. 107:40 he pours contempt on princes
and makes them wander in trackless wastes;
Psa. 107:41 but he raises up the needy out of affliction
and makes their families like flocks.
Psa. 107:42 The upright see it and are glad,
and all wickedness shuts its mouth.*

1. What does it mean to describe God as “sovereign”? (Ps. 115:3; Job 42:2)
2. What does it mean when we refer to God's providence? (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28)
3. How is God's sovereignty providentially displayed in nature? What reasons does he wield his sovereignty over nature? (vv. 33-34; 35-38)
4. In what ways is God's sovereignty providentially displayed in people's lives? What reasons does he wield his sovereignty in their lives? (vv. 39-42)
5. Why would this section be a cause for thanksgiving for a believer?

VII. Conclusion

Psa. 107:43 ¶ *Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things;
let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.*

1. What is wisdom? How is this command similar to the conclusion of Jesus' sermon on the mount? (c.f. Matt. 7:24-28)

2. How does the psalmist propose we wisely respond to this psalm? (v.43)

“We can do this by seeing God’s wise, loving, and sovereign hand even in hardships. The psalm ends with a humble acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty over all things and all circumstances, reminding us that even the bad things of life are in God’s hands.”¹

3. How would you summarize the encouragement found in this psalm?

4. How could this psalm be used to instruct an unbeliever?

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 107–150*, vol. 8 of Boice Expository Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 873.