

Then They Cried To The Lord In Their Trouble

Turn with me to **Psalm 107** and I want to share a word of encouragement this morning. Psalms 105-107 comprise a trilogy of sorts, recalling God's faithfulness to the people of Israel throughout their history. Psalm 105 begins with the covenant with Abraham through the Exodus and entrance into the promised land. Psalm 106 tells of the unfaithfulness of the people during that same time and their exile into Babylon and Psalm 107 gives thanks to God for delivering them from exile and bringing them back to the promised land.

Psalm 107 gives us four different pictures of God's people, in four different, difficult circumstances, and each time, when God's people call upon the Lord, he hears, he answers and he delivers them out of their trouble. Because of God's faithfulness and his mercy there is good news for you today. I believe you are destined for deliverance! Look at these opening verses. **"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say this — those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south. Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things."** Psalm 107:1-9

As I looked at this Psalm, I could almost hear it being preached. "All right, it's time to begin our service. Let's give thanks to the Lord for he is good, and his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say this – come on – how many of you have been redeemed from the hand of the foe? How many of you were once scattered, lost, away from God, off in sin, but he has gathered you from the far off and distant lands – he has gathered you from the east and the west and from the north and the south. He has redeemed you. Oh, come on somebody. Come on you that have been redeemed, you can say this – you can give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his love endures forever."

Church starts and then the preacher, the Psalmist, begins to tell the story of the redeemed of the Lord. He begins to testify of those whom the Lord has redeemed, those whom he has gathered to himself. Look at verse 4. I can hear him preaching.

"We are the redeemed of the Lord. And if we are the redeemed, that means we have been

redeemed out of something. Webster's dictionary says to redeem means to buy back. It says redeem means **"...to rescue, ransom, or liberate from captivity or bondage...to deliver, to rescue, to save in any manner. In theology, to deliver from sin and its penalties, as by a sacrifice made for the sinner."**

If we are the redeemed of the Lord, then we've been delivered from something. We've been rescued from something. We've been saved from something. We've been brought out of something, liberated from something. The psalmist is thinking of being redeemed out of slavery and exile in Babylon - finally being allowed to come home to Israel. Maybe you haven't been exiled to a strange land, but you've been redeemed, rescued out of something. Some of us have been rescued out of the wastelands and the desert."

The psalmist said, **"Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away."** Exiled, led into a desert wasteland and there was no city where they were allowed to settle. No Jews allowed. They were rejected and abandoned and left to wander.

Some of you can relate. You've been rejected. Cast out, cast aside. You feel like you've been wandering through the desert for a while now. You haven't been able to find a city to settle in. You keep experiencing rejection. It doesn't feel like you belong...anywhere. You can't get settled in your life.

A desert wasteland is a desolate place, a solitary place, a lonely place. You feel alone, vulnerable, hopeless. Work isn't fulfilling. You aren't settled there, it's just a job. You come to church, but it's just another wasteland. You don't feel settled. You aren't connected. Alone, it really feels like your life is just ebbing away. You are disappearing and no one even seems to notice you, dying in the desert.

But then this passage says concerning those in the desert, those wandering in the wasteland of life, **"Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them from their distress."** Whatever the reason for the desolate experience, for the wilderness you are walking through, the way out of that desert is to call upon the Lord. If you will call, he will answer. "Call on me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know." Jeremiah 33:3. That is the promise we hold to when we are wandering in a desert wasteland. Hungry, thirsty and in need. But if we call, he will answer.

Somewhere I read about a physician suffering with an illness that put him in bed, in terrible

pain, in despair really. He said, as I was laying in that bed, staring up at the ceiling and wondering what I could do, I realized my eyes were fixed in the right direction. Up. Looking up, toward heaven, was the only way a bed patient could look. And he said I realized then, the only way out of the sickness I was in was up. **“The only way out is up.”** Look up and call upon the Lord.

Notice verse 7. **“He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.”** They couldn’t find a place where they fit or where they felt they belonged, but then they called upon the Lord and he led them straight to a city where they could settle, to a people that accepted them and loved them. He brought them to the place where they belonged. His city. His kingdom. His family.

God’s got a place for you. He hasn’t brought you into the desert to die here. He is bringing you through the desert to a city that is just made for you. Verse 8 and 9 call us to worship and give thanks to God for his wonderful deeds. He has destined you for deliverance from the desert. He will satisfy the thirsty and fill the hungry with good things. From starvation and dying of thirst alone in the desert, He is bringing you out of the desert and into his city, into his blessing. Trust him.

Now look at verse 10. We move from the desert to a prison cell. **“Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains.”**

The Psalmist acknowledges these folks were prisoners of their own making. They had rebelled against God and his counsel and found themselves imprisoned. Some of you know what it is like to be a prisoner this morning. A prisoner because of bad choices, wrong choices. Some of you know what it is like to be a literal prisoner, incarcerated because of mistakes you made. You’ve paid your debt to society, served your sentence and you are living a new life in Christ and we are grateful you are here with us today, but you remember what it is like to be a prisoner.

Some of you are prisoners of a different type. You are in chains today, bound by addiction to drugs, alcohol, pornography, sexual immorality and infidelity, greed, lying, gambling, violence, anger, you are living a life and lifestyle that is contrary to God’s word. You are despising the counsel of God as this passage says. You are going your own way, and the result is bondage.

You wish you could be free but you are in chains today.

Some of you are shackled by emotional chains, held captive by your past failures and mistakes. Some of you are prisoners to darkness and the deepest gloom of depression, fear, despair, post traumatic stress. You feel alone. Verse 12 says, “they stumbled and there was no one to help.” Alone, bound, in despair. But remember, the way out is up. Look up. It says they sat in darkness, in the deepest gloom, but God didn’t leave them where they were. He didn’t leave them where he found them. It didn’t matter their past or what they had done to put themselves in that position. **“Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains.”** No wonder the psalmist says in verse 15, “Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.”

No shackles, no prison bars are so secure but what God’s mercy can cut through them. Gates of bronze and bars of iron. That’s pretty substantial stuff, but if you will call upon the Lord, he will deliver you out of the darkness and the gloom - he will liberate you from the prison that holds you captive. I don’t care how heavy the gates or how strong the bars, the things that hold you captive can be broken from your life. Listen to me this morning, you have a destiny and it is not to die as a prisoner. Your destiny is not to die behind bars or to remain a captive of the enemy, instead, God has destined you for deliverance. He has destined you to be free. They cried to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them from their distress. That’s your destiny!

Look at verse 17. We’ve looked at those in the desert, those in prison. Now we are looking at those in sickness. **“Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities. They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.”** Psalm 107:17-22

This passage describes those who are sick through some rebellion and are suffering because of sin. He may be thinking of the rebellion in the wilderness when venomous snakes bit the people and Moses made the brazen serpent. You can read it in Numbers 21. Of course, not everyone encounters sickness because of sin or rebellion in their life. These folks suffered

affliction it says. **“They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.”** It describes those who are wasting away do to sickness. They could no longer eat. They are suffering and in pain and they are near the gates of death. Perhaps even hoping for death so they will no longer have to suffer this pain. Have you ever been there? Do you know what I’m talking about? What do you do when you are suffering pain like this? You remember, the only way out is up. What does verse 19 say? **“Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them from their distress. He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.”**

They were at death’s door – the gates of death the Psalmist called it, when they called upon the Lord and he heard them and sent his word and healed them and rescued them from the grave. He is still sending forth his word and healing people. There is still reason to call upon him when sickness and illness have come. “Well, I don’t know about asking for healing because I don’t really deserve to be healed.” Do you think these people deserved to be healed? This passage says they were suffering affliction because of their iniquities, their rebellion. They didn’t deserve healing. But they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, relying upon his mercy. And out of his mercy, he saved them from their distress. He healed them and rescued them. No wonder he says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say this...let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.” God has chosen to hear your cry, even if you did get into this mess through your own foolishness and rebellion. Or if you had nothing to do with it and sickness came out of nowhere, call upon the Lord and trust him. God has destined you for deliverance. He has sent his word to heal you and rescue you from the grave. You are destined for deliverance.

Now look at verse 23. **“Others went out on the sea in ships, they were merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.”**

Who stirred up a tempest? Who brought the storm? He did. Niv doesn’t capitalize pronouns of deity, but other translations do. The “he” is capitalized in those other translations. God stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. Why? I’ll show you in just a minute. But look again at this storm.

Ever felt like this? **“They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they**

were at their wit's end."

One minute they were at the crest of a wave and then suddenly the bottom would drop out and it was like they were suspended in the air for a split second and then they dropped. Their heart and stomach were in their throat. It spun them around till they reeled and staggered like drunken men. There was nothing they could think to do.

Some of you are thinking "that's it! That describes the journey I've been on in the last year. Up, down, spinning around, my head spinning, sick, scared, out of control, at my wits end. What do I do? How do I get out of this storm?" Remember, the way out is up! Look up.

You already know the answer to this question. What did they do? **"Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he brought them out of their distress."**

Cry out to the Lord. Sometimes, in a storm, there isn't time for a long, lengthy, flowery prayer. Just a "Help, God!" Or even just crying "Jesus." But we cry out to him and He will bring us out of our distress. Now look what happens in verse 29:

"He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed." This is the calm after the storm. Jesus speaks and the wind and the waves obey him. He stills the storm to a whisper. The waves stop their rolling and the sea is hushed. If you will call upon the Lord, if you will trust him even when you are going through a storm, he will see you through. He will still the storm. In his timing, He will hush the waves and bring peace in the midst of the storm.

Now look at the next verse. Remember I said I would tell you why this says the Lord stirred up the tempest that lifted high the waves? Read verse 30.

"They were glad when it grew calm and he guided them to their desired haven." It is important for us to realize, God didn't just calm the storm, he took the ship to a safe haven. He took those folks where he wanted them to go. He sent the storm. Why? **It was all about destination!**

The storm may have taken them some place they never would have gone on their own. It may have taken them some place off the map. Some place they never even thought of, some place they never considered. But God had a destiny and a destination for them. God knew where they needed to be. God knew the desire of their heart, so "he guided them to their desired haven."

God sometimes stirs up the tempest out of his mercy, he picks up the winds out of his love for us because he wants to take us someplace we've never even thought about. He wants to use us in places no one's ever considered, he wants to send us to places no one's even been before.

What's the purpose of allowing the storm? To get us to the desired haven! It's all about destination. It's about the realization of his purpose and plan for your life. You've been destined for deliverance. And it is not only that he is delivering you out of something or delivering you from something, He is going to deliver you to something. He is delivering you to the desired haven. He has a place for you and the storm is going to get you there. Don't be afraid. You're going to get through this and you will be exactly where he needs you to be.

What do we do? **“Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.”**

This time he tells us to get together with some believers and worship God. To testify of what he has done. To encourage one another by telling them the story. “I was in a storm once. And I didn't think I was going to make it and it blew us way off course, but then the Lord calmed the waves and the wind and I found myself blown all the way over here and this has been the best experience of my life.”

He moves us from the raging storms to a place of rejoicing, from despair to deliverance. You are destined for deliverance. Don't despise the storm. God is taking you somewhere. Bless the Lord. Worship the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love. That love won't fail you in the desert, in prison, in sickness, in the storms. His love will keep you. His grace will sustain you. His power will deliver you and see you through.

“Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord.”

God is up to something. You are destined for deliverance. Cry out to the Lord and he will hear you. Remember, the only way out is up! You are headed toward your destiny!