

Week Twelve – August 17
THE HEART OF FAITHFULNESS
PSALM 107:1-16

Overview: The author of Psalm 107 is not known. It was written to celebrate the Jews' return from exile in Babylon. Our focus on verses 1-16 begins with a statement that God is good. But what makes God good? It is His faithful attributes – His faithful love endures forever. The Israelites always wanted to do what was right in God's eye, but they could not stay true to Him. Invariably, they would stray from God and find themselves in need of rescue. And what would God do, He would in His time redeem them from "the hand of the enemy, and gather them out of the lands from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south." (v. 2-3). Here the Psalmist is illustrating God's goodness and His faithfulness to the Israelites by recalling a variety of events in their history.

In verse 4, the Psalmist turns to the wandering and lost way of the Israelites as they had no place to dwell. They were hungry and thirsty. They were desperate and they called out to God. He responded to their plight and led them out in the right way, that they might find a city for a dwelling place. So, what were the Israelites to do? "Give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and His wonderful works to the children of men!" (v.8) And then the Psalmist turns to the second story. Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom. They rebelled against the word of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. So, God subjected them to bitter labor, they stumbled and there was no one to help. But once again we see that when they cried out to God, He was faithful and drew them out of darkness and "broke their chains in pieces." (v. 14). And the people of Israel gave credit to God and praised Him, thanking Him for His unfailing love.

The entire message of Psalm 107 conveys what God has done for His children and how lovingly He has dealt with them. God withholds what is deserved (punishment) and gives what is not deserved (mercy and grace). That is worthy of praise as noted in Verse 15, "Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful deeds for men."

What is the central focus of this Psalm? What is the Psalmist telling us?

The focus of Psalm 107 is on being grateful for what God has done for our lives and specifically about looking back at one's life and realizing how much He has changed us for the better. The Psalmist wants us to focus on His love. To draw closer to God. No matter what we are dealing with at any moment in time, the way to overcome worries, problems and fears begins with drawing closer to Him and His love for us. Focusing on that kind of love changes our perspective about life and reminds us of just how good He is to us and how much He does care for guiding our lives. When we look carefully at verse 1, we tend to focus on the words "good" and "mercy" and we should, but the one word that truly stands out is "forever". We should desire things that literally last forever and one of those things is God's love. One of the purposes of this life is to prepare us for the concept of living with God forever. Realizing that God is good to us and realizing that we will live forever in His presence should get us to want to draw close to Him and that is the point the Psalmist is telling us.

Progression or Steps that lead to a deeper relationship with God

We live in a fallen world. When we consider this wicked world, it becomes clear that we will from time to time wander into the desert just like the Israelites. We will find ourselves outside of the presence of God and when we do, we will find that the times will grow to be more and more difficult to deal with. Our emotions, desires, and feelings will begin to override our decisions and the downward spiral will continue until we see the need for God to rescue us. As we cry out to God, we have confidence in Him. Why? Because of His goodness and His mercy which endures forever. God will rescue us to eternal salvation, but also know that He will also care for our lives and wants to satisfy our current needs. This does not mean that God will not drop food in our laps, even though He has the power to do so. But often God will just guide us to where He can satisfy our needs so we can live to praise Him for another day. And what are we to do? We are to praise God for what He has done in our lives, what He has provided to meet our needs, and how He has guided us through this treacherous world we live in. When we pause and give God credit, we appreciate all the more how He is working in our lives. More importantly, that act of worship gives us the strength to continue working our way through the challenges that this life has for us.

How does this impact your walk with God?

What are we to do as Christians? We are to be faithful and live knowing that God's word is true and does stand the test of time. It is best to simply live the Christian life and watch how He does lead us and bless us when we do trust in Him. It would seem logical that the first step in learning to trust God would be to describe difficult situations where believers have turned from Him and show examples of how God works to draw us back to Him or closer to Him. The stories in this psalm are all cases of people who have turned from God and He in turn goes to incredible lengths to show us that He exists, He is in charge of our lives and he desires to use us to make a difference for Him in this world. That should form the basis of our daily prayer: that God use our lives to make a difference for Him.

Are there time when you have found yourself outside the presence of God? How did you respond? Did you cry out to God? How did God respond? Did you have preconceived ideas of how you wanted God to help you through this time of difficulty? Did it turn out like you wanted? What should we expect when we cry out to God?