

PSALMS

Chapter 107

Book Five

Let the Redeemed of the LORD Say So

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble 3 and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. 4 Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; 5 hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. 6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 7 He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. 8 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. 10 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, 11 for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. 12 So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. 13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart. 15 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 16 For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron. 17 Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; 18 they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. 19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 20 He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. 21 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 22 And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy! 23 Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; 24 they saw the deeds of the LORD, his wondrous works in the deep. 25 For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; 27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven. 31 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! 32 Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. 33 He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, 34 a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants. 35 He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. 36 And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; 37 they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. 38 By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish. 39 When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, 40 he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; 41 but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. 42 The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth. 43 Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.

Ps 107† An exhortation to praise the Lord for his unfailing love in that he hears the prayers of those in need and saves them (see next paragraph—on structure). It was composed for liturgical use at one of Israel’s annual religious festivals. Interpretations vary widely, but the following seems most likely: Having experienced anew God’s mercies in her return from Babylonian exile (v. 3; see Jer 33:11), Israel is led by a Levite in celebrating God’s unfailing benevolence toward those who have cried to him in the crises of their lives. In its recitational style the psalm is closely related to Ps 104–106, and in its language to Ps 105–106. For that reason it has been seriously proposed that with these last two psalms it forms a trilogy from the same author. Whether or not this is so, its affinity with the preceding psalms strongly suggests that it was associated with them before the insertion of a Book division between Ps 106 and 107 and that it was intended to conclude the little series, Ps 104–107. Its recital of God’s “wonderful deeds for men” (v. 8)—which climaxes Ps 105–106—balances the recital of his many wise works in creation (see 104:2–26) and his benevolent care over the animal world (see 104:27–30). The editors may have inserted a Book division between Ps 106 and 107 with a view to a fivefold division of the Psalter. (CSB)

Ps 105–7 are related by their focus on different aspects of Israel’s history: Ps 105 focuses on the early history of Israel; Ps 106 focuses on Israel from the time of the exodus to the exile; Ps 107 focuses on the time of restoration from the exile. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, call to worship; vv 4–9, wanderers in the desert; vv 10–16, those in darkness and prison; vv 17–22, the foolish; vv 23–32, those in a storm at sea; vv 33–38, the Lord grants water and fruitfulness; vv 39–42, the weak are delivered and the mighty humbled; v 43, appeal to wisdom. (TLSB)

Psalm 107 has a much different style than 104–106. Notice, for example, the refrains which conclude each section. Another major difference is that Psalm 107 is less historical than the preceding psalms. (PBC)

The introduction (vv. 1–3) and conclusion (v. 43) enclose six stanzas, of which the last two (vv. 33–38, 39–42) stand apart as an instructive supplement focusing in a more general way on reversals in fortunes—which, however, end up with God restoring the “hungry” (v. 36) and the “needy” (v. 41). Of the four remaining stanzas (marked by recurring refrains: vv. 6, 13, 19, 28; vv. 8, 15, 21, 31), the first and last refer to God’s deliverance of those lost in the trackless desert (vv. 4–9) and those imperiled on the boisterous sea (vv. 23–32). The two central stanzas celebrate deliverance from the punishment of foreign bondage (vv. 10–16) and from the punishment of disease (vv. 17–22). Of the concluding lines to these four stanzas, the first two (vv. 9, 16) and the last two (vv. 22, 32) are similar. The verse pattern of these four stanzas (six-seven-six-ten) makes deliberate use of the significant numbers seven and ten. (CSB)

107:1–3 Introductory call to praise. (CSB)

Call for the redeemed to praise the Lord. (TLSB)

107:1 A conventional liturgical call to praise (see 106:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; Jer 33:11). (CSB)

Ps 106:1; 118:1 begin the same way. (TLSB)

love. A common word pair in the Psalms, epitomizing the Lord’s care for His people. (TLSB p. 843)

107:2 *redeemed*. Here, as often, a synonym for “delivered.” (CSB)

Four examples of people redeemed from trouble: those lost in the wilderness, prisoners, the foolish, and sailors facing storms. All cry out to the Lord, and He delivers them. Those redeemed from trouble are encouraged to thank the Lord. In a sense, we all experience some aspect of these four perils. They probably reflect the overall peril of the captivity rather than any particular situation. (TLSB)

107:3 *from the lands*. From the dispersion resulting from the Assyrian (see 2Ki 17:6) and Babylonian captivities (see 2Ki 24:14, 16; 25:11, 26; Jer 52:28–30; see also Ne 1:8; Est 8:5, 9, 13; Isa 11:12; 43:5–6; Eze 11:17; 20:34). (CSB)

Israel had been scattered first by the Assyrians (2Ki 17:6) and then by the Babylonians (2Ki 24:14, 16; 25:11; Jer 52:28–30). (TLSB)

south. Lit. “(the) sea” i.e., the west, as in Isa 49:12. But perhaps the final letter of the Hebrew word has been lost, which if supplied yields “south.” (CSB)

107:4–9 Deliverance for those lost in the trackless desert. No reference is made to rebellion (as in the third and fourth stanzas), but since Israel had journeyed through the desert on her way to Canaan she had firsthand experience of the terrors of the desert. She was, moreover, bounded on the east by the great Arabian Desert (as on the west by the Mediterranean Sea; see vv. 23–32), across which her merchant caravans traveled. (CSB)

107:4, 7, 36 *wandered* – Hbr simply says, “They wandered.” (TLSB)

city to dwell in. Lit. “city of habitation,” i.e., where people live and where a steady supply of food and water makes human life secure. (CSB)

107:6 *they cried to the Lord*. The author uses the same Hebrew verb in v. 28, thus linking the fifth stanza with the second. In vv. 13, 19 he uses a different (but similar-sounding) Hebrew verb, linking the third and fourth stanzas. Just as Israel’s history was a history of divine deliverance (see Ps 105) and a history of rebellion (see Ps 106), so also it was a history of crying out to the Lord in distress (see references in note on 106:44). (CSB)

Israel’s history involved many situations in which they cried out to the Lord. (TLSB)

107:7 *straight way*. Direct route, clear of dangerous and difficult obstacles. (CSB)

107:8 For other refrains see introduction to Ps 42–43. (CSB)

Each section is followed by the same refrain of praise (vv 15, 21, 31). (TLSB)

107:9 *satisfies the longing soul ... fills... the hungry*. Hbr also means “to run or rush about.” (TLSB)

107:10–16 Deliverance from the punishment of foreign bondage. God even delivers those who cry to him when their distress is a result of his discipline for their sins (see vv. 17–20, 33–41). (CSB)

The second crisis corresponds in a general way to Israel's experiences in Egypt and Babylon, but again it is generalized. (PBC)

107:10 *sat in darkness*. Vivid imagery for distress. (CSB)

It seemed to Israel that their captivity was their end; their despair was deep. (Cf 23:4.) (TLSB)

prisoners. While reference is no doubt to foreign bondage, the imagery of being bound was also used by OT poets to refer to other forms of distress (see Job 36:8; Isa 28:22; La 3:7); so the reference may be deliberately ambiguous. (CSB)

107:11 Their imprisonment was not due to any civil violation. Rather, they had rebelled against God by ignoring His Word. (Cf Zec 1:4.) (TLSB)

God ... Most High. That is, God Most High. (CSB)

counsel. God's wise directives embodied in his words. (CSB)

107:12 *hard labor*. Lit. "brought down their heart with labor," i.e., a labor so burdensome it broke their spirit. (CSB)

The labor broke their will to resist (cf 31:10; Ne 4:10; Is 40:30; Zec 12:8). (TLSB)

fell down. Their strength failed (see 31:10; 109:24; Ne 4:10; Isa 40:30; Zec 12:8). (CSB)

107:16 Either this verse is quoted from Isa 45:2, or both verses quote an established saying. (CSB)

doors of bronze. City gates—normally of wood; here proverbially of bronze, the strongest gates then imaginable (see Jer 1:18). (CSB)

bars of iron. Bars that secured city gates (see Dt 3:5; Jer 51:30), usually made of wood (see Na 3:13) but sometimes of bronze (see 1Ki 4:13). "Can a man break iron ... or bronze?" was a proverb of the time (see Jer 15:12). (CSB)

Iron denotes strength, cf Jer 15:12. (TLSB)

107:17–22 Deliverance from the punishment of wasting disease (see note on vv. 10–16). The third crisis could apply to almost any period of Israel's history. It occurred over and over again during the time of the judges and kings. (PBC)

107:17 *fools*. Fools despise wisdom and discipline (Pr 1:7; see v. 43). (CSB)

iniquities suffered affliction. See Lev 26:16, 25; Dt 28:20–22, 35, 58–61. (CSB)

107:18 *gates of death*. The realm of the dead was sometimes depicted as a netherworld city with a series of concentric walls and gates (seven, each inside the other, according to ancient Near Eastern mythology) to keep those descending there from returning to the land of the living (see also Mt 16:18). (CSB)

107:19 *delivered*. See v. 13 (another link between the second and third stanzas); cf. vv. 6, 28. (CSB)

107:20 *his word*. His command, here personified as the agent of his purpose. (CSB)

God's Word gives life. (TLSB)

107:22 *tell of his deeds*. In their concluding lines, stanzas four and five are linked, as are stanzas two and three. (CSB)

songs of joy. See, e.g., Ps 116. (CSB)

107:23–32 Deliverance from the perils of the sea. Israel's merchants also braved the sea in pursuit of trade (see Ge 49:13; Jdg 5:17; 1Ki 9:26–28; 10:22). (CSB)

To the Israelites, the sea was a perilous place, symbolic of trouble (32:6). (CC)

Seafaring was not common among the Israelites. The story of Jonah is the only OT account that compares with this psalm. Nevertheless, Israel was fascinated with the sea as the most awesome part of God's creation. In a storm at sea the best efforts of ancient mariners counted for little. They were helpless before the power of wind and wave. Therefore God's control over the sea was considered the outstanding display of his power. The disciples were especially impressed when Jesus stilled the storm. (PBC)

The 107th Psalm is a psalm of thanks for the help that God shows to all people in their distress. (Reading the Psalms – Luther)

107:27 Israel is compared to sailors suffering seasickness and helplessness against the sea's ravages. (CC)

107:24 *wondrous works in the deep*. Since the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean coastlands associated the "mighty waters" (v. 23) of the sea with the primeval chaotic waters, the Lord's total control of them was always for Israel a cause of wonder and of a sense of security. Therefore the terrifying storms that sometimes swept the Mediterranean (see Jnh 1; Ac 27) are here included among his wonderful deeds. (CSB)

The storm of Captivity had swept over the nation; all seemed lost. Those who lived through the recovery of a nation from a captivity can in a very real sense claim to have seen His works. (Leupold)

107:28 *he delivered them from their distress* – Last of four refrains (cf vv 8, 15, 21); underscores the psalm's theme. (TLSB)

107:29-30 Seafaring was not common among the Israelites. Their story of Jonah is the only OT account that compares with this psalm. Nevertheless, Israel was fascinated with the sea as the most awesome part of God's creation. In a storm at the best efforts of the ancient mariners counted for little. They were helpless before the power of wind and wave. Therefore God's control over the sea was considered the outstanding display of his power. The disciples were especially impressed when Jesus still the storm. (PBC)

107:30 *haven*. Perhaps trading center. (CSB)

107:32 *let them extol him in the congregation of the people* – Suggests a national assembly where the chiefs of the nation sit—perhaps in the temple—in order to praise God. (TLSB)

“The assembly of the people” is any gathering of an informal sort. (Leupold)

elders. The Hebrew for this word means lit. “bearded ones,” perhaps reflecting the age, wisdom, experience and influence necessary for a man expected to function as an elder. As heads of local families and tribes, “elders” had a recognized position also among the Babylonians, Hittites, Egyptians, Moabites and Midianites. Their duties included judicial arbitration and sentencing as well as military leadership and counsel. (CSB)

This is any official and formal gathering of representatives of Israel. (Leupold)

107:33–42 A twofold instructive supplement recalling how the Lord sometimes disciplined his people by turning the fruitful land (v. 34) into a virtual desert (see 1Ki 17:1–7; 2Ki 8:1) but then restored the land again (see Ru 1:6; 1Ki 18:44–45), so that the hungry (v. 36) could live there and prosper in the midst of plenty. But then he sent powerful armies against them (such as the Assyrians, 2Ki 17:3–6, and the Babylonians, 2Ki 24:20–17; 25:1–26) that devastated the land once more and deported its people; yet afterward he restored the needy (v. 41). But the poet generalizes upon these experiences in the manner of the wisdom teachers. (CSB)

This section reiterates the principles concerning blessings and curses, which are set forth at the end of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The territory around Sodom and Gomorrah is a prime example of good land which became a wasteland because of its people’s sins. The rest of this section corresponds in a general way with Israel’s experience in the Promised Land, but the psalmist is more interested in general principles than in historical specifics. (PBC)

107:33 Psalmist changes his approach and uses two different images to show that success and failure, prosperity and calamity are in God’s control. (TLSB)

thirsty ground. Many streams (“wadis”) are empty during the dry season, but this psalm describes extreme drought. (TLSB)

107:33–35 The imagery is similar to that found in Isa 35:6–7; 41:18; 42:15; 43:19–20; 50:2 and may indicate that the author has been influenced by Isaiah. (CSB)

107:40 Perhaps quoted from Job 12:21, 24. In their prosperity the people, led by their nobles, grow proud and turn their backs on the God who has blessed them (see Dt 31:20; 32:15), so he returns them to the desert (see Dt 32:10; Hos 2:3, 14). (CSB)

107:41 *needy.* Those in need of help. (CSB)

God’s will ultimately serves the purposes He has for His people. (TLSB)

107:42 Conclusion to the instruction (vv. 33–41); perhaps an echo of Job 5:16. (CSB)

upright ... wicked. A frequent contrast in OT wisdom literature (see Pr 2:21–22; 11:6–7; 12:6; 14:11; 15:8; 21:18, 29; 29:27—but the Hebrew for “wicked” here is shared more often with Job). (CSB)

107:43 Conclusion to the psalm. (CSB)

Psalm's conclusion echoes Hos 14:9: evil will be overcome by God's providence. (TLSB)

Whoever is wise. See Dt 32:29; Hos 14:9. (CSB)

All who wish to be wise should apply the principles of this psalm to their own lives. (PBC)

consider the steadfast love of the LORD. The theme of vv. 4–32. (CSB)

People should be strengthened by the love of God displayed in his blessings upon those who remember his covenant. (PBC)

Ps 107 History unfolds the prevailing deeds of God's steadfast love. Because of sin, this world is chaotic and inhospitable. But in Jesus God has restored the peace we long for. Our sins are forgiven, and where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and every blessing. • O Lord, do not let us be overwhelmed by the confusion around us. Remind us of Your steadfast love that delivers us. Thank You, Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)