

Four Stories [Psalm 107]

Draft by Steve Carr [www.houseofcarr.com/thread]

INTRODUCTION

1. I hope you're enjoying this series in the book of Psalms.
 - a. Biblical poetry is often overlooked in favor of the compelling stories of the Bible.
 - b. I'll admit: I prefer preaching the biblical stories. It's a much easier task.
2. Today, however, our text actually contains some stories—**four** stories.
 - a. While poetry is power, story seems to be even more powerful.
 - b. In 1999, futurist **Leonard Sweet said**, "The future belongs to the storytellers, the artists"
 - c. This text will tell us how this future exists for all of us.

VERSES 1-3

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

² Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

³ those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south.

1. The purpose of this psalm is a command, as found in VS1: GIVE THANKS
 - a. Usually something that parents have to remind their kids, but all people need this.
 - b. WHY GIVE THANKS? Because of God's goodness and his forever love.
2. Go to VS2: God's people are encouraged to tell their story.
 - a. Listen, I love to teach the Bible and unpack the truth of God's word.
 - b. But even if I present the most impassioned plea, you are a better preacher than me.
 - c. YOUR STORY holds more power and sway, because it's individualized.
 - 1) How has God delivered you from the hands of your enemies?
 - 2) You need to tell your story to people in many different settings.
 - 3) It personalizes the gospel to people who are often skeptical of faith.
3. VS 3 "gathering: "Psalm speaks to an important biblical events you likely know little about.
 - a. In the year 586BC, the city of Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
 - b. Known as THE FALL OF JERUSALEM, it was the September 11th of the Jewish world.
 - c. A few weeks ago, in our discussion of Psalm 91, we discussed Tisha B'Av
 - 1) This is the Jewish holiday of sadness when God's people remember the fall
4. From here, the psalmist treats us to four stories—both different and similar.
 - a. It gives us different narratives of those scattered during the exile.
 - b. The stories in Psalm 107 follow a specific cycle, one that appears elsewhere in Scripture.
 - 1) God's people in **trouble**
 - 2) God's people **cry out**
 - 3) God's people are **rescued**
 - 4) God's people invited to **give thanks**
 - c. Of the four stories, 2nd & 3rd were rebellious, while the 1st and 4th were not
 - d. One more thing: VERSES 6,13,19,28 are identical verses.

STORY ONE: VERSES 4-9

TROUBLE: Homeless and hungry, lost in the wilderness (vs4)

KEY VERSE: ⁵They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

RESCUE: God gave them a home [city] where they could live (vs7)

STORY TWO:VERSES 10-16

TROUBLE: Imprisoned and depressed because of their rebellion (vs 10)

KEY VERSE: ¹²So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

RESCUE: God led them into the light, breaking their chains (vs 14)

STORY THREE: VERSES 17-22

TROUBLE: Sick facing death because of their rebellion (vs 17)

KEY VERSE: ¹⁸They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.

RESCUE: God healed them, rescuing them from the grave (vs20)

STORY FOUR: VERSES 23-32

TROUBLE: Overwhelmed by the storms [life metaphor] (vs23)

KEY VERSE: ²⁷They reeled and staggered like drunkards; they were at their wits' end.

RESCUE: God stilled the storm to a whisper (vs29)

FINALLY, told to give thanks. **Same verse repeated:**

Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind

THE POINT: These four stories, though different, actually track the same.

- a. No matter what your level of righteousness, you need God's rescue.
- b. The next verse unifies the stories into one.

VERSES 33-42

³³ He turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground,

³⁴ and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there.

³⁵ He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs;

³⁶ there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle.

³⁷ They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest;

³⁸ he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish.

³⁹ Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow;

⁴⁰ he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste.

⁴¹ But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks.

⁴² The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths.

1. So the four stories of God's people are really just one story.
2. This is a hymn summarization of the plight of God's people. A story (history) in song
 - a. This is Israel's history: **Exodus to Wilderness to Promised Land to Exile to Return**
 - a. It was up&down **VS33**: Because of their sin, God took away their fruitfulness.
 - b. As easily as he eliminated the vibrancy, he returned it in **VS35**.
 - c. **VS39**: They decreased and were humbled.
2. ABOUT PUNISHMENT: Humans can survive in the desert; it's just a miserable experience.
 - a. Verses 40-42 contempt on the wasteful, but lifts up the needy
 - b. Upright verses wicked

VERSE 43

⁴³ *Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the LORD.*

1. "The one who is wise" — Your story should culminate in wisdom.
 - a. WHO CARES ABOUT YOUR PAST? You need to seek a future of wisdom.
2. "Ponder" — Wisdom means taking the time to think about things
 - a. The thought of repeated sinning could be demoralizing
 - b. Rather, the focus in the kingdom of God is his unfailing love
3. Wisdom ought to force us to heed the opening verse of this psalm and to "give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; [because] his love endures forever."
4. THE CONCLUSION FOR US: Jesus is wisdom for today.
 - a. **1 Corinthians 1:30** *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*