

Psalm 107

Read Psalm 107:1-3: The word psalms means ‘*songs of praise*’. The book of psalms includes 150 individual psalms. There are some patterns that reoccur throughout the bible. The psalms are broken down into 5 books. The 5 groups of psalms follow the same themes of the first five books in the bible.

- Book 1: (Psalm 1-41) are like the book of Genesis emphasizing how God is beside us.
- Book 2: (Psalm 42-72) are like the book of Exodus emphasizing how God goes before us and delivers us
- Book 3: (Psalm 73-89) are like the book of Leviticus, written by priests, and emphasizing that God is all around us
- Book 4: (90-106) are like the book of Numbers speaking to God’s holiness being above us. It relates to Israel and its neighbors.
- Book 5 (107-150) are like Deuteronomy speaking about *God among us, in our new beginnings.*

So the context here is about *how God interacts with us as born-again men and women*. Everything that happens to us somehow directly or indirectly results in more freedom (even if it involves being pushed around by this world’s forces). Our lives are full of seasons; which all are forcing us towards more freedom and faith in God.

This psalm begins by declaring that God’s mercy lasts forever; and that those who have been saved need to *talk about it*. He has brought us out of some pretty bad places.

He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth— (Psalm 40:2-3)

There are two main definitions of mercy in the dictionary. One action-oriented definition is to show compassion to someone whom you have the power to punish or do harm to. Another definition of mercy is more about the character of the one in power. It is being predisposed to not harm or abuse.

To say that God's mercy endures forever is also saying that we just keep creating situations where punishment and correction is called for. We begin our relationship with God as ignorant and opposing his purposes.

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:6-8)

This means that God showed us mercy while we were using our opportunities to sin against him. We get ourselves into all kinds of jams, because of our bad choices. We are led by emotions and desires instead of the mind of Christ we are just chasing the wind. Our poor choices wrap around us like a spider web; and *infect* everything in our lives. Jesus took our curses and toxic hatred and our resulting penalty to restore our freedom.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

It is one thing to valiantly trade your life for a good friend in combat; but something else to trade your life for the enemy combatant who is trying to kill you. We think that we are fighting circumstances, but sometimes we are fighting God's will.

These verses refer to *the redeemed*, who were *gathered out of nations around the world*. The Jews were taken out of their homeland more than once. Most recently, in 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. The Muslims have tried to extinguish the JEws to disprove biblical prophecy. The Jews resettled all around the world. Those who settled in northern and eastern Europe are called the *Ashkenazi Jews*. Those who settled in Spain and Portugal are called *Sephardic Jews*. Things did not go so well for the displaced Jews in these other nations either. In 1290 the Jews were expelled from England. In 1492 the Jews were expelled from Spain. In 1948-1973 the Jews were expelled from various Arab countries. The *diaspora* is a term that describes the scattering of Jews around the world, because of anti-semitism and envy.

When faith left the country of Israel it began a downward spiral. The following verses are scriptural excerpts where *God packed his bags and left town*.

And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne. Then He spoke to the man clothed with linen, and said, “Go in among the wheels, under the cherub, fill your hands with coals of fire from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city.” And he went in as I watched. Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and paused over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord’s glory. And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even in the outer court, like the voice of Almighty God when He speaks.....Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels were beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord’s house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. (Ezekiel 10 various verses)

Israel ceased to be a nation for 2000 years. In 1948 Israel regained its nation status and was reborn. This was all predicted. Israel had become a vacated marshland and desert. The famous American writer Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) became famous after visiting Israel and eastern Europe with a church group in the 1860’s. His writings about Israel made him the most famous American of the 1800’s. Mark Twain was an irreverent skeptical author; who wrote about life. Twain made his daily postings in a San Francisco newspaper titled: The Innocents Abroad. Clemens saw a sad and empty landscape in Israel when he traveled with a church group. He still thoughtfully sent his mother a King James bible. Clemen’s description of Israel in the 1800s was as follows: *It is desolate of inhabitants. There is not a man for 30 miles in any direction. He saw 2-3 Bedouin campsites; but no permanent homes. Of all of the lands there are for dismal scenery , I think Palestine must be the prince. Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies.*

Then when the Jews were gone; and their language had been forgotten...God began to fulfill his prophecy. There are many times when God waits until our last glimmer of hope is gone before he begins his work. Israel would now be *resuscitated back to life* by God.

The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they

were very dry. He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” So I answered, “O Lord God, You know.” Again He said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’’’ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’’’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the Lord.’’”

(Ezekiel 37)

Anti-semitism abroad then pushed Jews back to their homeland once again. In recent years the flow back home of displaced Jews has accelerated. The *Aliyah* is a term given to this repatriation back to their homeland. *Aliyah* means *going up to Jerusalem* (like they used to do for the holy holidays). One such example of Jewish repatriation is seen in the war in the Ukraine with Russia. Ukraine has many Ashkenazi Jews. They have been fleeing in droves for their lives back to Israel.

It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:11-12)

Many biblical scholars prior to 1948 did not believe that the prophecy about Israel in the future was literal. They substituted the church into Israel's place in prophecy. They taught that prophecies about Israel in the future were figurative (since it did not exist).

God made fools out of them who doubted the literality of scripture. They doubted that the Jews would become a nation and re-learn their language. That kind of thing has never happened to any nation before.

Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? (Isaiah 66:8)

Read Psalm 107:4-9: Much of the bible includes multiple fulfillment of prophecies. These verses refer specifically to the 40 years of wandering in the desert. They also resonate with the life of Abram; one of our prime examples of faith. We really do not exactly fit in anywhere on earth. Things might seem to be a good fit; but then they fall short. We are not to get too tied down with our day to day. Abram was called a sojourner (traveler); because God kept him mobile and unencumbered.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God..... These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off [e]were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.....They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (Hebrews 11 various verses)

These verses speak of the desperation in times of being without food or shelter. Not knowing how you will buy food, or stay in shelter is a disturbing thought. There were even homeless men in the days of Job. They seem to die without notice. What about when we fall to circumstances?

"But now they mock me, men younger than I, Whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock. Indeed, what profit is the strength of their hands to me? Their vigor has perished. They are gaunt from want and famine, Fleeing late to the wilderness, desolate and waste, Who

pluck mallow by the bushes, And broom tree roots for their food. They were driven out from among men, They shouted at them as at a thief. They had to live in the clefts of the valleys, In caves of the earth and the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed, Under the nettles they nestled. They were sons of fools, Yes, sons of vile men; They were scourged from the land.
(Job 30:1-8)

Read Psalm 107:10-14: Egypt is a symbol for the earth. It is compared to a furnace and a place of affliction and abuse. It captures and enslaves us. The Egyptian slave masters are like demons who keep us on the treadmill of business. Satan is compared to Pharaoh (the king of this world). We are essentially slaves to our own sins and passions; until the prophet (like Moses) came and freed us. Bob Dylan wrote a song about how everybody is serving somebody. He said that we either are serving the devil or we are serving God. This is actually true. Many people believe that there is a middle ground; where we can exist as independents. Serving our self-will is actually Satan's main slogan.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:16-23)

Our pastor used to tell us that there is nothing more sad than when a sinner who is chasing his desires ceases to find satisfaction. He has traded away everything of value for a cheap thrill. He has burned his relationships; and damaged his health and emotions. He has bypassed all of the signs to make a u-turn. Now he has no caretakers or place of comfort. Satan seeks to enslave us to the images in our imagination. It is amazing how convoluted a person will become as they run from God's light. The more that we hang onto our hidden sin, the more it becomes an obvious mistake. We have a nearly unlimited ability to mask the truth as we pursue our selfish desires. Satan

converts men into an unlovable and unhealthy leech on society. Only God can transform a lost cause.

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Read Psalm 107:15-22: We serve the God of lost causes.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” (luke 4:18-19)

“The bows of the mighty men are broken, And those who stumbled are girded with strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, And the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren has borne seven, And she who has many children has become feeble. “The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the beggar from the ash heap, To set them among princes And make them inherit the throne of glory. (1 Samuel 2:4-8)

We may even be more savable if we are at rock bottom.

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Revelation 3:15-28)

Read Psalm 107:23-32: There are all kinds of situations and places of desperation that God saves man from. We keep migrating towards slavery and danger. God wants to bring us to a place where life is calm and in control.

The bible compares life with God as your king; to life in the unstable natural world. Israel is compared to living on solid ground. We have a foundation in Christ that is not movable. We are anchored to something solid and unswerving. Life in the natural world is compared to the ocean. The sea is a dangerous place with its waves. There is no real control or stability. There are all kinds of forces coming to bear all around you. The rivers on earth are associated with their particular origins; and they serve as boundaries for the nations. The ocean is a collection of peoples of all origins and nations. The winds on earth are compared to demonic powers that cause the movements and waves that threaten life. There is never absolute calmness or rest. It is always stirring. The ocean is a picture of the Gentile world. There are all kinds of powers and forces are stirring it up. It is a mixture of people of every nation. It is a place where danger and death and power are found. The demonic forces move the people like waves; and popular culture in unison. Our trends and politics and media rise up and threaten anyone near them. Paul experienced the full force of nature against him as he headed towards Rome, with the gospel.

When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone. Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea....Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."...When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon. So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven. And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up. But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid,

Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island." (Acts 27 various verses)

God saves men from the forces that come to bear upon this world. We have no control over our environment.

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:35-40)

Read Psalm 107: 33-43: God has the power to make nature heel and be calm and become habitable for his people. He has the power to create or destroy. He turned Israel into a lifeless desert from a forested and fruitful land; when his people chose idolatry. He then (after 2000 years) turned this lifeless desert into an agricultural garden; as he is bringing his people back to their homeland.

People wonder why a loving and protective God pounded his people into oblivion; and then rescued them years later. It was an answered prayer. They had become worse than the Canaanites who they destroyed. The prophet Habakkuk prayed that God would step in and stop the out of control sin in his nation. God answered his prayer with the Babylonians. God uses evil empires to put a stop to sin just as easily as he uses his holy armies.

O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.... "Look among the nations and watch— Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, A bitter and

hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. Their horses also are swifter than leopards, And more fierce than evening wolves. Their chargers [d]charge ahead; Their cavalry comes from afar; They fly as the eagle that hastens to eat. “They all come for violence; Their faces are set like the east wind. They gather captives like sand. (Habakkuk 1 various verses)