

19-107-1—Psalm 107: The God of the Desert

Hardship, trial, trust, prayer, thanksgiving

Ps.107:1-9, 33-43

God can lead us from homeless deserts to heavenly destinies.

INTRODUCTION:

–Psalm 107 easily lends itself to a sermon series on *thanking the Lord*.

It begins by saying that there should be an exhortation on the lips of the redeemed: **Psa 107:1-3, Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say this-- those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.**

–Who are the redeemed? Those **bought back** from *the hand of the foe*. (Our *foe* is Satan, to whom we often *sell ourselves for tickets to nowhere*.)

–These *redeemed* are *gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south, (from all nations, all cultures, all circumstances, all situations)*.

–Psa 107 gives four situations where God reveals Himself as Redeemer.

The first I'm calling, "**The God of the Desert**," because it shows how... **HOM.idea**. But for that to happen, we must *first* be...

I. Awakened from Our Dream of Isolation (v.4, Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.)

A. Trying to live *in desert wastelands* is a counterproductive lifestyle

1. There's *barrenness (infertility) in a life lived away from life*.
 - a. A little *desert* can be good [**Poustinia**: short retreat to gain perspective]
 - b. Too much *desert* is *deadly* [**Too much Digoxin** becomes a fatal toxin!]
2. There's a *selfish solitude* that leads to a *dead end*.
 - a. The *self* can be a *false sanctuary* [**Elinor Wylie**'s poem "**Sanctuary**": This is the bricklayer; hear the thud / Of his heavy load dumped down on stone. / His lustrous bricks are brighter than blood, / His smoking mortar whiter than bone. // Set each sharp-edged, fire-bitten brick / Straight by the plumb-line's shivering length; / Make my marvelous wall so thick / Dead nor living may shake its strength. // Full as a crystal cup with drink / Is my cell with dreams, and quiet, and cool. . . / Stop, old man! You must leave a chink; / How can I breathe? *You can't, you fool!*
 - b. The *isolation of self* is the stuff hell is made of. [**C. S. Lewis** has a description of it in *The Great Divorce*: ". . . a damned soul is nearly nothing; it is shrunk, shut up in itself; Good beats upon the damned incessantly as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes are fast shut. First they will not, in the end they cannot, open their hands for

gifts, or their mouths for food, or their eyes to see.”]

B. Salvation begins with a search (“*Some wandered*”)

1. Wandering is at least movement, and maybe a sign the wanderer is *awakened* to the reality that there's death in the desert—
 - a. Humans weren't created for a life of selfish isolation.
 - b. Death is *separation from life* (physical, social, spiritual).
2. That the wanderer is “finding no way” implies a search is on!
 - a. No path is found by those refusing to see themselves as lost. (Pride doesn't ask for help: “*I know what I'm doing!*”)
 - b. But wanderers who realize they need “*a city where they could settle*” are seeking a resting-place, a place of habitation, to put an end to their *self-made restlessness and loneliness*.
3. What causes us to seek beyond our fantasies of self-isolation?—v.5, They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.
 - a. Only *hungry and thirsty* people look for food and drink.
 - b. When *life ebbs away*, we recognize the self isn't self-sufficient.

TRANS: The *God of the desert orchestrates the ups and downs of a self-made life*, to get us to *hunger and thirst for true life*— v.33-42. He turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground, and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there. He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs; there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle. They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest; he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish. Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow; he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste. But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths. The next step is to be...

II. Aroused to Our Dependence on the Savior (v.6-7, Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.)

A. The prayer of the lost is a cry for help!

1. It's not a passive acceptance of fate, but an emotional outburst!
2. It's not a “God and me” arrangement, but faith in a gracious God (“*God helps those who help themselves*” isn't in the Bible, but the invitation of God's grace is always, “*Help yourselves!*”)
3. It's not “when I get my act together,” but “they cried out to the LORD in their trouble”— Psa 46:1, God is...an ever-present help **in trouble**.

B. **V.6-7** describes how God answers our cry for help:

1. He delivers us from distress. [**R.I.P.** is a wish placed on a loved one's grave, but it's also what life is like resting in the arms of the Prince of Peace.]
2. He leads us in a new direction:
 - a. *a straight way* (the *right way*— Jesus told us, “I am the Way....”)
 - b. *to a city* (God's redemption plan was never about individuals in isolation, but about a Church on earth and a City in eternity.)

TRANS: When *God leads us from homeless deserts of selfish isolation to heavenly destinies of spiritual fellowship, we're not done till we've...*

III. Acknowledged Our Duty of Thanksgiving (v.8-9), Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.)

A. What does holy gratitude look like?

1. Giving thanks is making praise known (printed, spoken, shown)
2. Its focus is God's unfailing love (His commitment to divine “*tough love,*” that *does what it takes to awaken* us from a false dream.)

B. Holy thanksgiving acknowledges his wonderful deeds for men:

1. He satisfies the thirsty with the water of divine life and with the cup the New Covenant in His blood.
2. He fills the hungry with good things... He fills us with:
 - a. the bread of Heaven, His body in our Holy Communion,
 - b. doing God's will (which is what Jesus called *His food*),
 - c. the Body of Christ, the Church— 1Cor 10:16-17, Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. (This is why sharing in church is so vital: we need to partake of each other's spiritual experiences.)

CONCLUSION:

—**v.43**, *Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD. The God of the Desert uses homeless deserts to lead us to heavenly destinies.* It may be “*tough love,*” but it's *the great love of the LORD.* Psalm 107 tells us to be wise and consider it, so that as we do, we might “*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*”

PS 107:1 (NIV), Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.
 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say this-- those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,
 3 those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.
 4 Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.
 5 They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.
 6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.
 7 He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.
 8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men,
 9 for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

PS 107:33, He turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground,
 34 and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there.
 35 He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs;
 36 there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle.
 37 They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest;
 38 he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish.
 39 Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow;
 40 he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste.
 41 But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks.
 42 The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths.
 43 Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.