

The God Who Saves

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What we're going to do tonight is return to our sequential study of the Psalms and we are up to Psalm 107. I think it was about 6 ½ years ago that we started in Psalm 1 and over time we've been working our way through here and there and we come back to the start of Book Five of the five books of the Psalter. And I just want to say by way of preface is that it is exceedingly sweet to study the Psalms and I want to emphasize that and impress that upon you and upon your heart and your thinking here today. The Psalms, what makes them so precious is that they are timeless. When you enter into a Psalm, you are entering into the immutability of God, you're entering into his steadfast love, his faithfulness, and you're entering into the plan and the decrees and the certain things of God that cannot change, and we step out, as it were, we step out of the problems that plague us in time and we step into an eternal realm, a permanent realm and we find our hearts refreshed by contemplating the God who transcends everything in life, transcends all of the problems of life, all of the time of life, transcends life and death, birth and all things in between, and so for us to be able to study a Psalm is a great and precious privilege, especially in a time like in which we are living where so many people are just captivated by what is happening in the moment and the uncertainty of what lies just ahead. Let's you and I leave all of that behind tonight, let's forget about all of those things and contemplate the greatness and the immutability of our God as we study this Psalm 107 together tonight.

The title of tonight's message is simply "The God Who Saves." The God who saves and Psalm 107 is one of the longer Psalms and I'm going to take five or 10 minutes here with you to simply read it, to go through it all. There's no reason for us to hurry. If God is timeless, why should we be in a hurry in studying his word? And I realize that not everyone has had opportunity to read it before we came here tonight, so let's take it as a whole, let's put it into our minds, and then we'll unpack it in the hour that lies ahead. Psalm 107, beginning in verse 1.

1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary 3 And gathered from the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south. 4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region; They did not find a way to an inhabited city. 5 They were hungry and thirsty; Their soul fainted within them. 6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;

He delivered them out of their distresses. 7 He led them also by a straight way, To go to an inhabited city. 8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! 9 For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good. 10 There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, Prisoners in misery and chains, 11 Because they had rebelled against the words of God And spurned the counsel of the Most High. 12 Therefore He humbled their heart with labor; They stumbled and there was none to help. 13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death And broke their bands apart. 15 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! 16 For He has shattered gates of bronze And cut bars of iron asunder. 17 Fools, because of their rebellious way, And because of their iniquities, were afflicted. 18 Their soul abhorred all kinds of food, And they drew near to the gates of death. 19 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. 20 He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions. 21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! 22 Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, And tell of His works with joyful singing. 23 Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters; 24 They have seen the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep. 25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; Their soul melted away in their misery. 27 They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses. 29 He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad because they were quiet, So He guided them to their desired haven. 31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! 32 Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, And praise Him at the seat of the elders. 33 He changes rivers into a wilderness And springs of water into a thirsty ground; 34 A fruitful land into a salt waste, Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it. 35 He changes a wilderness into a pool of water And a dry land into springs of water; 36 And there He makes the hungry to dwell, So that they may establish an inhabited city, 37 And sow fields and plant vineyards, And gather a fruitful harvest. 38 Also He blesses them and they multiply greatly, And He does not let their cattle decrease. 39 When they are diminished and bowed down Through oppression, misery and sorrow, 40 He pours contempt upon princes And makes them wander in a pathless waste. 41 But He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction, And makes his families like a flock. 42 The upright see it and are glad; But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth. 43 Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things, And consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD.

Perhaps as we were reading, you saw the pattern that the Psalm follows. It describes people in distress, how they pray in their distress, the Lord answers and the Psalmist calls them to give thanks to the Lord for his lovingkindness.

I wouldn't expect you to remember this because it's been several months since we were in the Psalms, but we studied Psalm 105 and 106 a few months ago and this theme of thanksgiving was present in those two Psalms as well. It was the opening theme of both of those Psalms. Look at Psalm 105:1 with me where it says, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples." And then in Psalm 106:1, "Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting." We've come to a section in the Psalter where this theme of thanksgiving for the loyal love of God is the theme that is dominating these Psalms that have been put together by the compiler many many years ago, and what we find, then, as we are reading through the Psalms and going through it on a sequential basis, that our minds have been framed toward a posture of gratitude, of thanksgiving. These Psalms at this portion of the Psalter are cultivating in us a spirit of thanksgiving and Psalm 107 is going to build on that theme.

Now there are many of you that are new to our church here, at least within the past few months and we're so glad that you're here, and I just want to encourage you with something that maybe you haven't had the opportunity yet to hear me say before now, is that it's very very valuable to read through the Psalms sequentially and to be looking for the way that the Psalms put themes together in different sections. You find this in Psalms 90, 91 and 92, for example, and Psalms 22 through 24. It's obvious that these Psalms were put together for a reason and rather than simply going to an individual favorite Psalm from time to time, to take the time at some point soon in the course of your life to read through the Psalms a little more slowly, a little more carefully, a little more systematically and it will be wonderful for you to see how these things open up to you. There is an internal intent in the Psalter. These Psalms are put together by thoughtful men or a thoughtful man, possibly Ezra, who put these Psalms together and arranged them in a thematic way. They're obviously not there in a haphazard way, and Psalms 105 through 107 show that to us.

Now in Psalm 107, it opens up and let's look at these opening three verses. Obviously all we can do is go through things in a very quick way today to cover such a large Psalm. That reminds me to say one other thing, again for those of you that are new. What we've been doing as we've gone through the Psalms is that we've taken the approach almost without exception that we treat every Psalm in one single message. So whether the Psalm is two verses like Psalm 117, or it's a much longer Psalm like Psalm 107, we're trying to treat them all in a single message and when the longer Psalms come, that means that we do things at more of an overview fashion and that's the way we've approached it.

So in Psalm 107:1-3, let's look at his opening call to worship, you might say. He says,

1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

Lovingkindness is a word that means his steadfast love, his loyal love, God's faithfulness to his people is utterly unchanging. God knows the beginning from the end. There is no middle knowledge with God. That is bad teaching to say such things. God knows the beginning from the end. He's not learning things as he goes along like we do. God knows the beginning from the end and so he is able to establish steadfast love and he never changes and solid reformed theology is the bedrock of the security of your soul and it's important to realize that. And here the Psalmist draws upon the immutable, eternal, faithful love of God as his opening theme.

And so he goes on and those who have been redeemed by this God are to praise him for those attributes of his character. Verse 2,

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary 3 And gathered from the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.

Now on Sundays we just finished looking at a brief survey of the book of Jeremiah and we saw how God sent the people of Israel, the people of Judah off into exile as a punishment for their sin. It appears to many commentators and I agree with them, that it seems like perhaps this Psalm was written after that exile and God had gathered the people back together in the land. So the Jews had returned from the Babylonian exile after this time. Seventy years after being scattered, 70 years, you know, two generations depending on how you count a generation, two or three generations dwelling in a foreign land and yet now they are back and God has brought them back to their land and shown his faithfulness to them.

You see it there in verse 3, he's redeemed us from the hand of the adversary, gathered from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. God gathered us everywhere that we were scattered. God brought us back. He has shown his eternal love to us in time and space history. This isn't an abstract theological construct to the writer of the Psalms, this is something that they have lived through. They have seen God manifest in their lives in actual time and space events his faithfulness to them. And so his call in response to that is that the people of God who have experienced his deliverance should be the people who are giving thanks to him. Let them speak it out. Let them declare the goodness and the faithfulness of God to help them in their problems and in their distress.

So this is the theme of the Psalm, that those who have been delivered by God, those who have been saved by God should acknowledge his faithfulness to them with outspoken, verbal expressions of praise and thanks, first of all, to him vertically speaking, and then to declare it to one another as well. Part of the reason, part of the thing that we do as we're going through the Psalms like this together is that that's what we are doing here. I have the privilege of being the mouthpiece of Scripture to remind you of these things so that

we would join together corporately in ascribing praise to God for his faithfulness to us. And so this is the theme of the Psalmist.

Now as you contemplate what we just said about the return from exile, it's very interesting to me and I think it will be to you also, that this Psalm seems to be the answer to the end of Psalm 106. In verse 47, look up just a couple of verses there and you see in Psalm 106:47, the Psalmist there said, "Save us, O LORD our God, And gather us from among the nations, To give thanks to Your holy name And glory in Your praise." Well, Psalm 107 is saying as you read these and as you learn not to read the Psalms in isolation but you read them together, you find Psalm 107 praising God for the answer to that prayer in Psalm 106:47. It is praising God for his sovereign deliverance of his people and his sovereign disposal of their affairs.

Now as we read through the totality of Psalm 107, we find that this Psalm reflects people who are on the verge of death, and God often what we see is that God often brings his people into extremity, into places of trial and adversity that are far beyond their capacity to deal with, to solve on their own, God often brings us to that kind of extreme adversity and uncertainty so that we will see our desperate need, and in that desperate need we call upon him and we learn something of the depths of his lovingkindness to his people, we learn something of his power to deliver when we see him bring us through on the other side of that adversity that we had no answer to, that we had no ability to solve on our own, in those times of extremity, in our weakness God proves his strength and that is a recurring theme of Scripture, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 come to mind in that.

Now knowing that some of you are in times of extremity, let me just encourage you as we consider this Psalm to realize that these times of extremity are ultimately a blessing from God to us because they are the occasion upon which he manifests his faithfulness to us. We see his power on display. We see his goodness and his faithfulness manifested to us in the course of real daily life where we were at our wit's end and God delivered, God helped us, God providentially and powerfully helped us. Well, this becomes part of your testimony of praise. This becomes part of the reason that you learn to love God more and more is that the principles of Scripture are not simply something out there, they are something that have actually impacted your own life and that's a blessing. The reality of the presence of God in your life is something to be cherished and if extremity helps us to understand and experience that personally, then God has a purpose for it that goes beyond what we see at the time.

And so we see that God is a God who can save and does save, does deliver even in extremity, and as we consider this Psalm as were going through it, we'll see that God is good to us – watch this – despite our sin; that even in sinful affliction, what I mean by that is even when you are experiencing the consequences of your own sin and your own rebellion against God. Your life has fallen apart and you know that it's your own fault, it's your own rebellion against God that has brought that to pass, and you feel weak and defenseless and you feel isolated from God as a result of it, and you know that you have no basis upon which to approach him in your own righteousness. Well, what this Psalm does for us in a very blessed and wonderful way, this Psalm says that even for those that

are in that condition, suffering the consequences of their own sin whether it's external or just the affliction of an accusing conscience to realize that this God who saves is a God who welcomes prayers of distress even from people like that, even from people like you, to realize that God is a friend to those who are in distress. And so it's a Psalm that is just brimming and pulsating with wonderful wonderful hope to realize that God is a gracious God who receives people in their distress and he delivers them.

Well, let's just go through these next couple of sections of the Psalm and we'll see, point 1 tonight: the pattern of God's deliverance. The pattern of God's deliverance. It's very obvious that the writer of this Psalm had a very clear pattern in his mind that he was using in order to teach his concluding lesson. Let me say that again. It is very obvious that the Psalmist had a very clear pattern that he was following as he wrote this Psalm, and as he was writing it, he had in mind the final lesson, the final verse that he was going to impress upon us as the thing that would be our takeaway and that which he would have us to learn and take to heart. In verses 4 through 32, in those 29 verses, verses 4 to 32, the Psalmist gives four illustrations of God's deliverance to his people in times of their need. This is very plain, very obvious, I'm going to show it to you as we go along, and each of these four illustrations follow this simple pattern that I was just telling you about.

Okay, so here's the pattern before we look at the four illustrations. The Psalmist starts by describing men in their problems. He describes men in their problems and then, secondly, his pattern is this, is that he describes the men and their prayers in their distress. So you see the problem and then you see the prayer that is made in the midst of those problems, and then, thirdly, he shows what God's provision was to those men in their problems in response to their prayers, and after showing that provision, he calls for a response of praise. So he starts by showing the problem, the prayers in the midst of the problem, God's provision in response to that prayer, and then the praise that should follow now that God has answered. And so he looks back at different scenarios, different episodes in history and follows the same pattern and here's what you're to learn, I don't want to wait until the end of the message to make the point, I want you to be able to see it and look for it as we go along. The point that he is making is this: through this pattern and through the multiplied repetition of the pattern, showing it four different times, he is showing you through the repeated emphasis that this is what God is like. God is loyal. God is faithful. God is powerful. And when people earnestly call on his name, he responds to them. On this side of the cross, we understand that people must call on him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not some generic god, this is the God that we approach through the Lord Jesus Christ, but this is what God does because this is who God is. He is a God of loyal love who answers the prayers of his people. He does that because he's good and he does that because he's faithful, and all of the examples follow that pattern and what he is doing is he is showing God to you so that you would learn that this is what God is like and that you would be encouraged in your own walk with God to respond to him as the Psalmist outlines. You find yourself in a problem, you go to God in prayer. You actually pray to him and God provides in response to your prayers in his time, and as a result of that you learn to praise him more and more.

You know, I think back to some of the most severe trials that I've faced, remember praying in the midst of those some, you know, with some very bitter tears, and looking back now with the benefit of a lot of intervening years and just saying, "Man, the Lord really provided there. When I thought he had abandoned me, He was being most faithful to me and what can I do except to praise Him and honor Him and glorify Him as a result of that?"

That's the pattern for all of us. It's not unique to the Psalmist. It's not unique to me. This is the way it is supposed to go for the people of God. And we talk about it individually, this is for each of you to appropriate, but also corporately as a local church, as a local body. This is the way, this is the corporate mind that should be developing in us, that we know God well enough to know that we are not, we are not intimidated by circumstances, we are not intimidated by the uncertain world around us. We know who God is. We know him. We know he is great. We know that he is good. We know that he is faithful to his people. We know that he provides for them in distress. And so even if the future is uncertain and even if calamity does suddenly come upon us, understand this, beloved friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, understand this, that even when calamity comes and adversity strikes you hard and deep with many tears, there should be a part of your heart, the controlling portion of your heart that understands something that's pretty radical for me to say but you need to understand and think like this, that in reality nothing has changed. Nothing has changed, by which we mean this: God is the same God before the calamity that he was after the calamity. He had his eye on you, he had his eye on the sparrow before the calamity and he does after the calamity. He is powerful to deliver before, he's powerful to deliver after. He heard your prayers before, he hears your prayers after. He answered your prayers before, he will answer them eventually afterwards.

The plan of God, the decree of God has not changed simply because your circumstances have changed. The fact that you're emotionally wrought by the circumstances and often quite understandably so, there must be this transcendent perspective through which you view all of life that understands and thinks about all of life through the surpassing immutability and faithfulness of God to his people and that doesn't change no matter how your circumstances change. It doesn't change based on what the doctor says to you from week to week. It doesn't change based on your family situation. It doesn't change for anything and that's why I can say that in reality there is a sense in which no matter what comes to us, nothing has changed because we're still in the hands of that same immutable, great, good and gracious God who provides for his people in their times of need.

And so, you know, there are times, there are times where I'm conscious of something and this sounds really really odd, but there are times where I'm conscious that I'm saying things in the moment like now, I'm conscious of saying things that I wish I had heard in the midst of my affliction. I wish I had heard someone saying these things to me in the time of my deepest distress. I needed to hear it and those words didn't come to me for, you know, whatever reason. But in saying these things, as much as I realize that they are challenging, I'm saying the things which as a pastor I know you need to hear even if it seems like I'm minimizing and diminishing the struggles that you're going through. I'm not. What we're doing as we talk about these kinds of things from God's word is we are

talking about that which is the answer and the solution to your problems. The problems of your deeply distressed heart, these are the answers to those things and it admittedly grieves me when I hear about, I was hearing about a pastor just tonight who consciously avoids talking about the sovereignty of God in the terms that we're talking about it here tonight. He does not teach his church those things. Well, that grieves me to hear that because I know that he is, whether he realizes it or not, he is stepping on the spiritual air-hose that his people need. We need to know that God does not change. We need to know that God is sovereign over everything. We need to know that God has the power to answer our prayers and that he never changes in a way that means if he's received us once, he'll receive us always in Christ. You must know this and when you know this, then your whole life changes and your whole spiritual existence is irreversibly altered by the power of the truth of God's word. So that's why I dwell on these things and that's why I get animated when I talk about them. I wish I had heard them, you know, in my own days of distress. The blessing is for me personally, is that I have the opportunity to say those things now trusting that God brings those words to the ears of ones that were suffering like I was back then. Okay, enough of that.

Let's look at the four illustrations that he uses. First of all, he talks about those lost in the wilderness. Those lost in the wilderness. The Psalmist tells of a problem beginning in verse 4 that sounds an awful lot like Israel's wanderings in the desert after God delivered them from Egypt but before they entered into the Promised Land. Psalm 107:4,

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region; They did not find a way to an inhabited city. 5 They were hungry and thirsty; Their soul fainted within them.

And what did they do in that miserable time? You know, I don't do too good in physical affliction, I'll be honest with you. If I'm hot and hungry, man, I get really grumpy really fast and, yeah, amen. Thank you, Larry. Everyone else is doing this to me but not you. I appreciate that. You know, I don't do well there in that kind of affliction and so you picture them tired, grumpy, and all of this and what did they do? Verse 6. He had just described their problem and now he tells us that "they cried out to the LORD in their trouble," verse 6. Do you see it there? They had their problems and they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and what did God do? What did God do for them in the wilderness? He gave them water. He gave them food. He gave them daily manna. Verse 6,

6 ... He delivered them out of their distresses. 7 He led them also by a straight way, To go to an inhabited city.

He led them to the ultimate destination. They had a problem. They prayed. God provided. And so what should they do? Verse 8,

8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! 9 For He has satisfied the thirsty soul, And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.

They experienced answer to their prayer. The right thing for them to do is to give thanks to God for his loyal love because he provided for them in their time of weakness. So we see those lost in the wilderness fit the pattern of what the Psalmist is describing.

He goes on and he describes those who are lost in prison. They're lost in prison. And beginning in verse 10, he tells of prisoners who are subject to harsh labor. In verse 10 it says,

10 There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in misery and chains, 11 Because they had rebelled against the
words of God And spurned the counsel of the Most High. 12 Therefore He
humbled their heart with labor; They stumbled and there was none to help.

And so here are these prisoners that are suffering under the weight of the consequences of their own sin. Notice why they are in misery and chains, verse 11, "they had rebelled against the words of God." They had "spurned the counsel of the Most High." This is a worldwide phenomenon of people suffering the consequences of their sin and sin has consequences both inside the church and outside of the church, and here the Psalmist is describing people who were in need due to their own rebellion. They were suffering, they were miserable because of their own sin, and for a time God had left them to themselves to feel the weight of it all. What did they do with their problem? You see the same language being used.

13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;

He describes their prayer, they cried out to the Lord, "God, save us! I repent! This is all due, I take responsibility for this situation that I find myself in. God, have mercy on me the sinner!" And their affliction has humbled their heart to cry out to God in repentance and what does God do? Well, he doesn't turn his face away from their prayers. He doesn't say, "You made your bed, now sleep in it, buddy." God's not like that. God doesn't respond to repentant prayers with that harsh spirit. Do you see it, beloved? He's a God of lovingkindness. He's a God of mercy. He's a God of grace. He's a good and merciful God and even though their trouble was a result of their own sin, what did God do in verse 13?

He saved them out of their distresses. 14 He brought them out of darkness
and the shadow of death And broke their bands apart.

God provided for them in response to their prayers. And so what should they do in verse 15?

15 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His
wonders to the sons of men! 16 For He has shattered gates of bronze And
cut bars of iron asunder.

Now here at this portion of the Psalm, the Psalmist is talking about a physical deliverance of literal prisoners but isn't it obvious that those of us that have been spiritually delivered

by Christ from the bondage of sin and our bondage to Satan, that this has even greater application to us? If you've been delivered from sin by the saving power of Jesus Christ, if you've been brought from death to life by the new birth imparted by the Holy Spirit to your heart, if all of your guilt has been forgiven in Christ and you are no longer on a path that leads to hell and destruction but you are on the path that leads to heaven and delight, isn't it obvious that you all the more, even more than literal physical prisoners, those of you that understand the spiritual deliverance that is yours in Christ, isn't it obvious that your heart should be responding to God in just this same way? Shouldn't you be at the front of the line of those who are giving thanks to the Lord for his loyal love and for his wonders to the sons of men?

One of the things that is really delightful about talking to new Christians is the sense that they have of, "Why did God save me?" In their spiritual infancy they look for something inside themselves, "What did I do, Lord, to deserve this mercy?" And soon enough they'll figure out there was nothing in them that deserved mercy. God was just good to them. God was just good to you, my friend, and he saved you just because he's good and he's loving. It delighted him to show that mercy to you. Nothing about you that earned it. Nothing about you that distinguished you from someone else who has not received his mercy. God just sovereignly poured out love upon you and when you cried out under the influence of the Spirit of God, "God, save me! Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" And God did that, you were on the receiving end of the very same lovingkindness that this Psalm is talking about.

Well, if that's you, if you're genuinely a Christian, then Scripture speaks to you tonight to set everything else aside, verse 15, look at it there with me. Let's use the second person singular by way of application. "Let you give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to you." For he has delivered you from the chains of Satan. He's delivered you from the chains of your own sin and he's cut it asunder and broken the chains and now your heart is free. If Christ sets you free, you are free indeed. And if that's you, if you're a Christian tonight, then give thanks to the Lord for his loyal love to you.

Well, he goes on. He's talked about those lost in the wilderness, those lost in prison, and then he speaks about those lost in affliction, those lost in affliction beginning in verse 17. He tells of a problem that sounds like a massive plague that has come upon a people. He says in verse 17, "Fools," and notice that this is coming to them again because of their own rebellion. Verse 17,

17 Fools, because of their rebellious way, And because of their iniquities,
were afflicted. 18 Their soul abhorred all kinds of food, And they drew
near to the gates of death.

They were about to die under the weight of this physical affliction. Now other parts of the Bible tell us that not all sickness is punishment so we shouldn't take this as a universal description that all sickness is a result of sin. That's not the case, but here in this case their trouble was self-inflicted. They had a debilitating and potentially fatal illness of

some kind that the writer of Scripture ascribes as a consequence of their own sin. So again, these are people who have no basis upon their own to call out to God. They have no righteous basis. They have no merit of their own to appeal to to have God hear them. They are guilty. They are suffering. They are weak. They are impotent. There is nothing about them to recommend them to God and all they can do is cry out in their feeble nature and from the depths of their own guilty soul, verse 19,

19 ... they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;

Same language as verse 13. Same language as verse 6. You see the pattern. They cried out to the Lord in the trouble, "Lord, have mercy on me the sinner!"

He saved them out of their distresses. 20 He sent His word and healed them, And delivered them from their destructions.

So again the repetition says,

21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! 22 Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, And tell of His works with joyful singing.

Praise is the appropriate response when God has delivered you from affliction.

You know, and I say this sympathetically and I say this because I know that I'm part of the problem here with what I'm about to describe, but when people share prayer requests with me privately or share them in a group setting as we did this past Sunday, we've gotten down the routine of identifying our problems that we want others to pray for us about and God has a way of answering those prayers, but you know, it's a smaller subset of people that ever come back around and say, "Do you know what I want to do? I want to thank God here publicly, I want to acknowledge that God answered my prayers. I had this affliction, I had this family problem and we prayed about it. I want to thank you for prayer and I want to give honor to God because He answered the prayers and the situation's been resolved and I'm so grateful and thankful to Him." You know, it reminds me of the parable that Jesus taught, it may have been an actual historical incident, I didn't look this up in my notes, but you remember how the 10 lepers came to Jesus and he healed them all and sent them away. They all went away rejoicing because they had been healed. Only one of them, 10%, only one of them came back, fell down at his feet and thanked the Lord for what he had done. You see, we tend to be more like the 90 than we might care to admit both privately and corporately here, and what this Psalm teaches us and one of the ways that it corrects us here this evening is that if you are on the receiving end of answer to God's prayer, then you need to be giving thanks, you need to be swift to give thanks to God for his goodness as you were to cry out to him in your distress. That's spiritual integrity, you might say. That's the biblical pattern that the Psalmist is trying to teach us. So it's good for us to express our dependence on God, what I'm saying on our dependence on Christ, what I'm saying is that let's take the next right, proper, appropriate step, the biblical step that is just as eager to give thanks to God as we were to make

supplication to him. I have a feeling that every one of us need that word of correction from God's word tonight. I know I do.

Well, going on he gives another illustration, those lost at sea. He tells a problem, he tells about a problem involving sailors at sea. If you think about the book of Jonah and the opening chapter where Jonah was onboard and God hurled a huge storm on the sea to discipline him and the ship is back and forth and everybody is getting seasick, you may have a picture of what the Psalmist had in mind here actually because Jonah would predate this Psalm if our understanding of the setting of this Psalm is correct. Verse 23,

23 Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters; 24 They have seen the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep. 25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea. [It makes me seasick to read this.] 26 They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths [up to the heavens, down to the depths]; Their soul melted away in their misery. 27 They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end.

You can picture them going, running to the edge of the boat to just get and do what you do when you're seasick over the edge of the boat. This is the picture that he's giving us and in that misery, in that place of the forces of God's nature being arrayed against them and in a situation that they had no control over, and in their misery what did they do? Verse 28,

28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses.

When they tossed Jonah in, the sea turned to glass, didn't it? When Jesus was with the disciples in the boat, he manifested his deity by saying to the raging sea, "Hush. Be still." And it became like a sea of glass. The Psalmist is saying that God provided for them in response to their prayers. Verse 29,

29 He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad because they were quiet,

You just picture these seasick guys. "Ohhh, I'm so glad that's over!" And there's no more motion under their feet.

30 ... they were glad because they were quiet, So He guided them to their desired haven.

They went from being at risk of shipwreck to being safe at shore. What should they do? Verse 31,

31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, And for His wonders to the sons of men! 32 Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, And praise Him at the seat of the elders.

Deliverance, God's deliverance of us from our problems, God's deliverance of us from our sins call for public praise. That's why it's so important for us to join in congregationally when we sing and to sing it out and to participate like that, to declare the deeds of God to your spouse and to your children, to speak when you're grouped together with other believers. "Do you know what? Let's not talk about politics tonight, let's not talk about sports or the latest entertainment because I just have to tell you about the goodness of God and what He's done to my soul." And sanctify all of the conversations. Maybe, I don't have mine up here with me, you know, but I invite you to put your phone down and say to somebody soon, "I'm so grateful to be in Christ. I'm so grateful for what God has done." This is not something that we just experience and internalize privately, look at it there in verse 32, "Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, And praise Him at the seat of the elders."

So we've seen how the pattern of God's deliverance. Well, we need to hustle up here for the rest of our time and I think we can. The second section that we see is the providence of God's disposal. The providence of God's disposal and that heading, that bullet point means absolutely nothing. Let me explain what I mean by that. He goes on in this section to show forth the way that God operates in time, that God has power over situations and he has power over people and he deals with them according to his will. God disposes of human situations in the way that he deems best without any fear or without anybody contradicting him. He is sovereign. He is able to do whatever he pleases, whenever he pleases, to whomever he pleases because he has absolute power and he works off of the perfect knowledge of everything that has ever happened, is happening now, and ever will happen. And so what does God do with that sovereignty? Well, one thing he does is he will take away prosperity as a punishment for sin. Verses 33 and 34,

33 He changes rivers into a wilderness And springs of water into a thirsty ground; 34 A fruitful land into a salt waste, Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

People sin, God has the power to discipline them and part of the way that he does that is through circumstantial adversity that causes them to suffer as a result of their rebellion against God.

Now conversely, looking at it from the other side of the spectrum, God is equally able to give grace to those who are suffering in times of poverty. Verse 35,

35 He changes a wilderness into a pool of water And a dry land into springs of water; 36 And there He makes the hungry to dwell, So that they may establish an inhabited city, 37 And sow fields and plant vineyards, And gather a fruitful harvest. 38 Also He blesses them and they multiply greatly, And He does not let their cattle decrease.

On the one hand in this section, you have people in prosperity that God humbles. On another hand, you have people in poverty, suffering, and God lifts them up. God humbles the proud, he gives grace to the humble. Isn't he wonderful? Isn't it wonderful to know that arrogant men are not beyond the sovereign discipline of God? That gives us comfort in all of our earthly afflictions. It's also wonderful to know in our times of need that God has the ability to lift us up. Some of you, I know, have experienced that personally in your business dealings and things like that. You were on the brink of ruin and God somehow brought it back. What a blessing to see. This is the nature of God. This is his providence. He casts down men from lofty positions to humble them. Look at verse 39,

39 When they are diminished and bowed down Through oppression,
misery and sorrow, 40 He pours contempt upon princes And makes them
wander in a pathless waste.

But by contrast, he lifts up the humble and blesses them. Verse 41,

41 But He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction, And
makes his families like a flock. 42 The upright see it and are glad; But all
unrighteousness shuts its mouth.

Through God's sovereign power, through his loyal love, God can reverse the condition of anyone, in anything, at any time. The Old Testament is filled with this. The New Testament is filled with this. Paul went out on the road to Damascus breathing threats of murder and violence against the church of God and Christ stopped him on the road, converted him and he became the great Apostle Paul. God is sovereign and he exercises his sovereignty in loyal love toward his people, his people being those who cry out humbly to him in their distress and trust him for his mercy. For us in these days in the New Testament, trusting him for his mercy in Christ.

This is who God is. This is what he does. This is timeless, as we said at the beginning. This transcends everything on earth. This transcends everything in life. This is, do you know what? This is going to be true about God 100 years from now when all of us are gone. This is going to be as true then as it is today. It's as true today as when the Psalmist wrote it some 2,000-2,500 years ago. This is who God is and that brings us to our third and final point: the purpose of this Psalm. The purpose of this Psalm. All of this repetition has enforced a lesson upon us if we have ears to hear. It makes us think deeply. Verse 43,

43 Who is wise?

Who is wise? In other words, after having heard all of these things by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will you be wise in response to it because here's what the wise man does, here's what the wise woman does in response to all of these things.

Let him give heed to these things, And consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD.

Pay attention. Think about these things beyond tonight and shape your worldview by them and live and respond to life as though the things you have heard are actually true, and as you do that, consider the multiplied plural mercies of God. God delights in showing this loyal love to his people. He delights in forgiving sin. He delights in blessing those who call upon him and making himself known. That is who God is and he doesn't change, and so what you and I are to do if we are to be wise, is to take these things, meditate upon them, affirm them deeply in our hearts and let them shape the way that we respond to life henceforth and forevermore.

Wisdom here is a word that indicates practical skill in life. So my friends, are you here tonight and do you find yourself in affliction? Give heed to these things and call upon the Lord. Consider the lovingkindness of the Lord and renew your prayers for help. You young people starting out on the verge of life, would you want to be a humble man, become a humble woman living under the blessing of God? Do you want that for your life? Would you aim your life after such things? Well, consider the things of this Psalm and see how God sovereignly disposes the affairs of men. Count on it, believe the word of God that he casts down the proud but he lifts up the humble, and based on that unalterable moral principle of the universe and the character of God, young people, decide in your heart what kind of man or woman you're going to be. Will you follow in humble obedience Christ? Or will you spurn his word and go your own separate way? I'll tell you, it's obvious from this word, one is the path of blessing, one is the path of destruction and there will be no excuse later on, "No one told me about this." You've been told. Scripture is clear and now the wise man chooses how he will respond.

For those of us that are in Christ and we've seen the hand of God blessing us, taking us through adversity, giving us prosperity, sometimes taking it away for a time and all of the ups and downs of life, look, we know who God is. We know that he's good. We know that he's faithful and that means that we can bow down before him even now before we have the answer and give him thanks.

And so, my friends, are you among the redeemed? Has God delivered you from sin? Are you one of those who praise him for deliverance? If Christ has saved you, my friend, give thanks to God and tell others that he is good. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for this Psalm but we thank You even more for what this Psalm tells us about You. You are the God who saves. For many of us in this room, Father, You saved us when we called upon You, "God, save me from my sin! I'm so guilty! O God, send Christ into my life and save me!" And You did, made us new, changed us, brought the word to life, set us in a broad place and filled our lives with blessing. Father, we thank You for that. For those to whom these things are foreign, Father, perhaps having sat under some kind of Bible teaching for a long time but these words strike them new

today, this is God in a way that they hadn't understood before, Father, would You be gracious to them, Father, would You work in their hearts so that they would cry out to You in their trouble and then save them out of all of their distresses and manifest to all under the sound of my voice that You are a good God of great loyal love. Let us be among the wise who give heed to these things and consider the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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