

“Let the Redeemed of the Lord Say So”

Psalm 107

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Introduction:

Hopefully most of us here this morning have been to an art gallery. I know that we have several art galleries right here in Madison. In fact, our local paper just had a story this past week about the plans for expanding the Chazen Museum of Art on the UW Madison campus. We have galleries and art museums fairly nearby in Chicago. We can get on a bus and be there in just a few hours, and we can spend the day looking at some amazing works of art. Many cultures around the world have a deep appreciation for art, and so we find some amazing galleries in nearly all of the world's major cities.

This morning, however, instead of focusing on literal works of art in some of the world's greatest galleries, I would invite you to join me in considering a kind of gallery in the Old Testament of the Bible—a series of pictures (or snapshots), outlining what it means to be redeemed, and the gallery is found in **Psalm 107**. In our pew Bibles, the passage starts on **page 963**. I have chosen this passage for our lesson this morning, because the author gives us five little snapshots concerning what it means to be redeemed. As we might already know, to be redeemed is to be **“bought back”** or **“purchased again.”** We know what it means to redeem a coupon—we trade it in, we redeem it for something that is important to us. Well, as Christians, we have also been redeemed. Paul explains in the book of **Romans** that, **“...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)**. In other words, God *redeemed* us—God bought us back—by trading the life of His only Son. This is the ultimate demonstration of what it means to be redeemed, and yet in **Psalm 107** we have several pictures, several illustrations—and the main lesson for us as God's people this morning is that we are to be thankful enough to actually say something about it to the world around us. If you will, please notice with me that the author starts in the first few verses of **Psalm 107** by saying...

- 1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.**
- 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary**
- 3 And gathered from the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.**

And so the theme for the chapter is that those of us who have been redeemed have something to be thankful for. In fact, we are so thankful that we will actually say something about it. It is significant that four times in this chapter we are encouraged to say something—to speak up! This morning, then, I would invite you to look with me at several pictures of redemption—pictures from ancient Israel, but pictures that we can definitely tie in to our situation here this morning.

I. **First of all, as we look at verses 4-9, we discover a lesson from those who have been REDEEMED IN THE WILDERNESS.**

Let us please look at verses 4-9...

- ⁴ They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region;
They did not find a way to an inhabited city.*
- ⁵ They were hungry and thirsty;
Their soul fainted within them.*
- ⁶ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He delivered them out of their distresses.*
- ⁷ He led them also by a straight way,
To go to an inhabited city.*
- ⁸ Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!*
- ⁹ For He has satisfied the thirsty soul,
And the hungry soul He has filled with what is good.*

We know that travel is a lot easier today than it was back then. Today, we have huge 4-lane divided interstates with wide shoulders, and stripes, and signs, and rest areas. These interstates are patrolled for our safety. We can simply pull over for every possible option in fuel, and food, and drink. We travel with GPS to tell us exactly where we are and to direct us to where we are going. When we left Henderson this past Thursday, we pushed the “**Go Home**” button, and within seconds, we knew which way to turn out of the parking lot, and we knew the exact minute we would pull in our driveway at home nearly 12 hours later. We travel with cell phones so that we can call for help. A certain traveling companion of mine this week was texting and talking at the same time. A certain young man in the back seat was using an i-pod and a laptop in the back seat. We are truly blessed as we travel.

But we also realize (as blessed as we are) that travel has not always been this easy. In the ancient world, travel was truly dangerous. The path was uncertain. There were no maps. And if something happened, help was basically unavailable. For this reason, we read in verses 5-6 about those who wandered in the desert. We read about those who could not find their way—those who were hungry, and thirsty, and tired. And in their distress on this journey, the Bible says that they called out to God for help and that God led them to an inhabited city—to a place of food and safety. For this reason (according to verse 8), the people were to give thanks to God.

As we apply this to our situation today, we realize that in a spiritual sense, we are also on a long journey—not a long trip home from Tennessee back to Wisconsin, but a spiritual journey. In the Bible, we think of Abraham who was called by God to get up and move as a test of faith. The Bible explains in **Hebrews 11:10**, that Abraham, ***“...was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”*** Like Abraham, we also are also on a great journey—looking for the city of God. And it seems that the spiritual lesson here is that if we get in trouble, if we get discouraged, if we get attacked—we are cry out to God—the God (according to **verse 9**) who, ***“...has satisfied the thirsty soul,”*** the God who has filled the hungry soul with what is good. And then, when the Lord helps us on the journey, let the redeemed of the Lord say so—let us then tell somebody about it. Do our neighbors know what God has done for us? Have any of us ever been wandering in a spiritual sense? Have we ever wandered off of the path, and has God brought us back? If so, then the Bible would encourage us to pass it on. Perhaps there are others around us who are also wandering—wandering from job to job, from marriage to marriage—looking for something that will satisfy—filled with questions and looking for answers. And so, as the Psalm says, ***“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.”*** Let us pass it on so that others can also find the way.

II. As we look back at Psalm 107, we also find a picture of those who have been REDEEMED FROM SLAVERY.

If you will, please look with me at **verses 10-16**...

- ¹⁰ ***There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in misery and chains,***
- ¹¹ ***Because they had rebelled against the words of God
And spurned the counsel of the Most High.***
- ¹² ***Therefore He humbled their heart with labor;
They stumbled and there was none to help.***
- ¹³ ***Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.***
- ¹⁴ ***He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death
And broke their bands apart.***
- ¹⁵ ***Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!***
- ¹⁶ ***For He has shattered gates of bronze
And cut bars of iron asunder.***

In **verse 10**, we find that these are people ***“...who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in misery and chains.”*** And yet please notice from **verse 11** that these were not slaves who were captured through no fault of their own, but instead, these were people who had ***“rebelled against the words of God,”*** those who had ***“...spurned the counsel of the Most High.”*** In other words, they had brought this slavery upon themselves. These are people who had given in to sin and were held captive by it as a result. Don't we see this all around us today? Just this last week, perhaps you read in the news about a 13-year old young man in

Rock County who apparently died as the result of an overdose of Oxycontin. Obviously, there's a lot we don't know about that case, and I am sure we will learn more in the coming weeks and months. But obviously something went wrong in that young man's life. Sin has a grip on us that affects not only us but also those around us. We look even at some of our close friends, and we see the effect of alcohol—the bondage and the great pain that it can bring into a person's life. We think of all forms of sexual sin—from adultery to pornography—and we realize that sin can turn any of us here this morning into a prisoner. You know one of the most contagious diseases right now among teens and young adults? It's not H1N1, it is Chlamydia—that's according to the CDC in a story on 27 News locally just this past Thursday. In fact, five of the top 10 most contagious diseases among teens and young adults right now are STD's. Sin can put any of us behind bars, so to speak. Rebellion against God brings suffering, and bondage, and death.

Those in **verse 11** had ***"spurned the counsel of the Most High."*** In other words, they didn't like God's advice, and so they blew it off. They didn't care for God's rules, and so they simply turned away. And as a result, they found themselves in slavery. However, the turning point comes in **verse 13**, as we find that they cried out to the Lord in their trouble. The Lord then saved them out of their distress, ***"He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke their bands apart."*** Without God's help, the slavery continues, but with God's help we can break free from sin. As Paul said in **Romans 6:17-18**, ***"But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."*** This morning, as we think very personally about how God has delivered us from various sins, ***"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."*** Let us speak up about it. As the Psalm says in **verse 15**, ***"Let [us] give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men!"*** The greatest blessing we have as Christians is described in **Colossians 1:13-14**, ***"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."*** And so, as the Psalm says, ***"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."***

III. There is a third picture of redemption in Psalm 107, and it is the picture of being REDEEMED IN SUFFERING.

If you will, please look with me at **verses 17-22**...

¹⁷ ***Fools, because of their rebellious way,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.***

¹⁸ ***Their soul abhorred all kinds of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.***

¹⁹ ***Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble;
He saved them out of their distresses.***

²⁰ ***He sent His word and healed them,
And delivered them from their destructions.***

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

Once again, we see that sin results in suffering and pain. We are not told exactly what these people did or what their suffering was. On the wall, I have placed a painting of Moses holding up the bronze serpent in the wilderness. In **Numbers 21**, the people had rebelled against God. In fact, the people were complaining about the miserable food, and so the Bible says that God had sent fiery serpents among the people so that many of them died. They cried out to the Lord, and God then told Moses to make a bronze serpent, and to hold it up, and to tell the people to look at it if they wanted to live. We are not specifically told if this is the situation being addressed here in **verses 17-22**, but it certainly fits. The rebellious people hated food, they nearly died, they called out to God, and the Lord saved them in their distress.

I would say there are a lot of people in a similar situation even today. I have said before that God has killed more people for being whiners than for any other sin. In the Old Testament, millions died for whining. And when we whine, and complain, and rebel against God, we suffer. As one commentary pointed out, these people did not want good food—they wanted whipped cream and caramel sauce! They wanted what they wanted, and they suffered as a result. The same thing happens today. We can whine and complain, we can rebel against God's plan, but it really doesn't do us any good in the long run. Not always, but often, suffering is the direct result of sin. Ultimately, all suffering goes back to sin in some way. But sometimes it is rather obvious—the bully who picks on the wrong kid and gets beat on himself, the teenager who ignores God's plan for intimacy and gets a terrible disease, the executive who cheats and then gets fired, and so on. So often, we bring suffering on ourselves by ignoring the word of God. Sometimes our sin causes others to suffer—we lie and someone else loses a job—his children have been affected by our behavior. Sometimes our sin affects future generations—I am thinking of the doctrine from hundreds of years ago in some parts of India where it is unacceptable to eat a cow—children are starving to death as they share the streets with one of my favorite food sources! There is an example of a choice made hundreds of years ago that continues to bring suffering into this world.

Nevertheless, the point is that God has redeemed us in our suffering. The people in **Psalms 107** cried out to God, and then (according to **verse 20**), the Lord, ***"...sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."*** God sent His word. That is exactly what God did in the New Testament, ***"In the beginning was the Word...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."*** (**John 1:1,14**). God sent His Word to heal us. That doesn't mean that God just sent us a Bible, but it means that God came down to identify with us, to fully understand what we are going through. What do we do, then, when we are delivered or healed from some kind of suffering? According to **verses 21-22**, we are to, ***"...give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men!"***

Let them also offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of His works with joyful singing.” In other words, *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.”*

IV. As we look back at Psalm 107, we see another picture as we discover the picture of being REDEEMED IN OUR TROUBLES.

And the picture in verses 23-32 is that of sailors on a ship during a storm...

- 23 Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters;
24 They have seen the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind,
Which lifted up the waves of the sea.
26 They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths;
Their soul melted away in their misery.
27 They reeled and staggered like a drunken man,
And were at their wits' end.
28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
And He brought them out of their distresses.
29 He caused the storm to be still,
So that the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 Then they were glad because they were quiet,
So He guided them to their desired haven.
31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness,
And for His wonders to the sons of men!
32 Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people,
And praise Him at the seat of the elders.*

We know that on the sea a storm can cause a lot of trouble. We remember the words of the Navy Hymn, written in 1860 by William Whiting...

**Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!**

That hymn has been rewritten many times, and I would encourage you to go home this afternoon and do a Wikipedia search for **“Navy Hymn.”** You will find that many verses have been added over the past 150 years—verses for the Marines, for the Navy Seals, for the Coast Guard, for divers and those on submarines, for search and rescue personnel, for those who serve in the Arctic and Antarctic, and even for those who travel in space. And although the illustration of being on a ship at sea is in fact very specific, even those of us here on land (a thousand miles from the nearest ocean), we can understand at least something of the fear that must be involved in

being on a ship at sea during a storm. We think about our own lives. Sometimes everything is calm, but then sometimes the storms come and we start to get overwhelmed—a loved one gets sick, we lose a job, we get totally lost in a class at school, or maybe we have trouble in a marriage. Most of us know what it means to be at our **“wits’ end”** (as the author of the Psalm puts it in **verse 27**). Like those sailors, we may be out there minding our own business, but then suddenly something comes up and knocks us down. But thankfully, the sailors in the Psalm turn to God, **“...they cried to the Lord in their trouble”** (in **verse 28**), and the Lord **“...brought them out of their distresses.”** And, as with the other pictures in this chapter, the reaction is basically the same—the sailors praise God—just as we also do today, **“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.”**

V. There is one final picture in the closing paragraph as we discover that we are REDEEMED IN TIMES OF NEED.

If you will, please look with me at **verses 33-42**...

- 33 He changes rivers into a wilderness
And springs of water into a thirsty ground;***
- 34 A fruitful land into a salt waste,
Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.***
- 35 He changes a wilderness into a pool of water
And a dry land into springs of water;***
- 36 And there He makes the hungry to dwell,
So that they may establish an inhabited city,***
- 37 And sow fields and plant vineyards,
And gather a fruitful harvest.***
- 38 Also He blesses them and they multiply greatly,
And He does not let their cattle decrease.***
- 39 When they are diminished and bowed down
Through oppression, misery and sorrow,***
- 40 He pours contempt upon princes
And makes them wander in a pathless waste.***
- 41 But He sets the needy securely on high away from affliction,
And makes his families like a flock.***
- 42 The upright see it and are glad;
But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.***

In this final section, we find that God uses adversity and prosperity to get our attention—to bring down those who are arrogant and to lift up those who are oppressed. But in all of this, the most important lesson is how important it is to listen to the word of God. As C.S. Lewis once said, **“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our consciences, but shouts at us in our pain. Pain is His megaphone to reach a deaf world.”** Very interesting! And so when we turn to God He answers our prayers.

Please notice the result in **verse 42** as we find that the *“upright”* see all of these things and are *“glad,” “...but all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.”* In other words, those who fear God may go through a time of adversity, but they are not shaken by it. Or, they may go through a time of prosperity, but they are not pulled away from God by it. As Paul said in **Philippians 4:11-13**, *“...I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

Conclusion:

This morning, we have considered several pictures in the gallery of **Psalm 107**, and perhaps we have been able to see ourselves in at least one of these pictures. These are pictures we can understand.

- Have we ever been hungry, thirsty, or tired in the wilderness?
- Have we ever been a slave to something—a sin, a destructive habit, a bad attitude?
- Have we ever suffered—either physically, or emotionally, or spiritually?
- Have we ever been at our wits' end—agitated and overwhelmed by something?
- Have we ever been needy—overwhelmed in some situation, not knowing what will happen next?

Perhaps we have seen ourselves in this chapter. And yet in all five of those pictures, it is encouraging to know that God had the power to change things for those who cried out for help. And so with that, as we come to the end of **Psalm 107**, we come to **verse 43**, *“Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things, and consider the lovingkindnesses of the LORD.”* If we are wise, first of all, we will listen to God and then secondly, we will stop to think for a moment about the amazing love of God—let the love of God sink in for a little bit! Or, in a very practical way, we come back to the beginning—when God does something for us, *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!”* When God does something for us, let us speak up, and let us tell somebody about it! Studies have shown that we speak an average of about 16,000 words per day. How many of those words do we use to tell people what the Lord has done for us?

On the other hand, if you are still a prisoner to some kind of sin this morning, we would encourage you to use some of those words to call on the name of the Lord. The Bible explains in **1 Peter 1:21** that we do this (that we make this appeal for a good conscience) by allowing ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins. Actions speak louder than words. Or, as Ananias said to Saul in **Acts 22:16**, *“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”* If you are ready to obey the gospel, you can let us know about your decision by coming to the front as we sing this next song.

To comment on this lesson: church@fourlakescoc.org