

Grateful

He is Good

"Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." -Psalm 107:1

For as long as I can remember I have enjoyed riding roller coasters. The anticipation of the big drop, the forces experienced on sudden turns, the speed...even though most aren't very long, there is a lot of excitement crammed into a couple minutes! I am always ready to try a new one, but there was one that I was a little bit afraid of. It was not because of the type of roller coaster it was; I had done ones with more loops, bigger drops, and higher speeds. I was nervous because of where I was. It was a park in Mongolia, and I had been there long enough to know that safety standards aren't the same there as in the USA. I was with a group of young Mongolian veterinarians who had just completed an internship program, and as celebration, they wanted to go to the park and ride the rides. The roller coaster was saved for last as the apex of the experience. They wanted me to ride with them, and so I went along. I saw group after group safely go, but it didn't calm the nerves. It was finally our turn, and to my relief when I sat down, there was a lap belt and shoulder restraints. If one failed, I still had a backup! However, my relief was short lived as the worker walked by, unbuckled me, and then buckled the lap belt to the shoulder restraint...now I was nervous again. I don't think that was the design for either one of these safety mechanisms. The ride took off, and I made it back to the start without incident. I was truly grateful!

However, I don't think this is the type of gratitude that Psalms 107 is referring to. To begin with, we do not see our circumstances listed as a reason for gratitude. Rather our gratitude is based solely on who God is. That is why when in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 Paul says *"in everything give thanks,"* it is not an impossible task. If gratitude was based on circumstances, it would be a roller coaster ride swinging between gratitude and thanklessness based on what our perception of the situation was. However, if gratitude is based on who God is, then it can be constant. How is that so?

The answer to that question is rooted in who God is. First, we see that He is good and loving. Good and loving are not code for easy and pain free. Unfortunately, pain and suffering are a part of this world, but they don't mean there is no care. I think we as veterinarians understand this. When a patient comes in limping and we start manipulating the leg, at some point we are guessing we will cause pain. That is how we know where the injury is, which will allow us to more accurately determine what is going on. The pain was inflicted not because we didn't care; it was actually for the good of the patient so that we could properly treat it. In the same way, God may allow pain to enter our lives, not because he is callous to our situation, but because he loves us and wants us to be like Him because that is what is best for us in the long run. So, whether we find ourselves in a pleasant or unpleasant situation we hold to the truth that God is good. For that, we can be thankful.

As you continue to read the rest of Psalm 107, you will see a pattern develop. People are in some sort of trouble/difficult situation, they cry out to God, and he responds. In that, we see

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that God is able to respond to our needs. Some were wandering in the wilderness, others were in darkness, another group were called fools and facing afflictions because of their choices, and some were in storm tossed waters. In John 14:7, Jesus tells us He is the Way for those who are wandering. In John 8:12, Jesus declares that He is the Light of the World for those who are in darkness. For those who are lost in their folly, John 14:7 also reminds us that Jesus is the truth, and for those facing afflictions we see many examples of Jesus healing people, but perhaps nothing points to his power over affliction more than His resurrection from death in John 20. For those who are facing a storm, we are reminded in John 6:16-21 that Jesus can meet us in our storms and see us to the other side. We can be grateful because we know that He has the power to help us.

When I was on the roller coaster and my 2 safety mechanisms were connected together, I felt less safe because neither one was functioning in the manner it should. However, when we join God's goodness and his power, they work in perfect unison providing greater security than either one could individually. He is not just good with no power to influence our situation; He has the power to work. He does not just have power and will do whatever with no regard for its effects; His goodness influences how the power is used. Certainly, our circumstances may not work out the way we would desire, but in those times, we remember that His ways are not always our ways. May our gratitude never be based on what circumstances we find ourselves in but always be based on who He is!

- 1) Can you think of a time where you saw God's goodness and power come together in your life?**
- 2) Think of a difficult situation that you are currently facing. Where can you see God's goodness and be thankful?**
- 3) In that same situation, where are you powerless to work? Have you cried out to God as those in Psalm 107 did or are you trying to do it all on your own?**
- 4) For those in Christ, why can we still have a heart full of gratitude when nothing seems to be working out as it should (for perspective, read John 11:25)?**



Dr. J...

Following nine years of general practice in a rural East Tennessee clinic, Dr. J and his family moved to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. For six and a half years, he worked alongside Mongolian veterinarians in a small animal clinic. Through day-in, day-out work at the clinic, he helped to train the national veterinarians in improving their knowledge, skills, and care for the animals that they were seeing. In 2022, he returned to the USA and joined the CVM staff where he works with Missions department supporting the work

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