

19-107-2-Psalms 107: The God of the Prison
sin, guilt, bondage, habits, slavery, deliverance, freedom
Psa 107:10-16,43

Only God can free us from the chains of guilt we forge for ourselves.

INTRODUCTION: (text for Scripture reading)

–(Re-read 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.)
–God *redeems* us in different circumstances, difficulties and hardships, four of which Psa 107 talks about. In the midst of these situations, if we cry out to God, He hears us. When He *answers*, it’s time for sharing the gratitude in our hearts with *praise and thanksgiving* on our lips.
–We’ve looked at “The God of the Desert” (about how God can lead us from *homeless deserts* to *heavenly destinies*). Now we turn to “The God of the Prison” (where we find that **HOM.idea**.)

I. The Drama of the Prisoner (the scene opens with...)

- A. **A tragic reality**– v.10a, *Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom,...*
1. A picture of being immobilized in obscurity:
 - a. They “*sat*”– they could run no further from God.
 - b. They “*sat in darkness*”– they could run no further from light.
 2. [Heb. sat=dwell]– They *dwelt* in “*deepest gloom*” [lit., “*death-shadow*”]:
 - a. Bondage in a living tomb... under a *perpetual* “*shadow of death*.”
 - b. Guilt is the shadow of a coming judgment [Rev’s “*second death*”].
 3. They were caught in the consequences of sin– v.10b, *prisoners suffering in iron chains,...*
 - a. They were (KJV) “*bound in affliction*,” as by an oppressor, Satan...
 - b. They were held “*in iron chains*” (Sinful habits that seem *harmless* at the start, may take over with irresistible control.)
- B. This tragic reality has a tragic reason– v.11, *for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High*.
1. Rebellion against the “words of God,” found in the Bible **or** echoed in the conscience, imprisons a person in the iron grip of guilt.
 2. By rejecting God’s counsel (the best advice in the universe), people fall prey to *foolish trends* and *demonic deceptions*.
- C. There’s a tragic remedy for this folly (**tragic** only because it was preventable, but is now the only hope of the guilty)– v.12, *So he*

subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

1. **God** “*subjected them*” (When it comes to our *spiritual health*, God won’t leave us alone; we can run from, but we can’t avoid Him.)
2. “*bitter labor*” is work without meaning or reward [like a mother’s tragic of labor for a stillborn]. (*Fruitless work frustrates the soul*.)
3. “*they stumbled*” with “*no one to help*” (This pictures the unstable gait of the inebriate, stumbling on a rocky path.) [Sin, like *alcohol*, trades *reality* for *fantasy*. It dulls common sense. A drunk wears out those who try lifting him from his fallen stupor, because it’s a task that never seems to end.]

TRANS: God allows this prison-house of guilt, not as punishment, but as a necessary step in setting us free from the chains of bondage we’ve forged for ourselves through sin. What God is really after is...

II. The Deliverance of the Prisoner– v.13, *Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress*.

- A. “*Then*” [means “*as a result*”]– God patiently waits for our “*then*,” letting the effects of guilty bondage awaken us to turn to Him. This turning point begins the divine sequence of *deliverance*.
- B. “*Then they cried to the Lord*” (**not to false hopes and futile helps**)
1. Self-improvement plans can help, but only if Spirit-led;
 2. People can help, but only those whom God sends to us;
 3. Programs might help, but only those that God empowers;
 4. Prescriptions may help, but only if God blesses the ingredients.
- C. When does God deliver the prisoner of guilt? There’s no lag time–
1. “*he saved them*” at once (Even if *our call* is late, He *answers* early.)
 2. His resolution of our circumstances may be a *process*, but His peace in our hearts brings immediate relief from our “distress”.
- D. **AND see how personal His deliverance is**– v.14, *He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains*.
1. “*He brought them out*” (God accompanies those willing to be led...
 - a. “*out of darkness*”– back to the divine light they formerly spurned;
 - b. “*out of... deepest gloom*” {No more *self-pity-parties!*} We must forsake our guilty identity to find our true identity in Christ.)
 2. God personally “broke away their chains”– Our sin forged the chains of guilt, but only God can break them.

TRANS: Why this severe lesson of prison? God is **God of the prison!**

Under His gracious, *chastening* hand, it's the safest place for sinners. [On May 8th, 1902, the volcanic eruption of Mt. Pelée wiped out the village of Saint-Pierre, Martinique. 30,000 lost their lives, but Auguste Ciparis, a prisoner, survived. The night before, they put him in an underground dungeon for solitary confinement. *His imprisonment saved His life.*] God lets our waywardness land us in the solitary confinement of guilt, because “*then*” we can *cry out* to the only One who can break our chains. When He does deliver us, it's time for...

III. The Declaration of the Ex-Prisoner— v.15-16, *Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.*

- A. When we give thanks, we return grace [Fr., *rendre grace*] to God, giving back to Him the glory for what He has done.
- B. It means recognizing that His “*unfailing love*” is the source of both the harsh prison-house of guilt and His grace that frees us from it.
- C. Ex-prisoners gratefully declare God's “*wonderful deeds for men*” (All of them ***awesome orchestrations*** of *events* and *circumstances*):
 1. Those set free can testify how “*he breaks down gates of bronze*”—
 - a. Sin made those “gates” look golden, but they were really “*bars of bondage*” to sin and guilt, from which only God can free us.
 - b. These *gates* are barred from outside [not on the inside, as **modern psychology** tells us]. (They can be broken open ***by God alone...***)
 - (1) **Who** brings us out of *darkness* by His *enlightenment*;
 - (2) **Who** breaks the “*chains*” of our *personal sin* through *Christ*;
 - (3) **Who** leads us out from the “*gates*” of Satan's dominion “into the kingdom of His dear Son.”)
 2. Believers can testify personally that God “cuts through bars of iron” (*situations* and *circumstances* that seem impossible to deal with).

CONCLUSION:

—[**Felix, priest of Nola in the 3rd century**, was imprisoned in iron shackles in a dark dungeon. An angel entered his cell, telling him to go on a *mission of mercy*; at once his chains fell off, the prison doors opened by themselves, and he followed the angel out to begin his work.] There is no prison from which the God of the prison cannot free us. **But**, when He does free us, we are *saved for service* in the kingdom of God, *saved to “give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love.”*
 —I will close again with the last verse of Psalm 107, because it ties this whole series of four sermons together— **v.43**, “*Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.*”

Psalms 107:10-16, 43 (NIV)

- 10 Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom,
 prisoners suffering in iron chains,
 11 for they had rebelled against the words of God
 and despised the counsel of the Most High.
 12 So he subjected them to bitter labor;
 they stumbled, and there was no one to help.
 13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
 and he saved them from their distress.
 14 He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom
 and broke away their chains.
 15 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
 and his wonderful deeds for men,
 16 for he breaks down gates of bronze
 and cuts through bars of iron.
- 43 Whoever is wise, let him heed these things
 and consider the great love of the LORD.