

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— July 1, 2018 —

Pastor Leslie Smith

SERIES: Praise Your Way Through
SERMON: Life is Hard, But God is Good
TEXT: Psalm 107

Central Message:

A man was the sole survivor of a shipwreck. He was able to make a raft from some of the ship's cargo and drift to a deserted island. There, he constructed a makeshift shelter and lived on what little food he had been able to salvage from the wreckage. Time after time, he tried in vain to attract the attention of a passing ship. Finally, he saw a ship approaching more closely and hurriedly lit a signal fire. To his dismay, the ship passed by and was quickly fading from sight.

Accidentally, the flames from the signal fire set the thatched roof of his shelter on fire. The man watched helplessly as all of his provisions burned to ashes. All was lost, so he thought. He didn't see how his life could last much longer. But, then he noticed that the ship which had passed by him had turned around and was approaching the island again. To his relief, he was seen by the crew and rescued.

Once on board, he went to the captain to express his thanks. He asked, "What caused you to turn around after you had already gone by me?" The captain answered, "We saw the smoke you made by setting your shelter on fire." The very thing that seemed to seal his doom was the means of his delivery.

A lot of people view their problems like that marooned man. They see no point or purpose in them. Their problems drive them to despair and hopelessness. Sometimes people blame God and grow bitter because He allows trials to come

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“To Know God and To Make Him Known”

into their lives. And yet it is often those very trials designed by God that become the means for the person’s salvation or growth in grace. The problems bring us to the end of our own resources so that we are forced to call upon God for help.

The fallen human race has a basic problem: we think that we are self-sufficient. We are not, of course, but we think we are. In order for God to communicate His love to us, He has to bring us to an awareness of our need to depend totally upon Him.

Psalm 107 has four stanzas and each of the stanzas has a reprise and a chorus.

The first stanza begins in verse 4 and ends with the chorus in verse 8. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

The 2nd stanza begins in verse 9 and ends with the same chorus in verse 15. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

The 3rd stanza begins in verse 16 and ends with the same chorus in verse 21. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

The 4th and final stanza begins in verse 22 and repeats the same chorus in verse 31. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

In each of the four stanzas, there is a recurring action ...the people cry out to the Lord and He delivers them.

In verse 6, the psalmist says, “Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses.”

In verse 13, they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of

their distresses.

In verse 19, they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.

In verse 28, they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distresses.

This is a pattern in the lives of God's people. Our praise is in direct proportion to our crying. People who have had to cry don't have to be coerced into praise.

It's unfortunate that our children may not learn how to praise because parents try to prevent them from crying. If they cry, we put "Binky" in their mouths as babies, and for the rest of their lives, we are shoving in "Binky" so they won't cry. It seems that we can't stand to hear our children cry but God loves to hear His children cry.

If you look around in church and see who is praising, there is a good bet that they have done some crying. You don't have to negotiate praise with someone who has had to cry. "I love the Lord, He heard my cry, and pitied every groan."

The Psalmist gives us four examples to help us grasp the fact that even though life may be hard, God is good. We need to judge Him by His character and not by our circumstances.

Example #1: When we are wandering in the wilderness, God can lead us to a place of safety because He is a mighty good leader. (Psalm 107:7)

If we have been conscious of God's leading in our lives, we know that He is a good leader. Scripture teaches us that the steps of a man or woman are ordered by the Lord.

God led His people to the Promise Land as He said He would, but they were afraid and would not go in. God did not abandon His people. He led them in the wilderness for 38

years and then, when He was ready, He led them back to the Land. This time, under the leadership of Joshua, the people claimed the land that God has promised. David said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." He was talking about God's leadership in his life. God wants to lead us in the same way...to be our "spiritual GPS". He will allow us to make detours, and He will even allow us to take an "off ramp" from time to time, but over and over again, He leads us by His powerful hand back to the right path. The Prodigal Son is another good example.

Example #2: When you have been imprisoned by the enemy, God can bring you out. (Psalm 107:14)

God has the power to deliver us from any circumstances and because He is good, His jealousy looks after us. He may tolerate oppression for a time, but only as it suits His purpose, and in His time, He will bring us out.

1. God visited ten plagues upon the nation of Egypt in order to "persuade" them to let His people go. He deliberately hardened the heart of Pharaoh so that he would not let the people go until he had drunk completely from His cup of judgment, and as a final act of deliverance, Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the Red Sea. God is good, God is powerful, and He keeps His promises.
2. When Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into jail for preaching the gospel, I am certain that at some point they questioned God's goodness. But, God caused their chains to literally fall off their arms and He brought them out again by His powerful and merciful hand.

Example #3: When you are afflicted, God can send His powerful word to heal you. (Psalm 107:20)

Jesus is God in the flesh, and He heals almost as if by "spiritual remote control". He simply spoke the word of healing, and people were healed. He still heals and gives life by His powerful word. His words are spirit, and they are life!

1. In Matthew 8:13, Jesus healed the centurion's son with just a word. He also healed a nobleman's son. He did not have to go to his home to heal him, but He did it with His powerful word.
2. Most of us who have been seriously ill know that healing is private and personal. No one knows what you are going through but the One who is able to heal. When He heals us, it is our own private victory. When we give our testimony, people can rejoice with us, but they don't really know what we have been through, even if they have been through something similar themselves.
3. Deliverance, on the other hand, is public. If you struggle with alcohol or drug addiction, most of the people close to you are aware of your struggle because many of them are directly or indirectly affected. When God sends His word to deliver you, everyone around you knows that you have been delivered. Sickness is our own private "hell" and when God, in His goodness, heals us, we have a good reason to give Him praise.

Example #4: When the storms in your life have you at your wit's end, God can calm your storms. (Psalm 107:29)

1. When Jesus was in the boat with His disciples crossing the lake, a fierce storm came up and the disciples were very afraid. They cried out to Jesus, and He did not rebuke them for their fear. He spoke to the wind and the waves, and the storm grew calm. The disciples were shaken and their only question was, "What manner of man is this that even the wind and the waves obey?" Jesus not only calmed their physical storm, but their emotional storm as well.
2. Jesus seeks to do the same thing for us. He may not calm our physical storms...we may still have to endure illness or a bad marriage...we may still have to face losing a job or the death of a loved one, but we know that He is present

with us in the storm. After all, peace is not the absence of a storm but the presence of the Master. Do you have that peace for your life today? You can find it in Jesus Christ. **No Jesus, no peace. Know Jesus, know peace.**

God has led us and He has brought us out of difficult situations. He even sent His word to heal us and deliver us, and He calms our storms. One of my favorite hymns that captures this message is *Peace Be Still*:

Master, the tempest is raging!
The billows are tossing high!
The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness.
No shelter or help is nigh.
Carest Thou not that we perish?
How canst Thou lie asleep
When each moment so madly is threat'ning
A grave in the angry deep?
The winds and the waves shall obey Thy will:
Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea
Or demons or men or whatever it be,
No waters can swallow the ship where lies
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.
They all shall sweetly obey Thy will:
Peace, be still; peace, be still.
They all shall sweetly obey Thy will:
Peace, peace, be still.

If God, in His goodness, has spoken to a storm in your life, then you should be able to give Him praise.