

We turn again to the Psalms as our special focus for the New Year, . Despite the years of sin which the author of Psalm 106 was compelled to confess, the Psalmist ends with an assurance that God *will* hear his cries and the cries of God's people and save them! The highlight of Psalm 106 is the cry asking God to once again gather His people to Himself, restoring them from their sins (verse 47). May God likewise reassure us that *He* is in control of the waves of sin in our day – especially when such sinful rebellion arises from the hearts of His own people! Just as Christ walked on the waves in the Sea of Galilee to rescue His disciples from their fears and unbelief, so He still is able to come to us in the depths of the sea of our doubts, speaking the words, “Peace” to our storm-tossed souls.

Mon/Tues: Read Psalm 107:1-8**Steadfast, Unbreakable Mercy**

In Psalm 107, the historical event celebrated is God's gathering His people out of exile and bringing them back to the Promised Land and to the Holy City Jerusalem. (See Psalm 107:4-7). In this way, this Psalm is closely connected to Psalm 106:47's cry, “Save us, O Lord God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.” Psalm 107 is the *answer to that cry*.

But Psalm 106 and 107 are also connected by the way they begin. Each start: “Praise the Lord and give thanks to Him because He is good!” Notice that both Psalms begin by speaking of “God's *steadfast love* enduring forever.” Such *steadfast love* is the reason why they are to give thanks to the LORD. The word for such trustworthy and enduring love is “hesed,” the famous Hebrew noun for God's steadfast covenant love.

Another Psalm that speaks about God's “steadfast love” is Psalm 98:3: “*He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness.*” Another way to translate this word, steadfast love, is “mercy.” It is often paired with the Divine characteristic of faithfulness or truth, as it is here in Psalm 98. In other words, God's steadfast love is the motivating power that moves God to make His promise to be our God. And it is then God's truthfulness that engages Him to perform what He has promised, as the Puritan Matthew Hole puts it. This steadfast love, then, is unbreakable. We may, and alas do, break our word and break our promises many times. But God cannot break His covenant or His promise. He remains faithful when we are not.

Meditate and Pray: Sing about God's steadfast love in *Trinity Hymnal* # 3 by Isaac Watts, noticing how often Watts translates this steadfast love of God as mercies:

*Give to our God immortal praise;
Mercy and truth are all His ways:
Wonders of grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song.*

*He built the earth, He spread the sky,
And fixed the starry lights on high:
Wonders of grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song.*

*He sent His Son with power to save
From guilt and darkness and the grave
Wonders of grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song.*

*Give to the Lord of lords renown,
The King of kings with glory crown:
His mercies ever shall endure,
When lords and kings are known no more.*

*He fills the sun with morning light;
He bids the moon direct the night:
His mercies ever shall endure,
When suns and moons shall shine no more.*

*Thro' this vain world He guides our feet,
And leads us to His heav'nly seat
His mercies ever shall endure,
When this vain world shall be no more.*

Weds/Thurs/Fri: Read Psalm 106:47 – Psalm 107:3**Found and Thankful**

After the penitential Psalm 106, it is so refreshing to turn to Psalm 107. It is a beautiful Psalm, and in many ways a simple one after all the ups and downs of Psalm 106, with Israel's rebellion under Moses, turning away from God's Promised land to wander in the desert for forty years, their idolatry in Canaan, and the gruesome sins of bloodshed that spring from it. No wonder God exiles His people until they cry out to Him once again! We could long for another portion of Scripture to study, full of thanksgiving and joy like Psalm 107!

But not so fast. We want to answer the bell and rise to praise God every time the author of Psalm 107 commands us to "say so" (Ps. 107:1-2). But let's not forget that the grim confession of a *history of failure and sin* on Israel's part in Psalm 106 ends with praise and hallelujah to God in Psalm 106:48!

Meditate and Pray: How amazing God's grace, that He can bring final and lasting praise to the lips of even those He has severely chastised! And if Israel could find courage to groan in the far-away land of their sin, knowing that God would hear them and save them (Ps 106:47), is there any place into which we may have wandered in sin that is *too far* for our cries to reach God's ears in our day?

Surely not! Blessed, indeed, is the Lord from everlasting to everlasting. Indeed, let all the rescued people of God say, "Amen!" (Ps 106:48). Sing about God's long arm of grace that can reach even those who have fallen away countless times! Use the words of *Trinity Hymnal* # 491:

*Take me, O my Father, take me;
Take me, save me, through Thy Son;
That which Thou wouldst have me, make me, Let
Thy will in me be done.
Long from Thee my footsteps straying,
Thorny proved the way I trod;
Weary come I now, and praying,
Take me to Thy love, my God.*

*Fruitless years with grief recalling,
Humbly I confess my sin;
At Thy feet, O Father, falling,
To Thy household take me in.
Freely now to Thee I proffer
This relenting heart of mine;
Freely life and love I offer,
Gift unworthy love like Thine.*

*Once the world's Redeemer, dying,
Bore our sins upon the tree;
On that sacrifice relying,
Now I look in hope to Thee:
Father, take me; all forgiving,
Fold me to Thy loving breast;
In Thy love forever living
I must be forever blest.*

Saturday: Read Psalm 107:4-22**Praise for the Impossible Working God**

Reading Psalm 107, we discover that it is full of powerful evidence that God's arm is *never* too short to reach and rescue us in our overwhelming troubles. There are *four overwhelming troubles* which the Psalmist cites as places from which only God can rescue – and rescue He does!

First, (vv. 4-9), he mentions those who are returning exiles among God's people – struggling without shelter, food or water, crying out as they are about to expire in the desert. Second, we see (vv. 10-16) that God can even rescue those in the bonds of exile and imprisonment for their sins, bursting the bars of their cells asunder. There are also some who cry out in their foolish sin and resulting illness. They cry out to God, thus showing that it was good for them to be afflicted, as it drove them back to the Lord. Finally (and we will look at vv. 23-32 tomorrow), there are those caught in the wild waves of maritime storms – who cry out for rescue as they are drowning.

Meditate and Pray: The lesson is that God is so adept at rescuing us from *every imaginable trial and even from afflictions we have sinfully brought on ourselves*. We will never lack grounds for giving praise to the One who does the impossible. We only have to look at His most recent act of redemption in our lives for our hearts to be stirred to thanksgiving. He rescues us every day – so that every day there can be a song in our mouths! Sing about God's rescuing power, always remembering how He persists in rescuing us “even unto seventy times”! Use *Trinity Hymnal* # 455:

*And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

*He left His Father's throne above
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!*

*Still the small inward voice I hear,
That whispers all my sins forgiven;
Still the atoning blood is near,
That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.*

*'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

*No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.*

Sunday: Psalm 107:23-30**Brought to Our Desired Haven**

When God rescues from the sea, it is more than a supernatural rescue from the power of nature. To the Jew, the sea represented the wicked unknown, so for God to control even the waves is an ultimate proof of His praiseworthy power. Spurgeon writes about the significance of these verses as follows:

Navigation was so little practiced among the Israelites that mariners were invested with a high mystery, and their craft was looked upon as one of singular daring degree of and peril. Tales of the sea thrilled all hearts with awe, and he who had been to Ophir or to Tarshish and had returned alive was looked upon as a man of renown, an ancient mariner to be listened to with reverent attention. Voyages were looked on as descending to an abyss, "going down to the sea in ships"; whereas now our bolder and more accustomed sailors talk of the "high seas." Note the verse speak of "They that do business in great waters." To the Israelite, if they had not had business to do, they would never have ventured on the ocean, for we never read in the Scriptures of any man taking his pleasure on the sea: so averse was the Israelitish mind to seafaring, that we do not hear of even Solomon himself keeping a pleasure boat. The Mediterranean was "the great sea" to David and his countrymen, and they viewed those who had business upon it with no small degree of admiration.

Meditate and Pray: Since the sea was so unknown to the Israelites, why did the Psalmist include this description of God's power to rescue even the helpless on the open sea? All the other deadly experiences, desert, famine, sickness, etc., were well known to the Jew. But the sea?

God inspired the Psalmist to write these words in anticipation of what Christ would do in stilling the Sea of Galilee. Jesus, then, did not need to write Scripture Himself – He was too busy fulfilling the Old Testament in His every miracle and deed. And when Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, He was demonstrating that *He is entitled as God to all the praises which Psalm 107 give to the LORD!* Marvelous! Sing about this in *Trinity Hymnal # 601:*

*Jesus, Savior, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treacherous shoal.
Chart and compass come from Thee;
Jesus, Savior, pilot me.*

*When the darkling heavens frown,
And the wrathful winds come down,
And the fierce waves, tossed on high,
Lash themselves against the sky,
Jesus, Savior, pilot me,
Over life's tempestuous sea.*

*While th'apostles' fragile bark
Struggled with the billows dark,
On the stormy Galilee,
Thou didst walk upon the sea;
And when they beheld Thy form,
Safe they glided through the storm.*

*As a mother stills her child,
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boisterous waves obey Thy will,
When Thou sayest to them, Be still!
Wondrous sovereign of the sea,
Jesus, Savior, pilot me.*