

The Four Sinners: The Relationship Between
Humanity and Its Creator
A Verse-by-Verse Devotional Reflection on Psalm 107

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2023

The Four Sinners

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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The Four Sinners

March 27, 2023

Abstract

The book of Psalms is an essential means of worship to the Christian. Commanded to be sung and studied, God consistently uses the psalms to communicate with His people. His conviction, creativity, and faithful love are emphasized through the writing of each psalmist. This paper studies the varying types of psalms, the manner in which they are constructed, and the required response of the worshiper to the psalms.

Psalm 107, known as *Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So* if found to be titled, is a song of communal response and repentance. One sees that this title implies the lyrics of what can be realized as a modern-day chorus. The psalm is split into six sections, the second through fifth being of similar nature and structure, each describing a manner of sin and ending with a chorus declaring 'Let them thank the LORD for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man!'. The magnificent aspect to these repetitive lyrics is worthy of study as they display the opposing relationship of human sinful instinct and the grace of God.

The Four Sinners: The Relationship Between Humanity and Its Creator

Introduction

The book of Psalms is one of the most quoted books of Scripture. Written as songs by various songwriters and musical worshipers, the psalms helped establish a culture of expressing emotions both individually and communally to the Lord through music. The psalms are essential within the repertoire of the worshiper and should therefore be studied, reflected upon, and sung.

What Are Psalms?

In order to effectively prepare to read through a psalm, one must first understand what psalms are and how they were meant to be read. The book of Psalms is one of the poetic books of the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures, and it is arguably the longest book of the Bible. It is a collection of songs divinely composed by King David, Asaph, Moses, Solomon, Heman the Ezrahite, Ethan the Ezrahite, and the three Sons of Korah. The psalms were written as a form of raw, artistic expression that could not be satisfied in non-creative means.¹ It is no surprise that literature such as the psalms is present within Scripture as man was crafted in the image of God to create, and therefore the book of Psalms is meant to be held with equivalent importance to other non-poetic books of the Bible.² The psalms are another means through which humanity is able to emotionally convene with God through His Word.

How Are Psalms Meant to Be Read?

¹ Phil Moore. 2013. *Straight to the Heart of Psalms: 60 Bite-sized Insights*. Lion Hudson

² Howard Neil Wallace. 2017. *Words to God, Word from God: The Psalms in the Prayer and Preaching of the Church*. London, England: Routledge

Types of Psalms

Prior to understanding psalms, it is essential to identify the various types of psalms – hymns of praise, songs of Zion, personal psalms of distress, psalms of individual thanksgiving, royal psalms, and communal psalms.³ John H. Hayes simplifies these multiple classes of psalmic literature by corresponding the psalms to “human expression to the divine”, which he says is expressed through petition and praise.⁴ Through praise, the worshiper(s) bestow adoration upon God and declare His glory. When songs of praise are sung, worshipers collide with the presence of God through creative extolling.⁵

Hymns of Praise

Hymns of praise exist in order to teach and encourage extolling. They assist the worshiper in learning how to offer the Lord praise, what to praise Him for, and why He alone is worthy of praise. Psalms 8; 29; 47; 93; 95-100; 113-115; 117; 135-136; 146-150; and even Psalms 105-107 are typically noted as examples of these hymns of praise.⁶ The psalms that are grouped within this category share similar structural patterns and calls, containing an introductory exhortation, proclamation of divine praise (including drawing awareness to the Person and works of God), and ending with a reiteration of the opening exhortation.⁷ Hymns of praise serve both as reminders of the character of God and pure, joyful worship.

³ John H. Hayes. 1976. *Understanding the Psalms*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21, 23, 26.

Songs of Zion

Zion is the synonymous, symbolic, name for the holy city of Jerusalem. It refers to the place where God resides within the context of the post-Exodus Old Testament. This collection of psalms, including Psalms 42; 84; 122; 46; 15; and 132, were all composed around the concept and tangible location of Zion, or Jerusalem.⁸ These psalms refer to the journey out of Egypt to the promised land of Jerusalem, the place where the Spirit of God was worshiped – in the temple of Jerusalem – as well as the people of Zion, or in other terms, God’s chosen race.⁹ Songs of Zion serve as reminders to the Israelites (God’s chosen people) of the power and faithfulness of God and who they are meant to be in Him.

Personal Psalms of Distress

Since the Creation, God has intended for mankind to be in relationship with Him. To be in a relationship means to be emotionally intimate and trusting, which is precisely what these types of psalms encourage and accomplish. Personal psalms of distress are cries and appeals to the Lord for help. They speak authentically of the difficulties of life, the anguishes of grief, adversity, and affliction.¹⁰ These are psalms are laments and pleas that achieve both the example of how humanity is meant to petition to the Lord, and the mere fact that we are meant to go to God with our sorrows and frustrations.¹¹

⁸ Hayes, *Understanding the Psalms*, 41-56.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41-56.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57-84.

¹¹ Will Kines. 2012. *My Psalm Has Turned into Weeping: Job’s Dialogue with the Psalms*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Personal psalms of distress are structured in seven subsequent parts – the address to God, the description of distress, the plea for redemption, the statement of confidence, the confession of sin or affirmation of innocence, a pledge or vow, and a concluding praise or plea.¹² This structure is found consistently throughout nearly all personal distress psalms, including Psalms 31; 13; 17; 25; 31; 55-56. The personal psalms of distress beautifully serve the worshiper by guiding them on how to petition to the Lord and that He created us to be emotionally intimate beings that long for His goodness.

Psalms of Individual Thanksgiving

The psalms of individual thanksgiving are the “counterpart(s) to the lament,” as the psalm was composed out of a place of assurance and gratitude as opposed to distress.¹³ It is the personal testimony that results in a display of gratitude that makes these psalms ‘individual’ in their thanksgiving. The structure of the thanksgiving psalm begins with a call to thank the Lord or a reference to gratitude.¹⁴ Following this call is a more developed description of the distress the psalmist previously found themselves within.¹⁵ It is not uncommon for this description to allude to the appeal made within lament. The thanksgiving psalm then concludes with vertical

¹² Hayes, *Understanding the Psalms*, 21.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

acknowledgment and praise, reinstating the initial call to thank the Lord.¹⁶ Examples of psalms of individual thanksgiving include Psalms 116; 66; 30; 104; 32-34; and 73.¹⁷

Royal Psalms

Royal psalms are unique to other psalms in their usage and content, rather than in their structure and themes.¹⁸ These psalms were composed to be used within rituals and services that centered around the king and embody various other psalm types.¹⁹ Some royal psalms are songs of praise or thanksgiving, whereas others are laments and appeals. Psalms used within royal services were composed as a result of the Israelite culture viewing the king as a son of God that was divinely appointed to be in communion with both the Lord and the people, deeming the creation of special, royal psalms.²⁰ These psalms were sung in coronations (Psalms 2; 72; 101; 110), pre-battle rituals, royal weddings, illness and disease within the royal household (Psalms 22; 28; 61; 63; 71; 89; 144), and other large difficulties and triumphs (Psalms 18; 118; 138). The royal psalms can be used to worship by anyone, but it is important to note their sacredness and usage within Israelite society.²¹

¹⁶ Levi, Avital Hazon. 2022. "Worship: Bowing down in the Service of God." *Religious Studies* 58, no. 3 (2022): 487-504.

¹⁷ Hayes, *Understanding the Psalms*, 87-95.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 97-114.

Communal Psalms

The final type of psalm to identify is the communal psalm. The definition of the communal psalm is precisely as it would be perceived – they are psalms meant to be sung within the context of a congregation. Communal psalms encompass all the other psalm types, leading congregations in songs of lament (Psalms 12; 44; 58; 60; 79-80; 137), thanksgiving (Psalms 65-67; 75; 100; 105-107; 124), and even royal psalms at specific festivities.²² A psalm does not have to be composed within the present ‘we’ tense, as gatherings would often partake in saying ‘I’ as a undivided entity, which occurs in Psalm 129:1-2.²³ Communal psalms had significant roles in the unifying of God’s chosen people as it allowed congregations to worship as one and in the same posture.

Poetry and Scripture

Prior to studying how the psalms are meant to be read, one must understand how the book of Psalms was written. It does not take a mastermind to open the Bible and see the obvious difference in writing style between the psalms and the book of Numbers, especially since the visible formatting of the two are highly contrasted. The book of Numbers is written in prose, whereas the psalms are composed as poetry.

A common initial reaction to the inclusion of poetic writing in Scripture centers around the confusion of why God would include something within His Word that does not communicate in a straightforward manner. If He has something to say to His people, why does He not simply say it? Man can never truly know the mind or reasonings of God, but humanity does experience a

²² Hayes, *Understanding the Psalms*, 115-126.

²³ *Ibid.*, 115.

different reaction to prose versus poetry. Poetry evokes a deeper set of emotions that only the artistic and the creative can stir. It is why songs are written as poetry and recited poems to a lover are often deemed as more sentimental. Scripture also displays the truth that God never fails to communicate and convene with His people in a way that is personal and easy for them to understand, whether that be through experiences, visuals, or a direct word. This allows man to conclude that the Lord knew His children would most effectively connect with Him through both prose and poetry, and therefore the poetry in Scripture must be held with the same weight as the books with more direct language. The difference lies in the reading and interpreting of the artistic and metaphorical wordage.

Old Testament poetry was written in the Hebrew language. Hebrew poetry is known for its prevailing characteristic of repetition, formally labeled as parallelism.²⁴ Parallelism manifests through lines or phrases in a poem, or psalm, being subsequently restated throughout the poem. This makes for the obvious emphasis of specific themes or calls and assist the reader in the imprinting of that theme on their mind.²⁵

Poetry in general is characterized by its romantic nature, as it is filled with figurative language and abstract thoughts. This concept must also be present in the mind of the person reading the psalms as they too are filled with imagery, metaphors, and various figurativeness. Even more so than prose Scripture, the psalms are to be interpreted with an open mind and an awareness to what is plainly stated and what is metaphorical. An example of this is found in Psalm 62:1 in which David refers to God as his rock. This symbolism of a rock deeply displays

²⁴ Pieter Van der Lugt. 2013. *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry III: Psalms 90-150 and Psalm 1*. The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill.

²⁵ Sigmund Mowinckel. 1962. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. New York: Abingdon Press.

God as unchangeable and solid, for God is not an actual rock. Using figurative language helps the heart connect to the mind's eye and further implants a thought in the human emotion, which is simply one reason why the psalms are so significant in the life of man.

Singing the Psalms

The psalms are musical poetry, which imply that they were originally intended to be sung, yet they were not solely worship music of the past. It is commanded in the New Testament, during the era of the post-cross Church, that God's worshipers are meant to "admonish one another" through "singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:15). This not only instructs Christians to worship through singing psalms, but it differentiates the singing of the psalms from other types of musical worship.²⁶ This in turn commands man to study and reflect upon the psalms so that when they are sung their lyrics are not overlooked, and neither are the displayed works and Person of God.²⁷

Psalm 107

Psalm 107, entitled within the Bible as *Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So*, is the first psalm of the fifth section, or book, of collected psalms.²⁸ It establishes an overarching theme within this fifth collection – the faithful, steadfast love of God and His worthiness of praise.

²⁶ Mowinckel. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1962.

²⁷ John Kartje. 2014. *Wisdom Epistemology in the Psalter: A Study of Psalms 1, 73, 90, and 107*. De Gruyter.

²⁸ Daniel J. Estes, 2019. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture – Psalms 73-150, Vol. 13*. B&H Publishing Group, 313.

Psalm 107 tells of four different scenarios, some of which were real situations the Israelites collectively endured whereas others are more metaphorical.²⁹ These scenarios paint various sins that separate humanity from God which are used to accentuate the faithful love of the Lord – *hesed*.^{30 31} This is a beautiful psalm to study as it not only reveals the sinful nature of man, but it also further displays the perfect nature of God.

Primary Themes

Although Psalm 107 is mainly split into four sections that dive into the types of physical and spiritual sins of man, the theme of the psalm is better expressed through its title – *Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So* - that was added after the compilation of the book.³² Psalm 107 is a testament to the consistency of God, including His never-changing worthiness of praise, His constant grace and mercy, and His unwavering love. The faithful love of the Lord, known in the Hebrew language as *hesed*, is perhaps the most prevalent characteristic of God within this psalm.³³

²⁹ Stephen J. Lawson. 2006. *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Psalms 76-150*, ed. Max Anders. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

³⁰ C. S. Lewis. 1958. *Reflections on the Psalms*. United Kingdom: Harcourt Brace.

³¹ Lawson, *Old Testament Commentary*, 177.

³² Estes, *The New American Commentary*, 314.

³³ Lauren Chandler. 2016. *Steadfast Love: The Response of God to the Cries of Our Hearts*. B&H Publishing Group.

Hesed Love in Psalm 107

Hesed does not have an English equivalent, since the only word for love in the English language is ‘love’. *Hesed* love refers to a love of kindness and loyalty that arouses mercy and compassion.³⁴ When this is put into the context of Psalm 107 it changes the focus from the sinner to the Lord. Since Psalm 107 describes in detail different sins, it is easy for the reader to emphasize the downfall and despair that sin causes rather than the loyal and merciful love with which God always responds.³⁵ The psalm itself is bookended with a communal call to praise God, and the end of each section tells of the Lord’s consistent response – mercy, compassion, and faithful love. Each sinner and response of God is analyzed and reflected upon in the relative devotional.³⁶ It is essential that as Psalm 107 is read, it is read within the framework of *hesed* in order to best comprehend the wonderful, perfect love of God despite the sinful nature of His children.

Four Sections of the Psalm**The Wanderer**

As previously acknowledged, Psalm 107 is primarily constructed around the descriptions of four types of spiritual sins, the first of these being a wandering spirit. This is found in verses 4-9 which both paints a picture of a person wandering from the Lord and reminds the Israelites

³⁴ Lewis. *Reflections on the Psalms*, 1958.

³⁵ Ben Witherington. 2017. *Psalms Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics*. Fortress Press.

³⁶ Yohanna Katanaho. 2018. *Praying Through the Psalms*. Langham Creative Projects.

of the faithfulness of God through their physical wandering post Exodus.³⁷ The wanderer is a beautiful picture of how hearts drift from the Lord that also served as an admonition to His chosen people of His goodness.

The Prisoner

Verses 10-16 characterize the person imprisoned within their sin. This section is also graciously metaphorized in a manner that the Israelites can connect with as they were physically imprisoned under the Egyptians.³⁸ God delivered them from their physical enslavement, and through this psalm, both the Israelites and the worshiper are encouragingly reminded of the spiritual freedom found in God.

The Fool

The next set of verses, 17-22, depict the sin of foolishness. Relative to the Israelites neglecting the Lord and turning to the idols of the world for fulfillment, the sin of the fool keeps them from finding joy and peace in the obedience of the Lord.³⁹

³⁷ G.T.M. Prinsloo. 2021. "From Desperation to Adoration: Reading Psalm 107 as a Transforming Spatial Journey." *Acta Theologica*, Vol. 32.

³⁸ Jason Byassee. 2018. *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Psalms 101-150*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, Baker Publishing Group.

³⁹ Allen P. Ross. 2016. *A Commentary on the Psalms: Volume 3 (90-150)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 306.

The Adept

The final characterized sin is that of adeptness, or rather the misconception that mere humans have control greater than God. The person that lives in the trust of their own abilities really lives in their own pride and the disillusionment of a lack of need for God. The Israelites chose to trust in their own ‘power’ via prophets, judges, and kings, yet each time they were reminded of the much greater, perfect power of the Lord.⁴⁰

The Lord’s Redemption in Psalm 107

It is essential that the reader of Psalm 107 does not neglect to identify the mercy of God within each sinner’s story. The Lord’s response is consistent to each sinner – He delivers when they call and brings them to a place of safety, gratitude, and praise. He makes His Presence prevalent despite how far the sinner tried to run. This not only serves as a present reminder to the worshiper, but it also served as a source of both conviction and remembrance to the Israelites as they lived through some of the described scenarios.⁴¹ The psalm is bookended with a call to lift due praise to the Lord and utilizes Hebrew literary devices in its repetition of its call at the end of each stanza or section.⁴² The *hesed* love of the Lord and His worthiness of worship is consistently emphasized throughout the psalm, accentuating the theme of His loyal, merciful adoration for His children.

⁴⁰ W. Dennis Tucker. 2014. *Constructing and Deconstructing Power in Psalms 107-150*. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press.

⁴¹ Robert L. Alden. 2019. *Psalms – Everyday Bible Commentary*. Moody Publishers.

⁴² Quentin F. Wesselschmid . 2007. *Psalms 51-150*. ”Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture”, Intersity Press.

Conclusion

The poetic book of psalms within Scripture highlights the creativity and beauty of the Lord instilled within His image – man. Each psalm is composed as a song consisting of Hebrew figurative language. They tell stories that bring the worshiper closer to the heart of God while making them more aware of their natural unholiness, and Psalm 107 is a wonderful example of these works. The worshiper has the opportunity to come before God with praise, sorrow, questions, and all other emotions, and the written psalms encourage this openness.⁴³ As it is a command to sing and study the psalms, the Christian must understand and appreciate to depth and love of God displayed through the book of psalms.

⁴³ Katanaho. *Praying Through the Psalms*.

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Bookend of Praise: v.1-3

“Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” Psalm 107:1-3

Psalm 107 is a psalm composed by David, the leading writer of the book of Psalms. A consistency within many of the Davidic psalms is found in how the psalm begins and ends. The majority of David’s songs are bookended by praise, starting and ending by lifting up to God the worship He is due. The first three verses of this psalm continue in this trend, offering God praise and stating Who He is in order to center the heart of the reader on the true focal point of the passage. These verses command all that have been redeemed by God to gather together and praise God, from the north, the east, the south, and the west. While this may seem like simply a sweet element to the psalm, we must recognize that David is making the point that people from all four corners of the Earth have testimonies of the steadfast love of God, and yet, all people have sinned and fallen short (Romans 3:23). In the subsequent strophes of this psalm, David uses four examples of different types of sinners to display the lowliness of man and the incredible, undeserved mercy of God.

This devotional is to serve as a resource as we reflect on not only these types of sin and which we tend to fall trap to, but the *hesed* love of God. We will study each sinner one week at a time in accordance with God’s response to the sin, and in turn, the reactive actions of the redeemed. We serve a God that is perfect in love, Who wants the best for us, and relentlessly pursues us. Let us be intentional as we strive to be introspective and humble, offering this time of reflection as a sacrifice to God.

Week One

The Wanderer

'Some wandered in desert waste, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.'

Psalm 107:4-9 ESV

Day One – Verse 4ⁱⁱⁱ

‘Some wandered in desert waste, finding no way to a city to dwell in;’ Psalm 107:4 ESV

In our western culture, there is a large emphasis on the idea of ‘routine.’ Having a set task list or methodology to life makes us feel as though we have a purpose. We create our own ‘breadcrumb trail’ with these tasks and put our trust in the path guiding us home at the end of the day. While having discipline is good and healthy, it is far easier to fall into the traps of our physical tasks, and, in turn, find ourselves lost within their chaos. Yes, there are many other things that cause us to spiral and become overwhelmed or lost, such as becoming consumed by relationships or seeking entertainment or even our own very real struggles. Regardless of how we have lost our way, far too often does our ‘trail of breadcrumbs’ become whisked away by the wind, leaving us to wander.

In this verse, the wanderer finds themselves in a desert wilderness without a place of safety. The wilderness, in the ancient age, was always associated with the dangers that lay within it – beasts and predators, robbers, unpredictable weather and terrains, and other threatening dangers.ⁱⁱⁱ We are fortunate to live in a society where the wilderness itself is not a common threat or fear, and yet we find ourselves marching into it far too willingly. The wilderness, or waste, is a metaphor for being far from God, and ‘finding no way to a city to dwell in’ refers to the state of aimlessness. When we lose sight of our true and eternal ‘north,’ we place ourselves on a path that begs us to wander. This wasteland and aimless separation manifests in losing sight of our identity and placing it in earthly or tangible successes. It is revealed in finding meaning out of others and what culture dictates rather than what is true to Scripture. We drift deeper into the desert waste when we worship food or exercise or knowledge rather than allowing those to be acts of obedience and worship to the only One worthy of true worship.

When we do find ourselves aimless in the wasteland, how can we find our way back?

The Word of God is our compass that leads directly to the heart of God. It is filled with protection from the dangers of the wilderness (see Ephesians 6). It overflows with truth that realigns us towards Heaven – the city where the relationship we were created to dwell in lies. When we choose to make our way out of the wilderness, we learn that the path to safety and direction is not at all difficult to find. God does not rejoice in His children wandering alone in the company of spiritual danger and separation, which is why He has given us a map - His Word - back to Him where we can dwell in His peace, truth, and security.

Reflection

1. What am I walking towards?
2. What do I choose to find safety in?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, please reveal to me the direction I’m headed. My sin takes me further from you, but I know I can come before you and ask for guidance because of the sacrifice of Your Son. Help me to stay on the path that leads directly to You.

Amen.

Day Two – Verse 5

'hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them;' Psalm 107:5 ESV

Emptiness is a feeling that all mankind fears and understands. It is a hollow common ground that humans have, for we are all born into sin and separation from God. Consequently, we can all relate to the act of trying to fill that emptiness and the failure to do so that almost always follows.

This verse refers to the hunger and lifelessness of the wanderer. Due to their state of prolonged lostness, they lack food and water – the essential nutrients of physical life – which in turn causes them to feel fatigued and weary.

When we think of nutrients that are vital to our survival, the initial items we turn to are food and drink. We must keep in mind that not all food and beverages are considered nutritious. A 10-piece nugget from McDonald's is not sustainable long-term, and neither is a spike of caffeine from a Diet Coke. It is also not sustainable to eat small amounts of food that are considered to be nutritious. There is a balance and a necessary understanding that must occur before we choose whether we consume various 'edible' items. The same is true of our spiritual appetite. We can easily choose to have a drive-thru faith, where we attend church on a Sunday for the 'quick fix,' or we listen to worship music while driving to work in order to feel spiritual. Furthermore, we can just as easily choose to have a malnourished faith, where we read a quick passage of Scripture before falling asleep each night or pray prayers that may have depth but occur infrequently. We may not even consume anything that is of eternal significance and choose to attempt being filled by money or success or relationships or anything but God. Without consistent consumption of the Word of God and the intentional act of moving nearer towards Him, we are left lost and hungry and thirsty, our souls faint and not sustained.

God is fully aware that due to our sinful nature, we humans are prone to wander. Our instinct is not to fill our souls with lasting eternal nutrients, but to seek shallow means of fulfillment that always fade. God is also our loving Father and Jehovah Jireh – our Provider. He has given us access to the Bread of Life (His Word) and the Living Water (Jesus Christ) so that we may not only be filled by His Spirit but also that we may be sustained by His love. It is our choice whether we consume this nutritious gift.

Reflection

1. What am I choosing to consume?
2. When I am hungry or thirsty for sustainability, where do I turn first for fulfillment?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

God, please reveal to me what I choose to consume and label as nutritious. Convict me of what I have tried to fill my soul with and help me to turn to the sustainability You offer, for it is steadfast and eternal. Thank you for the gift of Your Word and Your Son. Amen.

Day Three – Verse 6

'Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress.' Psalm 107:6 ESV

Luke 15:11-32

One of the counter-cultural parables found within Scripture is that of Luke 15:11-32 – *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*. In spite of its reputation, this parable is one of the greatest analogies for the love of God the Father. The parable tells of a son who blatantly disrespects his father and leaves his family in search of wealth and worldly success, only to lose everything he had. In his desolation and despair, he returns to his father seeking servitude and refuge, but his father greets him with the purest of love and mercy, throwing him a celebration upon his return.

Mercy is defined as not receiving deserved punishment. In the case of the prodigal son, his father not only spared him of the embarrassment he was due for his sins but rejoiced at his return. So does our Heavenly Father do for us. When we separate ourselves from Him in search of our own type of success or fulfillment, the humble admittance of our wandering is all that is required of us to be delivered home. We only need to cry out in our distress for our Father God to save us from our trouble and relieve us of our anguish.^{iv} Yes, He disciplines as any good father would in order to help us learn what paths lead to pain and which paths lead to joy, but He also offers us undeserved freedom from punishment. He loves us so deeply that He cannot help but respond in mercy when we call for help. He is our Jehovah Mephalt, our Deliverer.

Reflection

1. Where have I seen the mercy of God in my life?
2. What am I in need of deliverance from?
3. How can I ask God for deliverance?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

Thank You for being my Savior and Deliverer. Lord, help me to admit when I am wandering, and make me aware of what leads me further from you. You are full of mercy and rich in love and to You I give praise. I do not deserve to be treated with such adoration and yet adoration is what You pour out. Thank You God of mercy, Amen.

Day Four – Verse 7

'He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in;' Psalm 107:7 ESV

When I was about nine years old, my dad took my little brother and I hiking in the White Mountains. Although this was not new for us, we ended up taking a wrong turn on our way back down the trails and became quite delayed. As a result, night fell before we could make our way back to the trailhead. Fortunately, my dad, who is a cartography enthusiast, brought a paper copy of the trail map, which proved quite helpful since you cannot see the tree markers in the dark. Despite being scared to move through the woods as a fairly helpless child in the night, I was blessed with a father who both protected me and led me back to the safety of the car. Without the guidance of my dad, I would not have been able to find my way home.

When we find ourselves aimless, empty, and wandering, it is difficult to find refuge, much less our way home, yet we have been blessed with a Father that we can fully trust to guide our way. In this verse, after the wanderer cried out to God in submission and need (verse 6), He delivered them and led them on the right path to a place of safety. He brought them to a refuge they would never have been able to reach alone. They were physically and spiritually drifted and lost, yet the faithful, *hesed* love of God delivered them. God is capable of doing this physically and it is our responsibility to trust that through Him, we can live a life of spiritual unwavering. We have the opportunity to directly ask our God for guidance as well as deliverance. This is what He wants for us! God has given us our own map that leads directly to His heart, and He is willing to lead us even deeper into His presence. He wants us to find refuge in His steadfast love and trust in His ability to lead and provide.

Reflection

1. What am I seeking without the guidance of God?
2. What is the destination that I have set for myself as opposed to where God wants to lead me?
3. What sin do I hold on to that keeps me from walking the path God has set?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

God, please reveal to me the direction in which You want me to go. My sin keeps me from moving straight towards You and without You I cannot find my way back. Thank You that I can come before you and ask for guidance. Amen.

Day Five – Verse 8

‘Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man!’ Psalm 107:8 ESV

One of the best ranking Disney movies to this day is a tale of a cowboy and an astronaut who become friends ‘to infinity and beyond.’ The little green aliens in *Toy Story*, annoying and yet endearing characters, have one of the most famous lines in the franchise. After Mr. Potato Head delivers the tiny toy aliens from their pizza-truck demise, they cannot help but shower him with adoration, repeating again and again: “You have saved our lives, we are eternally grateful.” Although the aliens are funny little characters, their famous one-liner rings true. If someone were to save your life, you would by default, be filled with gratitude and joy. It is the natural response to salvation.

Just like the toy aliens, we too have been saved from our deserved demise, and we too have the honor of rejoicing in the One Who delivered us. God saved us through the ultimate sacrifice of His Son, yet He did so not out of simple benevolence as Mr. Potato Head did for the aliens, but out of His perfect love for His children. As Christians, we are to love and rejoice in God more than the aliens adored Mr. Potato Head.

To put this in the context of this psalm, the Lord saved the wanderer from their lostness. He not only set them on the correct pathway but also led them directly to His sanctuary and refuge.^v Verse 8 speaks of our response to God, which is far greater than “you have saved our lives, we are eternally grateful.” God’s love is referred to as ‘steadfast’ and His works as ‘wondrous.’ His love has been and always will be present and firm. He displayed His love through the selfless act of sending His Son to pay the price for our sin. Even though the greatness of God would be true without the Cross, we are able to read this psalm through the lens of our own salvation. His most wondrous work was completed at Calvary, and yet all of His works display that same wondrous love. He reigns above all and yet He continues to deliver His children through the small and the large. How could we do anything but respond with songs of gratitude and joyful praise for both Who God is and what He has done for us?

Reflection

1. How has God displayed His love for me?
2. What was my instinctual response to God’s acts of love?
3. In what ways to I consistently give God the praise He is due?

Prayer

God, thank You for loving me even though in my sin I am undeserving of Your love. I thank You for my salvation and for your steadfast provision and displays of affection. You are God Almighty, and You alone are worthy of praise, so I offer my thanks and praise to You in this moment. I love You Lord. Amen.

Day Six – Verse 9

'For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.' Psalm 107:9 ESV

No one wants to reside in a state of longing. Longing is a yearning desire that when not filled, leaves inner hollowness. Longing tests our patience and easily causes us distress and instability. When we experience this emptiness, we also experience desolation and hopelessness. Despite these uninviting sensations, longing is a state that all of humanity is born into.^{vi} We are wired to long for fulfillment because we are born with a void caused by sin separating us from God. Often, we are left hungry and empty by our shallow attempts to fulfill our longing for God.

We fall into this temptation of emptiness and worldly fulfillment when we consume only the things of the world and the lies it tells, such as how riches will bring us peace and the perfect relationship will finally make us feel loved. The truth is that the world has nothing to offer, only God does, and in His perfect love, He came to this broken world to deliver us from these temptations.

This verse declares hope for our empty spirits. Not only does our God satisfy our inherent longing, but He also fills us with things that are good because they are from Him.^{vii} This sweet verse expounds upon God's wondrous works for which we thank Him. He meets our needs – Jehovah Jireh. He offers refuge and restoration – Jehovah Nissi. He leads us towards life and goodness – Jehovah Rohi. He guides us into what is right and true and eternal – Jehovah Tsidkenu. All we have to do is recognize that we are lost, cry for help, and trust in His deliverance and in His fulfilling goodness and love. How merciful and wonderful is He?

Reflection

1. What am I prone to long for?
2. How do I instinctually fill the void that God is meant to satisfy?
3. How can I redirect my habits and desires to chase God's fulfillment instead of the world's?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

Thank You God for Your goodness. Thank You that You want me to experience the fullness of life found in You and all of the good things that come with loving You. Help me to turn to You and the satisfaction You offer. Amen.

Day Seven – *The Gospel for the Wandering Spirit*

Redemption

God in His omniscience is fully aware of our sinful instinct. He knows that as a result of sin we are not wired toward Him, but toward our own desires. He expects us to wander from Him and stray from the path He has set for us. Out of His love and mercy, He offers us guidance away from our sin nature. He is our way out of the desert or the darkened woods. He is our protector from the predators we place ourselves in front of rather than seeking refuge in Him. Thanks to the sacrifice of His Son and the bridge that was made between us and God through the Cross, when we lose our way, all we have to do is ask, and He will deliver. There is hope for the wanderer. They do not have to be left alone, hungry, and thirsty in distress. They can call to the Lord and chose to trust His guidance and be led towards eternal restoration and satisfaction.

Application

Once we choose to be delivered from our lostness, the responsibility to refrain from wandering falls on us. God has gifted us with a map – His Word - that leads directly to Him. When we are with Him, we find true joy, peace, and fulfillment. We have the liberty to follow God's direction, but we also have the liberty to wander again. We display our gratitude for His steadfast love and wondrous works by being obedient to what He has laid out for us as good and filling and eternal. Following Him is a joy, for it is by His mercy that we simultaneously find our true freedom and direction.

Prayer

I praise You Lord for wanting me near You and for setting me on the path that leads to Your heart. Help me to stay on Your path and keep me from falling into the temptation of wandering. You are steadfast in love and worthy of following in obedience. I love You God. Amen.

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- ⁱ Phil Barfoot. 2021. *Joy Comes in the Morning: 365 Days of Gratitude*. Franklin, TN: B&H Publishing.
- ⁱⁱ Paul David Tripp. 2014. *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishing.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Daniel J. Estes, 2019. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture – Psalms 73-150, Vol. 13*. B&H Publishing Group, 313.
- ^{iv} Stephen J. Lawson. 2006. *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Psalms 76-150*, ed. Max Anders. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- ^v Estes, *The New American Commentary*, 314.
- ^{vi} G.T.M. Prinsloo. 2021. “From Desperation to Adoration: Reading Psalm 107 as a transforming spatial journey. *Acta Theologica*, Vol. 32.
- ^{vii} C. S. Lewis. 1958. *Reflections on the Psalms*. United Kingdom: Harcourt Brace.

Week Two

The Prisoner

'Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. So He bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! For He shatters the doors of the bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.'

Psalm 107:10-16 ESV

Day One – Verse 10^{viiiix}

‘Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons’ Psalm 107:10 ESV

From the moment we are born, we are captive to our sin. We are held by chains of rebellion and daily fall into the temptation of violating what God has set as good and right. Sometimes our imprisonment is a result of our own doing, such as developing an addiction to pornography, drug usage, or the simple idolization and worship of anything other than God Himself. On the other hand, sometimes it is a result of residing in a fallen world, such as struggling with eating or depression, or being born with a severe anxiety disorder, as is my imprisonment.^x Regardless, sin has taken hold of our freedom as the children of God and placed us within darkness and affliction, leaving us feeling as though we live behind iron bars.

At the time in which this psalm was composed, the common prison cell was not within a facility, but rather a deep, dark pit in the ground. Verse 10 describes darkness both as a literal darkness under the ground and as a metaphor for being within the pit of sin.^{xi} In fact, ‘the pit’ and ‘Sheol’ are used interchangeably in the Old Testament and name the location of death itself. This linguistic correlation establishes sin and death as the same place. If we read this verse and substitute the word ‘sin’ for the word ‘death,’ as they are synonymous, we read that “some sat in darkness, in the shadow of sin.”

The truth is, we all sit in the shadow of sin because all live within a world tainted by sin. This verse that introduces the form of sin we call imprisonment may seem quite gloomy and upsetting, but that is simply because it is. Sin is a place where darkness resides, and us humans live in the bondage of our sin, some that is deliberate, and some that we are born into that still act to separate us from God. For example, when are born into sin we did not choose to commit, such as anxiety, that does not mean that we have transgressed against God or that He delights in our struggle. He is a loving God that sent His Son as a sacrifice so that we do not have to be held captive by the sins of the world or the sins of our hearts. This verse is meant to help us recognize the darkness we are often imprisoned by, but it also instigates hope, as we no longer have to succumb to the pit eternally. We have the choice to be broken from death’s bondage thanks to our Almighty God.

Reflection

1. What holds me in darkness that keeps me from the freedom of God’s light?
2. Do I believe in lies that tell me I have no way out of my imprisonment? If so, what does Scripture say in relation to the lies?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

*God, please reveal to me the things that hold me captive. Reveal to me what keeps me in the darkness away from the light of your truth and love. Help guide me out of my sin and help me to live in the freedom You so graciously offer.
Amen.*

Day Two – Verse 11

‘for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High’ Psalm 107:11 ESV

Psalm 107:11 serves as the explanation for the imprisonment of the sinner introduced in verse 10. It states that they led themselves into captivity by the blatant rebellion against the wisdom and guidance of the Lord. This was not an act of ignorance, but an act of intentional sinfulness. We choose to sin because sin is in our nature as humans. As described in yesterday’s study, there are prisons of sin that we knowingly choose to throw ourselves into, and there are those that we have no control over that imprison us. The common denominator between these two types of sin imprisonment is the decision of the prisoner – whether to stay in sin, or to accept God’s gift of liberty.

Verse 11 describes that the sin of imprisonment is often, yes, the sinful act that leads us into bondage, but it is also always the deliberate choice to remain in bondage despite God’s design. We either choose to sin ourselves or choose to remain in the enslavement of a sinful world. We refuse the mercy and grace of God and the freedom He offers when we choose to despise His perfect ways. We easily fall prey to ignorance of the wisdom and light found in the Most High, choosing to live as a prisoner to the darkness.

We find hope and grace for our blatant rebellion in the wisdom and light of the Lord.^{xii} 2 Peter 1:2 states, “Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” We have been given this knowledge in the gift of His Word, and it is our responsibility to accept it and live in the freedom and grace that it offers, rather than despising it and remaining imprisoned.

Reflection

1. What has God, in His love, revealed to me that I choose to ignore?
2. Are there cycles of sin to which I continuously choose to succumb?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, please reveal to me what You have said and done for my benefit. Forgive me for the ways in which I deny receiving Your wisdom and grace and choose to love my own sinful desires. Help me find freedom in Your truth and dwell in the liberty of Your Word. Amen.

Day Three – Verse 12-13

‘So He bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress.’ Psalm 107:12-13 ESV

When we choose to remain imprisoned, God, out of His mercy, is quick to bring us back to Him. He humbles us with discipline, just as a good father should. Sometimes, the consequences to our sin are brought upon us by the world, and sometimes, they are brought upon us by God. Either way, He mercifully uses those consequences as discipline that redirects our desires toward what He has set as beneficial for His children.^{xiii}

There is a difference between punishment and discipline, which we often have a difficult time differentiating. Punishment is executed with the intent of inflicting pain, whether or not it is deserved. Discipline is executed with the intent of teaching and redirecting, which sometimes may involve hardship, but it is never performed with the desire for the receiver to remain in hardship. It is meant to humble the receiver and teach them what is favorable for their well-being and what is not. Discipline teaches through consequence and experience.

As humans, we deserve punishment. We sin against God multiple times a day, and yet, punishment is not what we receive. In fact, the only One who did not deserve punishment is the One that accepted the punishment for all of our sins. Out of His mercy, our God disciplines us when we need to learn from our mistakes and transgressions. With loving intent, He teaches us the opportunity for freedom and for good that He has set before us.

This love is even further proved in verse 13, when the prisoner cries to the Lord in realization of the affliction they brought upon themselves, and God is swift to save. God is filled with joy when we become aware of our need for Him because He wants to have a relationship with us. Sometimes, the most loving thing our Father can do is to teach us the difference between living with Him and living in sin without Him. Through His mercy, we have the opportunity to choose to live in what He has set as favorable.

Reflection

1. How has God displayed His mercy to me through His teaching and discipline?
2. What are the consequences I typically endure that come with my sin? How do they keep me separated from the freedom offered by God?
3. How can I come before God in repentance to accept His freedom?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, thank You for holding me accountable to my sin and always having my best interest at heart. Thank You for loving me so much that You continuously remind me of You, and I am sorry for when I have chosen to run from Your goodness. Amen.

Day Four – Verse 14

‘He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and burst their bonds apart’ Psalm 107:14 ESV

Romans 6:23

John 3:16

The past three days, we have studied how our sin holds us captive and our God sets us free, and verse 14 reaffirms that truth. How do we know that God is our freedom and how can His liberty be accessed?

We have been offered freedom from the bonds of sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of God the Son – Jesus Christ. He, the only One to live a perfect life apart from sin, paid the price we owed for our transgressions against God and made eternal freedom available to us (see Romans 6:23). As a result of His sacrifice, all we need to do to access that freedom is recognize our humble, lowly, sinful state as man in accordance with the greatness and worthiness of God. We must believe in the truth of Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross and that He died so that we may live eternally with Him apart from sin (see John 3:16). In doing this, we practically must choose Christ over our earthly desires. When we believe in His grace, mercy, and love and live accordingly, the bonds of our sin burst apart.

Even still, it is not uncommon to be set free in Christ and still feel the weight of our sin or feel as if we are alone in hardship. God is aware of this and that even if we have liberty through the Cross, the world we reside in has fallen and has wrongful instincts, many of which affect us. Not only does our God deliver us from the wages of sin, but He also walks with us through the hardships that we encounter. Psalm 23, a personal account and prayer of David, is a wonderful example of feeling alone in the sin of the world, but it is also a testament to the Lord being our refuge and sanctuary.^{xiv} We may “walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” but we have to “fear no evil for the Lord [our] God is with [us].” God loves us so much that not only did He in His sovereignty give us an opportunity to be released from the wages of our sin, but He remains with us in the effects of sin in our fallen world.

Reflection

1. Have I accepted the gift of eternal life and freedom from sin that God offers?
2. Do I believe that God walks with me through every shadow and wants to bring me out of darkness?
3. How do I know if I am choosing Christ over my earthly desires?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

Thank you for sacrificing Your Son so that we may have the gift of freedom from our sinful nature and dwell in Your Presence eternally. Help me to trust that You see the difficulties life presents and that You will never leave me. I know that You are a good God that just wants me near, and for that I thank You and I praise You. Amen.

Day Five – Verse 15

‘Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man!’ Psalm 107:15 ESV

This verse is a repetition of Psalm 107:8 from day 5 of last week’s study. When repetition occurs throughout Scripture, it indicates an elevated level of importance or emphasis on the repeated word or phrase. In this case, the emphasis is on praising God for Who He is and what He has done. Although there are countless praises and thanksgivings that our God is due, the testimonies of the wanderer and the prisoner differ, causing the praise they give God to have some differences. The heart behind the praise of the wanderer came from a sense of finding a safe place and a home through and in the Lord, whereas the praise of the prisoner came from a heart of freedom and deliverance.

When a captive is rescued or the price for their transgressions has been paid, the natural response of thanks is centered around their freedom. As a prisoner to our sinful nature, part of our thanksgiving to God is giving Him gratitude for granting us freedom from sin. We praise Him for Who He is - merciful, gracious, and loving - and we praise Him for what He has done – offered us an eternal restored relationship with Him and freedom from our sinful imprisonment.

We give God this praise through our worship, bestowing upon Him the worth He is due. We honor Him by refraining from falling back into our sin and reminding ourselves of His great character and works. We love Him because He first loved us, and when we fail to do so, His grace is sufficient, and His forgiveness is vast. We are set free by His unconditional love and undeserved mercy and grace. It is our honor to bestow upon Him worth and gratitude for breaking us out of the imprisonment of sin.

Reflection

1. How has God freed me from the sin that holds me captive?
2. How do I consistently offer Him praise and worship?
3. How do I resist the temptation of falling back into my imprisoning sin?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

Lord, You alone are worthy of worship. You are a perfect and loving God that has gifted me with the most precious and undeserved gift of Your grace and mercy. I give thanks to You and ask that You continue to free me from temptation so that I may love and honor You more deeply each day. Amen.

Day Six – Verse 16

'For He shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.' Psalm 107:16 ESV

In the ancient world, gates and fancy doors were crafted with an added layer of bronze material which served as a source of durability and fire prevention. Iron bars also helped to further secure the gates. As these metals were dense and strong, they served well as barriers of cities, palaces, and cells. Isaiah 45:2 informs us that Babylon, a literal and metaphorical city representing evil, was surrounded by one hundred of these bronze and iron gates, and within the walls were the imprisoned people of God.^{xv} God loved His children so deeply that nothing could avert Him from delivering His people that He cut right through the iron and bronze wall in His act of rescue.

The Lord is determined to free His people from their prisons of sin that create a barrier and prevent relationship with Him.^{xvi} As proven in both Psalm 107:16 and Isaiah 45, He will stop at nothing when it comes to the pursuit of those He loves. He shatters the obstructions that we ourselves lack the strength to destroy, whether these be diseases, addictions, fear, or trauma. He pursues and frees those who desire to be free and to reside with Him. As we studied a few days ago, all we have to do to receive this relentless deliverance is recognize our need for it and ask God for His mercy. Our God is all powerful and almighty. He alone has the ability to rescue us from the bondage to which we are enslaved. He alone has the purest of hearts that is determined to pursue and deliver.

Reflection

1. How has God shown His love by rescuing me from my sin and pain?
2. For what things do I need to turn to God for deliverance?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

You are a God of pure heart that holds nothing but love for me. Thank you pursuing me and saving me when I have been unable to deliver myself. I know that You will always come to my rescue when I ask. Amen.

Day Seven – *The Gospel for the Imprisoned Spirit*

Redemption

Whether imprisoned by our own doing or by the effects of being born of a sinful world, there is hope for the prisoner. Our identity does not lie within our verdict of sin, rather it lies within God Himself Who created mankind in His own image as an outpour of His love. Since the entrance of sin into the world in Genesis 3, God has been pursuing His children with mercy and grace. He pursues us with the gift of eternal reconciliation and freedom from the bondage of sin through His Son. If you are in pursuit of freedom, know that since before your birth, God has been in pursuit of you, so much so that if you desire the liberty found in Him, all you need to do is repent and believe. We serve a good God that offers hope and freedom to all, and He has given us the liberty to choose whether we live in His light or in the darkness of our sin.

Application

Once we choose to be delivered from the bondages of sin, it is our responsibility to refrain from falling back into the darkness of our natural ways. We stay away from the darkness through the consistent pursuit of the light of Christ. We do this by spending time getting to know Him and His Word more deeply and intentionally worshiping Him. We dedicate our every breath and every move of our freedom to serving Him. We share this gift of liberty with others so that they too may experience God's relentless pursuit and unconditional love. When we do these things, we fall less in love with sin and the dark and more in love with God and His light. We prevent being once again imprisoned to our sinful ways and remain in the open air of the life we find in Christ.

Prayer

Thank You Lord for wanting me near You and giving me an opportunity to be freed from my sins. Thank You for paying the price that I owed so that I may unashamedly come before You in petition and repentance and accept Your love and liberty. God, You are almighty and all merciful. I want to praise You and You alone for the rest of my days. I love You God. Amen.

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- ^{viii} Phil Barfoot. 2021. *Joy Comes in the Morning: 365 Days of Gratitude*. Franklin, TN: B&H Publishing.
- ^{ix} Paul David Tripp. 2014. *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishing.
- ^x Will Kynes. 2012. *My Psalm Has Turned into Weeping : Job’s Dialogue with the Psalms*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- ^{xi} Daniel J. Estes, 2019. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture – Psalms 73-150, Vol. 13*. B&H Publishing Group, 315.
- ^{xii} Lauren Chandler. 2016. *Steadfast Love: The Response of God to the Cries of Our Hearts*. B&H Publishing Group.
- ^{xiii} Yohanna Katanaho. 2018. *Praying Through the Psalms*. Langham Creative Projects.
- ^{xiv} Phil Moore. 2013. *Straight to the Heart of Psalms: 60 Bite-Sized Insights*. Lion Hudson.
- ^{xv} Estes, *The New American Commentary*, 315-317.
- ^{xvi} Howard Neil Wallace. 2017. *Words to God, Word from God*. London, England: Routledge.

Week Three

The Fool

'Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He sent out His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of His deeds in songs of joy!'

Psalm 107:17-22 ESV

Day One – Verse 17^{xviii}

‘Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;’ Psalm 107:17 ESV

Verse 17 establishes this new stanza by identifying the sinner as a *fool*. The adjective ‘fool’ appears various times throughout Scripture, further indicating not only its significance but also its relevance to man. Perhaps the most notable verse that helps define what it means to be a fool is Proverbs 12:15 which states, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who listens to counsel is wise.”^{xix} Through this, we can better understand who a fool is – a person who is not only unwise but chooses not to gain wisdom.

In Psalm 107, the foolish sinner pursues rebellion rather than God’s goodness.^{xx} They run toward difficulty in their act of fleeing God. The Lord alone is good, so when we turn from Him, we turn from goodness. Whether we do or do not choose foolishness intentionally, our folly results in negative consequences, which we learn not just through our own experiences but also this verse. Indiscretion and lack of wisdom only ever lead to affliction and suffering.

Not only does Scripture teach us where foolishness leads, but it also informs us of how foolishness is born. Mark 7:21-23 states, “For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness; all these things come from within, and they defile a person” (ESV). Foolishness, just like all other sin, begins in the heart of man. By nature, we are foolish sinners. Our instinct is to rebel, despite the consequences.

Thankfully, we serve a God that is aware of our instinctual rebellious streaks. He has met us in our foolishness and offered a way out – salvation and sanctification. The Lord is aware that as long as we live in a sinful world, we too will be sinful, but through Him we have the opportunity to flee folly and chase after God’s holy and fulfilling desires. He has divinely gifted us with not only verses throughout His Word but also an entire book of the Bible that pours out wisdom (Proverbs) and guides his children away from choices that result in affliction. He opposes pride and blesses humility - Proverbs 3:34. God loves His children so much that He wants them to live in His goodness and His joy, so why would we choose to rebel from such perfect love?

Reflection

1. How do I tend to place my own desires above the will of God?
2. What are the consequential patterns I see when I follow my foolishness as opposed to when I follow the Lord? Do these fulfill me?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, You know that I’ve been a fool from the moment I was born, and that without you I can never flee that desire. Help me to run to You and Your will and to lead others to Your freedom and love. Thank You for wanting me to be near to You. Amen.

Day Two – Verse 18

'they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.' Psalm 107:18 ESV

As we studied yesterday, the consequences to our sinful foolishness lead to suffering. On the surface, the subsequent affliction is spoken of as simply physical, but what is truly occurring is both external and internal in its consequence. In this part of the psalm, the sinner is overwhelmed by the affliction caused by their rebellion as well as the gravity of sin itself. They are so overtaken by despair and regret that they cannot take care of themselves enough to even eat. While this is a physical ailment, it stems from the emotional. The heavier the sin, the more intense the internal gravity of the consequence.

We were born sinners due to the fallen nature of our world, but we were also born with a moral compass as we were created in the image of a perfect Creator. We can sense right and wrong from an early age and understand conviction far too well. It is important that we learn from the foolishness and affliction of others in order to not only avoid committing those same wrongs, but also to see more clearly why God's intentions are better than sin's. The idea of loathing food to the point where I am near death due to the emotional weight I hold does not seem too appealing. Having access to and chasing after the Bread of Life and our Living Water is much more inviting. I want to be in fellowship with fulfillment and not residing in physical and emotional poverty with rebellion.

It is also important to note that although sin does come with a price, the results of following God are holy and pure, despite their difficulty. Romans 8:1 declares the joy that "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (ESV). God does not punish sin with shame or condemnation, but He is a perfect Father that teaches through discipline and conviction. He is love itself, and so are His intentions. For those of us that have accepted the free gift of salvation offered to us by God, we no longer need to suffer from the guilt brought about by sin. We have the opportunity to bring it before the Lord in repentance, and yes, learn from our mistakes, but also find freedom from them. How wonderful is it that we serve a God that knows and loves us so deeply that He offers us liberty from our own deserved consequences? Our God is mercy and compassion.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23 (ESV)

Reflection

1. How has God been merciful toward me when I deserved punishment for my actions?
2. How have I displayed the love of Christ and been merciful to others when they've sinned against me?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

God, Your love is pure and merciful. I am a sinner and deserve not only punishment, but death for my transgressions, yet You have offered me freedom from sin and eternal life through Your Son. Thank you pursuing me and teaching me to love You better. Amen.

Day Three – Verse 19

'Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress.' Psalm 107:19 ESV

By now, this verse should be easily recognizable, if not already memorized. It has so far appeared in each stanza of Psalm 107 without any change in wording. Although at first glance it may seem as if its repetition is a literal cop-out on the part of the psalmist, it is in fact a beautiful representation of the character of God. Just as the verse repeats, so do the actions and the love of God.

One of the aspects of the Lord, the One True God, that sets Him above all other gods, is His characteristic of consistency. Who He is does not change with how we are. The Bible itself is the true story of how God has relentlessly pursued nearness with His children, despite if they pursued nearness with Him, and it all points to Calvary, where God Himself died so that we may be near to Him for eternity. This is not the characteristic of someone that loves inconsistently.

Since this is the third time this verse has appeared in the same language in this psalm, it is important to examine the differing causes that led to this same response. As we have studied, the first sinner is lost and alone, and once they recognize that they do not have to remain stranded, they cry out to the Lord. The second sinner is imprisoned by the sin of the world and the result of their rebellion, and once they realize that they do not have to remain in bondage, they cry out to the Lord. This third sinner is dying and depressed as a result of their recklessness, and once they recognize that they do not have to live in such despair, they cry out to the Lord.^{xxi} Each time the sinner called upon God, despite the different reasons and the seemingly contrasting sins, He *delivered them from their distress*.

The Lord is consistent. When He says He loves His children and answers those who call upon Him (Psalm 91:15, Jeremiah 33:3, Psalm 38:15, Psalm 86:7), He means it, and this is just one example of this truth. It does not matter who we are and what we have done because of who He is and what He has done. He is a perfect God that pursues His children and offers grace and mercy and freedom and refuge to any who ask.^{xxii} We do not have to be afraid to call upon Him when we need it, because we can know that He will always answer in His perfect love.

Reflection

1. How has God shown His consistency in my own life?
2. Have I been avoiding calling upon Him when I know He will answer with the love that I need?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

Lord, thank you for Who You are. You are love itself and You never change. Thank You for loving me when I don't deserve it and for pursuing me when I don't pursue You. Help me to love You consistently as You love me. Amen.

Day Four – Verse 20

‘He sent out His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.’ Psalm 107:20 ESV

Verse 20 describes the practical reaction of God to the cries of the foolish sinner. In this situation, the psalmist states that the Lord *sent out His Word and healed them*. At surface level, this seems to be a sweet sentiment, but what does it mean for God to send out His Word, much less heal the sinner through it?

It is important that as we try to understand this verse, we contextualize it within Scripture. The book of psalms is within the Old Testament, which occurs prior to the descent of the Holy Spirit. This means that in order for the third Person of God, His Spirit, to be present, He had to be intentionally sent. The Holy Spirit is referred to largely as the Word of God before Acts 2. The Word of God was His Spirit sent in the form of an oracle messenger because the Holy Spirit Himself could not be consistently present with God’s people in their sin-caused separation.^{xxiii} We can replace the term “His Word” with “His Spirit” in order to better understand the verse, which would then state “He sent out His Spirit and healed them.”

Despite God being too holy to be tainted by our sinful world, He intentionally pursued His children in that when they would cry out to Him, God did not remain far from them. Instead, God sent Himself as His Word, or Spirit, to chase after those who called upon Him, and through His Spirit, the sinner was healed.

This verse further displays the Lord’s relentless pursuit of us as He is willing to break whatever barriers are necessary to be near those He loves. It also serves as a source of hope for those that are in pain or suffering affliction caused by sin, whether the world’s or their own. God is not only willing to heal the brokenhearted, even when it is of their own doing, but He also wants to heal! He wants to deliver us into His safety and love. What is even more beautiful is that we live post-Calvary, where the gap between God and man was dissolved and the Holy Spirit descended. God no longer needs to cross great distances to meet us because the Holy Spirit is here with us. We have the most intentional, perfect God that came down to Earth and stayed in order to pursue and deliver us.

Reflection

1. How have I seen the healing and delivering power of God in my own testimony?
2. Do I live like the Holy Spirit is here alongside me, or do I act like He is far away?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

Lord, thank You for relentlessly pursuing me. You stopped at nothing to be near to me and now I never have to leave Your presence. Help me to come to You for deliverance and trust in Your healing power. I love You God. Amen.

Day Five – Verse 21

‘Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man!’ Psalm 107:21 ESV

In verse 19, we studied the beauty in the repetition of this psalm, specifically how it is a metaphor for the consistency of God.^{xxiv xxv} Verse 20 has also appeared twice previously in this psalm, and we have examined that if we are meant to exemplify the Lord, then we too are to be consistent. We mirror the diligence of God, in part, through our praise, especially when we have experienced His grace and mercy firsthand. This is why it is so important to identify the ways in which we can worship God consistently.

When the act of praise or worship is spoken of, perhaps the most famous passage that comes to mind is that of Jesus and the woman at the well in John 4. When she asks Jesus where she is to worship, as she has been cast out from all nearby societies, He encourages her that there will soon be a time where worship does not occur in a temple, but in spirit and in truth. What is so wonderful about this concept is that we live in the era of spiritual and true worship! This psalm was written prior to the sacrifice of Jesus when praise occurred where God’s presence was said to be, but as we discussed yesterday, the descent of the Holy Spirit has enabled God to be here with us. If we know that we can now worship Him whenever and wherever, then we must determine the “how” of true, spiritual worship.

To worship in spirit means to worship in authenticity. It means to praise and thank God out of sincerity and humility from not our mind, but our heart and our soul. Our praise is not meant to be mechanical, but genuine. To worship in truth is to ensure that our praise aligns with Scripture. It is not shaped by what we think worship should be or what seems good and easy, but rather it is shaped by God’s divine direction. When we praise, we elevate the Lord by bowing before Him.^{xxvi} This does not necessarily mean we bow physically each time we worship, although it is a wonderful posture of prayer, but rather the bowing of our hearts and desires. We worship by taking what we believe to be ours, good or bad, laying it at the feet of God, and proclaiming His glory over it all.

Tangibly, this is often done through song, prayer, fellowship, and communion, as is instructed by Scripture, but we do not have to wait to be in a “church-like setting” to be offering our thanks to God! Our thanks comes from the posture of our hearts, and if we offer God our authentic adoration and love of His truth and life in all that we do, dedicating our every breath to Him, then we never stop offering Him the praise He is due

Reflection

1. How do I intentionally humble myself before God when I praise Him?
2. When He offers me His grace and mercy, is my instinctual response to worship Him?
3. What has God done for me in the past week that is worthy of my gratitude?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, You alone are worthy of praise. I come before You right now to thank You and offer You my worship. Help me to worship You authentically. Help me to see Your goodness more clearly and crave offering You thanks. Amen.

Day Six – Verse 22

“*And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!*” Psalm 107:22 ESV

The offering of sacrifices was the way in which the Israelites found nearness to God.^{xxvii} Sacrifices would serve as the cost for their sin and as a display of thanksgiving. When these sacrifices of gratitude were made, they were done in community. The person giving the sacrifice would stand at the altar and testify of the Lord’s provision and goodness, offering Him praise, while the sacrifice, an animal (which they would then share as a meal), was roasting.^{xxviii}

This is a beautiful picture of what our sacrifices and praises of thanksgiving are to look like. Our God has created a way for us to directly access Him and we no longer are required to offer pure sacrifices to be in His presence. While we no longer have to offer animals because of the death and resurrection of Christ, we are to share our testimonies and glorify God in our fellowship. The communal example set by the Israelites when they would enter into the presence of God is a wonderful guide to how we too are to come before God in community, especially to glorify Him by testifying of His deeds. We gather as the local church and offer songs of joy that ascribe to the Lord the glory He is due. We gather as communities in fellowship and do life together, sharing our testimonies of God’s goodness and provision. We study His Word together, and we hold each other accountable to the ways of God because His ways are holy. These are some of the means by which we offer sacrifice to our God and testify of His deeds. We offer Him our time by spending time with Him and with those He has made. We offer Him our fears by being unafraid to share how He has delivered us from sin, and by asking others for help because we know in Him lies freedom from sin. What a joy that we not only get to worship Him and thank Him for all He has done for us, but also that we get to do so in the fellowship of His people.

Reflection

1. Am I intentional in praising God within the realm of community?
2. Why do I hold back from sharing my testimony? Is this reason rooted in the truth of Scripture?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

You are the One true God, and I want everyone around me to know it. Help me to be a vessel to share Your good works and loving Spirit to those who do not know You and to be an encouragement to my Christ-like community. Thank You that we can now simply sacrifice our time, energy, and desires to You in order to give You praise. Thank You for always being near. Amen.

Day Seven – *The Gospel for the Foolish Spirit*

Redemption

We have been born into a world stained by sin, causing us to be tainted as well. We chase after what we believe to be best and are ignorant of the ways of freedom and righteousness. Sometimes, we become so destroyed by our own attempts of shallow fulfillment that we become despaired and distraught. God is aware of this tendency and offers deliverance. He knows of the pain that sin brings, even when we willingly choose to be in pain, but He does not like to see His children suffer. God has given us direct access to Him through the descent of His Spirit so that all we need to do is cry out in our despair to be delivered. We serve a God of liberty and life Who wants nothing but the best for His children, and He relentlessly pursues them out of His holiness and mercy.

Application

When we cry out to God in our despair and recognition of our sin, He gifts us with freedom, grace, and mercy. It is our responsibility to be intentional in chasing the pure and holy desires of God and not the corrupted desires of our human hearts, but we can rest knowing that when we do mess up, God will always deliver us in love. He gives us such a beautiful testimony of His goodness which we are to testify of in our adoration for Him. We share of God's love publicly and unashamedly, for He wants all those He created to know Him. When God delivers us from our pain and our sin, we are to respond with sincere gratitude and true worship.

Prayer

Lord, I thank You for pursuing me even when I was deemed not worthy of chasing. Far too often I deliberately follow my desires as opposed to Your plan and Your righteousness, and it always leaves me in pain. I thank You that You are the Great Physician and that You heal and deliver me from my strife, even when I am the one who placed myself there. Help me to unapologetically worship You for all my days because You are worthy of my worship and so much more. Thank You God! Amen.

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- ^{xxvii} Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 306-307.
- ^{xxviii} Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 306-307.

Week Four

The Adept

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

Psalm 107:17-22 ESV

Day One – Verse 23-25^{xxxix}

‘Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the Lord, His wondrous works in the deep. For He commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.’ Psalm 107:23-25 ESV

This initial collection of verses wonderfully introduces a few of the overarching messages of this stanza. It speaks into both the character of sinful man and the character of Almighty God. Verse 23 paints the first picture of the sinner-character in this section of the psalm. It states that “some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters,” which informs us of two things – the sinner in this scenario is a sailor, and they felt adept to take on the “great waters” themselves.^{xxxix} They feel as though since their livelihood occurs on the sea, regardless of their success in their chosen career, they are capable of being in control of their well-being. Through the first few verses of this section, we are also introduced to the power of God in this sinner’s story. The sailor had a front-row seat to experience God’s might as He displayed His power over the winds and waves by sending a storm.^{xxxix} In these three verses, we see the dichotomy that this stanza is centered upon – the lack of power in man and the perfect power of God. The sailor believed themselves to be capable of faring the “great waters” only to be humbled by the Lord displaying His superiority over His creation.

It is essential to recognize the obvious difference in the amount of control between the two characters – humans and God. Although we may not be caught within a storm on the sea or even believe that we are in control when we man a ship, we do have the tendency to live as though we run our own lives. Sometimes it takes a storm to humble us and bring us back to the realization that we are not in control. This is not going to be a week of discouragement, but rather a week of encouragement and peace as we recognize who truly steers our life! God is sovereign over all and holds the greatest power, so why would we not want to relinquish our perceived control to Someone Who is actually capable of control? We cannot ensure our own safety and prosperity, but our God is good, and He wants the best for us. What a joy it is to serve Him!

Reflection

1. Have I relinquished my perceived control to God?
2. How have I seen God display His might and power?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, You are all-powerful and almighty. Compared to You, I am nothing. Help me to learn through this week’s study how to rely on You and relinquish control. I know You are a good and perfect God. Amen.

Day Two – Verse 26

*“They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight.”
Psalm 107:26 ESV*

This verse is rich with beautiful metaphors that describe the storm created by God in verses 24-25. The “mounting up the heaven” and going “down to the depths” refers to just how violently the waves and wind carried the ship up and down the waters.^{xxxiii} As a natural result of this violent situation, the sailor became terrified, but not only does this verse tell us of the ‘melting of their courage’, but it says it melted in “their evil plight.” This may stand out as an odd statement at first, since nothing in this stanza has yet to seem inherently evil, but disobedience is disobedience, and sin is sin. Though they did not do something that we may deem as culturally evil, they went against the ways of the Lord in not trusting Him and in choosing instead to set the course to where they felt led. They did not choose righteousness, but rather acted out of selfish, prideful plight.

This verse is not a verse that describes any lack of love from God, but rather the opposite. From a shallow perspective, we can easily convince ourselves that God was so angered by the sinner that He set out to violently destroy them, and while God does hate sin, the point of the storm in this scenario was to rescue the soul of the sinner. Sending the storm created an obvious opportunity for the sailor to recognize their own helpless state and pursue help elsewhere. The storm inspired humility through the display of God’s power and control. It is important to note that although God does discipline us and send us ‘storms’ to remind us of His sovereignty, it is our responsibility to cry out to Him for help in the midst of these storms. If we choose to recognize when we are in earthly danger but not when we are in eternal spiritual danger, then we cannot be saved. You cannot rescue someone that does not see the need for their own rescue. Sometimes, storms occur that are not designed to discipline us, but in His might, God can use our circumstances for His glory when we relinquish them to Him. It brings us such peace to know that not only is God in control of our circumstance, but also that he loves us so much that He reminds us of His presence and His power.

Reflection

1. Do I turn to God in the middle of difficulty?
2. How have I seen the love of God through the storms of life?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

Thank You God that You are merciful and perfect. I know that even though I encounter seasons of distress, You have the power to save me and the power to turn them for my good and Your glory. Help me to run to You first when I am thrown around by the waves and wind and remind me that You are a haven of love. Amen.

Day Three – Verse 27

“They reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits’ end.” Psalm 107:27 ESV

Verse 27 continues expounding upon the reaction of the sailor in the storm. It describes that they were so physically thrown off by the thrashing of the ship that they appeared to be drunk. It also informs us that this caused the sailor to become completely internally distressed. This is quite a shift from the sailor we first met in verse 23. Initially, they were calm and collected, going about their business with the skills they possessed, but they learned that those skills and the confidence they had in their own ability were a shallow foundation. When we depend on our own abilities, we depend upon a faulty structure. We are inevitably going to be forced into realizing our own lack of strength.

Another biblical character that displays this truth is King Saul. When he began his reign, he was aware that he did not have much knowledge or wisdom and therefore relied on the guidance and skills of the Lord. When faced with a difficult situation, he would come before the Lord and ask for His assistance because King Saul was aware of God’s sovereignty. Once King Saul began to benefit from the help of the Lord and accrue more money, more followers, more wives, and more military victories, Saul turned to his own assets for salvation. This faulty foundation of pride in himself caused Saul to be driven to such emptiness and strife that he took his own life by “falling on his sword” on the battlefield. Like Saul and the sailor, when we choose to rely on what we believe are earthly assets that accrue power, such as trying to be in control, financial comfort, or cultural recognition, we choose to fall on our own sword and become distressed and thrown off. When we do not choose God, we choose spiritual death, for He is our steadfast source of life. Only skills or assets that are of God, such as the fruits of the Spirit, can be relied upon because He is all powerful and in control. Thankfully, He offers us His assets and His nearness through the gift of salvation and through His never-ending mercy. We can always rely on His steadiness that is His will and power, and we never have to live apart from the fullness of life.

Reflection

1. What foundation do I build my current and eternal life upon?
2. How can I better rely on the power of God to steady me?
3. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, You are perfect and steadfast. You alone are the firm foundation I can trust to build my life on, and I know that when I stand on You and Your truth, I will never falter. Thank You for being more powerful than me. Amen.

Day Four – Verse 28-29

'Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.' Psalm 107:28-29 ESV

We have been waiting for this verse! In each stanza, the Lord has delivered His children whenever they have called, despite how deeply they have buried themselves in sin. God, in His consistency, once again answered the distress call of the sinner. Once the sailor finally recognized that they were a mere human incapable of saving themselves, they relinquished their circumstance and the distress caused by it to the Lord. In their learned obedience, they were blessed. God not only delivered the sinner but also stilled their environment to a point of deep tranquility. When we cry out to God in the storm, He brings us to an oasis of His peace. Only in Him can this true peace be found.

It did not make a difference to God that the sailor had sinned against Him or that their deserved consequence was death, because the sailor cried out to their Father for help. When any good father hears his child cry for assistance or respite, not only does the father come running, but he scoops up his child in his arms and reminds them of the safety found in their parent. Our Heavenly Father is not only a good father, but the perfect Father. He too scoops us into His arms and shows us the safety and peace that exists through Him. He meets us where we are and relieves our minds, bodies, and souls when we become distressed, regardless of whether we brought our pain upon ourselves or not. His power brings peace, and His love brings refuge.

Reflection

1. When I am in need of deliverance, is my instinct to cry out to God?
2. Do I trust that He has the power to save?
3. How has God brought me to a place of peace when I have been in distress?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today's reflection?

Prayer

Lord, You are a perfect Father and I am so glad to be Your child. Help me to cry out to You when I need it. Thank You that You always come to my rescue no matter how badly I have sinned against You. I do not deserve Your love, and yet You love me more than I could ever imagine. Thank You God! Amen.

Day Five – Verse 30

“Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and He brought them to their desired haven.”
Psalm 107:30 ESV

Verse 30 takes verses 28-29 even further through the mercy of God. Not only did God bring peace upon the sailor, who had sinned against Him, but He also brought them to the place they longed to be. We are not given the information as to whether this desired haven was their original destination, but we have been given information on the character of God. Throughout this psalm, and all of Scripture, we see that God is merciful and gracious and wants us to thrive in Him. We know that He blesses worship and obedience, which the sailor offered unto God as a result of encountering His glory. From this, we can be certain that regardless of whether or not this haven was the initial destination of the sailor, it was the place where they most needed to be. God fulfills our needs and more, even when we are not fully aware of what those needs are.

The Lord led the sailor not only from intense danger to great peace, but also to wonderful delight.^{xxxiv} What makes this place so delightful is not the location itself, but rather that God is in this haven with the sailor. Our desired haven is Heaven, which means the presence of God. Our soul’s true desire is to be in the place that is God’s presence, which is also His desire for us. When we stop and praise and recognize Him, just as the sinner did, we find fellowship with God. We enter into His holy presence when we intentionally seek His presence.^{xxxv} Despite this wonderful truth, we all fall short in consistently seeking God. We, like the sailor, are sinners who have been tricked by the world into thinking we can save ourselves, but that does not stop the Lord. He reminded the sinner of His power and ability to save, and He led the sinner, in His love, to a place of joy and peace, going above and beyond the sinner’s prayer. We serve a God that knows of our sinful tendencies, yet relentlessly pursues us. How beautiful is it that our God not only saves us, but also loves us so deeply that He simply wants us to be near Him?

Reflection

1. When I am in need of deliverance, is my instinct to cry out to God?
2. Do I trust that He has the power to save?
3. How has God brought me to a place of peace when I have been in distress?
4. Do I consistently seek out the Presence of God?
5. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

Lord, You are a perfect Father and I am so glad to be Your child. Help me to cry out to You when I need deliverance. Thank You that You will always come to my rescue no matter how badly I have sinned against You. I do not deserve Your love, yet You love me more than I could ever imagine. Thank You God! Amen

Day Six – Verse 31-32

“Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! Let them extol Him in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.” Psalm 107:31-32 ESV

This verse is quite familiar at this point, as it has been a consistent refrain throughout the rest of the psalm, but in this stanza, it ends with a different command. It tells those that have experienced the steadfast love of God, which is all of us, to thank the Lord for this love and His works. It continues to instruct us redeemed sinners to extol the Lord in the congregation of people and the assembly of elders.^{xxxvi} To extol is not simply to thank, but rather to enthusiastically and passionately praise. By using the verb extol, this verse further implores us to worship God ardently. The rest of the verse instructs us on where to praise God, listing two separate locations – “the congregation of the people” and “the assembly of the elders.” ‘The people’ offers a generic and inclusive referral to society, but we can also interpret it as the congregation of the church. This dual definition implies praising God in both the secular and the sacred communities. The ‘elders’ are quite an exclusive group of people, members of the law and the faith culturally set above nearly all others in society. An assembly within the Hebrew context is a group of people that have been gathered together by the same cry, such as with political rallies or celebrations. We get to spur on the greatest celebration of all by crying out the name of Jesus publicly, gathering various kinds of people to share in His love and goodness.

Through this command to enthusiastically praise God in the companies of these two very different people groups, we can understand that we are to extol the Lord no matter where we are or who we are with! We do not have to yell in the streets or dance around in the square – do not worry, you can still do that – but we are not to keep our faith solely private. We must testify of the wonders of God so that others may hear and worship Him. We are not to shy away from giving God the praise He is due because of culture, because of status, or because we feel we are not worthy of sharing Who He is. He has made us worthy through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We now get to extol Him, and He deserves to be extolled!

Reflection

1. Am I quick to offer God public praise?
2. When have I been in situations where I was afraid to stand up for the Gospel?
3. How do I love God’s children better when I share the Gospel?
4. How was the *hesed* love of God displayed in today’s reflection?

Prayer

God, You are perfect and praise-worthy. Help me to unashamedly love You and share of Your goodness. I want to give You praise because You are perfect and holy, and You love me when I am least deserving of Your love. All praise be to You, God! Amen.

Day Seven – *The Gospel for the Adept Spirit*

Redemption

Whenever we believe that we are capable of saving ourselves or controlling our path, we are proven wrong. We have no power to rely on and are always bound to falter and fall. Fortunately, we have a God that both knows and expects this of us. He offers us His love to rely on and sometimes reminds us of His goodness by showing us that we are not at all adept to preserve ourselves. When we recognize our humility in comparison with His glory, He blesses us by bringing us closer to Him and His peace. He is a place of refuge, and we cannot reach joy and salvation without Him.

Application

Once we realize that we are in distress and have entered into a storm, we cry out to God in our humility. We extol Him and recognize He is in control, for His ways are better, and He is worthy of praise. We share of His goodness publicly. We worship Him and tell of Him to all, regardless of status or fear. He has given us the freedom to praise Him and the liberty to call upon Him whenever necessary – how could we not share this with the rest of His children?

Prayer

Lord, You are Almighty God and You alone are sovereign. I thank You that You are in control because I am far from capable of saving myself. Thank You that You sent Your Son to take my place on the cross so that I might come directly to You to be eternally saved. Help me to remain humble in Your presence and to relinquish control of my life, for the control was never even mine. You are the perfect Father, and it is You whom I love and praise. Amen.

^{xxxix} Phil Barfoot. 2021. *Joy Comes in the Morning: 365 Days of Gratitude*. Franklin, TN: B&H Publishing.

^{xxx} Paul David Tripp. 2014. *New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishing.

^{xxxii} Jason Byassee. 2018. *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible: Psalms 101-150*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, Baker Publishing Group.

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^{xxxiiii} Daniel J. Estes, 2019. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture – Psalms 73-150, Vol. 13*. B&H Publishing Group, 316-318.

^{xxxv} Estes, *The New American Commentary*, 316-318.

^{xxxvi} Robert L. Alden. 2019. *Psalms – Everyday Bible Commentary*. Moody Publishers.

^{xxxvii} Levi Avital Hazony. 2022 "Worship: Bowing down in the Service of God." *Religious Studies* 58, no. 3.

Afterword: Bookend of Praise

“He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants. He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish. When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.”

Psalm 107:33-43

These final ten verses of the psalm serve as the latter bookend of praise that David works into his compositions. Through this, not only does the reader begin and read the psalm through a God-loving lens, but they leave Scripture and enter the world in the same fashion. They restate about God what has already been said – He alone is powerful, He alone is just and able to discipline in purity, He alone provides, He alone is our refuge, and He alone loves and pursues His children. He has the power to shut the mouths of the wicked in humility while the righteous praise Him and experience fellowship with God. God’s love is *hesed* – faithful, loyal, and compassionate. Who are we to not offer Him the praise He is due when He constantly delivers and adores us through our sin? He attends to His children, because He alone is steadfast in His mercy, His grace, and His love.

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Non-Bibliographic Citations

Christian Standard Version, The Holy Bible

English Standard Version, The Holy Bible

New King James Version, The Holy Bible

New International Version, The Holy Bible

The Message Translation, The Holy Bible

The Passion Translation, The Holy Bible