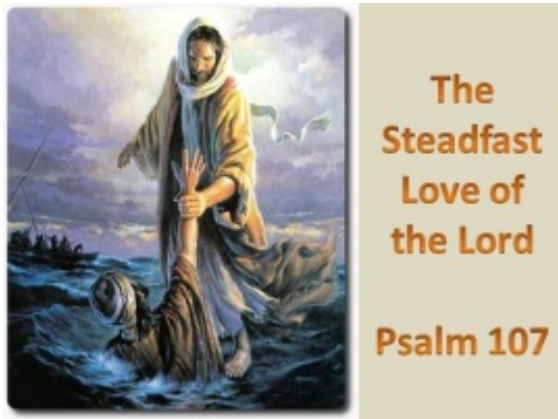


The Steadfast Love of the Lord (Psalm 107 May 30, 2010)



If I were to ask – is God a God of love? A Christian would cry – absolutely!

If I then asked – how do you know? – A child of God would point to the cross.

But, if I were to walk out onto the street and ask a non-Christian – is God a God of love? Chances are most would smirk and say something like – *if* there is a God – He is anything but loving.

If you probe a bit deeper, what they mean by this is that if *they* were God – they would run the world very differently. Babies would not die, wars would not break out, storms would not devastate. Paedophiles would not molest children. If there is a heaven and hell – everyone would be in heaven and there would be no hell.

If they had the power to change the world for the better – some things would change.

In 2003 – Clive Anthony hosted a TV show – *God Almighty* – where he invited various celebrities to describe how they would change the world if they were God. The show mixed some serious thoughts with humour.

There are a huge number of sites on the internet that ask people – how would *you* change the world if you were God.

When you sift through the answers – it seems there are several areas most people think that a loving God would have to change.

Unfortunately, very few of these sites challenge the respondents to actually think about what they are saying.

But imagine for a moment that you are speaking with a friend who is not a Christian, but they are a thinker. You might ask them – OK – if you were God – what *would* you do differently that would show the world you are a God who is love?

The dialogue might go something like this.

First, I would *Heal Our World*.



No more natural disasters, no famines, no droughts.

Fine – but we still get sick and die.

Yes, I'm not done yet. I would also *Heal Our Bodies*.



No illnesses, no ageing, no death.

OK – but much of the pain in this life comes from what we do to each other. To live forever with the pain we inflict on each other sounds terrible. To live forever with guilt, depression, anguish – sounds terrible. Does anyone want to live forever with such pain?

Hang on, I'm still going. I would also *Heal Our Souls*.



No hatred, no discrimination, no wars, no divorce, no rape, no murder. I would wipe away guilt and tears. Just love.

Sounds good – but think about what you are saying.

Who decides what needs healing in our souls?

Some men like to have relationships with other men. Many say that is wrong.

Some men find pummeling each other in a boxing ring is fun – others call it barbaric.

Some men believe activities such as sex outside marriage and using recreational drugs is wrong.

Who decides on each and every point if such activities are right or wrong – whether our souls need healing of these things or not?

Well if I were God – I guess I would decide – my word would be law.

So what if I don't want my soul healed the way you want to do it.

What if I am happy with my choices that you think are wrong.

Do I get a choice or would you just override my will and heal me anyway?

Yeah. Those are hard questions. I guess if I were God – knowing all things – able to do all things – somehow I would be able to balance changing the world into what I know is right but giving each individual some limited freedom to choose. Don't ask me to explain it – but if I were God I could do it. That's about the best I can do for now.

I am sure you are aware – there is no one who would willingly want to hand over all their choices and desires to you. So would you choose everyone to have new healed souls – some – none?

I don't know – but as God I could answer that.

If for some reason – to show your power or for some other reason you chose not to change every heart – what criteria would you use to decide who you would draw into accepting your offer?

I don't know – but as God I would know.

There are a lot of things that you don't seem to know. One more question. When would you institute your changed world, bodies and souls – straight away – or would you wait for awhile?

I guess because I am a loving God – I would give a period of time in which – my divine balance between choosing some and giving them some freedom to choose – would allow for a time for men to decide to accept my offer. I want them to choose me – but I also know that I have to help them choose me.

Sounds complex – but as God I could work it all together.

So in summary, there are areas that are difficult. Who, when and how you would heal.

As a good and loving God, there may well be a period of time in which the world is not healed, our bodies are not healed, our souls are not healed – a time in which men have some responsibility for choosing to accept your offer or not – and are encouraged strongly to do so.

I guess.

In other words – even you – a loving God might well end up with a world that looks pretty much like ours.

So, how would the world know that you are a God of love? In this world where earthquakes devastate, cancer maims and lust leads to rape – how could anyone ever know that God is love?

Many might answer – the incredible creation He made for us – or He feeds and shelters us – or He provides for us.

But, the Bible tells us that in actually fact the answer is much greater, even more incredible than that.

The Bible tells us that we know God is love because of His grace.

From the Garden of Eden to the New Jerusalem – God's dealings with us are filled with lashings of grace.

We make mistakes, we turn from God, we sin, we neglect our soul – but the Lord remains steadfast in His love – and when we call to Him – the blessings are beyond description.

One of the great Old Testament passages that demonstrates the love and grace of God is Psalm 107. Wherever you are in your spiritual journey – I trust this wonderful passage is balm for your soul – because it shows us the steadfast love of God.

The Psalmist introduces the Psalm in verses 1-3. Look at verse 1:

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

When you read about the love of the Lord – what is it that shows us that the love of the Lord is steadfast and endures forever?

Ask a 13 year old – what shows your parents love you? – and the answer might be – they bought me an ipod touch or they don't make me work too hard.

Ask a 19 year old and you might hear – I took Dad's car out – drove like an idiot and wrapped it around a tree. I thought he would kill me – but he was just relieved I wasn't hurt.

But what is it that shows us the steadfast enduring love of God?

The Psalmist tells us. Verses 2 and 3:

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.

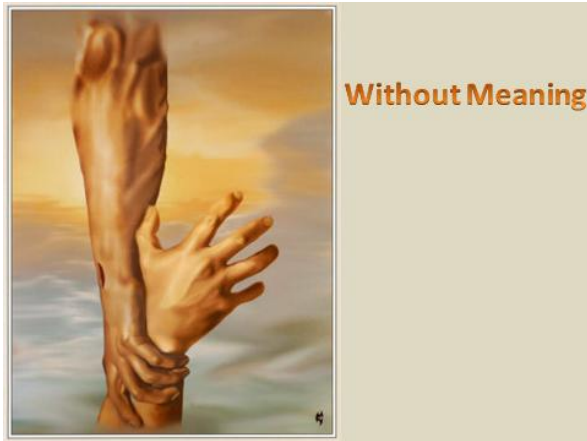
He says – think about us – the people of the Lord. We were in trouble – far from the Lord – and He loved us – redeemed us and gathered us from the lands.

The Psalmist probably has in mind Israel after the exile. A nation who turned to idols, turned from God – were scattered, hurting, lost – but shown the love of God – gathered together in the land – blessed.

But, this love of God applies to everyone. The Psalmist then chooses four groups of people – who are living demonstrations of the love of God.

Just look at these four groups.

The first are those:



Without meaning

Look at verses 4 and 5:

Psalm 107:4-5:

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

This idea of searching for a city is not just a physical city – but it is metaphorical language describing searching for heaven – the eternal city.

These are those who have lost their way spiritually. Looking for meaning in life. Why am I here? Where am I going?

Those who ache to have their soul satisfied – they know there is something that can satisfy – but they can't find it.

When you read over the literature of every civilisation – there are questions that are common to everyone.

Even Richard Dawkins begins his documentary – *The Big Question* – with these words:

The human race is one of the wonders of the universe. We may be unique. And of all our remarkable properties, one stands out. It is that we are restlessly drawn to ask questions like: "Why are we here?" "What is the purpose of life." The great civilisations and cultures of the past came up with various answers.

His answers don't satisfy – but even he realises the restless pull of eternity.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us:

He has put eternity into man's heart.

Men look up at the heavens – or look at the beauty of the earth:

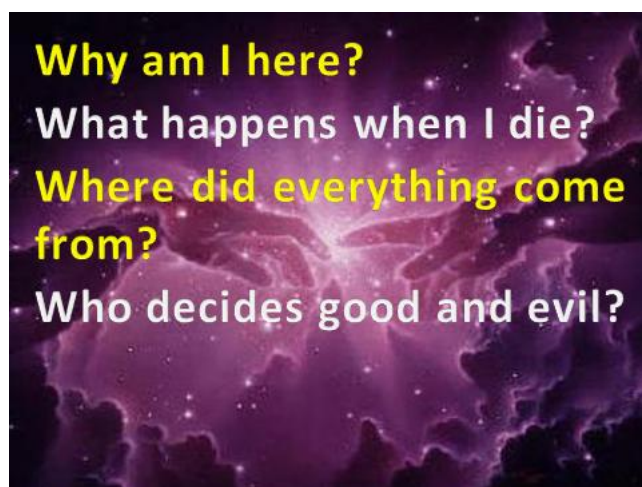
And they feel small. They stare in wonder. And something inside asks – does this mean something? – Do I mean something? I am more than a chance accident?

A day when they look at a newborn baby or they ponder about how fearfully and wonderfully we are made:

You realise life is so complex – so wonderful – so beautiful – so mind-blowing. You look at a newborn baby and you have to at least ask – how did this child get here and do they have a purpose?

These are big questions.

Every society has asked them. Questions like:



Why am I here?

Does my life have any meaning or am I just some cosmic accident that comes and goes with no purpose? Is there a way I am supposed to live my life?

What happens when I die?

Is that it – ashes to ashes, dust to dust – or is there more?

Where did everything come from?

The beauty of the universe – the organisation of life – did chance lead to mankind – or is there a Creator?

Who decides good and evil?

Who decides what is right and wrong? Who decides if Hitler was wrong or a paedophile is evil? Do we decide – or is there a standard of right and wrong?

These are big questions – questions that any thinking person just has to ask.

And when you do ask the hard questions – there are only **two** real answers.

- Either we are just a big cosmic accident – chance and time worked to make us. Nothing turned into everything. This means we have no purpose in life. There is no real good or evil. Death is the end. There is no God.

This worldview asks us to believe this. Once upon a time there was nothing. Then came a Big Bang. Don't ask what happened before the Big Bang. Don't ask how the Big Bang came about. Just have faith in the almighty Big Bang.

Somehow the Bang turned energy into matter. And our earth was formed – and by some incredible chance it was formed absolutely perfectly for human life.

- Or the other option is to accept that there is some supernatural force who created us for a purpose.

God or gods.

Our society is one of the few in history who have chosen to believe that there is no supernatural guiding force involved. The universe, earth, mankind, us – no purpose – no point.

Most societies have reasoned that there is a god or gods. But how do you know the will of the gods?

Men have searched and found various answers. But ultimately they have not satisfied.

Why? The Apostle Paul told the men on Athens in Acts 17:24-28:

The God who made the world and everything in it, ... determined ... that [all men] should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being.”

God created us in such a way that it is only when He is in our lives that we are fulfilled. Nothing else satisfies.

I did a search on Youtube and found so many videos where someone went out with a camera onto the streets asking people – What is the meaning of life? Where is happiness found? – or similar questions.

Again and again you get these blank looks. Not sure ... still looking ... or the smart answers – the meaning of life is 42 ... or money ... or sex. But even they know that this doesn't really satisfy.

Psalms 107 was written to the Jews. The Jews who had the oracles of God. They knew where life was found.

But this first group had wandered from the truth. They were as lost and without meaning as the most remote tribe.

They found themselves in the desert waste. No city to dwell in – lost – dissatisfied – hungry, thirsty. Their soul fainted within them.

Without God – that is what happens. Our souls crave for meaning – but only one place satisfies.

Over the years I have sat with many young men and women who grew up in church or a Christian home – got to 17 and wondered – the world looks good – does it taste good.

They tried sex and alcohol and parties. Tastes good for a while – but ultimately it doesn't satisfy.

They wondered about life – Eastern mysticism, scientific rationalism, nihilism.

Their soul hurt.

I talked with them. They want to turn back to God – but they abandoned Him – they spurned Him. How could He accept them?

And God says – there is no soul I will turn away.

Verses 6-7:

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.

Their soul was withered. They hurt. Finally they called out to the Lord from the depths of their distress – and he delivered them.

When I read this – I think of Jonah. A prophet of God – sent to deliver a message of hope – but he fled from the Lord. He wound up cast into the sea – in the belly of a great fish – and finally with no place left to turn he cried out to God.

I called out to the LORD, out of my distress, and he answered me; out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice. ... When my life was fainting away, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple. ... Salvation belongs to the LORD!

And the LORD heard Jonah and rescued him.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

Verses 8 and 9:

Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

The love of the Lord is indeed steadfast.

Adam is given everything. A perfect home. The perfect wife. Dominion over the creation. He walked with God in the garden. And he despises these gifts and chooses to sin against the Word of God.

Noah – blessed, rescued, preserved – how does he thank God – by becoming drunk.

The children of Israel – rescued from Egypt by the mighty hand of God – they saw the Red Sea part – they saw Pharaoh and his armies destroyed – they saw water come from the rock and manna from the sky. And while Moses goes to receive the Law – they thank God by building a golden calf to worship.

David – taken from the sheep to the throne. Hundreds of wives and concubines. Defeats every enemy. Made immensely rich. How does he thank God? By adultery and murder.

Peter – sees Christ, the miracles, chosen as an Apostle – He denies Christ and flees the cross.

That is us.

We keep wandering into the spiritual desert and we hurt.

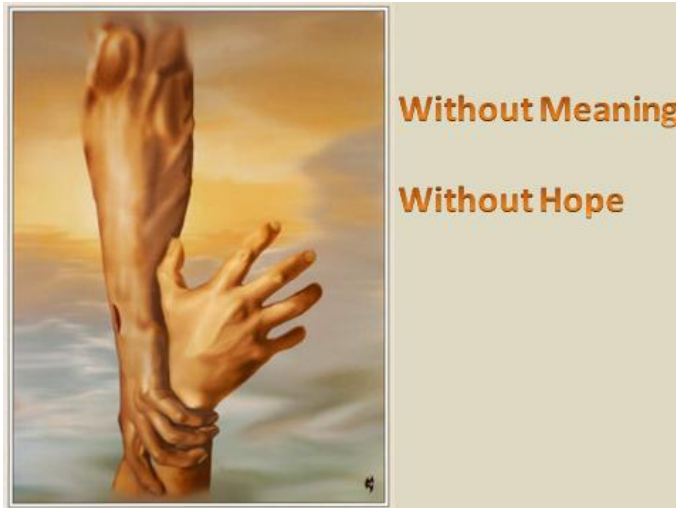
But God is love. He forgives. He rejoices when the lost sheep is found – when the prodigal son returns.

And when they return – He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

He cries taste and see that the Lord is good. How blessed are those who take refuge in Him.

He fills our souls. He gives us life. He gives us peace. He satisfies our longings. He gives us a future. He tells us that He will bring us to the city – the heavenly Jerusalem – forever.

There is a second group. Those:



Without hope

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 labour; they fell down, with none to help.

This group rebelled against the words of God. They did not accept the truth of the Lord.

The result was they were without hope in this world or the world to come.

They sat in darkness, in the shadow of death. This world was all there was – and it held no joy. They contemplated eternity and their hearts sank. They were prisoners of their own sin – afflicted and in irons.

There was none to help them.

Paul put their fate in these terms – they fell short of the glory of God – and the wages of their sin was death.

In this life – they were prisoners – Dead in their trespasses and sins.

Enslaved by the sin that so easily entangles. The sin of greed or lust. God had put right and wrong on their souls – so their sin crushed them.

Sins that once seemed to offer joy – were now dust.

There are so many chains that bind us. We can be enslaved to so many sins – and it is bondage. We know it is wrong. We know it causes pain not joy. But we can do nothing about it.

And the wages of this sin is death. We are bound – the shadow of death approaches – and unable to do anything about it.

The approach of death is a sobering time. You realise what a prison your sin is.

Jay Gould, one of the richest men of his day, when he knew that death was upon him lamented:

I suppose I am the most miserable man on Earth.

Lord Beaconsfield – a man of great power and fame looked back over his life and sighed:

Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.

Voltaire – the French philosopher, lived life far from God. He gave no second thought to death until the end finally approached. Then, he cried out, “I wish I had *never* been born.” When his doctor pronounced that he would soon be dead, Voltaire gripped him and begged, “I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six-months life!” As his life ebbed away, so desperate were his screams that the nurse who attended him sobbed, “For all the wealth in Europe, I would *not* see another infidel die.”

You suck the marrow from the world but find it is bitter and provides no assurance of the world to come.

But, no one is too far from the Lord to be saved.

If this is you. If this world seems like hard labour with no hope. Know this – God saves.

Verses 13-14:

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart.

I love this verse. It describes salvation.

Once we were in the darkness of the shadow of death. Enslaved to the wages of sin. Without hope.

But God saves – bursting the bonds of our enslavement.

They had tried to live well – but could not.

They fought against sin and could not. It bound them.

But God broke the bonds – freed the captives.

Ephesians 2:1-5:

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ... were by nature children of wrath, ... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:11-13:

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles ... were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Wesley put it so well:

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.

He bursts the bonds. He frees the captives. When He began His ministry – Jesus stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth and cried.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. Luke 4:18-19.

No wonder the response of those who have experienced this love is thanksgiving.

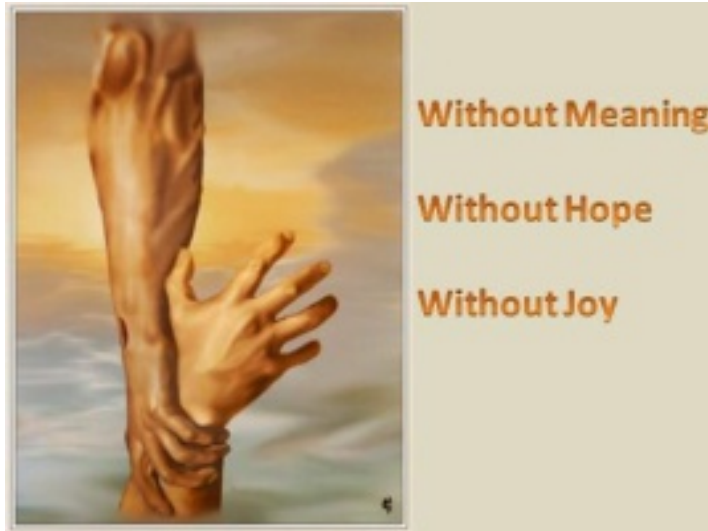
Psalms 107:15-16:

Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.

What a picture. Imprisoned. Unable to get out. And God Himself comes to His children and shatters the doors to the prison and cuts the bars of iron that hold us captive.

And remember – He does this for those who spurned His counsel and rebelled against His words. That is steadfast love. That is grace.

There is a third group. Those:



Without joy

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.

God has told us how to live. He made us – He knows what will bring us joy and what will bring us pain.

When we choose to do it our way – the result is affliction and pain.

Henry Blackaby and Claude King give this example:

Suppose the Lord says, “I have a gift for you—a beautiful, wonderful expression of what love is. I will provide you with a spouse—a husband or wife. Your relationship with this person will bring out the very best in you. It will give you an opportunity to experience some of the deepest and most meaningful expressions of human love. That individual will release in you some wonderful things, affirm some things in you, and be there to strengthen you when you lose heart. Within that relationship, your mate will love you, believe in you and trust you. Out of that relationship I will bless the two of you with children and those children will sit on your knee and say, “Daddy (or Mummy), I love you.”

But, then He says, “You shall not commit adultery” (Matt. 5:27). Is that command to limit or restrict you? No! It is to protect and free you to experience love at its human best. What happens if you break the command and commit adultery? The love relationship is ruptured between husband and wife. Trust is gone. Hurt sets in. Guilt and bitterness creep in. Even the children begin to respond differently. Scars may severely limit the future dimensions of love you could have experienced together.

God's commands are designed to guide you to life's very best.¹

Proverbs gives this example. Proverbs 5:3-5:

The lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol.

It is ironic that those seeking joy find only pain. When you seek pleasure in the world – when you turn from the Lord – the result is ultimately grief.

An affair that seemed so tempting ruins your marriage, your family, your life.

Seeking after wealth destroys your time with your kids, your health, your joy.

The Psalmist paints a picture – the world and its pleasures turn to dust.

He says, even food has no taste – you don't want to eat – sin has robbed this world of its joy – you just want to die – but then death holds no hope either.

Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes of how he had everything – money, power, women – but without God it was vanity of vanities – dust and worthless.

In Jeremiah 2:11-13 the Lord is very blunt:

Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

The people of God looked for joy in other gods, in the world – and what they found was dry dust.

The heavens should be appalled at such sin.

The people of God have committed two great evils. First, they failed to drink from the one source of real joy and life.

God is the fountain of living waters – only He can quench our thirst. He made us to only be satisfied in Him.

And they committed a second evil. They went out into the desert of the world and hewed cisterns that cannot possibly hold water.

They put their faces in the parched desert trying desperately to suck joy from a place where there is no joy.

¹ Henry Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1994), p. 14.

In the past few weeks two people I know – one I knew fairly well – committed suicide. They both had great jobs – one had children – so much to live for. But without the Lord – houses and cars and things held no joy. Their deaths were incredible tragedies.

They had the things of the world – but their life was still so empty, so unsatisfying, the pain so great – they felt the only way out was suicide.

God who is love cries out that it need not be so. There is a place where the things of this world turn to joy.

If only they had done what the people of God finally did. Psalm 107:19-20:

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.

They called to God and He healed their souls. He delivered them for their distress. He gave them hope amid the suffering. He gave them joy.

Don't miss this. They had deliberately turned from God. They revelled in sin.

And when the end result was pain – finally they realised their problem and they called to God and were delivered.

In Romans 5:1-5 Paul tells us:

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

In Christ, we can have peace with God and a hope that does not disappoint.

Jesus told us that He came to give us abundant life – life to the full.

He told us to abide in Him that our joy may be full.

No wonder they rejoiced. Verses 21-22:

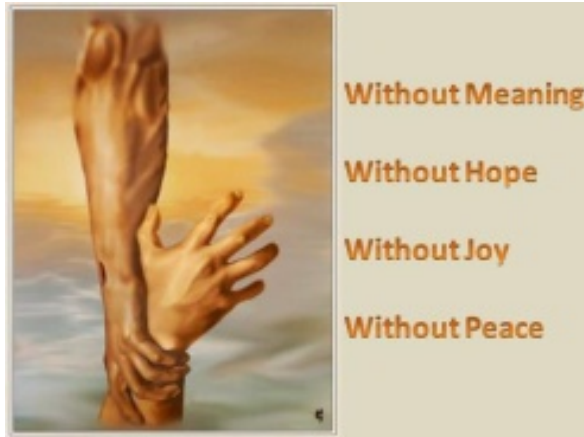
Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!

Amen!

And can it be that I should gain

An interest in the Saviour's blood!
Died He for me, who caused His pain!
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

There is a fourth and final group. Those



Without peace

Verses 23-24:

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.

Understand the context. Israel was not a known seafaring nation. They were not known as sailors or merchants of the sea. The sea was a place of danger – storms, monsters, trouble.

But the incredible profits drove some down to the sea in ships. They wanted wealth – so they risked their lives on the waters.

There on the seas they saw the power and majesty of God. Storms came.

The point is this. In every life – storms come. These men were going about the business of life and storms came.

Verses 25-27:

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.

These are the storms of life. The sorrows like sea billows roll in.

It can be any storm. Natural disaster. Financial disaster. Family disaster. Health disaster.

We have all had them. One minute life is a clear sky – the next it is storms and we can't see how we can survive.

We blame God – He lifts the waves – He sends us to the depths.

The storms seem to overwhelm us. We are at our wits end.

And we have been right where these men were and done what they did. Verses 28-30:

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. 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.

At times God takes the storm away. He heals our sick child. He provides a job when we can't pay the mortgage. He restores a shattered marriage.

At times God gives us the faith and strength to rise above the storm. James 1:2-5:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

When we turn to God – He calms the storms. Either by taking the storm away or more often – giving us the strength to endure them. No wonder the end result is praise.

Verses 31-32:

Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! Let them extol him in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

No matter where you are – what you have done – what you are doing. God says – turn to Me and I will heal you and give you life.

Just think about this.

Men and women who have wandered far from the Lord. Those who rebelled against the words of God. Those who sinned against God. Those who sought self and encountered storms.

God would have every right to simply turn from us. But He does not.

We call the wanderer home. He welcomes the rebel, the sinner, the self-absorbed. He holds nothing against them.

He responds to our rejection with love – a steadfast love that does not change.

He waits for the sinner to repent.

2 Peter 3:9:

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

And when they turn to Him – the Lord blesses now and eternally.

The Psalmist ends with a wonderful summary of the eternal blessings that He lavishes on His children.

Verses 33-42:

He 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.

This is poetic language. Those who refuse to turn to God – those who are proud and self-righteous – they remain lost and wandering and in pain – lost in trackless wastes. God humbles the proud.

But for those who turn to Him, He raises them up and blesses them mightily. Those who hope on the Lord are raised up on eagle's wings.

He provides a fertile city – a place of plenty. He raises the needy. And all the upright praise the Lord.

He ends with this thought. Verse 43:

Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD.

The steadfast love of the Lord.

Many look at this world and say – God is not a God of love.

The reality is that God is so loving that He is waiting patiently for those who are His to repent and turn to Him.

And then He will heal this world – a new heavens and new earth.

He will heal our bodies – we will rise anew to never die again.

He will heal our souls – no sin, no tears, no pain.

This Psalm promises that this is the reality for all who turn to the Lord.

This is a Psalm that touches every one of us – no matter where we are in our walk with Christ.

Some of us have never turned to the Lord. We have sought joy and fulfilment in the world. Perhaps some still think that is where the answers to the questions of life – where joy and peace and satisfaction will be found.

But generations have tasted the world and found it does not satisfy. They wander aimlessly – hungry and thirsty.

Some know the wonder of God – but have turned away. You wanted to taste the world.

You might be like the comedian who quipped:

They say money can't buy happiness. Well all I want is the opportunity to try it for myself.

But it does not take long to realise that this does not satisfy – that God alone satisfies. I urge you – taste and see that the Lord is good.

Some here desperately love the Lord – but you struggle.

Doubts arise about God and His goodness.

Struggles with sin sap your strength.

The trials of life get you down.

But God waits for you to call on Him – to heal you, strengthen you and make you stand.

This Psalm is for all of us.

There is nothing we have done that can separate us from the love of God.

No matter where we are – lost, in sin, rebellious – God waits patiently and calls to us in love.

Did you notice that repeated refrain – the steadfast love of the Lord?

We might fail – God never fails.

Our faith may fail – His love never does.

He loved Adam and Abraham and Jacob and Moses and David – flawed men who failed.

And when they turned to the Lord – they found that His steadfast love endured forever.

But, Psalms like this were a mystery to the Jews. They wondered how God could love those who failed so overtly? Where was the justice of God and the holiness of God?

How can God forgive those who wander from Him, rebel against His Word, spurn His counsel, love sin and seek the world?

It was only at the coming of Jesus that this Psalm finally made sense.

Jesus is God – who is love – made flesh.

Jesus died in our place for our sins.

Jesus loved us while we were yet sinners.

Jesus frees us, gives us a hope and a future.

Jesus says – I will take your yoke. I will bear your troubles.

Jesus says – take My holiness, take My joy, enjoy My life.

I used this picture on the Powerpoint – because that is how I picture my life.

Lost and drowning in this world. In bondage to sin. Without hope. Nothing bringing joy.

And those nail pierced hands reach down and grab me and pluck me to safety and fill me with joy without compare.

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 great old hymn – *How Firm A Foundation* sums it up best:

Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply:

The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake!

No matter where you are – never knowing God, far from God, struggling with God – God is there. He longs for us to call out to Him – and His steadfast love will reach down and save us and fill us with a joy beyond anything we have ever known.

In this – more than anything else – we see the incredible steadfast love of the Lord.