

# “Why Give Thanks to the Lord?” (Psalm 107)

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**INTRODUCTION:** I’ve noticed people who have posted on Facebook every day of November a different reason to be thankful. That’s a great habit. Some of you might think, “I don’t have much reason to be thankful.” But listen to this: Matthew Henry the great Bible scholar was robbed, but he went home and wrote in his diary that he

was thankful first, he had never been robbed before, second, that although they took his money they didn’t take his life, third, that although they took all he had, it was not much, fourth, that he was the one robbed and not the one who robbed. (*Tony Evans’s Book of Illustrations*, p. 144.)

Like Matthew Henry, if we will just look around, we will see many reasons to thank the Lord. Psalm 107 tells us why. Verses 1-3 form an intro, saying "Give thanks to the Lord... let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Don't keep it a secret! Speak up!

And why should we give thanks to the Lord. We should give thanks because each of us who are redeemed have a story to tell. The New International Version has “let the redeemed of the Lord say this,” but the NIV revision of 2011 says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story" and that’s exactly what happens next in the psalm. The psalm then proceeds to tell four stories of redemption that give reason for thanksgiving.

The Israelites who first sang Psalm 107 had stories to tell, much like our own, of how God met their need.

Notice a pattern in each of these stories: the *condition* they were in, the *cry* for help and God’s answer, the *call* to give thanks, and the *conviction* about God’s salvation.

## ***I. He satisfies the outcast (v. 4-9)***

*v. 4-5 their condition is that they are outcast.* “Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates that last phrase, “their spirits failed within them.”

The historical situation was the exile from Babylon. Because of the exile and dispersion, the Jews had no place to call home. Today, all who are outcast and alone can relate to how they felt. According to a Gallup Poll, 4 in 10 Americans have feelings of intense loneliness. (Raymond McHenry, *McHenry’s Stories for the Soul*, p. 165)

*v. 6 the cry and answer.* They cried out to the Lord. In each of the four stories, the same statement is repeated, that they cried out to the Lord, and each time it is immediately followed by a statement of how the Lord delivered them.

*v. 7* says the Lord “led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.”

*v. 8 the call to thanksgiving.* This exact same phrase of thanksgiving is repeated in all four stories, as well. Notice they are to give thanks for God’s “unfailing love.” This is the Hebrew word *hesed*, God’s covenant love, the nearest word in the Old Testament to grace.

*v. 9 the conviction that God satisfies.* In each of the four stories, there is a statement of response, showing why they can be thankful, despite their trials. Here it is the fact that the Lord satisfies. “He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.”

I’m reminded that Jesus went to an outcast Samaritan woman at the well. The Bible says in John 4 that Jesus met her there at noon, not a time women would normally come, but since she had been married five times and was living with a man she wasn’t married to, none of the other women would have anything to do with her. Yet Jesus did. Not because he condoned her sin, but because he loved the sinner. He told that woman, who came every day to draw water from the well, that she could get “living water” by faith in Him. Her life was changed by Jesus, for he truly satisfies the outcast. So even though you may be outcast and alone, depressed and oppressed, you can be thankful to God, for He satisfies the outcast.

## ***II. He sets free the captive (v. 10-16)***

*v. 10 their condition was that they were captive.* “Others sat in darkness and in deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains.” However, verse 11 says that unlike the first group, these were prisoners due to their own rebellion against the Lord. They were much like people today who become prisoners to their addictions, whether it be narcotics or alcohol or pornography or sexual abuse or child abuse or anger or bitterness or unforgiveness or some other behavior that has them “in darkness and in deepest gloom.” Are you like that? Are you a “prisoner suffering in iron chains” of addiction or bitterness?

*v. 13 repeats the cry.*

*v. 14* tells how God “brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom, and broke away their chains.”

*v. 15 repeats the call for thanksgiving.*

*v. 16 gives the conviction* that God can set them free from any addiction, saying “for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through the bars of iron.” It’s significant that verse 16 is an answer to the question of Jeremiah 15:12: “Can a man break iron—iron from the north—or bronze?” The passage in Jeremiah was referring to Babylon’s invasion from the north. Most city gates were made of wood, although some of the strongest gates were made of iron. Psalm 107:16 answers the question of Jeremiah, with a resounding yes! The Lord our God can break the strongest bronze city gates with bars of iron. Today we may ask, can anybody break me free from my addiction and set me free from my captivity? The answer again is yes! The Lord our God can break you free!

Sometimes I will counsel with somebody struggling with an addiction, and from time to time I will refer them to Penfield Christian Homes or another Christian recovery center, where they will get counseling, and they will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. For a Christian recovery center knows that we cannot overcome our addictions without Jesus Christ. At Penfield and homes like this, they will be reminded that they are a blood-bought child of God. Whenever somebody wants to tell them, “You’re an alcoholic,” or “you’re a drug addict,” they will be reminded that they are a child of God, and God can break the bonds of their addiction. (See [www.penfieldrecovery.com](http://www.penfieldrecovery.com) for more information.)

### **III. He saves the sinner (v. 17-22)**

*v. 17-18 their condition was sin.* It says that they were fools whose rebellion and their own sin “drew them near the gates of death.”

*v. 19 repeats the cry for help.* This time it is a confession of sin and need for a Savior.

*v. 20* tells how God “sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.” We can only be saved from sin when we trust in God’s word, which tells us that Jesus Christ is the only savior who can rescue us from sin and the grave.

*v. 21 repeats the call* for thanksgiving.

*v. 22 gives the conviction of salvation.* This time it is the conviction of a sinner saved, who sacrifices thank offerings and joyfully tells his testimony of salvation.

When we are saved, we are like the munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz*. They were under the oppressed power of the wicked witch, but when Dorothy’s house fell on the witch, they could sing, “Ding Dong! The Witch is Dead!” Because Satan is defeated, death is defeated, and we can live forever.

### **IV. He stills the storm (v. 23-32)**

*v. 23 their condition was that they were enduring the storms of life.* Specifically, verses. 23-27 describes sailors literally tossed by the waves, and how “in their peril their courage melted away” and “they were at their wits’ end.”

Jewish people were not a sailing people, and they were terrified of the sea. So I think it is appropriate to make the application to the storms of life that we face today. Whatever storm you are facing, it is a desperate situation for you. It may be that you lost your job, or lost your husband or wife. It may be that your application for a loan was rejected or your application for your favorite college was rejected or your girlfriend or boyfriend or your son or daughter rejected you. It may be that you are losing your battle with cancer or with heart disease, or you may be losing your business or losing your friends. It may be a different storm altogether.

*v. 28 repeats the cry* for help. I’m reminded that Jesus was in a boat with His disciples when a storm arose, and they cried out to Jesus, and He calmed the storm. We, too, need to cry out to Him.

*v. 29-30* tells how God answered by stilling the storm and guided them to a haven of rest.

*v. 31 repeats the call* for thanksgiving.

*v. 32 states the conviction* that they can praise God in public for stilling the storm.

Chuck Swindoll says that when he sees the Golden Gate Bridge, he remembers that an engineer has to take into account three loads, or stresses, while designing bridges. These are: the dead load, the live load, and the wind load.

The dead load is the weight of the bridge itself. The live load is the weight of the daily traffic the bridge must carry. The wind load is the pressure of the storms that beat on the bridge. The designer plans for bracings that will enable the bridge to bear all of these loads.

In our lives, we too need bracings which make it possible to carry the dead load of self, the live load of daily living, and the wind load of emergency storms. When we place our trust in Jesus Christ, He gives us the strength to brace ourselves against these different stresses. Whatever load you are carrying, I’ve got good news for you: He stills the storm.

That is why we give thanks to the Lord. (Charles R. Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, p. 578-579.)

CONCLUSION: Dr. Tony Evans says that when he first began to travel and speak at other places, he began the habit of picking up a small trinket at the airport to give his children as a gift when he got home as a blessing to them. The kids were excited and thankful for the blessing he gave. But as time passed and he continued to travel, they began to look forward to him making trips, because they knew he would come home with the blessing. In other words, they started to put more focus on the blessing than the bless-er! (*Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations*, p. 25.)

As believers, we must never forget that the greatest reason of all to be thankful is the Lord Himself. He is able to satisfy the outcast, set free the captive, save the sinner and still the storm because of whom He is. Psalm 107 concludes in v. 33-42 by giving a series of reversals, showing how God turns everything upside down. The fruitful land is turned into a salt waste for the wicked, but the hungry are given a home and fields with a fruitful harvest. Nobles who oppressed the poor are made to wander in the desert, but the needy are lifted out of their affliction. Verse 42 sums it up: "The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths."

If we have a personal relationship with Him through Jesus Christ, then He is able to turn our lives upside down and inside out. With Jesus, the values of the world are turned on their head. Jesus said the "first shall be last and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that we are to enter the narrow gate, for wide is the gate that lead sto destruction and many enter through it, but narrow is the gate that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14.) But when we go against the flow and follow the way of Christ, we are blessed beyond measure with abundant life on earth and eternal life in heaven. There is no greater blessing than a personal faith in God through Christ!

Psalm 107:43 ends the psalm just as Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount, reminding us that we are wise if we pay attention. It says, "Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord." In a similar conclusion, Jesus ended the Sermon on the Mount with a contrast between the wise man who built his house on the rock, which represents Jesus, and the foolish man who built his house on the sand.

Is your life built on a relationship with Jesus Christ? If it is, then despite the problems of today, the promise of tomorrow gives you every reason to give thanks to the Lord!

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