

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 5th May 2024 pm

TITLE: "Considering the steadfast love of the Lord" TEXT: Psalm 107

Scripture references from the ESV

Psalm 107 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever!

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.

⁴ Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; ⁵ hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within 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.

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.

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 labour; they fell down, with none to help.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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!

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.

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.^[b]

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

What one summary sentence would you use to tell the story of your life?

Would you tell it in the way the Psalmist tells Israel's story in Psalm 107? The writer considers four vignettes from Israel's life in exile that speak about people in distress (**vv4-5,10-12,17-18 and 23-27**). In their distress, the people, on all four occasions, did the same thing, with the same result:

they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them from their distress

In each instance, that deliverance directly reversed the distress:

- Those who were lost and wandering in the desert were led to the safety of a city
- Those who were held captive in a dark place were set free
- Those who were on the verge of death were healed and given life
- Those who were in the turmoil of a storm at sea were brought to the safety and peace of their final destination

Israel's story is narrated through four episodes that speak of God's deliverance as he brought them back from exile to the Promised Land, setting them free from captivity,

delivering them from certain death and bringing them through the storm to safety in their desired location.

The one summary sentence for the whole story, repeated in **vv8,15,21 and 31** is:

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

The story of Israel's rescue from exile, and every deliverance within that, is

the story of the unending covenant love of the God who is good.

- Ask yourself this question: As you look over your life and consider all the distresses and deliverances, would you say that the story of your life is the story of the unending covenant love of the God who is good?

If that is not how you see it, it may be that you have not taken time to heed **v43** and to consider the steadfast love of the Lord. You have, perhaps, not taken the time to think over the highs and lows of life and to consider how

**God's deliverance in your distress was a demonstration of his unending covenant
love for you.**

Though we are far removed from Israel, Israel's story is also our story. Christ, who came and lived this story, is the true singer of this Psalm and, as those who are united to him, that makes it our story too.

It is the story of God's unending covenant love for us.

This Psalm highlights three truths: our sin, our Saviour and our response.

1. **Our sin.** The previous Psalm recounts Israel's unfaithfulness to God, because of which he exiled them, scattering them among the nations. When they cried out to him to save them, the question that raised is

Would God save them?

Psalm 107 opens with the answer (**vv1-3**). As the story is told, we can see the longing of the exiles to be:

- Led back to their own land and set free from slavery
- Delivered from death and brought safely through the storm of God's judgement

The backdrop of their distress is sin, and that is the backdrop of our distresses too.

It is either our own sin, coming from within us and resulting in evil thoughts, speech and actions, or sin that comes at us from

others, resulting in our suffering. Indeed, our world is primarily in distress because of sin.

All around us we see relational conflict, and the suffering that flows out of it. This comes not from earthly failures, such as lack of material prosperity or bad government, but because we have failed to put God first or find our true identity in him. Instead of seeking the glory of God, it is all about our own selfish choices, which result in suffering for others. Because we are selfish, we respond to that suffering with hostility, and then find ourselves trapped in a vicious circle of sin and suffering, as Psalm 107 shows us (vv10-11, 17). Our world is under a curse.

Psalm 107 is our story, because, like Israel,

we are all sinful and we are living with the consequences of that sin.

As God's people, we still do stupid, sinful things that result in affliction for us, because God disciplines us, and affliction for others because our sin causes others to suffer. So we live as exiles, wandering lost in waste deserts, enslaved to sinful patterns of behaviour, destined for eventual death and facing the storm of God's wrath. All we can do is pray the prayer in 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.** When we do that, Psalm 107 assures us that God steps in to deliver us because of his unending covenant love.

2. In response to our sin, God gives us our Saviour. In moments of deepest distress, even those who have no faith are inclined to turn to prayer, and in this Psalm, we can see that when the Israelites were at their wit's end, they cried out to God. We might think that praying when you are in deep trouble is not a good motive for prayer. Surely God deserves better than that! Indeed, he does, but it is clear that he does not despise the desperate prayer of those who are at their wit's end. C. H. Spurgeon commented:

They are hard pressed. 'Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble'. Why did they not do so before? Because people do not begin to pray to God as long as they have any hope. But when all hope is gone, then comes the first real, living, agonising cry to heaven; and no sooner is that heard than God answers it. Supplications which are forced out of us by stern necessity are none the less acceptable with God... indeed

*they have all the **more prevalence** since they are evidently **sincere** and make a powerful appeal to the **divine pity**.*

God is a God of unending covenant love, and when we, in our distress call out to him, he doesn't scold us for it. Instead, he intervenes to deliver us. He does this even when we are in the mess because of our own sin. He may discipline us, but when we cry out to him, he steps in to rescue us, because he has committed himself to us in love (v17-20).

**The message of the Bible is that Jesus not only brings us out of exile,
but he also carries us to safety.**

In order for Jesus to do that, he had to experience the distressing situations of Psalm 107. He endured:

- the exile of human misery, experiencing the agony of hunger in the desert, where he was tested by the devil but overcame.
- the darkness of the cross as he took our sin on himself
- not just sickness that leads to death, but real physical death and real spiritual death
- the storm of God's wrath in all its force, as he cried out 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

Through Christ, we now have our souls satisfied and our sins forgiven.

**We have resurrection life and assurance of eternal rest in the safest port – heaven
itself**

This is the unending covenant love of God towards us

The story of that love can be written, not just over our salvation from sin, but over our deliverance in every distressing situation we face. Whether it is suffering that comes at us or suffering as a result of our own sin, we can cry out to God to deliver us, and have the assurance that he will always do so. He may not deliver you in the way you want or think he should, but he will assuredly deliver you.

3. What should be our response? The Psalm shows us that it needs to be consideration, trust and thankfulness

i. Consideration (v43) Every part of our lives intersects with God – there is no sacred/secular divide. Therefore, every day, and in every situation we face,

We will be experiencing God's steadfast love to deliver us

The Psalm exhorts us to take time to consider where we have experienced his steadfast love to deliver us. We should never attribute our deliverance to good fortune, as unbelievers do. All that happens, whether in church or outside, will have points where we can trace God's unending covenant love. That should lead us to

ii. **Fear God** – in the sense of trusting him alone to deliver us from distress. Those in distress cried out to the Lord:

It was the cry of trust in God

They were in situations that brought them to the end of themselves, but from that place of desperation, they cried out to God trusting that he was the only one who could help and that he would help.

- What are you facing at the moment that leaves you feeling as if you are wandering lost in a desert or trapped with no way out?
- What are you facing that leaves you feeling you are facing some kind of death or an out of control storm?

Those who fear the Lord look to the Lord in those times.

They have nowhere else to look

They trust him to deliver them and when he does, they respond with:

iii. **Thankfulness.** The Psalm begins with a command to give thanks to the Lord, and the repeated chorus is:

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

Every distress that God takes us through is an opportunity to experience his steadfast love and goodness. As we consider his steadfast love to deliver us, even when we didn't deserve it, the right response is

A response of thankfulness to him for his steadfast love

- Now, having considered all that, what one summary sentence would you use to tell the story of your life?

Surely, as you consider God's steadfast love,

there is no other way to tell the story of your life except as
the story of unending covenant love of the God who is good

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