Sunday, October 17, 2021

Lesson: Psalms 107:1-9, 39-43; Time of Action: probably around 538 or 537 B.C.; Place of Action: probably Jerusalem

Golden Text: “Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses” (Psalms 107:6).

I. INTRODUCTION. The children of Israel had a lot to praise God for. Throughout their history, their disobedience has led to many invasions by other nations often resulting in the Israelites being taken captive and exiled from their land, a land that God promised to them. In this week’s lesson, the psalmist focuses on the LORD’S deliverance from Babylonian Captivity. Being allowed to return to their homeland after 70 years of slavery in Babylon was surely worth praising the LORD. The captivity of sin has put the LORD in the delivering business and He comes to the aid of those who know Him and cry out to Him to be delivered from any and all situations brought about by their sins. Of course, we praise God for delivering us from our present situations, but like the psalmist, we should praise Him for every past action of deliverance as well.

II. THE LESSON BACKGROUND. Psalms is a title derived
from the Greek word “psalmos” describing a poem sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The Hebrew title for the book of Psalms was “Sepher Tehillim” which means Book of Praises. Although most psalms are ascribed to David, not all the psalms were written by him. Seventy-three psalms are assigned to David, twelve to Asaph (see Psalms 50 and 73-83), two to Solomon (see Psalms 72 and 127), one to Moses (see Psalms 90), one to Ethan (see Psalms 89), and twelve to the sons of Korah, a family of Levitical singers (see Psalms 42-49; 84; 85; 87 and 88). Many of the Psalms have superscriptions before the psalm which provide some historical information like the author of that particular psalm. But the superscription for Psalm 107 only says “God’s provision for the redeemed” and does not give the name of the author. As for the date of this psalm, it is also unknown. The emphasis in Psalms 105 is on Israel’s exodus from Egypt and on God’s longsuffering care of His people in Psalms 106. Psalms 107 appears to focus on the LORD’s redemption of the nation from captivity in Babylon (see Psalms 107:2-3).

While the circumstances described in this psalm could be experienced by almost anyone, they especially apply to what Israel had to endure while in captivity.


A. A call for praise with thanksgiving (Psalms 107:1). Our first verse says “O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” Of course, there are more, but here the psalmist
begins with a general call to all to “give thanks to the LORD” and he gives two reasons why. First, because “he is good.” This is undeniable. Psalms 73:1 confirms this when the psalmist said “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” Not only has God been “good” to Israel, He is also “good” to believers today who have a clean or pure heart. The second reason that the psalmist gives for why we should “give thanks to the LORD” is because “his mercy endureth for ever.” In other words, the LORD’S compassion and loving-kindness will last forever and will never end.

B. Reasons for praise (Psalms 107:2-3).

1. (vs. 2). This verse says “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy...” The term “redeem” means “to buy back for a price.” Since this psalm focuses on the LORD’s redemption of the nation of Israel from captivity in Babylon, the price to be paid would be Babylon’s defeat at the hands of the Persians who would then under King Cyrus allow the captive Jews to return home (see II Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). So the “redeemed” in this verse refers to the Hebrews whom God delivered from Captivity, those “whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” In this case, “the enemy” refers to the Babylonians. God delivered His people “not by might nor by power” (see Zechariah 4:6), nor by “price nor reward” (see Isaiah 45:1, 13), “but by his (my) Spirit” working on the spirits of men (see Ezra 1:1). The psalmist called on Israel, “the redeemed of the LORD (to) say so.” But what were they supposed to say? In verse
1, the psalmist made a general call to “give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” It appears then that the words “say so” mean that the psalmist was calling on all Israel who had been “redeemed” from Babylonian Captivity to “say” or speak out the same thing that he had said: “give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” This would be their praise to “the LORD” before other peoples. Today, believers are “the redeemed of the LORD” (see Galatians 3:13; I Peter 1:18) because the great Redeemer has saved us from sin and hell (see Ephesians 2:4-6; II Timothy 1:9). Believers today have more reason than anyone to “say” or proclaim that God “is good, and His mercy” is everlasting.

2. (vs. 3). This verse says “And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.” As a result of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Israel, the Israelites had been dispersed like out-casts from their own land. But when God redeemed them, He “gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.” In other words, no matter in what country His people had been scattered, God kept His promise and brought them back home (see Deuteronomy 30:4; Ezekiel 34:12). Yes, God knows those who belong to Him, and He knows where to find them (see Ezekiel 34:11-12).

C. A time of despair (Psalms 107:4-5).

1. (vs. 4). This verse says “They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell
in.” The mention of “They wandered in the wilderness” probably would remind many of us of the “wilderness” or desert (see Psalms 78:40) wanderings by the Israelites after being freed from Egypt. But in the context of this particular psalm, it can also refer to the return from Babylonian Captivity. Certainly, that was no easy journey for God’s people either. Undoubtedly, they were bewildered and “wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way” meaning they journeyed in the desert where there were no roads that had been previously traveled. As they traveled back to Israel, these delivered captives “found no city to dwell in.” They found no dwelling place to rest in. There were no conveniences, no accommodations, and no “city” where they could seek lodging.

2. (vs. 5). This verse says “Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.” As the psalmist continued to describe God’s people journey back to their homeland from Babylon, he said “Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.” They were in danger of perishing from hunger in their return home through the dry and barren deserts. The phrase “their soul fainted in them” means that they suffered so much from fatigue on their journey that they were ready to fall out for lack of refreshment. Those who always have plenty don’t know how miserable it is to be “hungry and thirsty” and have no way to solve that problem. This was the case of Israel in the wilderness, and maybe even other poor travelers.

D. A time of deliverance (Psalms 107:6-9).
1. (vs. 6). This verse says “Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.” In “their distresses” God’s people did what the Apostle James encouraged believers to do (see James 5:13): “they cried unto the LORD in their trouble.” When troubles seem to be more than we can stand, that’s the time to pray and cry out to the LORD. And sometimes all we can say to the LORD is one word: “HELP!” God does not need to hear the whole story because He knows what we are experiencing just like He knew what His people were going through. In response to their cries for help, the LORD answered and “delivered them out of their distresses.”

2. (vs. 7). This verse says “And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.” As part of His answer to their cry for help in their times of trouble in the desert wilderness, God “led them forth by the right way.” For sure, people will lead us by the wrong way, but God will always lead us “by the right way.” Although we may sometimes question God’s way, if we continue to follow Him we will find out that it was “the right way” all the time. For Israel, God was leading them in “the right way” so “that they might go to a city of habitation.” The “city of habitation” or the place where His people would dwell was Jerusalem. By application, like the Israelites here, we believers are here in this world as in a wilderness, for here in this world, we have “no continuing (or lasting) city” (see Hebrews 13:14); we are like strangers and pilgrims. But we are under the guidance of God’s wise and good counsel, and if we commit ourselves to it, we too shall
be “led in the right way” to a heavenly “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (see Hebrews 11:10).

3. (vs. 8). This verse says “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” Since God had done all of this for Israel and received His mercy, the psalmist declared “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness.” The word “men” here most likely refers to those people whom God has graciously delivered. The psalmist also said that God should be praised “for his wonderful works to the children of men!” The phrase “children of men” refers to the sons and daughters of mankind in general who may not know the LORD (see II Samuel 7:14; I Kings 8:39; Psalms 12:1; 14:2; 90:3), and the sons and daughters of non-Jews in particular. The psalmist expected those who had received mercy from God to render Him “praise” in return. We must acknowledge that God shows His goodness to the “children of men,” those who may not be saved as well as to the children of God; for He shows His “goodness” and “His wonderful works” to both (see Matthew 5:45).

4. (vs. 9). This verse says “For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” The psalmist had previously declared that God’s people had been “hungry and thirsty” and “their soul fainted in them” (see verse 5). Now he reveals that God delivers His people and reverses their troubling circumstances. The psalmist said “For he satisfieth the longing soul, and
filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” The LORD often supplied Israel’s needs and wonderfully delivered them when they were about to perish. The same God who led Israel has led us and fed us all of our lives, with food for both the body and the soul, for truly He “filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” Those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (see Matthew 5:6), after the living God, and commune with him, “shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy (His) house” (see Psalms 65:4). **Note:** Verses 10-38 are not part of our printed lesson, but in those verses, the psalmist goes on to describe how God continuously delivered Israel from trouble after they cried to Him for help (see Psalms 107:10-31). Because of God’s deliverance, the psalmist said more than once, “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” (see Psalms 107:15, 21,31). Then the psalmist called on all the people to “exalt” and “praise” the LORD because He had “turned the desert into a fruitful land and the standing water and dry ground into watersprings” (see verses 32-38). Our printed text continues with verse 39.

**IV. GOD REVERSES CIRCUMSTANCES (Psalms 107:39-43)**

**A. The mighty are humbled (Psalms 107:39-40).**

1. (vs. 39). This verse says “Again, they are
minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.” As we study the history of Israel, especially in the book of Judges, we find that they never seemed to learn the lessons God was teaching them (see Judges 2:11-12, 16; 3:6-7, 10-12, 31; 4:1). God had caused them to grow in numbers (see Psalms 107:38), but because of their constant disobedience, the psalmist said “Again, they are minished” meaning that God continued to diminish or reduce their population. In addition, the people were “brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow” all because they refused to obey the LORD (see Deuteronomy 28:15-52; 63-65). The truth is that God has many ways of reversing the fortunes of man and making men poor. He can do it by “oppression, affliction, and sorrow” just like He tested Job and humbled him (see Job 23:10).

2. (vs. 40). This verse says “He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.” No one is exempt from God’s dealings not even royalty, for here the psalmist said “He poureth contempt upon princes.” In other words, God even brings shame to great leaders. He also “causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.” This means that God also makes high and mighty “princes...to wander” through empty deserts that have no previously travelled roads. The Scriptures are replete with instances where God humbled or brought low powerful and mighty leaders (see Exodus chapter 14; II Kings 19:20-37; Daniel chapter 4 and Acts 12:20-23).

B. The meek are honored (Psalms 107:41). This
verse says, “Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.” After having said how God reverses the exalted condition of princes to one of contempt, in this verse, the psalmist declares how God reverses the condition of “the poor” and humble. He said “Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.” Those who were “poor,” afflicted and trampled on are not only delivered, but God has also set them “on high” out of the reach of their “affliction” or troubles and gave them places of honor (see I Samuel 2:8; Psalms 113:7-8). And God adds to their honor and elevation by giving them a multitude of children, for He “maketh him families like a flock.” In other words, God not only reverses the condition of “the poor,” He also gives them children so numerous, “like a flock” of sheep, useful, meek and peaceable. For as another psalmist said when speaking of the joys of children, “Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed...” (see Psalms 127:4-5). Certainly, God is to be credited with setting up families and building them up. The LORD’S point for reversing the conditions of “the poor” and princes is to remind us that princes should not be envied, nor should “the poor” be looked down upon, because God has many ways of changing the conditions and circumstances of both.

C. The wise are encouraged (Psalms 107:42-43).

1. (vs. 42). This verse says “The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.” Of course, “the righteous” are those who are
right with God, follow His ways and seek to do those things that please Him. Here the psalmist declares that “the righteous” observe with pleasure the reversal of circumstances presented in verses 41-42. He said “the righteous shall see it, and rejoice.” The pronoun “it” refers to the reversal of conditions and circumstances of the poor and princes. When those who are “righteous shall see” these changes, they “rejoice” glorifying God for showing His dominion over the children of men. One cannot help but “rejoice” when he or she witnesses how God manages people to serve His own purposes. When we, as saints, “see” the despised poor lifted up, and the prideful brought down low, we can “rejoice” because God has once again kept His Word. Not only will “the righteous… rejoice” at seeing the reversal of these circumstances, but in addition, sinners will be silenced; for the last part of this verse says “and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.” When sinners see how their punishment answers their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them His gifts which they have abused, they won’t have a word to say for themselves. God will be justified and perfectly clear in what He does.

2. (vs. 43). Our final verse says “Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.” The psalmist concludes by declaring who it is that “shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.” The word “lovingkindness” is often translated in Scripture as “mercy.” The psalmist is saying that only a “wise” person who “will observe these things” meaning the different
ways God deals with people, “shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.” The truth is that sometimes it’s hard for us to “understand” why God shows His “lovingkindness” or His mercy to those we don’t think deserve it. But “Whosoever is wise,” in their wisdom, they will come to “understand the lovingkindness of the LORD” and why He does have mercy on whom He will have mercy (see Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15). This understanding can go a long way to helping us become better Christians.

V. Conclusion. We Christians enjoy the blessings of God every day in the sun and the rain, in family and friends, in our churches and in our Saviour. We should never be guilty of overlooking God’s blessings or being ungrateful for all He does for us. Praise belongs to God and He hates the sin of ingratitude as much as anything else we might regard as a major sin, such as murder. Unfortunately, it’s easy to be less than grateful. It’s also easy to praise God when we read His Word and understand what He has done for us as our great Redeemer and Deliverer. If the earth itself—the hills, the pastures, and the valleys—give silent but powerful praise to God, surely we can rejoice, shout for joy, and sing His praises aloud.
Sunday, October 17, 2021: “Praise God for Past Deliverance”
Commentary (The ISSL Curriculum)

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