

# Psalm 107

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 05 July 2020

Preacher: Robin Silson

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good evening and may I extend the welcome to this evening's service. My name's Robin, I'm a member of the congregation here at St Silas.

And we've got a wonderful psalm to dig our teeth into this evening. So why don't I pray and then we'll look at it together. Father God, we thank you so much for the Word of God. We thank you that we can read it. We thank you that we can think about it and listen to it. And we thank you that you're at work in us through it. And so we pray now as we think about this psalm together, you'll be at work in our hearts, transforming us to help you love you more and serve you more and know your great love for us.

We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen. And as I said, we've got a wonderful psalm to get our teeth into this evening. And one of the big issues that it addresses is how we should respond to trouble. To respond to trouble. And so from the off, our question really is, how do we respond to trouble when it comes, when it arrives at our door?

[ 1 : 12 ] Let's just start thinking about what we mean by trouble. Now, we know it means a bad situation, but the reasons we get into trouble, they differ, don't they?

Don't most of us remember our parents saying, just you wait till your dad gets home, you're in so much trouble. Now, that threat, it normally came because we'd done something wrong. It was deserved trouble because we'd been giving our mum and dad a hard time. In a way, that's the same with us as adults, right? Some of the trouble we get into, it's as a consequence of the wrong that we've done.

But that is not the only reason. There are other reasons for getting into trouble. Let's take an example, getting into debt. If that's happened to anyone, it could be because they've been foolish with their money and spent more than they had.

But that is not the only reason. It could be that someone's been made redundant. It could be that they've been a victim of a scam. And in some countries, getting ill can bring debt because you can't work.

[ 2 : 24 ] They don't have the welfare system like we do. So there's lots of reasons for getting into troubling situations. Alongside that, there's also the issue of feeling troubled, isn't there, by a particular issue.

We might not be in debt ourselves, but feel troubled by seeing others who are maybe in poverty, that we see in other countries, and we can feel troubled by that.

Not all the trouble that we face is self-inflicted. Some of it will be. But the effects of living in a world ravaged by sin, sin means that it comes to us for different reasons.

As we've mentioned, directly because of our sin, but also because of other people's sin. Sometimes we're the victim, and sometimes it can seem to come to us for no rhyme or reason.

It is nobody's fault if you get ill. But whatever the trouble is, the question remains, how do we respond when it comes to your door?

[ 3 : 27 ] How do we respond when we're in trouble, or troubled by circumstances in ours or other people's lives? Well, this psalm tonight is wonderful, because it points to one way in how we might respond.

To look to God's faithfulness to his people in the past, in order to give us faith in him for the future. I'll say that again.

To look to God's faithfulness to his people in the past, in order to give us faith in him for the future. It's looking at his steadfast love. That's his committed covenant love, and how it has always endured.

It has never failed. It has always been there for his people. And so that's what I hope we understand from looking at this psalm together this evening.

But just to navigate, I suppose, what's going on in the psalm, it splits up into four sections, and in the first three verses, it almost acts like maybe it's like sort of a summary of what's going to be fleshed out in the rest of the psalm.

[ 4 : 33 ] Just look with me at the opening two verses. It says, And then there's this sort of key verse.

It says, And in verse two, when it says hand of the four, it could quite easily be translated the hand of trouble.

And we've thought a little bit about already, haven't we, about trouble in our own lives. What the psalmist does in the next quite long section of the psalm, he outlines four different troubles that God's people faced.

Some have reasons why they're in trouble, some don't. And he outlines how the people respond, how they acted. And so we're going to start by looking at our first point.

The first point we're going to look at is that knowing the Lord's plan changes our perspective.

Knowing the Lord's plan changes our perspective. If you look at it together with me, from verse four all the way down to verse 32, there are four situations, circumstances, troubles presented to us.

[ 5 : 43 ] And the resulting circumstances and how things result. Now for sure, they look different to the types of troubles we face today.

Just look with me at the situations. Verse four, we've got some people wandering the desert with no food. Verse 10, we've got people in prison in iron chains because they rebel against God's commands.

Verse 10, we've got some became fools who because of their sin, they're suffering some sort of physical affliction. And in verse 23 to 27, it says there's sea merchants, they're tossed up and down by the waves, their courage is melted away and they're at their wits end.

For different troubles, different reasons. Some of it is the people's fault. It is a consequence of sin, of iniquity. But there is something a bit surprising perhaps.

Twice, the Lord is presented as responsible. Verse 12, right, we read, he subjects them to bitter labor.

[ 6 : 48 ] They stumbled and there was no one to help. Verse 25, we read that it's God who speaks and stirs up the tempest. It's God that lifts high the waves.

And we tend to think, why would God do that? If they're his people, that doesn't sound very kind. It doesn't sound like steadfast, committed, unfailing love. What's remarkable here though, is that's not what the psalmist thinks.

He includes this in a psalm of thanksgiving. This is part of his praise to the living God. And suppose we might even think, what's wrong with him?

What is wrong with this guy? How on earth could he give thanks for things that seem so awful? Well, I think there is a difference going on here. There is a difference between looking back at difficulty that has passed and the trouble has gone.

[ 7 : 53 ] There is a difference between that to coping with present difficult situations and circumstances. And in fact, there's lots of places in the psalms which are written in the midst of present trouble.

And where the psalm writer's language is completely different to maybe what we see here. If we look at Psalm 44, for example, the writer, he's obviously in the midst of trouble, but his language is so different.

He writes, why are you sleeping, O Lord? Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and depression? He's in the midst of trouble. This psalm is different.

The writer here, he can talk about these things in a thankful way, I suppose, in a psalm that's included about thankfulness because he has the perspective of seeing God's plan worked out. God's intervention, what his action has caused. He's looking back at these situations from the vantage point of seeing God's people being delivered and rescued from their struggle.

[ 9 : 01 ] In each situation that we look at, God delivers his people and it changes his perspective. And we see that carried all the way through, right up to the end of the psalm.

Verse 33, which comes after the situation, as he talks about how the Lord acts. He turned it into a desert. But then verse 35, the situation's flipped back round.

He turned the desert into pools of water. The situation is redeemed. Seeing the Lord's plan changes his perspective. And isn't this the same with us when we think about the cross?

We sing praise to God about a cross, a method of execution. Now, in the middle of the event, I don't think the disciples were singing.

But once he'd risen, then they had a change to their perspective. We have a change because we can see it from a different vantage point. We see the Lord's plan.

[10:04] Whilst the cross was still harrowing, we now see it as victory. We see it as the way that the Lord has secured our redemption. Now, having said all that, I don't want to seem glib or seem like I'm making light of people's current troubles.

We've mentioned Psalm 44 already, that in that Psalm, crying out to the Lord is the way that the Psalmist talks to God. Well, in this Psalm, it's encouraged as well.

And we're going to move on to our second point. Desperation for the Lord is encouraged.

Desperation for the Lord is encouraged. And I think it's worth spending some time looking at that, thinking about the people's response.

If you look with me, there is a pattern worked out for all the situations that get mentioned. In verse 6 to 8, 13 to 15, 19 to 21, and 28 to 31, there is a repetition of the pattern that we see.

There's an order to response. We see the people cry out, the Lord delivers them from their distress, and then they respond with thanks. The people cry out, God delivers them from their distress, and they respond with thanks.

[11:24] And the people always respond in these four situations the same way. They cry out to the Lord. Just look at me, verse 6 is one of the examples. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble.

It's a very helpful thing to notice, to pick up on, to think that crying out to the Lord, being frustrated about the trouble that they face is okay.

It's using the language of Psalm 44. Where are you, God? Why have you let this happen? Help me, I need you. Wake up, Lord.

It shows us that this is an entirely appropriate way to respond in the midst of trouble. God, he's not aloof to that.

He hears our cries. His steadfast love, his committed covenant love is always towards us whenever trouble we're going through. And in British culture, we have that sort of stiff upper lip still there, don't we, about how we don't show emotion.

[12:31] That we're supposed to present ourselves as coping. You know, your car can have the nicest body work and look great on the outside, but the engine can still be a mess.

And from the outside, if everything looks good, you still have to take it to the garage. Let me tell you, if you're in the midst of trouble and you feel like you're in that desert place walking in a wilderness, if you're stuck in the grips of sin that you can't escape and it's exhausting, it feels paralyzing that you're alone in your struggle, crying out to the Lord is okay.

In this psalm, there's an approval of doing that. We don't have to put on a front that everything's okay when it's not. If you're mourning the loss of a loved one and you wonder, how am I going to get through this?

And you just want to hear that God is with you and comforts you. If you're in debt over your head and you think, what am I going to do? How on earth am I going to pay the bills?

And if you're questioning, in whatever circumstances you're in, you might be questioning, why on earth would God let this happen? It is okay to cry out to him.

[13:54] He knows what's going on. He can wear that mask in front of everyone else, but he knows how much you're hurting and the trouble you face and he wants you to go to him.

In Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth, God is called the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. Do we know that his tenderness towards you, it outstrips even what you're capable of towards yourself?

Hear the words of Jesus, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

But what we see in this psalm, after the crying out to the Lord, we see in every situation, the Lord delivers his people from the distress.

And that's what we're going to look at in our third point. Deliverance from the Lord is certain. Deliverance from the Lord is certain. If you're a Christian, tuning in tonight, I want to assure you, God will deliver you from all your trouble.

[15:16] There is no question mark regarding if God will redeem and deliver you, but there is a question around when you will experience that.

And it might not happen how you expect, or when you expect. But God has a plan to deliver his people from their distress. He knows each of us, he understands what we're going through, and he'll be with us in the darkest of days.

His deliverance will meet your needs. Just look how it changes with each case in the psalm. Verse 7, he leads those who are lost. Verse 14, he brings the prisoners out of darkness.

Verse 20, he heals the afflicted. Verse 29, he calms the storm. He rescues and delivers all his people from the trouble they're in.

It's the same with us, but the difficulty is that we expect it in this earthly life, and that is not guaranteed. We might experience it in this life as a foretaste of what to come, but it is not certain.

[16:22] Listen, we can put our trust in God to deliver us. Millions of people trusting a whole host of other things.

You think of how many people play the lottery just hoping that their numbers are coming up. Putting our trust in the Lord for our deliverance, it's not like playing the lottery.

It's not a gamble. There's no betting odds here. It is certain. But alongside that, there is something else that stands out.

Just think of, let's just go through this list again. He leads those who are lost. He brings the prisoners out of darkness. He heals the afflicted. He calms the storm.

We could have easily got that list from the Gospels. It's almost identical deliverance is demonstrated in the earthly life, the earthly ministry of Jesus.

[17:24] What's it saying to us? It's saying to us that Jesus Christ's ministry is the same as that of Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament. Jesus leads those who are lost.

He finds his lost sheep. Jesus brings those in captivity, in bondage to sin, out into the light. He's the light of the world. Jesus heals the afflicted, the paralysed man.

He sets the demonised free. And with a word, he calms the storm. And what's really amazing here about the God-man Jesus, he has done all this, but more than that, he has been in the position of trouble himself.

He's felt troubled. He wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. He knows what it's like. He walked in the wilderness for 40 days, hungry and thirsty.

And on the cross, he knew what it was like to be separated from his father. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? What's truly staggering is that the one who delivers us from our troubles is the same person who has lived through and experienced the same troubles we face.

[18:50] When you come to him, he has complete understanding for everything you're going through. He's the one who rescues you from it.

And so this evening, we've thought about how we respond to trouble. We've thought about how knowing the Lord's plan gives us a different perspective.

About how crying to the Lord is okay. We don't have to hide how we feel from our Heavenly Father. But ultimately, the Lord will deliver us.

He will redeem us from our troubles. But you know, the biggest trouble in this life we've not yet mentioned. We've talked about Jesus' death.

But the big thing that truly frightens us is our own. That's the thing we fear. I don't know if you've heard it, but there's this great song.

[19:49] It's by a Scottish band called Tidelines. It's called Strangers. And the songwriter, he's looking at his future and he's singing about the worries he has for his life.

He worries about a whole host of things. And one of them is dying lonely. And the chorus, it's so pointed. It's very moving. And it's kind of strange because he's not a Christian himself, but he sings lamenting the disappearance of religion because of the hope that has sort of disappeared from society.

Even though he doesn't believe it himself, he's desperate to know what happens after he dies. He sings, where are the make-believers what was foretold?

I can't die not knowing where I will go. His trouble is the biggest trouble that consumes us. In fact, it's so troublesome to us, we spend most of the time trying to avoid thinking about it.

What happens on the other side of death? Covid has brought death to our attention more than anything else recently. But the reality is there's more to it than that.

[ 21 : 03 ] Because the biggest trouble is not death itself, but what happens on the other side of death when we stand before the living God. The question that we need to ask is what will we say to him when we do?

For us, as Christians, even the most frightening thing man ever has to face has been taken care of. And the whole point of this psalm comes in the last verse.

Let the one who is wide heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord. That is what we're doing this evening. So that we can stare death in the face.

We are looking back at the wonderful deeds of the Lord and thinking about them, letting them speak to our hearts so that we face trouble differently. It makes us wise. And I would suggest that not as often as you can, ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.

Ponder the stories of Jesus in the Gospel. Ponder the faithfulness of God in the Old Testament. Because this is your God. This is my God. And this is our God.

[ 22 : 19 ] And my prayer is that as we look back at the faithfulness of God in the past, we will have faith in him for the future. That he will deliver us. Even when we don't know the exact details of how that will span out in our earthly life.

You know, I feel for the writer of the song that I mentioned. And don't get me wrong, I enjoy listening to it. But let's just remember that is not my song.

It's not our song. I hope that Psalm 107 is your song for today and this week. Let me pray as we close.

Father God, we thank you so much that you're with us in all the troubles that we face.

Lord, there's many different reasons that trouble comes to us. But we thank you that you know them all. And Lord, we pray that we would come to you, that we would cry out to you when it's at our door.

[ 23 : 28 ] Lord, and we thank you that whilst we don't know how it will look, we thank you that we can trust in you to redeem us from all our troubles. And especially, help us to ponder these things.

Help us to keep our eyes fixed on these stories and the truth that come from the Bible. And we pray that this would be our song, that Psalm 107 would be our song, Lord, that we would, we would, like it says at the beginning of the Psalm, that we would tell the story of the redeemed.

Our story. We pray that you would give us joy thinking about our own redemption. We ask that you would use this to strengthen us and equip us to serve you and know your great love for us each day.

Today and this week we ask. We ask for all this in the name of Christ. Amen. Amen.