

Finding Thankfulness in Trouble, part 2

Psalm 107:33-43

(preached Pine Grove 11/27/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Johnny Carson once said that Thanksgiving is a national holiday where people travel 1000s of miles to eat a meal with people they only see once a year...

And then realize that once a year is too much..

I assume everyone had a great Thanksgiving, but since a believer is constantly thankful, we are going to continue thanksgiving tonight as we finish up Psalm 107...

This is a psalm of thanksgiving that Israel would sing to the Lord...

Two Sundays ago, we looked at five reasons why reasons why Israel was thankful to the Lord...

You can see them in the outline for last week..

They were primarily thankful for God's goodness to them in verses 1-3, and then we got specific reasons why they were thankful to God from verses 4-32...

They were thankful for God's leading them out of the desert to a land fill with food and drink in verse 4-9...

We talked about how that may have been a reference to God's leading Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land...

Then we saw in verses 10-16 where Israel was thankful that God had helped them get free from captivity where they were in bonds and chains...

Which may have been a reference to the nation being in captivity in Egypt or Assyria or Babylon..

And then we saw Israel's thankfulness for being healed of their diseases in verses 17-22...

Where God had simply spoke a word and brought healing to people's diseases..

Finally, last week we saw Israel's thankfulness to God for a sea rescue...

Where God had stirred up a strong wind and then hushed it when the sailors called out for help.

And we saw a pattern last time in this psalm where trouble comes, the people in trouble call for help, God delivers, and the people respond with praise and thanksgiving to God..

And we talked about the importance of being thankful as a response to God's kindness to us..

And how deliverance from our troubles is not a time to pat ourselves on the back for our wisdom or skill or wise thinking, but rather a time to be thankful to the Lord for his deliverance..

Tonight, we come to the end of this psalm and we are going to find another reason to be thankful to the Lord...

And this is a way that we don't like to consider and often don't like talk about, but it is nonetheless a reason to express your thanks to Him..

And that is we should be thankful for God's justice...

Often times, we refuse to consider the justice of the Lord, yet it is a characteristic of His that we need to be thankful for...

Especially since we live in a very unjust world...

And especially since we often experience injustice in our own lives...

The only way to keep our wits about ourself is to praise the Lord for His justice...

And Israel was reminded in verses 33-42 that they should be thankful to God for his perfect justice...

VI. Be Thankful for God's Justice (33-42)

So, let's start our way through this final section by reading verses 33-34...

33

*He [t]changes rivers into a [u]wilderness
And springs of water into a thirsty ground;*

34

*A fruitful land into a salt waste,
Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.*

These two verses are simply reminders that the whole earth is under the authority of God..

And if He needs to change a river into a barren wilderness without any water at all, He has the power to do it...

He can even take a very fertile land and turn it into a land of salt where nothing will grow...

Do you remember the story of Abraham and Lot?

They were choosing where they would settle their families, and Lot chose an area that was very fertile and green called Sodom and Abraham settled in Canaan...

Eventually, Lot's decision brought much trouble to him and his family because of all the wickedness of the people of Sodom that God eventually destroyed Sodom and its neighboring city of Gomorrah...

And they were both turned from lush green fertile lands into wastelands overnight

Both of these once fertile cities became completely desolate overnight at the command of the Lord..

Even consider the garden of Eden which was most likely located in modern day Iraq...

What do we know about Iraq?

Desert wasteland for the most part...

Even the land that Israel settled which was a land flowing with milk and honey is now for the most part barren and dry...

And why does God reverse the green grass and make it a land of salt?

Look at the end of verse 34...

Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

Though not every case of a barren land is the doing of the Lord because of the wickedness of the people, God can and often does pass out judgment upon people through their climate..

God has withheld rain from nations and cultures.

God has sent drought and caused famine.

God has sent floods and other disasters as judgment upon the wicked.

Though we can't be sure of what God is doing in natural disasters and droughts, we must understand he has the power to do anything he wants to punish the wicked and sometimes he simply dries up the water...

But then we read this in verses 35-38...

35

*He [v]changes a [w]wilderness into a pool of water
And a dry land into springs of water;*

36

*And there He makes the hungry to dwell,
So that they may establish [x]an inhabited city,*

37

*And sow fields and plant vineyards,
And [y]gather a fruitful harvest.*

38

Also He blesses them and they multiply greatly,

And He does not let their cattle decrease.

The psalmist moves from his judgment on the land because of the wickedness in it to God's goodness to the land toward the righteous who live in it...

Look at verse 35.

It is the exact opposite of verse 33..

Instead of changing the rivers into wilderness, God takes the wilderness and changes it into a pool of water..

And then he takes the dry land and changes them into pools of water..

And he puts hungry people there to dwell...

The picture is that people who are hungry are longing for goodness...

Jesus said "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.."

The hungry person is the person in need, and those who seek the Lord are those in need..

The wicked are already full...

Full of their riches and greed and arrogance...

God wants those who hunger so that he can turn a wasteland into streams of water and fill their needs..

He puts them in a desert region and gives them water so they can build a city and then in verse 37, he makes their crops grow...

And he multiplies their efforts and brings forth abundant crops and get this in verse 38...

He doesn't allow their cattle to even decrease..

In other words, God even controls the number of cow pregnancies to put it mildly...

He makes sure the cattle are having calves and that disease isn't allowed into the herd, and that the cattle have plenty of food to eat...

In case, you ever wondered, God's hand is in everything and without his hand in everything, we would have no hope...

We make take it for granted....

We may wrongly call it Mother Nature...

But the truth is that God controls the world and even the crops and cattle of the world...

But even when the land is good to the people and their crops are plentiful and their herds are doing good, trouble can come to a people from other sources...

Look at verse 39...

39

*When they are diminished and bowed down
Through oppression, misery and sorrow,*

40

*He pours contempt upon [z]princes
And makes them wander in a pathless waste.*

In other words, the land can be fertile and the flocks can be fruitful, but governments can be oppressive...

And sometimes, governments bring misery and sorrow to God's people..

So, what does God do?

He pours out contempt upon princes...

He makes them wander in a pathless waste...

You may have forgotten the story of Nebuchadnezzar, but he was the king of Babylon..

A glorious king...

His kingdom was known for all its gold and splendor, but Nebuchadnezzar was not a believer in the God of Israel...

So, God eventually brought him low by making him into a beast of the field for 7 years...

Listen to Daniel 4...

**28 “All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.
29 Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king [ab]reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal [ac]residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ 31 While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice [ad]came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: [ae]sovereignty has been removed from you, 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven [af]periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ 33 Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had**

grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

This is a picture of what the psalmist is writing about in verse 39-40 of Psalm 107...

Nebuchadnezzar was an oppressor of Israel.

He had taken them into captivity.

He had brought misery and sorrow to them, and God literally poured contempt on Nebuchadnezzar and made him wander the field like a beast...

This is the sovereignty of God...

This is how God cares for his people.

He is not only powerful enough to make the crops flourish and the cattle successfully breed, he can topple oppressive authorities as well...

And while he is bringing princes low, look at what he does for his people...

Verse 41...

41

But He sets the needy [aa]securely on high away from affliction,

And makes his families like a flock.

As the Lord has the power to bring princes low, he also has the power to bring the needy high....

Not in the sense of honoring them but in the sense of raising them above the trouble...

The psalmist writes that he sets the needy on high securely away from affliction...

Listen to 1 Corinthians 1...

19 For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,

And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside."

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the [o]message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for [p]signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach [q]Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For [r]consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to [s]the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no [t]man may boast before God.

This is the paradox of God...

The mighty prince becomes weak and the weak believer is made stronger...

The wise scholar is made to look foolish, and the foolish man is made to look wise...

For the psalmist, he writes that the people who are hungry have been made full...

And the high and mighty rulers have been brought low all by the hand of God..

As the oppressive princes go low and find trouble, the oppressed people are raised above out of the trouble...

And then the psalmist writes this at the end of verse 41....

He makes his families like a flock...

What does that mean?

God blesses families who seek him many children...

Even in less than ideal conditions the people of God multiply...

Consider Israel in Egypt...

Listen to Exodus 1...

1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one [a]with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; 3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 All the [b]persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy [c]in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. 6 Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. 7 But the sons of Israel were fruitful and [d]increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly [e]mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

This is the picture of Psalm 107:41...

Israel is in Egypt under an oppressive government that has forced them into slavery...

Yet, God blesses them in their sad state by causing their number to multiply exponentially...

Israel's flock grows from 70 to over 2 million in no time and eventually Egypt was filled with Israelites...

It is often in times of persecution that God blesses this people the most..

Not only does he bring the oppressors of His people, down, he causes the blessings of His people to rise..

And then we get to the main point of this entire section...

Verse 42...

42

***The upright see it and are glad;
But all unrighteousness shuts its mouth.***

The upright person here is the righteous person, the saved, the redeemed, the child of God...

For us, true believers see it and are glad...

See what?.....you may ask...

Well, the see what we just talked about...

They see God make the rivers in the lands of the wicked dry up...

They see the wilderness that they inhabit turn to springs of water...

They see the barren soil they plow produce abundant crops..

They see that God blesses their land and their livestock abundantly...

They see God pour out his contempt on their oppressive rulers over them..

They see God bless them even in their poor state with large families and protection from their enemies...

They see all that happen and it makes them glad...

On the other hand, the wicked, the unrighteous, the unsaved see those things and they can't say a word..

What do we see here?

Well, this is the justice of God..

God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked..

Now, it may not always appear like that to us..

In fact, Psalm 37 and Psalm 73 speak of the fact that the righteous sometimes lose and the wicked win...

But those psalms are speak of the temporary success of the wicked....

Sometimes, in a fallen world we forget that momentary success does not mean lasting success...

Momentary reward does not equal eternal reward...

And the reason for that is simple...

God always has the final say...

God's justice will prevail in the end...

His righteous people will be rewarded and evil people will be punished...

That is the eternal justice of God, and it is designed to do what?

To make us glad...

There is nothing wrong with rejoicing in God's justice..

In fact, we should be thankful for God's justice...

We should praise God for his justice..

Look, it was fifth grade in Mrs. Henry's class and there was candy missing from her jar of treats in the front of the room...

And under my desk was one of those missing pieces...

Our class had just come in from recess and she noticed a handful of butterscotch candies gone from that jar on her desk...

And one of them was right under my desk...

It looked bad for me, real bad...

She had Brown Baby, which in 1985 was the name her paddle that the School District of Newberry County allowed her to have and swing on any mischievous student...

She looked square at me and asked if I had been in her jar, and I said no..

Then she asked about the candy under my desk and I said I didn't know where it came from...

But that answer didn't work, and she called me to follow her to the hall...

And that is when Mason Pugh spoke up...

He told Mrs. Henry that one of our classmates had come in during recess to use the bathroom and that Mason had saw him in her room messing around her desk...

The kid admitted it and I went to my desk and he went to the hall to meet with Mrs. Henry and Brown Baby..

I wasn't a Christian then, but I was sure was happy about God's justice that day...

It didn't break my heart at all that Danny Ruggles was getting those 3 licks and not me...

Justice had won and I was glad and very thankful...

And it is only right for us to rejoice in the justice of God..

God is not saddened by his justice because it is perfect and deserved by all who break his laws...

God is not ashamed of his justice..

He hands it out as He see fit and we all should rejoice in it and be thankful for it...

But there is one final part of this psalm in verse 43...

For 42 verses, we have found reasons to be thankful to God..

Thankful for his goodness...

Thankful for his leading..

Thankful for his release...

Thankful for his healing...

Thankful for his rescue...

And the final reason to be thankful to God is for His justice...

Yet, the last verse is not a reason to be thankful, but rather a reason to be thoughtful...

VII. Be Thoughtful about God's Kindness (43)

Look at verse 43...

43

***Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things,
And consider the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.***

After giving us 42 verse and 6 clear and well thought out reasons to be thankful to God, the psalmist leaves us with one idea....

Think about what you just read...

Give heed to it..

Consider it...

And I love the way he begins this final verse...

Who is wise?

Who does the world see as wise?

Well, scholars are seen as wise...

Experts in their field of study are seen as wise...

Older people are seen as wise...

Yet, who does the Bible see as wise?

Those who listen and obey the word of God...

Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived...

And at the end of his life, he wrote that true wisdom is
“fearing God and keeping His commands.”

The wise person is the one who listens to God’s word
and obeys.

And the psalmist is simply saying...

Consider the reasons to be thankful to God...

Take heed to the goodness of God..

See the justice of God..

Understand the power of God to change the climate if he
needs to..

Consider the blessings of God that come to those who do
not do evil but live righteously...

And the clear answer to the question of who is wise is
this....

The wise person is the one who sees these qualities of God in this psalm and seeks to know Him and obey Him...

The wise person is the one who sees the lovingkindness of the Lord and comes to God in faith...

Conclusion

Psalm 107 is a psalm of thanksgiving, and though it is 42 verses long, it doesn't scratch the surface of reasons to be thankful to God...

The year is 365 days long and one day of thanksgiving doesn't even scratch the surface of how often we should be thankful to God...

And let me end with this....

Like love, being thankful is not just saying the words, thank you Lord...

It is living a life of thanksgiving where you serve, you obey, you give all out of the thanksgiving in your heart...

Everybody says they are thankful to God, but your thanksgiving is also seen in what you do...

Though it just 3 days after Thanksgiving, let us vow to live everyday being thankful to God..

Let us pray...