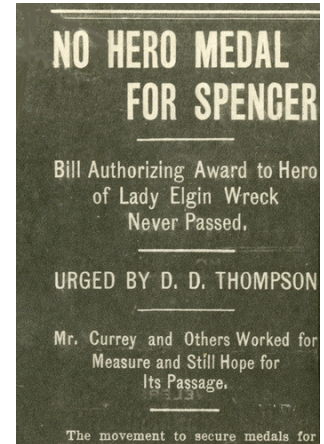


3h - God's Wonderful Goodness

Read Psalm 107

On September 8, 1860, The Lady Elgin sank in Lake Michigan. A young ministerial student named Edward Spencer dove repeatedly into the icy waters and rescued seventeen people. The prolonged exposure permanently damaged his health however, and he was unable to complete his studies. Some years later, at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the seventeen people he saved ever returned to thank him.

Thankfulness is basic to godliness. This psalm shows us how much it means to say that God is *good*, and calls us to thank Him for His goodness to us in the past and the present. Note the repeated refrain in Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31.



1. Why do you appreciate it when someone thanks you for something special you have done?

2. Read Psalm 107. How does Psalm 107:1-3 provide the theme and tone of the psalm?

- **Psalms 107:1-3 HCSB** Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His faithful love endures forever. (2) Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim that He has redeemed them from the hand of the foe (3) and has gathered them from the lands--from the east and the west, from the north and the south.

David begins by telling us the purpose of the Psalm, "Give thanks". We are to be a grateful people. Why?

He is good. He could have been an arbitrary, cruel deity. He could have created a black and white universe devoid of color and joy. He could have rendered creation silent; deaf; mute. Instead, He filled it with music and sound. He is good. One argument people make against God is "How can you believe in a good God when there is so much cruelty and evil in the world?" My response is that the fact that there is both good AND evil in the world argues for a beneficent deity. In human experience, evil, powerful despots do not give their subjects a choice. It is the benevolent rulers who allow their citizens to vote and, if they choose, even leave the country. Because we see that choice available to humanity, we argue that God is at the very least benign, probably benevolent, and possibly even loving!

His faithful love endures forever. He does not tire. He was lovingly referred to by the English poet Francis Thompson as the "Hound of Heaven." Isn't that an odd name? It's disturbing at first to refer to Yahweh as a "hound". It is initially repelling. However, when you think about it the strangeness disappears. The meaning is understood. As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and unperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. Like our parents in the Garden of Eden, in sin the human spirit seeks to hide itself but Divine grace follows after, unwearingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never ending pursuit. It is Christ's love that compels us.¹

3. The psalmist describes four different incidents in Psalm 107:4-9, 10-16, 17-22 and 23-32. What brief title would you give to each incident?

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:14

Psalm 107:4-9 – The Wanderers
Psalm 107:10-16 – The Prisoners
Psalm 107:17-22 – The Fools
Psalm 107:23-32 – The Sailors

4. What elements do they have in common?

They are lost and without hope outside of Yaweh. Each one is separated not only from Yaweh but also from other humans in some way. The highest command “Love God/Love neighbor” is tacitly implied.

5. How is God's unfailing love demonstrated in each account?

Psalm 107:4-9 – The Wanderers

- a. were rescued from their distress
- b. were led home by the right path
- c. were shown faithful love and wonderful works
- d. found their hunger and thirst satiated.

Psalm 107:10-16 – The Prisoners

- a. were saved from their distress
- b. were brought out of darkness
- c. found their chains, bronze gates, and iron bars broken apart
- d. were shown faithful love and wonderful works

Psalm 107:17-22 – The Fools

- a. Were rescued from their distress
- b. Were sent the Word
- c. Received healing
- d. Were rescued from the Pit
- e. Were shown faithful love and wonderful works

Psalm 107:23-32 – The Sailors

- a. He showed them His power through the storms
- b. He saved them from their distress
- c. Their storms were stilled; they found quietness
- d. Were guided to the harbor they longed for
- e. Were shown faithful love and wonderful works

Rescued from distress. In each case, Hashem's purpose was rescue. He does not desire that any should perish but that all should come to everlasting life.

Shown faithful love and wonderful works. The methods may differ but they are all faithful love and wonderful works because of Hashem's purpose or motive. He is just as faithful and loving when He raises the storm (v. 25) as when He calmed the storm (v.29). He forms light and creates darkness; He makes success and creates disaster. It is the Lord who does all these things (Isaiah 45:7).

Derash for the four examples would include:

Wanderers: God provides sustenance during our desert experiences.

Prisoners: He provides deliverance from our addictions, our sins, and ultimately from Death itself!

Fools: He rescues our spirits from the calamity of the yetzer hara.

Sailors: The sea often represented chaos to ancient writers. God offers guidance to safe harbor when we are distressed by life's chaotic experience.

6. Each scene begins by describing a calamity and a cry for help. Why do we often hit bottom before we cry out to God?

Unfortunately, we must come up against situations that we cannot overcome in our own strength, or with our own wisdom. We need to be shown our need for a strength and a wisdom that comes from Above, that comes from Beyond, that comes from Another outside of us and yet rises up from within us.

In at least one area of our lives, at least once, we have to come to recognize our inability to save ourselves, and surrender to Christ, trusting Jesus to do in us and through us what we cannot do on our own. That surrender is, in essence, “taking up the Cross” with respect to salvation.

We must die to saving ourselves. We cannot save ourselves and determine that since we cannot, we will not. We must only trust in the Life, Death, Resurrection, and Kingship of the Lord to do what we have (at last!) learned that we cannot do. This is what it means to “embrace the Cross” in the area of salvation.

When we see that the death to Self is thorough and complete – that is, when we stop trying to save ourselves and cast ourselves upon the grace of God, then God raises us from the dead. That which was impossible before is now accomplished by God. The curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10-13) at that point is transformed into the Law of Freedom (James 1:25; 2:12). We become the thankful recipients of His grace, and He receives all the praise and the glory since we have done nothing and He has done everything. This is the principle of the Cross.

7. What kind of help do you need from the Lord at this time?

8. Each scene concludes by describing God's salvation and by calling us to give thanks for His unfailing love. Why do we often forget to thank God for answered prayers?

When we express gratitude we are in part verbalizing our need for help. We must acknowledge our dependence. Gratitude is humbling. The humble are grateful. These are two sides of the same coin.

Expressing gratitude can be quickly exhausting because it runs so contrary to the yetzer hara. In the short term, gratitude and worship are exhilarating. In the long term, however, it can be draining.

To express gratitude one must take a careful and introspective interest in one's life and environment. Far too many people live in “blissful” ignorance and are prone to staying in that mode by default out of sheer intellectual laziness.

9. What prayers has God answered recently for which you are thankful?

According to Psalm 107:22 and 32, what are some ways we can give thanks?

Offer sacrifices of thanksgiving.

Announce His works with shouts of joy.

Exalt Him in the assembly of the people.

Praise Him in the council of elders.

As there were four illustrations, here we see four directives, four mitzvot we must keep in mind, one for each experience. These would include:

Wanderers: It is precisely when we are in our “desert” that we should offer sacrifices of thanksgiving. Instead, we tend to grumble. We should acknowledge God's past favors and, in faith, look forward to His favors being renewed.

Prisoners: Those who are struggling with addictions, regardless of their form, should constantly be reminding themselves of God's great power and His ability to perform what the

human spirit cannot. Another derash would be those who are prisoners for the Christ's sake should rejoice in their sufferings as Paul and Silas did.

- **Acts 16:22-25 HCSB** Then the mob joined in the attack against them, and the chief magistrates stripped off their clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods. (23) After they had inflicted many blows on them, they threw them in jail, ordering the jailer to keep them securely guarded. (24) Receiving such an order, he put them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks. (25) About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

And as James commands:

- **James 1:2-3 HCSB** Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

Fools: The fool says in his heart "No God" says Psalm 14:1. All of us have been guilty of this particular brand of foolishness. When God graciously saves us, we should begin by confessing the name of His Son, and proclaiming His grace to the assembly of the people. We practice there, where it is relatively safe, so that we can be proficient when we do it out in the rather unsafe "world".

Sailors: Those who would guide others must first acknowledge that God guides them. As Joseph did:

- **Genesis 40:8 HCSB** "We had dreams," they said to him, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell me *your dreams*."
- **Genesis 41:15-16 HCSB** Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said about you that you can hear a dream and interpret it." (16) "I am not able to," Joseph answered Pharaoh. "It is God who will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

And as Daniel did:

- **Daniel 2:26-28 HCSB** The king said in reply to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to tell me the dream I had and its interpretation?" (27) Daniel answered the king: "No wise man, medium, diviner-priest, or astrologer is able to make known to the king the mystery he asked about. (28) But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has let King Nebuchadnezzar know what will happen in the last days. Your dream and the visions *that came into your mind as you lay in bed* were these:

10. What does Psalm 107:33-42 reveal about the ups and downs of life?

God can:

- a. turn rivers into deserts and back again.
- b. turn fruitful land into salty wasteland
- c. turn a desert into a pool or spring of water.
- d. cause civilizations to rise and/or fall.

He is the source of blessing. He is above our leadership and can cause them to lead us well or astray depending on our attitudes. As it says it,

- **Proverbs 21:1 HCSB** A king's heart is a water channel in the LORD's hand: He directs it wherever He chooses.

In darkness or light, blessing or disaster, we must continuously acknowledge our utter dependence upon the one who created and sustains all things; for all things were created

through Him and for Him, He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.² From Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be glory forever.³

11. Psalm 107:43 states that if we are wise we will "heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord." What things does the psalmist want us to heed?

We are to remember the Lord...Jeremiah 51:50

He is to be remembered in every generation...Exodus 3:15

May our tongues stick to the roof of our mouths if we do not remember Him...Psalm 137:6

We are to:

1. Remember and obey...Numbers 15:40
2. Remember and not forget...Deuteronomy 9:7
3. Remember for the rest of our lives....Deuteronomy 16:3
4. Remember these things and be brave...Isaiah 44:21; 46:8
5. Remember Him in the distant lands...Zechariah 10:9
6. Remember to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in us...2 Timothy 1:6

We are to remember and heed:

1. God's unfailing love, for it is Christ's love that compels us....2 Corinthians 5:14
2. The days of deliverance...Exodus 13:3; These days are to be remembered and celebrated by every generation...Esther 9:28; the days of old...Psalm 143:5
3. His Sabbath rest...Exodus 20:8
4. All the Lord's commands...Numbers 15:39
5. That we were slaves...Deuteronomy 5:15
6. What the Lord your God did...Deuteronomy 7:18
7. That the Lord your God led us... Deuteronomy 8:2
8. That the LORD your God gives us the power to gain wealth...Deuteronomy 8:18
9. The days of old...Deuteronomy 32:7
10. What Moses commanded us...Joshua 1:13; The instruction of Moses, His servant...Malachi 4:4
11. The wonderful works He has done...1 Chronicles 16:12; Remember the five loaves for the 5,000...Matthew 16:9; Mark 8:18-21
12. His covenant forever...1 Chronicles 16:15
13. the great and awe-inspiring Lord...Nehemiah 4:14
14. that we should praise His work...Job 36:24
15. That He remembers us...Psalm 42:6
16. To cause His name to be remembered for all generations...Psalm 45:17
17. the Lord's works ...Psalm 77:11
18. that God is our rock...Psalm 78:35
19. to observe His instructions...Psalm 103:18
20. the wonderful works He has done...Psalm 105:5; What happened long ago...Isaiah 46:9; Hebrews 10:32
21. His judgments from long ago and find comfort...Psalm 119:52
22. His name in the night...Psalm 119:55
23. Our Creator in the days of our youth...Ecclesiastes 12:1
24. His name alone...Isaiah 26:13
25. Lot's wife!...Luke 17:32

² Colossians 1:16-17

³ Romans 11:36

26. Paul's ways in Christ Jesus...1 Corinthians 4:17
27. How Jesus sacrificed His body for us...1 Corinthians 11:24
28. That those who sow sparingly...reap sparingly... those who sow generously...reap generously....2 Corinthians 9:6
29. The poor...Galatians 2:10
30. That at one time we were Gentiles...Ephesians 2:11
31. The Apostle's instructions on the coming of the Lord Jesus...2 Thessalonians 2:5
32. The prisoners...Hebrews 13:3
33. Our leaders...Hebrews 13:7
34. The words previously spoken...2 Peter 3:2.
35. The words foretold by the apostles concerning end times...Jude 1:17; What we have received and heard...Revelation 3:3

Good leaders will remind us of these things even though we know them...2 Peter 1:12; Jude 1:5