



Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

As a result of their rebellion and failure to keep the covenant with God, His people were taken captive by the Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians and others. But because of His covenant love, characterized by faithfulness and forgiveness, God delivered them from exile and returned them to their homeland. Psalm 107 contains a familiar exhortation to “give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever.” This is the refrain that is to be on the lips of all the redeemed (2).

Like the ancient people of God, we have experienced exile due to rebellion or negligence to keep our covenant with God. The covenant is broken through idolatry, loyalty to pagan governments and engagement in pagan practices. But it is also broken through sheer negligence, carelessness, and disregard.

In their distress the ancients cried out to God, “Where are Your former lovingkindnesses, O Lord, which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?” (Ps. 89:49) People today question God in different words. They say, “Why are You so far away? Have You abandoned me?” Or, “Why don’t You hear and answer my prayer?” It isn’t that people have *forgotten* the covenant, but that they have *broken* it. What gall to remind God of the covenant He initiated and offered, as though He had forgotten about it! And, further, to imply that our predicament is due to God’s unfaithfulness!

To prompt thanksgiving the Psalmist recounts God’s deliverance of His people from helpless, hopeless situations, each of which characterizes our spiritual exile.

WANDERING IN THE DESERT (v. 4-9)

Exiled from God due to sin is like being isolated from civilization, unable to find an inhabited city. All we can see is sand in every direction; dune after dune to eventual doom. The sun bears down, radiating unbearable heat, sapping every ounce of hydration and energy. Walking slows to plodding, then to shuffling, crawling and falling. Parched, hungry, dehydrated, disoriented and distressed, we cry out to God for deliverance. In His covenant love (Hebrew: *hesed*) God delivers His people to an inhabited city, one that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). Let the redeemed of the Lord say, “Give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness . . . for He has satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry

soul He has filled with what is good.”

IMPRISONED (v. 10-16)

Being exiled from God is like being chained in a dark prison, “in the shadow of death,” as the Psalmist describes it. Like Jehoiakim, king of Judah, who burned the scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecy (Jer. 36), people today reject the word of the Lord only to find themselves in a dark prison of their own making.

In their rebellion many people seek liberation through promiscuous devices only to become enslaved to and shackled by those very devices. Illicit behavior results in addiction, illness, poverty, debt, dependency, disease and death.

God humbles the rebel’s heart with labor (v. 12) so that he cries out in desperation. God breaks their bonds, cuts the iron bars (v. 16) and delivers them from darkness and distress when the rebel renews his covenant relationship with God. Let the redeemed prisoner say, “Give thanks to the Lord for His steadfast love.”

DEATHLY ILL (v. 17-22)

As a result of their foolish rebellion, many become so ill they nearly die. Some are so ill they refuse the nourishment food provides to sustain life. This is also true among those who are spiritually sick. Near death, they cry out to God in genuine repentance, returning to the covenant. God hears and heals.

Let them, therefore, give thanks and offer sacrifices to God, and tell of His works with joyful singing (v. 22).

Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King,
His love endures forever.
For He is good, He is above all things,
His love endures forever.
With a mighty hand and outstretched arm,
His love endures forever.
For the life that’s been reborn
His love endures forever.
From the rising to the setting sun
His love endures forever.
By the grace of God we will carry on,
His love endures forever.
Sing praise, sing praise.
Forever God is faithful.
Forever God is strong.
Forever God is with us. Forever.

Forever by Chris Tomlin CCLI 341098

STORM AT SEA (v. 23-32)

The great distress experienced by seafarers leaves them “at their wits’ end.” Literally, the Bible says “all their wisdom was swallowed up.” Overcome by the wind and carried by the waves, they are helplessly lifted

**Give Thanks
for God's**



high and quickly dropped to the depths at the mercy of the elements. Their soul melted away, reeling and staggering like a drunken man, the rebels cry out to the Lord for deliverance, just as Jonah did from the belly of the fish and just like the disciples did when they feared for their lives in storms on the Sea of Galilee. Responding to their appeals, the Lord calms the storm and guides His covenant people to safe harbor. This makes the people glad and eager to give thanks to the Lord.

CONCLUSION

This love is in a covenant relationship. While God loves all people, His promise to deliver is given to those only who are in a covenant relationship with Him.

Giving thanks is not merely a verbal exercise in which we toss to God our obligatory word of thanks as a convenient and almost thoughtless, habitual and ritualistic way to begin a prayer. The Psalmist calls it a “sacrifice (v. 22). Jeremiah 33:11 says thanksgiving is properly expressed not only with words but with an offering. The Hebrew writer adds (1:15-18), “. . . Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Obey your leaders and submit to them, . . . Pray for us. . .”

Charles Spurgeon said “[thanks] is all we can give him, and the least we can give; therefore, let us diligently render to him our thanksgiving.”

The best way to express thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love is to enter into covenant with Him.

Come, every soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord.
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His word.
For Jesus shed His precious blood
Rich blessings to bestow.
Plunge now into the crimson flood
That washes white as snow.
Yes, Jesus is the truth, the way
That leads you into rest.
Believe in Him without delay
and you are fully blest.
Come, then, and join this holy band,
And on to glory go
To dwell in that celestial land
Where joys immortal flow.
Only trust Him. Only trust Him.
Only trust Him now.
He will save you, He will save you.
He will save you now.

Only Trust Him by John H. Stockton public domain

Oh, give thanks to the Lord for His
steadfast, unfailing, enduring, loyal,
continuing and everlasting love.