

## **Ask.**

~ Psalm 107

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March 05, 2023

We have discussed rest and the necessity for the sabbath through Pastors Tom's sermon series. In this sermon, I would like to explore why we can rest. I have selected Psalm 107 as our text for this morning to do this.

One word in this entire passage is more important than any other. We see it highlighted in the very first verse. It translates as steadfast love in the English Standard Version, loving-kindness in the American Standard Version, and mercy in the King James Version. The word in Hebrew is "*Hesed*" and is an attribute of God.

*1 Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his **steadfast love** endures forever!*

There is such discrepancy in its translation because the word encompasses more qualities than the English language permits. "*Hesed*" love is: compassionate, generous and merciful in application—resolute, firm and loyal in dedication. It is selfless in its intention, patient in its commitment, and delivers assurance in its promises. "*Hesed*" love is active in its application.

I have chosen four short statements to reflect on when we read that word throughout this psalm. We can rest and be at peace because God is:

**Forever selfless.**

**Forever graciously, mercifully, and compassionately active.**

**Forever resolute in conviction.**

**Forever dedicated to his commitments.**

You can see why translators have trouble translating it.

The author calls us to thank the Lord for his "*Hesed*" love that endures forever. Humans can show this kind of love, but not like God. Notice that "endure" is next to the word "forever"—God's love endures our fickle inconsistencies.

*2 Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble 3 and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.*

The psalmist tells 4 scenarios through verses 4 through 32 to remind us how God relates to humanity. Each is constructed with the same form.

- **The Situation**
- **The Ask**
- **The Deliverance**
- **The Praise**

## Scenario 1 - Deliverance For The Longing, Hungry Soul.

### The Situation (both):

*4 Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in;*

Wandering in the desert, the redeemed sought paths to an oasis to find rest and relief. In an environment with no discernible way out, aimless and in an endless maze of nothing.

When we get caught up in the endless maze of sin, following what may appear to be a path leading to relief but find ourselves continually chasing discontentment and exhaustion.

### Can you see yourself in this type of pursuit?

In the Israelite's history, they spent 40 years in the desert and endured the Babylonian exile. They knew how it felt to desire a place to call home.

In both accounts, they got lost because they refused to keep God at the helm of their journey.

*5 hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.*

### The Ask:

*6 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 7 He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.*

One of the hardest things for us is to admit we need help—it is even more challenging if we don't recognize the danger. While ignorance may be bliss in the short term, our perspective becomes very clear when we feel the emptiness of hunger or thirst. This can apply to spiritual health as well.

**Are you wandering in a desert in your life? Are you feeling the emptiness of sin? Does your soul long for the comforts of home? Do you long for rest?**

If so, the answer is so simple it defies our every sense. Just ask.

*They cried to the Lord.*

It can't be that simple, can it? Do we believe it can be?

One thing to note is the desperation with which they asked. I am not saying you need to be at the end of your rope for God to act. God can save us whenever he chooses. However, we often don't turn to God for help unless necessary. We push our luck till we have no other choice. We think we don't need God—until we get lost, and we do.

We must search our hearts to see where we have wandered from Him and recognize our need for his intervention.

### **The Deliverance:**

Lucky for us, God is steadfast in his love for us. The psalm says that God will straightforwardly lead us till we reach our security.

### **The Praise:**

*8 Let them thank the Lord for his **steadfast love**, for his wondrous works to the children of man!*

*9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.*

If we could only remember everything God has done for us, we would sing his praise every moment of every day, no matter what may come. We need reminders. While experiencing God's patience and compassionate mercy, we can become indifferent toward Him. The psalmist here pleads to remember God's steadfast love for us.

Thinking this way begs the question; why is it essential to praise God?

**He is forever selfless.**

**He is forever graciously, mercifully, and compassionately active.**

**He is forever resolute in conviction.**

**He is forever dedicated to his commitments.**

There is a direct correlation between contentment and our praise of God. When we turn our focus from ourselves to God, we will stop wandering into the deserts of sin and find comfort and rest in the presence of our Lord.

**God is unwavering in his loyalty, compassion and love for us—ready to restore us when we call upon him.**

### **Scenario 2 - Deliverance From Imprisoned or Enslaved Soul.**

#### **The Situation:**

*10 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, 11 for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. 12 So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help.*

Very few of us will know what it feels like to be in irons shackles, but we have all experienced things that imprison us. Verse 10 says that these characters were prisoners in affliction and chains. We relate as sin can make us a prisoner in a very similar way.

Sin can easily entangle us—once caught, we can become prisoners. These prisoners had no liberty and no rest. Constant toil makes even the stoutest heart give in.

**Has sin trapped you in your life? Are you a slave to a behaviour that is keeping you separated from those you love? Do you wonder if you may be a slave to your sin? Does your soul long for freedom and rest?**

The first step is confronting the crisis we are in with honesty. If we are trapped, we need help from someone capable of setting us free.

#### **The Ask:**

*13 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.*

Ask God for help, and he will deliver us from our distress. The answer is easy in concept, but walking the path is difficult. When our actions trap us, stepping out of those consequences can be difficult; however, the steadfast love of God stays with us through that entire journey.

#### **The Deliverance:**

If you feel trapped by the weight of some of your decisions, God will set you free. The road ahead may seem impossible, but there is hope. He offers freedom from whatever your prison is with you through every step.

*14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and burst their bonds apart.*

God is faithful. God will guide you out of your entrapment. He is willing and devoted to forever rescue you from your sin. The path to freedom is there. How will you respond to the "Hesed" love of God?

#### **The praise:**

*15 Let them thank the Lord for his **steadfast love**, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 16 For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.*

Remember those words that encompass God's steadfast love, which endures forever?

**He is forever selfless.**

**He is forever graciously, mercifully, and compassionately active.**

**He is forever resolute in conviction.**

**He is forever dedicated to his commitments.**

Because of what God has done for us, we praise his name. Praise is so much more than just music. When we sing, remember who God is and what He can do. God is able and willing to set us free if we recognize our need for him.

**God is unwavering in his loyalty, compassion and love for us—ready to restore us when we call upon him.**

### **Deliverance For The Troubled/Self-Destructing Soul.**

#### **The Situation:**

*17 Some were fools through their sinful ways and, because of their iniquities, suffered affliction; 18 they loathed any food, and they drew near to the gates of death.*

In this snapshot, we find the consequences of our foolishness and how God responds to it.

First, we reviewed a scenario when people wandered from Him or aimlessly lived apart. Secondly, we read about people who become enslaved or imprisoned by sin.

This third section is again about our relationship with sinful nature and God. We see God's "Hesed" love from the perspective of deliverance from consequences. The characters in this scenario are enslaved to sin and have engrossed themselves in it for an extended period by choice-embracing it.

The affliction described here is of a self-inflicted nature. We can get trapped by sin by wandering too close to it, but living willingly in it has long-lasting consequences. These consequences can cause us to loathe life itself. Many start to believe they have no hope. The pleasures of life and food are no longer relevant. In this psalm, these people are at the end of their rope—feeling that death is coming close.

**Do you feel you have lived too long in sin to experience redemption? Have you lived a life that you think is foolish?**

You can believe you have no hope because of all your foolishness. The next verse shows how God responds to those suffering afflictions because of a life of folly.

#### **The Ask:**

*19 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.*

These people knew what they had done but desperately cried out to him. How does God respond? Does it say, "They cried out to the Lord and knowing their many transgressions, He let them suffer and die as they deserved?"

## **The Deliverance:**

*20 He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.*

Are you starting to get the strength and power of God's "*Hesed*" love?

**He is forever selfless.**

**He is forever graciously, mercifully, and compassionately active.**

**He is forever resolute in conviction.**

**He is forever dedicated to his commitments.**

Each of these words is an understatement to the bounds of God's "*Hesed*" love for you and me. Even if you lived the most reckless and foolish life of sin, swallow your pride and realize that God still wants you to see deliverance.

Would you cry out to him and accept his redemption? God desires for you to come to him. He is waiting for you, able to bring you out of your self-inflicted pain.

## **The Praise:**

*21 Let them thank the Lord for his **steadfast love**, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 22 And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!*

Can you imagine the happiness and joy that comes with this type of deliverance?

Let us thank God for his loving-kindness. Close to death, feeling no hope God can rescue us from the brink. He is worthy of our praise.

**God is unwavering in his loyalty, compassion and love for us—ready to restore us when we call upon him.**

## **Deliverance For The Tempest Bound Soul.**

### **The Situation:**

*23 Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; 24 they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; 27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end.*

Lastly, we see a scene centred around fear. The seas were a place of economic growth but came with a risk. If you have ever been on the ocean when a storm hits, it can be like sitting in a boat in the middle of rolling, moving mountains.

In the middle of the ocean, the average waves are two meters and can grow to more than ten meters high. If they combine, they can get even higher. That means ocean waves in a storm can be between three and four stories tall and sometimes even higher. That is hard to fathom, but that is the kind of fear the author references.

**Have you ever been out of your depth in life? Are you feeling overwhelmed by your circumstances?**

The second thing to notice is what they saw in the sea to pursue.

*24 they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep.*

This can be interpreted literally as his creation, but it also applies figuratively to our Christian life. Doing God's work requires us to take steps of faith—putting our life, as it is, at risk. Even following God, we experience fear.

*\* It's important to note that when it says evil plight, this is not necessarily referring to their actions but rather the terror of the Situation.*

Metaphorically we can stay close to the shore with our pursuit of God and play it safe, but the great things of God are out in the deep. When we risk little, we achieve little.

If you pursue God out into uncharted territory and feel out of control, write these verses (Psalms 107:23-32) on the canvas of your heart.

**The Ask:**

*28 Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.*

When we experience fear because of our circumstances, we can turn to God, who is faithful to deliver us.

**The Deliverance:**

*29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.*

This set of verses reminds me of when Jesus calmed the storm with His disciples. They were working alongside Jesus in his ministry. Journeying with him, following God, and suddenly a storm picks up. They feared for their lives, but Jesus was sleeping. He gets up and rebukes the waves calming the storm.

God faithfully delivers us from the impossible things, lifting us over them.

## **Are you ready to trust God with your fear? Where could God take you if the storms were calm?**

So often, the giant barricade to us doing good works for God is our inability to overcome our fears. Think of the most significant reason holding you back from sharing the gospel. Can you imagine that scenario if God just removed that barricade?

30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven.

God is faithful to take you to where you saw his glorious works, so there is no need to worry.

### **The praise:**

*31 Let them thank the Lord for his **steadfast love**, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.*

God is worthy to be praised for his steadfast love. Remember those words to describe "Hesed" love.

**He is forever selfless.**

**He is forever graciously, mercifully, and compassionately active.**

**He is forever resolute in conviction.**

**He is forever dedicated to his commitments.**

If you take a risk and follow God, know he has always been committed to you. God will see you through any fears that may come along the way. Does this mean things will be easy? No, but it means that He is with you through everything calming the waves to allow you to keep moving forward. You can rest assured of his control of every storm.

**God is unwavering in his loyalty, compassion and love for us—ready to restore us when we call upon him.**

### **God's Sovereignty Over The Barren Soul.**

The final section of this Psalm is often passed over when people teach from this. Still, I want to close our message by focusing on it to give us a better perspective on God and his "Hesed" love for us.

*33 He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, 34 a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants. 35 He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. 36 And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; 37 they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. 38 By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish. 39 When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, 40 he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; 41 but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. 42 The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth.*



God's work turns the heart of those who choose evil to wasteland and those who hunger for him into springs of water and fruitfulness. This closing section is about the sovereignty of God. Sovereignty is defined as supreme power or authority.

The first four scenarios are the author's claims, and this last section is God's qualification or authority to do so. God has the power to deliver his restoration and deliverance, and he also can withhold his blessing in the presence of evil.

You may think this seems unfair but understand that God does everything for us. To help us return to Him and follow in his ways. The hardest thing to understand about God is that we are made in his image and not the other way around. God is not bound by failure in decision-making like humanity.

God is infinite in wisdom. God is righteous in judgment. God gracious in redemption. God is sovereign.

He wants to build you up where you have fallen. He wants to give you rest and comfort from your aimless wandering. He wants to open the traps that entangle you and break the chains that bind you. He wants to heal your self-inflicted wounds and restore you. He wants to calm your fears and provide an opportunity for you.

**God is for you.**

**He is forever selfless.**

**He is forever graciously, mercifully, and compassionately active.**

**He is forever resolute in conviction.**

**He is forever dedicated to his commitments.**

**Whatever your question is, God is your answer. All you need to do is ask.**

*43 Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the **steadfast love** of the Lord.*

Be wise and remember the "*Hesed*" love of the Lord.

**God is unwavering in his loyalty, compassion and love for us—ready to restore us when we call upon him.**