

Considering the Steadfast Love of God

Shaped by the Psalms / Psalm 107 / July 19, 2026

Introduction:

This summer, we have been in our “Shaped by the Psalms” series, learning how various types of responses recorded in the Psalter shape how we respond to God. Last week, Sean unpacked a psalm of corporate lament, and it is fitting to follow lament with a psalm of thanksgiving. Psalm 107 is a powerful call to thanksgiving, marked by a particular structure that increases its depth. So, I want to spend extra time on this to begin our observations. This psalm is built around a literary device called an inclusio, where a phrase or idea bookends a set of material. Note how it opens with a call to thank God for His steadfast love and concludes with a call to consider His steadfast love. The inclusio indicates the verses in between teach us of God’s steadfast love to increase our thanksgiving. Verses 4-32 accomplish this through four similar patterned portraits of God’s saving actions. Note their common refrains. Each repeat, “Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress,” and “Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!” Each cry for help is met with deliverance and a call to thank God for His love displayed in His wondrous works towards all people. The differences are why they need help, how God delivered them, and the reasons for their thankfulness or expressions of their thankfulness. Then, verses 33-42 draw us in deeper by showing God’s sovereignty in calamity and prosperity. This structure invites us to understand the depth of God’s steadfast love, as it extends to those who depend on Him. Yet, there is one more thing to consider before unpacking all of this. Look at verses 4, 10, 17, and 23. The portraits speak of people wandering in the desert, being imprisoned, suffering affliction, and doing business on the seas. Our translation “some” suggests these are different groups of people, but the Hebrew appears to indicate they are one group from different angles. Portraits one and four show troubles coming through no fault of these people. Where portraits two and three show troubles coming because of rebellion and sin. They are often suggested to either be portraits of Israel’s journey to the promised land or of different groups coming out of the Babylonian exile. However, there is no direct correlation in either experience with the fourth portrait. So, who are these people? Look at verses 1-3, “Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” The language matches the global redemption and gathering of God’s people prophesied about in Old Testament. Those prophecies have a partial fulfillment when the remnant of Israel returned from Babylonian captivity that points towards a future complete fulfillment. In Mark 13:27, Jesus says, “And then he [the Son of Man] will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.” So, verses 2-3 suggests these portraits extend beyond either historical context, and represent the shared experience of God’s redeemed people. Therefore, we can see our experience in of each portrait, leading our hearts to thank God for His steadfast love. Let’s dive in and consider five ways this psalm shapes our responses to God. First,

Thank the Lord for Satisfying Your Soul

Consider the description of those in the first portrait. Look at verses 4-5, “Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.” People are depicted as wandering in deserts, hungry and thirsty with no safe place to find refuge. But note the focus on their souls. Verse 5 says, “their soul fainted within them.” Then, look at the reasons for their thankfulness in verse 9, “For he [God] satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.” The hunger and thirst spoken of in their wilderness wandering goes beyond a physical reality. Consider, then, how God delivers them from their distress. Look at verse 7, “He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.” The Lord led them on a strait way or path to a city, representing safety and sustenance. This is certainly reminiscent Israel’s wandering in the wilderness, as well as their Babylonian captivity. Yet, the imagery also speaks to the experience of all of God’s people.

Wasn't this the state of our souls prior to salvation? We were wanderers in life with no hope of finding the true city and lasting rest. We would have remained hungry and thirsty with nothing to satisfy our souls, but Jesus proclaimed to us, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." And when we cried to the Lord for mercy, He delivered us, and satisfied our souls, setting us on a straight path to a glorious city. However, our path to that final city is still in progress. Hebrews 11:13 says the Old Testament saints "acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth." Peter refers to God's people as "sojourners and exiles." And Revelation 21:2 describes our final destination as, "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This is important to understand. The salvation God offers in Christ isn't just pardon for sins, as important as that is. It is to help us see how Jesus can satisfy our souls and set us on a straight path towards an eternal satisfaction beyond comparison, calling us to flee our pursuits of those things that promise life but will never satisfy. Thank the Lord for satisfying your soul. Second,

Thank the Lord for Your Freedom

Consider the detailed experience of those in the second portrait before they cry for help. Look at verses 10-12, "Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help." The psalmist speaks of people bound and imprisoned, sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, because of their rebellion against God's words and counsel. And verse 12 reveals this is God's judgment for their rebellion. Note how God delivers them in verse 14, "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart." And the reason for their thankfulness in verse 16, "For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron." God delivered them from darkness and death by shattering the chains and prison doors that held them. Again, this can describe Israel's experience in Babylon, even mirroring Isaiah 45:2 where God speaks of ending Israel's exile saying, "I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron." But doesn't it also speak to our experience? Were we not rebelling against the words of God and imprisoned by our sin before salvation? But Jesus says the words of Isaiah 61:1 to our hearts, "the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." Then proclaims, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Through the cross and resurrection, Christ shattered the doors and chains of sin's imprisonment, calling us "out of darkness and into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Have you experienced this freedom found in Christ? If so, we should thank Him for our freedom as we sing with the saints throughout history,

Long my imprisoned spirit lay

Fast bound in sin and nature's night;

Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,—

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;

My chains fell off, my heart was free,

I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

(Charles Wesley, "And Can it Be"). Third,

Thank the Lord for Your Healing

Consider how the language of the third portrait points to something deeper than physical affliction. Look at verses 17-18, "Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction; they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death." The folly of sin is the cause of the an affliction so severe that it moves people to loath that which would help them survive and draw near to death's door. But, note how God healed and delivered them. Look at verse 20, "He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction." God's word was their healing balm. His promises of restoration and comfort were what met them in their cries for help.

This points our hearts to a spiritual restoration and healing from the effects of our sin. Certainly, there are times when the Lord reaches out to take away physical sickness. Our ultimate physical healing, though, is promised to come in eternity, where sickness and death are no more. Healing that comes because our sin has been dealt with. Family, God will always heal, whether in this life or the life to come. Yet, God's steadfast love extends something even sweeter than physical healing. He has healed us from sin's power over us and one day He will fully heal us from sin's presence. Now, note the change from giving reasons for thankfulness to an encouragement of how to show thankfulness in verse 22. Look there with me, "And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!" It's as though the psalmist gets more enthusiastic with his call as these portraits build, entreating the redeemed not only to have thankful hearts but give physical expressions of sacrifice and song. Have God's mercy, that has brought all kinds of healing in your life, cause you to continually cry out to the Lord for physical and spiritual healing, thank the Lord for the healing He gives, and joyfully hope in God's promised full and final healing to come. Fourth,

Thank the Lord for Sustaining Your Life

This portrait holds more details and, because of its difficulty to place directly within Israel's history, I am persuaded it is more of a summary of life's troubles. Look at the description of the troubles in verses 23-27, "Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; they saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight; they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end." People are going about their daily lives, doing business upon the sea, when the tempest starts to rage. The sheer size of the tossing waves overwhelms them, causing them to lose all courage and stagger like drunken men until they come to the end of themselves and cry for help. Note how the Lord delivers them in verses 29-30, "He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven." Isn't this descriptive of our lives at times? Our days are often filled with trials and confounding difficulties, are they not? Courage bends under the life's pressures like a palm tree in a hurricane. Yet, when we turn to the Lord, He will calm our hearts and bring us to our desired haven. While that haven may not come in this life, it will in the life to come. Now, note that God who commands and raises the storm in verse 25. Sometimes God brings the storm to redirect our evil plights. Here's a question that rang in my heart from this portrait. Why does it often take getting to our wits' end before crying out to the Lord for help? Are you like me in that? I often wonder how calm my heart would stay if I turned more quickly to the Lord. As I look back through my life, I see so many times it took longer than it should have to try out to Him. Yet, in His steadfast love, the Lord still sustains me when I turned to Him in my distress. Lastly, notice again the encouragement in how to show thankfulness rather than a reason for it in verse 32, "Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders." Family, God should be extolled within the assembly of His people for all the ways He sustains us. As we follow the progression of God's mercy and grace toward us, our thanksgiving should turn to public expression because a thankful heart can rarely keep silent. This brings me to the fifth and final way I see this psalm shaping our response to God,

Never Forget the Power and Mercy of the Lord

The final verses emphasize how God stands behind both calamity and prosperity through two sets of fortune reversals, moving from calamity to prosperity in verses 33-36, and from prosperity to calamity in verses 37-40. Look at verse 33-42, "He [God] turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants. He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. And there he lets the hungry dwell, and they establish a city to live in; they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield. By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish.

When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow, he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes; but he raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth." Sources of life like rivers, springs, and fruitful land become uninhabitable spaces because of evil. While uninhabitable spaces like deserts and parched lands, are turned into sources of life for the hungry to enjoy and thrive. The needy are exalted and will be brought out of their affliction, while exalted wicked will be brought low because of their oppression. This is worth ruminating on. Family, it's the hungry and needy who will truly be filled, not the rich, fat, and wicked. The wicked may delight in their spoils now, but those spoils can't compare to what is to come for those who trust the Lord. Their momentary joy will turn into an eternity of sorrow, while our momentary sorrow can't compare to the weight and breadth of glory we will receive. Note the conclusion again in verse 43, "Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord." The habit of the wise is to slow down and reflect on these things, considering the steadfast love of God. Mark Futato says it well, "Wisdom is the skill of seeing God's unfailing love in all the twists and turns of our lives (Mark Futato, *The Book of Psalms & The Book of Proverbs*, p. 344).

Conclusion:

So, as the worship team comes for our time of response, let me end with this question. Can you see God's steadfast love in all the twists and turns of your life? Can you say with the redeemed, "I have been satisfied in my hunger. I have been set free from the chains that bound me. I have been healed and revived on my death bed of sin. And I have been sustained through this life with my heart calmed and the hope of a sweet haven set before me. Therefore, I will thank my God for His steadfast love and extol Him in the assembly of His people." Oh family, I hope you can see and say the same, for all who are in Christ should be able to. Jesus Christ is the way through our wilderness wanderings. He is the bread and water of life. He is the great physician. He is the One who makes the wind and waves be still. And He is the giver of true rest. If you are in a season of distress today, whether for inexplicable reasons or due to your sin, turn to the One whose steadfast love extends to those who cry out to Him. As Michael Wilcock says, "Innocent or guilty, see how God loves you! Guilty or innocent, see how you should respond!" (Michael Wilcock, *The Message of the Psalms: Songs for the People of God*, V2, p. 151). Let's pray as we prepare to respond to God's Word.