

Paul Linnell, 13 June 2021

(Sermon Summary)

Psalm 107 - Different Kinds of Trouble

People ask “If there is a God, what is He like?” We find the answer in this Psalm which tells the true stories of many people who experienced the Lord’s deliverance in dire circumstances. The one central character is the living God. This Psalm has no reference to Israel, its prophets and kings, and is not set in a historical context. Rather, as the story of different people from across the nations, it has a New Testament perspective. Jesus said that people would come from the east, west, north and south and sit down in the kingdom of God.

The Psalm sets out four scenarios of different people in different kinds of trouble.

The spiritually destitute (vv4-9)

These people are spiritually lost and wandering in a desert. The world has not satisfied their souls and they are spiritually starving.

“*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble*”. God can satisfy our spiritual hunger and show us the path of life (Ps. 16). Jesus Himself is the direct Way (John 14:6) that takes us into the city of God, where we are satisfied with the blessings of the Kingdom. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matt. 5:6). We read about the heavenly city in Revelation 21:2-3 - it is a real city, but it also is the presence of God with us.

Are you aching, restless and dissatisfied? You can only be satisfied with the God who made you for Himself. If you are a Christian, you are already on the way to the heavenly city.

The spiritually imprisoned (vv10-16)

These verses speak of imprisonment: solitary confinement, with death looming. The reason is clear - the people have rebelled against God. These are people who have known about God, known the right way and rejected it out of their arrogance. It describes Israel but also all peoples, who have evidence of God’s existence through creation and through their conscience (Romans 1 and 2). Pride and arrogance leads to darkness and death: “The pride of your heart has deceived you” (Obadiah 3). Sin takes you down to death and hell.

These people deserved their fate, but then *they cried out to the Lord in their trouble* and He delivered them. What infinite grace and mercy God shows when people humble themselves! He breaks their chains of pride and hardness and sets the captives free (Isaiah 61). This is how Jesus destroys the works of the devil.

The spiritually sick (vv17-22)

These people are not conscious rebels, but have sinned through carelessness and ignorance, giving in to fleshly self-indulgence. Now they are suffering the consequences in their bodies: they are bound by their addictions and cravings, and see suicide as the only way out.

'They cried out to the Lord in their trouble' and He saved them. He saves them by sending His Word (v20). Jesus commanded sicknesses and demons with a word. The Word of God cleanses and corrects (Ps 19); the Gospel justifies and sanctifies.

It is a lie of the devil that we find liberation by throwing off God's constraints. Sin is a cruel taskmaster who holds us in bondage, but Jesus releases us (Hebrews 2:14-15).

The spiritually overwhelmed (vv23-30)

These sailors are not committing any particular sin; they are going about their everyday lives when unforeseen circumstances overwhelm them and they can no longer cope. This can happen to any of us. The Lord delivers instantaneously; he calms the storms and guides them to a safe haven, just as He did when He stilled the storm on the sea of Galilee. Our response must be to thank God for His goodness.

What can we learn from this Psalm?

1. In this life there will always be trouble (Job 5:7).
2. Troubles can be all-consuming, leaving us unable to cope.
3. In all these troubles, we must cry out to the Lord. We are often too proud to ask, or do not have the faith to believe He will deliver us.
4. The Lord is willing and able to deliver and save. He is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. We are delivered through the cross of Christ.
5. He delivers out of His sheer grace and mercy. His power is made perfect in weakness.
6. God is faithful and just, gracious and full of compassion.
7. We can see God at work in salvation. This demonstrates that He is real.

Does this Psalm describe your situation? You must cry out to God for yourself, "God have mercy on me, a sinner". Then you will come to that wonderful safe haven of peace.

If you have been saved and redeemed, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so" (v2); tell others what great things the Lord has done for you (Mark 5:19).