

Life in the Hands of the Redeemer

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- [0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.
- ! Psalm 107. O 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.
- Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.
- Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them to a straight way, till they reached a city to dwell in.
- [1 : 08] Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of men. For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.
- 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. 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. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of men.
- For He shatters the doors of bronze, and cuts into the bars of iron. Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities, suffered affliction.
- [2 : 24] They loathe any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. 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. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of men.
- And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of His deeds in songs of joy.
- Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters. They saw the deeds of the Lord for 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 into the depths.
- [3 : 28] Their courage melted away in their evil plight. They reeled and staggered like drunken men, and they were at their wit's end. 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.

Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of men. Let them extol Him in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.

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.

[4 : 36] 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 and evil and sorrow, He pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless waste.

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.

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

Thanks be to God. You may take your seats. Everybody loves a good redemption story.

[5 : 39] Perhaps one of the greatest redemptive moments in all of cinematic theater happened in 1994, December, when Harry and Lloyd in Dumb and Dumber hopped into their Mutt Cutts van to drive across the country to return a briefcase to the woman of Lloyd's dreams that he had talked to for five minutes.

But on one certain fateful night in their travels, Lloyd drives while Harry sleeps, and he takes a wrong turn. And it is not discovered until Harry wakes up the next morning, and they realize that the Rockies are not as rocky as they thought.

After Lloyd is driven across the six of the country overnight in the wrong direction, they are now almost out of money. They won't have enough money to make it.

And so Lloyd goes and trades, not sells, but trades the Mutt Cutts van for a tiny moped bike. And when Lloyd catches up to Harry and Harry sees what he has done, Harry says, you know, Lloyd, just when I think you couldn't possibly be any dumber, you go and do something like this and totally redeem yourself.

As funny as this scene was, it does speak to something. Our culture has a continual voice. You totally can redeem yourself.

[7 : 15] Our culture loves the idea of redemption. People are drawn in by the possibility of forgiveness, reconciliation, transformation.

It reveals how people wrestle with the reality of shame and guilt for wrongs done by them and against them.

There lies a longing for redemption that reveals a brokenness to human life and the innate desire for wholeness and healing.

But in the culture's self-absorbed worldview, the stories of redemption are inevitably connected to man's ability and sufficiency.

With the story unfolding with self at the center, the culture is right in that there is a problem, but it goes very wrong with what the source and the nature of the problem is.

[8 : 21] For if your doctor identifies the wrong diagnosis, you will then receive the wrong treatment. At the heart of the world's message of redemption is that you are your own redeemer.

And the world offers only superficial help, self-help with systems that might satisfy for a moment, but still leaves you broken.

This Psalm 107 says, you, however, totally cannot redeem yourself. It shows how our sin has separated us from God and placed us in a world of exile and slavery that we do not belong to.

All of our affections, mind, will, are disconnected and disordered by this disease. It shows that we need a great surgeon and a physician who is not called Dr. Self.

This surgeon is the only one who can go and heal where we cannot. We need surgery at the source where we are cut off because of sin and we need to be rejoined and redeemed.

[9 : 46] This Psalm offers not a system of help, but offers a redeemer. I believe the main point of this Psalm is Be wise and know that redeeming power and steadfast love belong to the Lord who alone is your redeemer.

And we will break this out in three points. Point one, the song of the redeemed. The psalmist here begins in a very emphatic way with the use of the word, Oh, oh, give thanks to the Lord.

And this interjection is the psalmist seeking to articulate the intense earnestness for the people to give thanks. And the basis of their thanksgiving is on the claims and the character, it's on the claims of the character and works of the covenantal God of Israel.

Give thanks for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever, for he gathers in his people.

We are being instructed here to get our eyes off of ourselves and self-worship and set them to God himself. And the use and the meanings of these words, good and steadfast love, are meant to be understood and defined on the basis of the covenantal relationship with God.

[11 : 22] And it's important that we make this distinction because we can inject in this moment our interpretation, our understanding into the true meaning of these words.

For we are creatures of comfort and ease. We want it our way. We want our good. And so when we think good, we can often only think in the physical realm.

God is good if my health is good. God is good if my family is at peace. But when God relates to us in goodness, it is first and primarily angled spiritually.

Our greatest good is to be made right before God so that we may enter into fellowship and communion with him. God is good and steadfast in love as he pursues our hearts by whatever means necessary to draw us to him.

You will never know the goodness of God on your terms of comfort and prosperity. And we see in verses 2 and 3 that his goodness is revealed in his redeeming, in his gathering of his people from every ends of the earth.

[12 : 49] God is going out and bringing in a people. He is the one initiating redemption. And so the psalmist says, Oh, give thanks on the basis of who God is.

Oh, give thanks for what he has redeemed you from. Oh, give thanks for where you are being gathered to. This is the song of the redeemed. It is a song of thanksgiving to a God who cares way more about our eternal and spiritual comfort and vitality than merely being satisfied by earthly crumbs of pleasure found in this world.

Therefore, let the redeemed of the Lord say so. It is almost as if our point one, the song of the redeemed, it's more like the chorus of the song where it is the main thing we repeat and sing about.

But it's not the whole song. A song has stanzas and verses that are arranged with details that then support the chorus, that make the chorus all the more glorious and beautiful.

And verses 4 through 32 contains the stanzas, so to speak, of our song. They contain within these stanzas the story of the redeemed.

[14 : 20] And that leads us to point two, the story of the redeemed. And so we see four stanzas here in these verses 4 through 32 of different situations and plights.

And they each begin with, in our translation, with the word some. And we see that in verse 4, 10, 17, and 23. Some wandered, some sat in darkness.

And we see that. And the use of words some, though, can be misunderstood here as just merely different groups of people. But the psalmist is not speaking about different groups.

The psalmist is seeking here to poetically and jarringly describe the trouble and plight that God's people have been in.

So that the greatness of God's steadfast love in redemption is seen and made known. To know the depth and severity of the plight brings the melody and the harmony to the chorus of the song.

[15 : 26] And we see this poetic structure in these stanzas with the plight, the cry, the deliverance, the praise.

And it's not this, the pattern we see in Scripture as well. We see it in Israel's exodus from Egypt and their wandering in the wilderness. And we see it in our lives as well, do we not?

These plights are not just representations of Israel's redemptive history. These are also greater representations of the utter and helpless state of the human soul that is completely in bondage to slavery, to the hard and cruel taskmaster of sin and death.

The purpose of the historical psalms for the Israelites like this one in Psalms 105 and 106 was to look back and consider God's steadfast love displayed by his faithfulness and power to redeem.

And this was, this looking back, was the grounds for the Israelites to then place their future hope of being brought out of exile, a future hope of a Messiah that was promised to come to reestablish the throne of David.

[16 : 53] And though there are similarities here, though, that we do see in this psalm and these other historical psalms, Psalm 107 speaks of redemptive events differently compared to the other ones.

It speaks broadly without being specific. The stanzas are not necessarily meant to recount specific moments in Israel's history, though certainly you could easily draw connections as to what events the psalmist had in mind, but rather, it shows what it means to be redeemed and gathered from exile and slavery.

The psalmist is seeking through poetic force to show the utter desperation of the condition of the human heart.

Since the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3, all of the created order has never been the same. It was subjected to futility and bondage.

Verse 4 says, they wondered, which not only implies a physical wondering, but also of a moral wondering off the right path where we see in verse 7 how in the rescue he brings the person to a straight way, which of course the obvious opposite to straight is crooked.

[18 : 22] And so in our wondering, we have taken crooked paths into a desert wasteland. And this landscape of barrenness and tracklessness shows the emptiness of the human cravings and longings in a world that can never satisfy, but always leaves them hungry and thirsty to the point of their soul, their inner being fainting with no strength.

Verse 10 says, they were sitting or dwelling in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners enslaved in iron chains, in affliction.

These are devastating words. This shows how we are alone in solitude, cut off from God's presence in darkness.

Charles Spurgeon says that solitude is a great intensifier of misery. So we sit in this darkness for we have spurned the counsel of the Most High.

We've despised His word and His instruction. And this is what we did in Adam and Eve in the fall of sin. We rejected God and we enslaved ourselves in sin.

[19 : 48] Proverbs 5.22 says, the iniquities of the wicked ensnare Him and He is held fast in the cords of sin. And Jesus said in John 8.34, truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

sin. These iron chains are the chains of sin and guilt over the human heart, soul, and mind.

For we see the use of the word affliction here in verse 10. That word has to do with guilt and conviction of sin. And how unresolved guilt of sin is, it has like a kind of paralysis over the human heart and mind.

The early church father, Augustine, wrote to this effect on the guilt of sin on the conscience of a person and he said, it is like an unscalable wall with all doors closed.

he can find no way by which to escape into a good life. The plights continue. Verse 17, we were fools in our sinful ways and because of our sin we suffered affliction.

[21 : 13] There's that word again. We suffered guilt that leads to a loathing of food and life. And the image here is of one who has just given up completely.

Loaves all help as they draw near to the gates of death. In the medical world they call it adult failure to thrive. And I've seen it again and again where someone literally gives up their will to live and all food, all drink is loathsome to them.

They don't desire it. They don't want it. They refuse all help. They turn away family and literally they slowly waste away as they become skin and bone and they draw near to the gate of death.

This is the image the psalmist is putting before us. The guilt and misery of sin is an atrocious disease that afflicts the human soul. In this world of chaos and sin we are like those who go down to the sea and the Lord raises up a storm and the psalmist depicts a mighty tempest a mighty storm where the boat is tossed up by the rising waves just stunning imagery of just the boat going up and then come crashing down totally at the mercy of the waves and these sailors who would have vast knowledge and of navigating the ocean great skill now find themselves reeling and staggering about like drunken men staggering imagery they are at their complete wits end self sufficiency and human wisdom have no chance against the storms of this life these scenes just keep adding on to each other don't they it's just punch after punch it's like the image

I had was like the tsunami in 2004 that hit Thailand and Indonesia the coastline and the earthquake shock sent wave after wave onto the shore and as each wave came in they just increasingly kept getting worse and worse to the point where over a hundred and fifty thousand people died that day from those waves and the people as each wave came in they became totally desperate and they were completely unable to save themselves that's what these scenes are trying to show our desperate plight these bleak plights are showing us that worldly pleasure self sufficiency and human wisdom and strength are an empty fountain that will kill you we must be driven all the way down and come to the end of ourselves in total desperation where all that there is left to do is to cry out to the

[24 : 27] Lord there is a mercy here in the Lord bowing the person down to hard labor with none to help raising up the storm at sea for it is precisely there they cry out to the Lord and he delivers them we see that every time the Lord delivers the Lord alone gathers and satisfies the Lord alone breaks the chains the Lord alone heals the Lord alone stills the storm and brings us to the desired haven and so they gave the right and proper response the only response they thanked the Lord but don't miss that it is only when we have removed our eyes off of ourselves and seen the greatness of God in his redeeming power that we can rightly respond for years now

I have dealt with tinnitus which is that ringing ear in your ear from all that loud music that my mom and dad told me not to listen to when I was a kid and now I deal with the ringing sound and I remember when it started all the ringing it was it was very I was very aware of it it was very loud and I had a hard time concentrating but over time my brain adapted my brain adapted to the sound and now I hardly notice it after this constant ringing I now have been adapted to it I don't notice it anymore so too can we who were once astounded by the wondrous works and the delivering works of God grow accustomed to grace and hardly notice it where once we gave thanksgiving now we give little thought is this you is your life marked with thanksgiving for the steadfast love of

God are you still amazed by his redeeming power and love and I do want to say here at this point there are individuals here in this church who have and are walking through incredibly difficult seasons and I see you still fighting in faith to praise God in thanksgiving I want you to know it does not go unnoticed to the Lord for he sees you and he is pleased and he cares for you now notice how the response of thankfulness builds in the third and fourth stanzas the thanksgiving moves from private to public in verse 22 they offer sacrifices of thanksgiving which this would this sacrificing is pointing to public worship in the temple and they go on to tell the deeds of

God in songs of joy verse 32 let them extol him in the congregation in the assembly of his people and this is the redeemed being in absolute amazement at the steadfast love of God that they now can no longer contain themselves just as God burst their bonds apart so too they burst into songs of praise and thanksgiving this is the song of the redeemed this is the story of the redeemed and there is one who is central to all of this the redeemer point three the God of the redeemed so once these stanzas conclude the pattern here changes a little bit where now we have alternating themes of judgment and salvation and this goes on four different times we read how he now turns rivers into desert springs of water into thirsty ground a fruitful land into a salty waste because of the evil of its inhabitants but then he turns a desert into pools of water what are we to make of all this is this just

God changing on a whim one moment he saves the next he crushes certainly this cannot be so God it cannot be God changing his plan due to the emotion of the moment for this would contradict scripture for scripture makes it abundantly clear that God is the same yesterday today and tomorrow he's unchanging so how do we understand here in these verses the God of the redeemed what we see here is the active providential agency of God working over all things to bring about his purposes and plans just like the catechism we read from we see it here in these verses God is saying my counsel stands I accomplish all my purposes God is a God of covenant who has made a covenant with his people and though his people have rebelled and are unfaithful he being full of steadfast love and mercy will not simply let them go down the wrong path he is our good father who disciplines and pursues his children in love but he is also just and holy and therefore those who have not trusted in him

[31 : 03] God delivers his punishments for their sin because of our sin and evil works all that we should know is a desert waste imprisonment and death we do not deserve anything because we have spurned and despised the Lord God we all have turned away everyone to his own way and so when we see the judgment of God this is not God being capricious or random in his judgments he is God over all creator of the ends of the earth the one who is eternal and unchanging and there is not a moment in time in any event of your life that is not outside of his control oh it may certainly be completely out of your control but it is not outside of his control he has the power to either dry up the river or bring life where none was before

John Flavel said once we cannot understand the mind and heart of God by the things he dispenses with his hands the greatest good God can give a dying world is not your prosperity it's not your comfort in earthly riches but redemption from your sin apart from God everything is a trackless desert and dwells in the shadow of death but God did not leave us in the mire and pit of our own making by our sin no God the Redeemer sent his son Jesus Christ to rescue a dying world and to redeem it Luke 1 68 and 79 says blessed be the Lord God of Israel for he has visited and redeemed his people to give light to those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the paths into the way of peace

Christ the rescuer the redeemer has come and he has entered into our exile so that he can lead us out notice that all of these plights Christ has entered into he took on human flesh experienced all of our weaknesses and temptations yet without sin he wandered in the wilderness hungry and thirsty while resisting the evil one Jesus walked out onto the water in the midst of the storm and he caused the storm to be still with a word he healed the lame gave sight to the blind hearing to the deaf he was imprisoned Barabbas the guilty was released and Christ the innocent took his place he took all our places he was marred and abused by the

Roman guard he was brought low to the shadow of death even death on a cross he bore!

our sin and guilt and he drank the loathsome bitter cup of God's holy wrath for all of our sin Christ cried my God my God why have you forsaken me so that you and I can be redeemed and never have to cry why have you forsaken me Christ has gone to the source of our problem our heart of sin and rebellion to God and he died in our place when we place our faith and hope in Christ and cry out to him he delivers our past guilt and sin no longer becomes is no longer your name Isaiah 62 4 and 12 says you shall no more be forsaken oh hear the word of the

[35 : 52] Lord you shall no more be term forsaken! your land shall no more be term desolate you shall be the holy people the redeemed of the Lord you shall be sought out a city not forsaken in Christ by faith our redemption has begun but not yet in full where we are in the history and path of God's redemptive plan is likened to one who has been healed from cancer you go through you receive the diagnosis you go through all the treatment and at the conclusion of it you receive the wonderful news your cancer is gone it's been removed but though they have received healing they are not yet made whole are they for their remains in their body effects of the cancer there is still scar tissue pain and it hurts they still walk with a limp we too have been healed in

Christ by faith from our cancerous sin but we're not made whole yet though healed and released from the slavery of sin and death though justified by faith in Christ declared righteous by a righteousness not of our own though there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus there is a war that rages on between the flesh and the spirit and the battle ground is the human heart we still walk through grief and an inexplicable suffering we still struggle and fight with besetting sins and we receive the Lord's loving discipline our bodies still break down and disease strikes us so what do we do then in this already but not yet verse 43 whoever is wise let him attend to these things let them consider the steadfast love of the

Lord a friend of mine this past week shared a story with me how when he was at the age of 14 he began an addiction to alcohol and entered into bondage and then at the age of 17 he was in a car accident with family and he was in the car holding his infant niece in his arms when the driver of the car fell asleep and crashed!

and when my friend became alert he realized he was still holding the baby but the baby did not survive and he said after this moment he continued even more to pour himself into his alcohol just trying to find a way to dole out the misery of his this painful memory and then two years later from that time he found himself in the Vietnam War and he was at this point far from the Lord and one of the men though in his unit was a believer and this man befriended my friend and began to share with him the gospel of Jesus Christ and one day though they were out on patrol with four other men and they were ambushed and they quickly in that moment dug their foxhole began to try to fight back but by this point they were totally surrounded they were hemmed in bullets were flying all around them everywhere and all that they could do they couldn't even fight back at this point they were so trapped in all they could do was cry out for help they immediately radioed in to the navy gave their coordinates and they waited help did not come immediately though and then every one of those guys including two atheists began crying out to the

Lord for help my friend said he began to cry out Lord help me save me deliver me and he began to find himself not just asking for deliverance from this immediate physical threat but he found himself asking the Lord deliver me from your wrath save me deliver me and just as the enemy bullets are about to consume him they're just coming in closer and closer that friend who shared the gospel jumped on top of him covered him and took all of the bullets and he was saved and his friend gave up his life for him and I asked my friend how has he been able to move forward in life with all of these painful realities for he suffered more after he came back from the war he said if it were not for

[42 : 18] Christ I would have gone insane by now he said the memories never leave the pain is still there but I have a hope and a certainty that is fixed in Christ and I wait expectantly for my full redemption when I am brought home and I will see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ Jesus Christ jumped into our helpless foxhole and he died in your place so that you can be redeemed more than that so you can have a future hope that day is coming soon brothers and sisters and he will make all things new are you still waiting for hope are you still waiting in hope or have you grown tired and wearied have you grown distracted by the cares and pleasures of this world

Hebrews 12 consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary!

or faint hearted every day on this side of heaven brings new troubles I know you're aware of that new earthly pleasures!

old painful memories we cannot ride on the mercy and grace of yesterday scripture says God's mercies are new every morning and so the psalmist says in Psalm 90 satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love these new morning mercies can only be drawn from one place go go to the fountain of the wellspring of life Jesus Christ and drink drink from the living water that Christ offers you daily daily drink and you will not thirst be wise and know that redeeming power and steadfast love belong to the Lord alone who is your redeemer let us pray father we cry out to you you who are over all

God over all of our lives we cry out to you Lord I pray for the one in bondage this morning to one who is trapped by their sin and trapped Lord in bondage to their guilt Lord I pray that they would cry out that they would come to an end of themselves that they would know that true life true hope is found in you and you alone that they would that you would lead them to living water to the bread of life Jesus Christ who satisfies every longing soul we cry out and we thank you for your mercy and grace amen you've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens for more information about Trinity

[46 : 30] Grace please visit us at Trinity Grace Athens dot com