

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:  
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Psalm 107:1-32 (read vv.1-2, 8) “Oh, That We Would Give Thanks to the Lord”

Intro. This coming Thursday we will have our Thanksgiving holiday. It is an annual reminder that we should give thanks to the Lord. Will you give thanks to God in a special way? Or will you be focused more on the food, family, friends, the football game, or finding deer in the woods? You may not even *feel* very thankful. In fact, you may feel like complaining. 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 will be missing from this year’s Thanksgiving table. That is going to be true for Cheryl and me this year.

We could focus on our losses, trials, and difficulties. Instead, let us plan to give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. He has brought us through most or all of the trials we have been through. We can be thankful for the fact that our trials are opportunities for God to work, as we shall see in our text today. That is one reason why Paul said in 1 Thess. 5:18, “In everything give thanks....”

What about you? Will you be thankful this Thanksgiving, or will you complain? Well I want to prepare you for 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 with instruments in worship to the Lord. Psalm 107 was a psalm used to lead worshippers to give thanks unto the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says that giving thanks “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, not just on Thanksgiving, but every day. 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 in v.1 is an opening call to give thanks to the Lord, “Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Then, the Psalmist gives four testimonies or illustrations of the saving work of God. After each of those testimonies, 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. The fact that this is repeated four times makes this call to give thanks very important! It’s a dominant theme of this Psalm. Notice that in v.8 we see that a true child of God *wants* to see other people give thanks to the Lord as well. On the other hand, it grieves us to hear people blame God for their troubles, especially when most of the time, we bring troubles on ourselves!

In addition to the repeated refrain, 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.’” 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. 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.”

How often do *you* give thanks? Do you do so continually, every day, several times a day? Every meal is a good 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. Instead of complaining, 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 is good because He provides for our needs. Most of us are well provided for!

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 a very important Hebrew word *checed*. The word is translated “mercy” in v.1 of the NKJV. It is translated “goodness” in the refrain that is used 4 times in this Psalm (vv.8, 15, 21, 31). However, it is translated “lovingkindness” in v.43. That comes closer to the meaning. But because this word is based on a covenant relationship,<sup>1</sup> it is best translated “steadfast love,” or “faithful love,” for God extends lovingkindness to us even when we mess up! In fact, the emphasis in Psalm 107 is upon God’s lovingkindness in spite of man’s sin. It refers to a faithful love that addresses man’s need, not merit. What is amazing is that His lovingkindness is not just limited to His covenant people, but in v.8 we see that it often extends to “the children of men,” (v.8-*ben adam*), literally, “sons of mankind” or “sons of Adam.” All people are recipients of the goodness of God.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Romans 2:4 says, “the goodness of God leads you to repentance.”

Furthermore, His faithful love is not a transient thing, but according to v.1, it “endures forever.” It is a faithful, steadfast love. He stands ready to help when we call upon Him.

While Cheryl was in the hospital for 66 days this year, I had the opportunity to manifest this kind of steadfast love as I ministered to her *every* day without fail as her primary caregiver

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<sup>1</sup> 13 times this Hebrew word is in the same verse as the one for covenant. For example, Deut. 7:9 says, “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He [is] God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy . . .” Ps. 89:28 says, “My mercy I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall stand firm with him.” Note the poetic parallelism.

<sup>2</sup> In Mt. 5:45 Jesus said, “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

and advocate. That faithful love was rooted in the covenant relationship we entered into the day we married, when we vowed to love and to cherish “in sickness and in health.”

So remember that God’s goodness is displayed in His steadfast, faithful love. Reflect on His goodness, loving-kindness and grace, and give thanks to Him!

Furthermore, because God is good and because of His faithful love, we can count on God to rescue us in times of distress. So we should also give thanks to Him:

C. For His Redemption – He has saved us again and again from our difficulties. So in v.2 he 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 Mosaic law. When a family member became too far in debt and 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 and 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 loss or “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, bound for a devil’s hell, 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 . . . , 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 and 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, and we should give thanks for our redemption (cf. Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

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 and salvation by the Lord. In each case, the intervention of God was not deserved, but was the result of His mercy and 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 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 and 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 while exiled in Babylon.

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 and 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, v.5 says they became hungry and thirsty. Gloom and hopeless despair began to settle into their souls.

They could not help themselves or find help in others. Finally, they became desperate enough to turn to God in prayer. In v.6 the Psalmist said, “Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.” 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 became their Guide. He led them out of the wilderness by the right way, and led them to a city as a dwelling place. Furthermore, 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 a city where there was food and 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 getting lost in the woods one time as a child, along with a few of my friends. After wandering for hours, we finally found our 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. Thank God that you have had a stable home.

Even if you have never been lost physically, I dare say you have been lost spiritually. But many of us can say that God reached down in the wilderness of this world and saved us. And we have waiting 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 and mercy of the Lord. In vv.10-16 we see that He has redeemed:

**B. Prisoners** – The Psalmist mentioned are those who have been miserably fettered in dark prisons. Their misfortune was not accidental but according to v.11, they were in prison “Because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High.” 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 (Psa. 119:9-11) 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 none would offer help.

Now notice in v.13 what happened, “they cried out to the LORD in their trouble.” We pray most earnestly when we have 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.” No chains are too strong for the Lord! 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. These are great verses to read if you visit someone in prison.

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? I wonder if any of the hostage recently carried off and imprisoned by Hamas have thought about this Psalm?

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 midnight? Howard Coleman was deacon in my church. During WW2 his aircraft was shot down and he was sent to a prison camp, and God delivered him from prison, and from death. Oh, let those whom God delivers from prison give thanks to the Lord.

I expect that few of us here today have ever been in prison, but all of us have experienced the prison house of sin. Sin condemns us and 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 and 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.” That means they were brought low. 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 evidently 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, especially as you get closer to death. 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”, a poetic form for “the grave.” Death was standing at the head of the bed ready to take the helpless victims away.

Now the lesson is clear. When you sin against God, you invite trouble and hardship, including sickness unto death. 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, you risk getting sick from venereal disease. You may even die from AIDS or some other disease. If you get drunk from alcohol and become an alcoholic, you will likely get sick or have an accident and die years earlier.

Moses warned in Numbers 32:23, “be sure your sin will find you out.” Paul Harvey told of a criminal who eluded police and 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.<sup>3</sup> 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. Using what little strength they had left, “they cried out to the LORD in their trouble....” Again we see that 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. What He has done for others, He may indeed do for you, as stated in v.20, “He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” 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 and the centurion’s servant was healed (v. 20; Mt. 8:8). He can do the same today!

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. Cheryl and I are so thankful for God’s healing grace upon her!

The Psalmist has told us how the Lord has redeemed the homeless wanderer. He has redeemed many prisoners. He has saved foolish sinners from sickness that would have led to death. 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.<sup>4</sup>

Then, what many sailors dread happened. V.25 says, “He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea.” The Lord’s power is so great that He easily stirs up a storm simply by speaking a command (cf. Jonah 1:4). 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. The ship is being tossed about like a toy boat. The seafarers, unable to do anything about their lot, become dispirited and terrified. Their hearts melt 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, as stated in the last of v.27. 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. In v.28 the sailors thought of God and prayed in their distress. 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,” especially as our trials multiply. Our heavenly haven shall ring with shouts of grateful joy when once we reach its blessed shore.

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<sup>3</sup> Told in 1999. Story recorded from memory, and original source not documented.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

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. Then there was great calm (Mt. 8:26). These were some of 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, as the disciples did when Jesus called the storm (Mt. 8:27; 14:33; Mark 4:41; Luke 8:25). Furthermore, our thanksgiving and worship should not be private, but publicly declared. There are those who say that religion should be a private matter. Yet v.32 says, “Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the elders.” These sailors should thank and praise God immediately in the ship. But here we see that when they come home, they should go to the assembly of God’s people and offer praise and thanksgiving there was well.

So 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 and 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.

Conclusion:<sup>5</sup> In light of the Lord’s goodness and steadfast love 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 manifested in others and in your own life. Respond with public worship and thanksgiving.

Remember this Psalm the next time you face great trouble in your life. Perhaps you are going through a great trial such as sickness right now. Call upon the Lord to save you. Then, when He does, be careful to give thanks to God publicly.

If you need to be saved from sin and God’s judgment, now is the time to repent of your sins and trust in Him as your Savior. Then, make your decision public, and give thanks to the Lord publicly for the salvation that He has provided.

Sources: John I. Durham, *The Broadman Bible Commentary: Psalms*, Vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman, 1971); 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* [Ver. 5:80] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2021); Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979 reprint), 398-406; Kyle M. Yates, *Preaching from the Psalms* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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<sup>5</sup> I could **conclude** by giving the **audience** or a select group the **opportunity** to give additional **one sentence testimonies** of the Lord’s **intervention** in their lives.

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