

God's M.O.

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[0 : 00] Let's talk about mottos for a minute. We'll start with an easy one. What's the Marine Corps motto? Semper Fidelis, Semper Fi, always faithful.

How about the Coast Guard? It's similar. Semper Paratus, always ready. The Coast Guard actually has a much older, unofficial motto as well.

You have to go out. You don't have to come back. How about Air Force pararescue men? That others may live.

Have you heard of the Postal Service Creed? Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

It's actually not an official creed at all. No one has to swear by it. They don't have to sign on it. But it is chiseled in stone above a post office in New York City that was built in 1914.

[1 : 09] And it became associated with the USPS and became called their creed. But why do groups have creeds and mottos?

It's because they capture something. They distill something. It gives them the opportunity to say, this is who we are and this is what we do.

This is our modus operandi. It's how we operate. If God had a motto, what would His motto be? If God had a motto, I'm pretty sure it would be something like, steadfast love to the children of man. Steadfast love to human beings. That's who He is. That's how He operates. Steadfast love to us.

[2 : 16] And that's what Psalm 107 is all about. It's easy to see the purpose of why Psalm 107 is in our Bibles. We see it in verses 1-3 at the beginning and in verse 43 at the end.

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.

And then at the end, verse 43, whoever is wise, let him attend to these things. Let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord. So the purpose of this Psalm for God's people is that we would consider God's steadfast love to give Him thanks.

And what is steadfast love? It comes from a Hebrew word that if you've been around church for a while, you've probably heard before, chesed.

It's notoriously difficult to translate into English with one word. Very commonly it's translated as steadfast love. Sometimes it's translated as loyal love.

[3 : 40] It's trying to communicate something about an intention to do good to someone no matter what. In Exodus 34-6, this word, this term, steadfast love, is an important part of God's self-declaration describing who He is.

As He passes before Moses, it says, The Lord passed before Him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. It's also often translated in your Bible in the Old Testament simply as kindness. My favorite example is from 2 Samuel 9, where David is now the king of Israel after Saul has died, the previous king, Saul who tried to kill him many times.

And David asks the question, Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

Chesed, steadfast love. The expectation of the time and culture could be that he would eliminate the previous king's house and family to secure his own throne.

[5 : 03] But David says, Is there still anyone left that I may show him kindness? Steadfast love. I'd like you to think of it as kindness that doesn't give up.

So in our psalm today, we're to consider the steadfast love, the kindness of the Lord. The second thing you need to know about this psalm before we jump in is that this psalm is set in the context

after the exile.

You see a clue to that in verses 1 through 3, where it says, Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those who he has gathered in from the lands from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south.

That's exile terminology because that's not how Israel started, right? They started from one family in one place. And they grew and they multiplied in Egypt and their establishment as a nation came when that group as a whole came from Egypt altogether at once and became God's people.

So Israel was not founded by gathering from all different directions. So when this psalm talks about this gathering from around the world, it means after the exile.

[6 : 22] Because Israel was in its land, in the promised land. It was rebellious against God. God punished them as he told them that he would. He allowed them to be conquered, to be dispersed, to be exiled.

And after a time, they were allowed to return to their land. Still under foreign rule, but they were allowed to return to rebuild Jerusalem. They were gathered back together.

So this psalm was meant to be understood as a description of the experiences of God's people experiencing the steadfast love of God in exile.

And in this psalm, we see God's steadfast love in two modes. We see it in deliverance in verses 4 through 32. We see God's steadfast love in reversal in verses 33 through 42.

Deliverance and reversal. So first of all, we see God's steadfast love in deliverance from troubled circumstances. This psalm shows us that the steadfast love of God cuts through our troubled circumstances.

[7 : 28] So if you are currently in trouble, this psalm is for you. Or if you have been in trouble and been delivered from that, this psalm is for you.

And of course, I don't just mean trouble like I'm in trouble with my parents or I'm in trouble with my boss. I mean trouble like I don't know if I'm going to make it. Physical health trouble, like I don't know if I'm going to make it.

I don't know how I can go another day. Financial trouble, like I don't know how we're going to make it. Or relational trouble, like I don't think our marriage can make it. Or mental health trouble, like I don't think I can make it.

Or grief trouble, like I don't know how I can make it without them. If you are in trouble or if you have been in trouble, this psalm is for you.

The steadfast love of God cuts through our troubled circumstances. This psalm gives us four examples of people who have been redeemed from trouble. Four different types of trouble.

[8 : 33] Four situations that exiled Israelites found themselves in. And there's a common pattern for each one. First situation of trouble, verses 4 through 9, homeless and hungry.

Look at verses 4 and 5. Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

Wandering in the desert is not a good situation. If you're going to travel through the desert, you want to take a straight and short path. It's an inhospitable environment.

You don't know where your next meal will come from because you don't have fields to draw from or pasture land for any animals who might be with you. You don't know where or when you will find water next.

You just have to rely on what you're carrying with you. And you're in danger because you don't have the walls of a city around you or a community of neighbors to protect you. And to wander in the desert would be an especially painful situation for Israelites who remember the desert wandering of their ancestors.

[9 : 47] Who wandered for 40 years before entering the promised land because of their disobedience. So for them to wander in the desert now was to have lost everything. To have no home at all after all of Israel's history in their own land.

Now some of them are back right where they started and they have nothing to show for it. And this psalm finds these exiles at the end of hope.

It's been a long time since they've had food. A long time since they've had water to drink. And they can't seem to find anywhere to settle. Only desert.

Have you ever felt like that? Unemployed or underemployed. Maybe living paycheck to paycheck and the end of one never reaches the start of the other.

Housing trouble. No security. No stability. No provision. No end in sight. These exiles are in troubled circumstance and that's the first part of the pattern that we see repeated in these four situations.

[11 : 03] We see a troubled circumstance. And the second part of the pattern is in verse 6. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them from their distress.

These people turn to God as their only hope and they cry out to Him and this is not simply a quick prayer God please help us. Please send some food.

It's not just a simple prayer of desperation because remember the psalm is describing their experiences in exile and why did they go into exile in the first place? One major reason is because they worshipped and they prayed to and they hoped in other gods.

They looked to Baal and Molech and Asherah for provision for security for food for rain. So when it says that they cried to the Lord all caps Yahweh that's significant.

That's intentional. This isn't a generic God please help me this is God of my fathers Yahweh God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob all other gods have failed us.

[12 : 26] You're our only hope. God and he delivered them from their distress. God responds his steadfast love cuts through their troubled circumstances.

It acts on their behalf in verse 7 he led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Instead of wandering they were led straight out of the desert to a city a city to dwell in a place to be secure a place where there is provision for their needs.

And what is the right response? What's the only response that can well up within them that can't help but give in verses 8-9 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.

It's the steadfast love of God his kindness that doesn't give up. Troubled situation number 2 is verses 10-16 captivity 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. So these exiles are not just wandering they're in actual captivity. These are some of God's people in exile chained up as slave labor.

[14 : 18] labor. The conditions are cruel and the labor and harsh treatment has left them with no strength left. They fall and no one cares to help them.

And this too is some painful deja vu for the Israelites, right? They've been slave labor before in Egypt and their entire identity as a people is hey we're a people who have been delivered by God's mighty hand out of slavery.

And now some of them are in chains and under the whip again. And it's devastating. And why are they in this trouble?

God put them there. Right? Verse 11. 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.

God gave his people his good word, clear wisdom for life, a beautiful structure of morality to create a just and healthy society. And most importantly, he gave them knowledge of himself and the opportunity to know him and be in a relationship with him and to be his special people among all the peoples of the earth.

[15 : 40] And they rebelled against him. They counted his words as meaningless. They spurned them. They tossed them aside like trash. So now here they are, prisoners in darkness.

And as they sit in darkness with the clasps on their wrists rubbing bloody grooves into their skin, afraid that they won't have the strength for the next day's labor, they remember their God.

God. And they too turned to Yahweh. Verses 13 and 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. To those in captivity, God brings freedom.

His steadfast love cuts through their troubled circumstances and breaks apart their chains and brings them out into the light. And what's the only response they could possibly give?

[16 : 51] What would you do? Verses 15 through 16. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love for His wondrous works for the children of man.

It's the steadfast love of God. It's His kindness that doesn't give up. Troubled situation number three, verses 17 through 22, sickness.

Verses 17 and 18, it says, 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.

So for some, their sin has led to terrible sickness. And whether the sickness is specially sent by God or simply the natural result of a sin-filled life, we don't know.

But either way, they're now near the end of a brutal sickness. Think of the last time you were really sick. I was sick earlier this week.

[18:00] I was not near the gates of death, but I did loathe any kind of food. And when you're sick, nothing else matters, right? You don't have the strength to do what you need to do.

The things that are expected of you each day, you're not able to do. And anything that was interesting or excited to you just a day or two ago when you were healthy now means nothing. All that matters is, how can I get past this?

How can I get through this? How can I get my health back? Even sleep is miserable. And the people here in Psalm 107 are past any hope of medical intervention or recovery.

All that's left for them is to die and get it over with. But you know how this pattern goes now, right?

Verses 19 through 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. He heals them.

The steadfast love of God cuts through their sickness and delivers amazing health.

[19:18] Here's how I imagine it going for them. They're tossing in bed, half asleep, in pain, and that's when God's word of healing reaches them.

And they take a deep breath and they really fall asleep. And in the morning they open their eyes and they think, wait a minute, did I just sleep through the night?

They sit up and they feel great for the first time in a long time and the life that they had given up on is theirs to live.

Verses 21 and 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 and songs of joy. they thank and praise and sing to God because of his steadfast love, because of his kindness that doesn't give up.

[20:34] troubled situation number 4, verses 23 through 32, life-threatening danger. Look at verse 23.

Some went down to the sea in ships doing business on the great waters. Now, Israelites were generally not a seagoing people. So, likely what's going on here is that as part of the exile, as God's people were dispersed from their homeland, some of them, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, become part of sailing crews.

And this is what they experienced, verses 24 through 27. They saw the deeds of the Lord, his wondrous works in the deep. For he commanded and raised up a 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.

A massive storm has these sailors deeply afraid. They are beyond any skill that they might have as sailors. They're beyond any capacity of their ship to deal with the size of these waves.

[21:49] All that's left for them is to hang on, wait for it to capsize. And then they remember the God of their fathers, the God of their homeland, verses 28 through 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. God's steadfast love cuts through the clouds and the wind and the lightning and the rain and he stills the storm and hushes the waves and quiets the waters and he guides them to their port and they step foot on solid dry ground again which was something they thought would never happen.

Verses 31 through 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.

What else would you do if you were them? When God shows incredible kindness to you that doesn't give up? four examples of troubled situations where the steadfast love of God cut through.

[23 : 34] And these are four specific examples but the point in this psalm is that God's steadfast love cuts through any circumstance. The point of this psalm is that our trouble is an opportunity to see God's kindness clearly.

Let's highlight something that we've seen but we need to think about for a minute. God's steadfast love cuts through our troubled circumstances even the trouble of our own sin.

Remember this psalm is set in the context of the sin of God's people. That's what exile was. Exile was God's judgment on his people for their rebellion against him.

So in every circumstance that we see here in these psalms these people are experiencing God's judgment. And in two of these situations it explicitly says that their trouble is the direct result of their sin.

It was their sin that brought them to captivity. It was their sin that brought them to sickness. So God's steadfast love cuts through our troubled circumstances even the trouble of our own sin.

[25 : 10] We naturally assume that if we're going to ask for God's help we need to earn it or at least we need to temporarily be in a situation where we feel like we're okay asking for it.

You know like if trouble randomly comes to me while I am following Jesus and reading my Bible regularly and you know not sinning too much I think then yeah when trouble comes that's a great time for me to say God please deliver me please save me please help me that's a good time to ask God to deliver us.

We have trouble when we know that's not our situation and we might assume that if our trouble is the result of our own sin we shouldn't dare ask God to help us.

We just have to live with the consequences of our actions right? Suck it up. You got yourself into this. You don't deserve to ask for God's deliverance.

If this is God's discipline we just have to endure it. And the truth of course is yes that God does send trouble sometimes as discipline for sin as he does in this psalm and we should let that discipline have its effect in our lives but the effect the intended effect of that discipline is to turn us to God.

[26 : 45] It is to cause us to turn away from whatever it was that was leading us away from him and cry out to him. So what this psalm is teaching us is that God's steadfast love is so good, he is so kind that he even loves to deliver us from the trouble of our own sin.

God's kindness toward you does not depend on you being innocent.

A lot of us have a hard time believing that. God's kindness toward you does not depend on you being innocent.

the steadfast love of God cuts through our troubled circumstances even the trouble of our own sin.

And this psalm wants us to see the steadfast love of God in action in many different situations and when we cry out to God in our trouble in the same way, turning to him as our only hope, we also will see his kindness to us.

Amen. Amen. Amen. But the truth is, we know, he does not always heal.

[28 : 08] He does not always save in the ways like we just read. Sometimes his faithful people who cry out to him remain in their troubled circumstances.

You might think particularly of Christians who are persecuted around the world and there's no out in sight. love. The psalm ends by showing us that God's steadfast love is not only expressed in deliverance from trouble, but also in reversal of what is wrong in the world.

We see reversal in verses 33 through 42. He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into a thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste because of the evil of its inhabitants.

water. 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, i.e.

[29 : 59] those who are oppressing them, 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. Do you see what's happening there? God is not simply saving people from trouble, troubled circumstances, and taking them out of that and putting them somewhere else.

He is reshaping reality itself according to his kindness and his justice. justice. He's making the world right.

The evil people of the world, who at one point seem to have everything, end up with nothing. And those who are poor and are upright are given a home and a wonderful future.

God's people live in a city, and those who oppress them end up wandering in the desert. God's kindness that doesn't give up is shown in his work of reversal.

[31 : 18] And what these verses are telling us is that even for those who don't experience God's deliverance right away, it's going to be okay.

even when it looks like wrong is winning, reversal is coming. God is committed to making the world right.

God's steadfast love will win in the end. And he works these reversals in small part throughout history, and he will do so ultimately at the end of history.

He's making the world right, and our assurance of God's steadfast love both in the present and for all of the future, our assurance of God's kindness to us, no matter what, is secured for us by Jesus. In his death and resurrection for us, the ultimate example of God's kindness that doesn't give up. He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

[32 : 40] And what is God's plan for all of the future, for all of eternity when he makes the world right? It's that in the coming ages he might show the riches of his kindness.

towards us in Christ Jesus. That's what our future is. It's more and more and more of God showing kindness to us in ways that we could not expect or imagine.

So in Psalm 107 tells us about God's steadfast love reversing the situations of the world, it's telling us that it's going to be okay. God will bring you to a home.

What does John see in his vision and revelation? He sees a city prepared by God, a place where God will dwell with his people.

That's the steadfast love of God. Where do you find yourself in relationship to Psalm 107 this morning?

[34 : 04] Are you in trouble right now? Maybe trouble as a result of your own sin, maybe not.

Are you turning to him? Are you crying out to him? Are you hoping in his steadfast love? Are you trusting that his kindness will win out for you in the end, even when things seem bleak?

Have you experienced trouble in the past God's deliverance? Are you offering him thanks for that? Are you praising him? Are you extolling him in the congregation? Are you continuously sharing with others what God's kindness has done for you?

Are you God's kindness doesn't give up? God's steadfast love cuts through our troubled circumstances, even the trouble of our own sin, to bring us to a home.

[35 : 24] Let's pray. Amen. Father, we, on our best days, do not deserve your kindness.

Thank you that you have steadfast love, that it's who you are, it's how you operate. Help us to believe it. For those in this church who are in trouble right now, we cry out to you.

You are our only hope. And we ask that you would deliver, you would save, and you would show your kindness to us.

Amen.