

# PSALM 107

The psalmist, having in the two foregoing psalms celebrated the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in his dealings with his church in particular, here observes some of the instances of his providential care of the children of men in general, especially in their distresses; for he is not only King of saints, but King of nations, not only the God of Israel, but the God of the whole earth, and a common Father to all mankind. Though this may especially refer to Israelites in their personal capacity, yet there were those who pertained not to the commonwealth of Israel and yet were worshippers of the true God; and even those who worshipped images had some knowledge of a supreme “Numen,” to whom, when they were in earnest, they looked above all their false gods. And of these, when they prayed in their distresses, God took a particular care,

**I.** The psalmist specifies some of the most common calamities of human life, and shows how God succours those that labour under them, in answer to their prayers.

**I.** Banishment and dispersion (v. 2-9).

**2.** Captivity and imprisonment (v. 10-16).

**3.** Sickness and distemper of body (v. 17-22).

**4.** Danger and distress at sea (v. 23-32). These are put for all similar perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him a very present help.

**II.** He specifies the varieties and vicissitudes of events concerning nations and families, in all which God's hand is to be eyed by his own people, with joyful acknowledgments of his goodness (v. 33-43). When we are in any of these or the like distresses it will be comfortable to sing this psalm, with application; but, if we be not, others are, and have been, of whose deliverances it becomes us to give God the glory, for we are members one of another.

## PSALM 107:1-9

### EXHORTATION TO CELEBRATE GOD'S PRAISES

Here is,

**I.** A general call to all to give thanks to God, v. 1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray over it, set themselves herein to *give thanks to the Lord*; and those that have not any special matter for praise may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness. In the fountain *he is good*; in the streams *his mercy endures for ever* and never fails.

**II.** A particular demand hereof from *the redeemed of the Lord*, which may well be applied spiritually to those that have an interest in the great Redeemer and are saved by him from sin and hell. They have, of all people, most reason to say that God is good, and his mercy everlasting; these are the *children of God that were scattered abroad*, whom Christ died to *gather together in one*, out of all lands, <sup><3015></sup>John 11:52; <sup><3016></sup>Matthew 24:31. But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance, wrought for them when in their distress *they cried unto the Lord*, v. 6. *Is any afflicted? Let him pray*. Does any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles become extreme that is man's time to cry; those who but whispered prayer before then cry aloud, and then it is God's time to succour. In the mount he will be seen.

**1.** They were in an enemy's country, but God wrought out their rescue: *He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy* (v. 2), not by *might or power*, it may be (<sup><3006></sup>Zechariah 4:6), nor by *price or reward* (<sup><2513></sup>Isaiah 45:13), but by *the Spirit of God* working on the spirits of men.

**2.** They were dispersed as out-casts, but God gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, v. 3. See <sup><3004></sup>Deuteronomy 30:4; <sup><3010></sup>Ezekiel 34:12. God knows those that are his, and where to find them.

**3.** They were bewildered, had no road to travel in, no dwelling place to rest in, v. 4. *When they were redeemed out of the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands*, they were in danger of perishing in their return home through the dry and barren deserts. *They wandered in the wilderness*, where there was no trodden path, no company, but *a solitary*

way, no lodging, no conveniences, no accommodations, no inhabited city where they might have quarters or refreshment. But *God led them forth by the right way* (v. 7), directed them to an inn, nay, directed them to a home, *that they might go to a city of habitation*, which was inhabited, nay which them themselves should inhabit. This may refer to poor travellers in general, those particularly whose way lay through the wilds of Arabia, where we may suppose they were often at a loss; and yet many in that distress were wonderfully relieved, so that few perished. Note, We ought to take notice of the good hand of God's providence over us in our journeys, going out and coming in, directing us in our way, and providing for us places both to bait in and rest in. Or (as some think) it has an eye to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years; it is said (<sup>(LXX)</sup> Deuteronomy 32:10), *God led them about*, and yet here *he led them by the right way*. God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear at last to have been the right way. It is applicable to our condition in this world; we are here as in a wilderness, have here *no continuing city*, but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims. But we are under the guidance of his wise and good providence, and, if we commit ourselves to it, we shall be *led in the right way to the city that has foundations*.

**4.** They were ready to perish for hunger (v. 5): *Their soul even fainted in them*. They were spent with the fatigues of their journey and ready to drop down for want of refreshment. Those that have constant plenty, and are every day fed to the full, know not what a miserable case it is to be *hungry and thirsty*, and to have no supply. This was sometimes the case of Israel in the wilderness, and perhaps of other poor travellers; but God's providence finds out ways to *satisfy the longing soul and fill the hungry soul with goodness*, v. 9. Israel's wants were seasonably supplied, and many have been wonderfully relieved when they were ready to perish. The same God that has led us has fed us all our life long unto this day, has fed us with food convenient, has provided food for the soul, *and filled the hungry soul with goodness*. *Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness*, after God, the living God, and communion with him, shall be abundantly *replenished with the goodness of his house*, both in grace and glory. Now for all this those who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks (v. 8): *Oh that men* (it is meant especially of those men whom God has graciously relieved) *would praise the Lord for his goodness* to them in particular, *and for his wonderful works* to others of *the children of men!* Note,

(1.) God's works of mercy are wonderful works, works of wonderful power considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace considering the unworthiness, of those he shows mercy to.

(2.) It is expected of those who receive mercy from God that they return praise to him.

(3.) We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men as well as to the children of God, to others as well as to ourselves.

## ◀DAVD▶ PSALM 107:10-16

### THE DIVINE GOODNESS TOWARDS PRISONERS

We are to take notice of the goodness of God towards prisoners and captives. Observe,

**1.** A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to *sit in darkness* (v. 10), in dark dungeons, close prisons, which intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate; they sit *in the shadow of death*, which intimates not only great distress and trouble, but great danger. Prisoners are many times appointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are *bound in affliction, and many times in iron*, as Joseph. Thus sore a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize liberty, and be thankful for it.

**2.** The cause of this affliction, v. 11. It is *because they rebelled against the words of God*. Wilful sin is rebellion against the words of God; it is a contradiction to his truths and a violation of his laws. *They contemned the counsel of the Most High*, and thought they neither needed it nor could be the better for it; and those that will not be counselled cannot be helped. Those that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences nor the just reproofs of their friends, condemn the counsel of the Most High, and for this they are bound in affliction, both to punish them for and to reclaim them from their rebellions.

**3.** The design of this affliction, and that is to bring *down their heart* (v. 12), to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of

them, but thwart God's designs and walk contrary to him in them if our hearts be unhumbed and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the estate brought down with labour, the honour sunk? Have those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace.

**4.** The duty of this afflicted state, and that is to pray (v. 13): *Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble*, though before perhaps they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who, when they were at liberty, could not find time; they see they have need of God's help, though formerly they thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble, but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes and who alone can remove it.

**5.** Their deliverance out of the affliction: *They cried unto the Lord, and he saved them*, v. 13. *He brought them out of darkness into light*, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant, *brought them out of the shadow of death* to the comforts of life, and their liberty was to them life from the dead, v. 14. *Were they fettered? He broke their bands asunder*. Were they imprisoned in strong castles? *He broke the gates of brass and the bars of iron* wherewith those gates were made fast; he did not put back, but *cut in sunder*. Note, When God will work deliverance the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates of brass and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from him people (he was with Joseph in the prison), so they cannot keep them in when the time, the set-time, for their enlargement, comes.

**6.** The return that is required from those whose bands God has loosed (v. 15): *Let them praise the Lord for his goodness*, and take occasion from their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless him for that goodness which the earth is full of, *the world and those that dwell therein*.

## PSALM 107:17-22

### THE DIVINE GOODNESS TOWARDS THE AFFLICTED

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us, and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe,

**I.** That we, by our sins, bring sickness upon ourselves and then it is our duty to pray, v. 17-19.

**1.** It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness; we bring it upon ourselves both meritoriously and efficiently: *Fools, because of their transgression, are thus afflicted*; they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, make it necessary. Sinners are fools; they wrong themselves, and all against their own interest, not only their spiritual, but their secular interest. They prejudice their bodily health by intemperance and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts.

**2.** The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness, v. 18. When people are sick *their soul abhors all manner of meat*; they not only have no desire to eat nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it. And here they may read their sin in their punishment: those that doted most on the meat that perishes, when they come to be sick are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed; what they took too much of now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the appetite is gone the life is as good as gone: *They draw near unto the gates of death*; they are, in their own apprehension and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, as ready to be turned to destruction.

**3.** Then is a proper time for prayer: *Then they cry unto the Lord*, v. 19. Is any sick? Let him pray; let him be prayed for. Prayer is a salve for every sore.

**II.** That it is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this ~~33:18~~ Job 33:18, 28.

**1.** When those that are sick call upon God he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him and he *saves them out of their distresses* (v. 19); he removes their griefs and prevents their fears.

**(1.)** He does it easily: *He sent his word and healed them*, v. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking; he said, *Be clean, Be whole*, and the work was done. It may also be applied to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration; he sends his word, and heals souls, convinces, converts, sanctifies them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness God in his providence does but speak, and it is done.

**(2.)** He does it effectually: *He delivereth them out of their destructions*, that they shall neither be destroyed nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave and raises up, who *turneth man almost to destruction*, and yet saith, *Return*.

**2.** When those that have been sick are restored they must return to God an answer of praise (v. 21, 22): *Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness*, and let those, particularly, to whom God has thus granted a new life, spend it in his service; *let them sacrifice with thanksgiving*, not only bring a thank-offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank-offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. *And let them declare his works with rejoicing*, to his honour and for the encouragement of others. *The living, the living, they shall praise him*.

## ~~DAVS~~ PSALM 107:23-32

### THE DIVINE GOODNESS TO MARINERS

The psalmist here calls upon those to give glory to God who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandise,

yet their neighbours the Tyrians and Zidonians did, and for them perhaps this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

**I.** Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea, 23, 24. It appears to those *that go down to the sea in ships*, as mariners, merchants, fishermen, or passengers, *that do business in great waters*. And surely none will expose themselves there but those that have business (among all Solomon's pleasant things we do not read of any pleasure-boat he had), but those that go on business, lawful business, may, in faith, put themselves under the divine protection. *These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders*, which are the more surprising, because most are born and bred upon land, and what passes at sea is new to them. The deep itself is a wonder, its vastness, its saltness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea is wonderful. Let those that go to sea be led, by all the wonders they observe there, to consider and adore the infinite perfections of that God whose the sea is, for he made it and manages it.

**II.** It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than at land. Observe here,

**1.** How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. *Then* wonders begin to appear in the deep, when God *commands and raises the strong wind*, which *fulfils his word*, <sup>CHR</sup>Psalm 148:8. He raises the winds, as a prince by his commission raises forces. Satan pretends to be the *prince of the power of the air*; but he is a pretender; the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy it *lifts up the waves* of the sea, v. 25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis-balls on the tops of the waves; they seem to *mount up to the heavens*, and then they couch again, as if they would *go down to the depths*, v. 26. A stranger, who had never seen it, would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea, as it will in a storm, and ride it out, but would expect that the next wave would bury it and it would never come up again; and yet God, who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, does by his special providence preserve them, that they answer the end to admiration. When the ships are thus tossed the *soul* of the seaman *melts because of trouble*; and, when the storm is very high, even those that are used to the sea can neither shake off nor dissemble their fears, but *they reel to and fro*, and tossing makes them giddy, *and they stagger* and are sick, it may be, *like a drunken man*; the whole ship's crew are in confusion *and quite at their wits' end* (v. 27), not knowing what to do more for their

preservation; all their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone, <sup>3105</sup>Jonah 1:5, etc.

**2.** How reasonable it is at such a time to pray. Those that go to sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them is to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for *then they will cry unto the Lord*, v. 28. We have a saying, “Let those that would learn to pray go to sea;” I say, Let those that will go to sea learn to pray, and accustom themselves to pray, that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners, in a storm, *cried every man to his god*; but those that have the Lord for their God have a present and powerful help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wits' end they are not at their faith's end.

**3.** How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers: *He brings them out* of the danger; and,

**(1.)** The sea is still: *He makes the storm a calm*, v. 29. The winds fall, and only by their soft and gentle murmurs serve to lull the waves asleep again, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling. By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man *that even the winds and the seas obeyed him*.

**(2.)** The seamen are made easy: *They are glad because they are quiet*, quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant.

**(3.)** The voyage becomes prosperous and successful: *So he brings them to their desired haven*, v. 30. Thus he carries his people safely through all the storms and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heaven-ward, and lands them, at length, in the desired harbour.

**4.** How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially who have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness, to the glory of God. Let them do it privately in their closets and families. Let them *praise the Lord for his goodness* to themselves and others, v. 31. Let them do it publicly (v. 32), *in the congregation of the people and in the assembly of the elders*; there let them erect the memorials of their deliverance, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust him.

## PSALM 107:33-43

### WONDERS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

The psalmist, having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

I. He gives some instances of these revolutions.

1. Fruitful countries are made barren and barren countries are made fruitful. Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now,

(1.) The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil and made it unserviceable, v. 33, 34. Land watered with *rivers* is sometimes *turned into a wilderness*, and that which had been full of water-springs now has not so much as water-streams; it is turned *into dry and sandy ground*, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable. Many a *fruitful land* is turned into saltness, not so much from natural causes as from the just judgment of God, who thus punished *the wickedness of those that dwell therein*; as the vale of Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad, it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to those that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their corn and wine.

(2.) The goodness of God has often mended the barrenness of the soil, and turned a *wilderness*, a land o drought, *into water-springs*, v. 35. The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, is said to be, at this day, a fruitless, useless, worthless spot of ground, as was foretold, <sup>(Deut)</sup>Deuteronomy 29:23. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good things, and *more abundant honour is given to that part which lacked*. Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this.

2. Necessitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished and go to decay. If we look broad in the world,

**(1.)** We see many greatly increasing whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean and made no figure, v. 36-38. Those that were *hungry* are made *to dwell* in fruitful lands; there they take root, and gain a settlement, and *prepare a city for habitation* for themselves and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families. But as lands, will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must *prepare a city of habitation*, so lodgings, though ever so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must *sow the fields, and plant vineyards* (v. 37), for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though favoured with water-springs, will not *yield fruits of increase*, unless they be sown, nor will vineyards be had, unless they be planted; man's industry must attend God's blessing, and then God's blessing will crown man's industry. The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it does encourage, diligence; and, ordinarily, *the hand of the diligent*, by the blessing of God, *makes rich*, v. 38. *He blesses them also, so that they are*, in a little time, *multiplied greatly, and he diminishes not their cattle*. As in the beginning, so still it is, by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures *increase and multiply* (<sup>Gen 1:22</sup>), and we depend upon God for the increase of the cattle as well as for the increase of the ground. Cattle would decrease many ways if God should permit it, and men would soon suffer by it.

**(2.)** We see many that have thus suddenly risen as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing (v. 39): *Again they are diminished and brought low* by adverse providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families after them lose as fast as they got, and scatter what they heaped together. Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing, and often those that are filled with it, ere they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it that, ere they are aware, they lose it again. Hence it is called *deceitful riches* and the *mammon of unrighteousness*. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by *oppression, affliction, and sorrow*, as he tempted Job and brought him low.

**3.** Those that were high and great in the world are abased, and those that were mean and despicable are advanced to honour, v. 40, 41. We have seen,

**(1.)** Princes dethroned and reduced to straits. *He pours contempt upon them*, even among those that have idolized them. Those that exalt

themselves God will abase, and, in order thereunto, will infatuate: He makes *them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way*. He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp, and drives them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, nor what measures to take. We met with this before, <sup><R24></sup>Job 12:24, 25.

(2.) Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour (v. 41): *Yet setteth he the poor on high, raiseth from the dust to the throne of glory,* <sup><R18></sup>1 Samuel 2:8; <sup><R19></sup>Psalms 113:7, 8. Those that were afflicted and trampled on are not only delivered, but set on high out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in subjection. That which adds to their honour, and strengthens them in their elevation, is the multitude of their children: *He maketh him families like a flock of sheep*, so numerous, so useful, so sociable with one another, and so meek and peaceable. He that sent them meat sent them mouths. *Happy is the man that has his quiver filled with arrows*, for he shall boldly *speak with the enemy in the gate,* <sup><R25></sup>Psalms 127:5. God is to be acknowledged both in setting up families and in building them up. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised, for God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

**II.** He makes some improvement of these remarks; such surprising turns as these are of use,

**1.** For the solacing of saints. They observe these dispensations with pleasure (v. 42): *The righteous shall see it and rejoice* in the glorifying of God's attributes and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manages the children of men, as the potter does the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them, to see despised virtue advanced and impious pride brought low to the dust, to see it evinced beyond dispute that *verily there is a God that judges in the earth.*

**2.** For the silencing of sinners: *All iniquity shall stop her mouth*; it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the divine providence; and, forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect *stop the mouth of all iniquity*. When sinners see how their punishment answers to their sin, and how justly God deals with them in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall

not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear.

**3.** For the satisfying of all concerning the divine goodness (v. 43): *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things*, these various dispensations of divine providence, *even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord*. Here is,

**(1.)** A desirable end proposed, and that is, rightly to *understand the lovingkindness of the Lord*. It is of great use to us, in religion, to be fully assured of God's goodness, to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it, that his *lovingkindness* may be *before our eyes*, ~~1908~~ Psalm 26:3.

**(2.)** A proper means prescribed for attaining this end, and that is a due observance of God's providence. We must lay up these things, mind them, and keep them in mind, ~~1908~~ Luke 2:19.

**(3.)** A commendation of the use of this means as an instance of true wisdom: *Whoso is wise*, let him by this both prove his wisdom and improve it. A prudent observance of the providences of God will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good Christian.