

An Attitude of Gratitude 11-24-02

Psalm 107

We're taking a break in our series from Joshua to consider Thanksgiving in the Scriptures. It actually fits in because we have come to the place where they have finally entered the Promised Land. God parted their Jordan at flood stage, and we saw how He has done that for us as well. That calls for the giving of thanks to God. One of the great psalms of thanksgiving is Psalm 107. Open your Bibles there and follow along. Just because we have the projection system, don't get out of the habit of bringing your Bible to church. You may want to mark your Bible or put a cross-reference or note in your margin.

Psalms 107:1-5 (NIV) *1 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.*

The psalmist begins by telling us to "give thanks to the LORD for He is good; His love endures forever". Then He says to let the redeemed say this. So go ahead. If God has redeemed your soul, if He has made the full payment to ransom your soul from death say "Give thanks to the LORD for He is good; His love endures forever." Like we mean it! "Give thanks to the LORD for He is good; His love endures forever!"

If there is one thing we can be thankful for it is redemption. We owed a great sin debt to God. There is no way we could pay it. You could work ten life times to pay it and you wouldn't have amassed anything worth considering. God knew this, so He came to pay your debt for you. Praise be to God! He had mercy on our sin sick souls and paid what we could never have paid. If you consider eternal judgement, a place without love or light, a place where everyone is filled with only selfishness, you can't help but become a little more grateful for heaven. Hell is what we deserved, our just sentence, but Jesus paid it all! All to Him I owe! The enemy of our soul thought he had us for sure, but Jesus tore the bars away and set us free!

He is GOOD! Every good thing comes from His hand. (James 1:17) There is no goodness outside of Him. He is a good God. Do you believe it? Do you really believe it? Some of us have our doubts because something happened in our lives we can't explain. We couldn't see the good that came from that disappointing event. But God's word says He can do only good (Psalm 119:68), so I better trust His infinite wisdom, even though I have some scars. I need to lose my arrogance and say, "Yes, LORD, you know my future, and I need to let go of thinking I can make judgements on what You allow. You are good and everything you do is good." Even God's judgements are good. He can't act in a way that is not good. (Psalm 111:7 (NCV)) He is good – all the time – and all the time – He is good! If you believe that, you have reason to be thankful, to have an attitude of gratitude!

Commented [Q1]: 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.
James 1:17 (NIV)

Commented [Q2]: 68 You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.
Psalms 119:68 (NIV)

Commented [Q3]: 7 Everything he does is good and fair; all his orders can be trusted.
Psalms 111:7 (NCV)

I've heard it said that 'attitude is everything'. I would say 'Jesus is everything', but if you know Him, you ought to have an attitude of gratitude. Why would you be negative and whining if you know the LORD? -- What, things aren't going your way right now? If you trust the LORD, then you know that it is for your good. You can't whine about that. Then what is this whining going on in the lives of Christians? I'll tell you what happens to me and maybe, just maybe, you can relate.

I get busy doing what I believe the LORD wants me to do. Somewhere in the process of that busyness I start to think about a few moments for me after work. My attention turns to self. You know, to relax, watch the news, or to do some work around the house. Then one unexpected thing after another hits, like waves on a beach. I forget that those things are also God's plan for me, opportunities to serve God. (It doesn't matter what your job is, you can do any work as unto the LORD, in service to Him. (Ephesians 6:5-8)) The time starts slipping away and half the things on my 'to do list' get pushed into tomorrow. I, at least, want to leave on time, but then the phone rings again. My blood pressure starts going up and my focus is now totally off the LORD and completely onto what I want. I am not happy with what God has brought into my life. It didn't go according to MY plan. Complainers and whiners have a heart and mind fixed on self instead of God and His Kingdom. But wait! I thought I'm supposed to be the LORD's servant with no agenda of my own. To become a person of praise, I just need to shift my focus.

You see, whenever we start to cling to things for self, taking our eyes off the LORD, He blesses us with situations in which we have to let go of our agenda and surrender our lives back into His hands. Then we can return to that holy leisure in which Jesus walked the earth. A number of people were not in the Twin Towers on September 11th because of some little annoyance. One man bought new shoes and got a blister. He stopped to buy a Band-Aid to put on his blister. I wonder if he was disturbed at the annoyance that saved his life? What was his attitude? Probably, he was whining about it until he saw what had happened. As a Christian, I should believe that God is on the throne of heaven and that everything He sends my way is good. No wonder the Apostle tells us that in everything we should give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1Thessalonians 5:18) I want you stop a minute and think. Are you thanking God for that person that has gotten under your skin? For the situation you are in? For the things that at first glance are not what you would have chosen? Do you possess an attitude of gratitude or are you like the Israelites who whined in the wilderness until they all died off? Are you whining or are you shining? The people around you can tell you. Why don't you ask someone close to you to tell you honestly if you are whiner or a shiner? Don't fear the truth. We all need to let the LORD teach us to have His wonderful attitude of peace, joy and contentment. That doesn't mean compromising the truth, but it does mean surrendering your rights to demand your way in life.

His love endures forever! He is love. He loves me because He chose to love me. He will always love me. (Romans 8:38 (NIV)) *"I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation shall be able to separate*

Commented [Q4]: 5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.
Eph 6:5-8 (NIV)

Commented [Q5]: 18 give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thess 5:18 (NIV)

us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. "Are you convinced? The Apostle said he was! With all his difficulty, he could still say he was sure. As many times as I have sinned against Him, if He was going to quit, He'd of done it along time ago. He loves you because when He looks at you He sees Christ Jesus, not the sin! That will never change. His love endures forever! It doesn't make me more inclined to sin, but it breaks my heart when I let down a love like that. Listen to how he puts it in Ephesians 3:17b-19 (NIV) *I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.* And that love endures forever! I pray we all have a revelation of that love that will fill us with an attitude of gratitude and cause our faces to shine.

We could stop right there with His goodness and His love, but the psalmist put it into specifics, so lets follow his Holy Spirit inspired thoughts. We were desperate. We were wandering around trying to find a place to belong, looking for a group of people where we fit – that is the city Abraham was looking for, the one with foundations whose Builder and Maker is God. When we got desperate enough, God brought us into the Family of God. I have noticed that in those places where revival came with transforming power, people were desperate. When we get desperate, at the end of our rope, our life ebbing away, THEN He leads into the Family of God. Our brothers here from Teen Challenge know what I'm talking about. Some of us wonder why we don't have more of the life of the Spirit, because we are too comfortable to be desperate. God give us a holy discomfort that makes us desperate for more of Him! Praise God, that when we get desperate, He answers by bringing us into the family.

In Psalm 84:4 we read, *"Blessed are they that dwell in your house, they are ever praising you."* The house of God is the city of God, the family of God. If you are not praising it is because you are out of fellowship. You have put a wedge in between you and other believers. But if you are in sweet fellowship with genuine believers, you are ever praising God. You have the attitude of gratitude. Believers talk about the One they love. They talk about what He is doing. They are thrilled to be His. Sure they have trials, but they rejoice that they are for their good, and that their best friend, Jesus, walks through it with them, and so does their new family.

Psalms 107:8-9 (NIV) *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.*

When we got hungry enough, thirsty enough, He filled us with good things – with Himself! What could be better than that? "God give us a holy hunger, a holy thirst, so we can be filled with all the fullness of God!" Then we give thanks because His love didn't fail us, because His deeds to rescue us and lead us are wonderful!

Psalms 107:10-14 (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.

The Apostle Paul says, "Sin shall no longer be your master!" Sin is the hardest of taskmasters because it demands your life. When we refuse what God is telling us, when we turn our backs on His counsel, He gives us over to sin. He removes His restraining hand so we will finally get the picture. We are like the Children of Israel. We think Egypt is a nice place because we enjoy the evening meal. We forget about the lashes on our bodies and all the forced labor. So God lets us taste it again and remember how destructive it is. The good we want to do we can't seem to do, and the evil we don't want to do we end up doing. Then we cry out to God, "Who shall deliver us from this body of death?"

Psalms 107:15-16 (NIV) 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.

Who can set us free from the bondage of sin, the enslavement of vices, the trap of a carnal thought life? JESUS! Thanks be to God – He can break every chain and open every prison door. He's in the jail breaking business, not the jail run by the State, the jail of lust and sin. You shall know the truth – Jesus – and the truth shall set you free. If you're not free yet, get to know Him better. The truth will set you free.

Psalms 107:17-20 (NIV) 17 Some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities. 18 They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death. 19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. 20 He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Some of our bondages were so strong that they were killing us. We were literally dying. Before you think I'm just talking of chemicals, let me tell you, unforgiveness and bitterness can kill you just as well. Fear and anger can eat your physical body up. It is all rebellion against God. But even when we were dying, IF – IF – we cry out to the LORD (there is that desperation!) He can heal our physical bodies as well as our bitter spirits.

Psalms 107:21-22 (NIV) 21 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. 22 Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy.

The Israelites gave special thank offerings when God did something special in their lives, when He healed them, when He got them through a difficult situation. When was the last time you gave a thank offering? It doesn't always have to be money in the offering plate, it could be help to the needy, or page of thanks written from your heart to God. Tell of his works with songs of joy! Write Him a song and sing it to others. If you can't sing it, at least share it as a testimony! Believers, if God brought you through something, you need to share it! Don't take it for granted. "I was sick, and I got well. Oh well." No! Thank the LORD that I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and this sickness was not unto death. I can live to praise and thank Him a little longer on the earth. Don't be like the nine lepers who went on their way without thanking God for their healing! Have an attitude of gratitude!

Psalms 107:23-32 (NIV) 23 Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. 24 They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. 25 For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. 26 They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. 27 They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. 29 He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. 31 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. 32 Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.

To the people of that time, the seas were an uncontrollable realm in which you placed yourselves in the hand of God. We have those experiences in life now and then, loss of a job, death of spouse, betrayal of a friend. Suddenly life has us tossing on the waves, at our wits end. We cry out to God, and He brings us into our desired haven. Notice here that it is the LORD who calms the storm. When Jesus stilled the storm on Galilee, He was verifying the fact that He is Jehovah God. Once the storm is over, exalt God in the assembly of the people. Share your testimony! Isn't that what this is saying? (32) Go to the elders and share your praise report!

Psalms 107:33-42 (NIV) 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.

The Lord changes our situations. He brings justice in the earth. He blesses the land when people turn to Him. We saw that in the Transformation videos. He curses the land of those who turn from Him so that they will turn back to Him. When we see God at work, the upright rejoice. They have an attitude of gratitude, but the wicked just sit in silence.

43 Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.

Are you wise? Are you taking heed to what God is doing? Do you bring a thank offering or just take it for granted. If you are wise, you will consider the great love of the LORD. And when things are darkest, most difficult for you and you are having a hard time seeing it, just turn to the cross. He hung there because of His love for you. That, alone, should give us a life long attitude of gratitude, a reason to shine. Whiners, there is hope us. Look to Jesus, see His great love! Focus your mind and heart there on the wonderful things He is doing, and become people of praise. Let the LORD give you an attitude of gratitude, today!