

Special Focus Session

November 27, 2022

THREE REASONS FOR GIVING THANKS

Psalm 107:1-9

We Bible-thumpers always lament the commercialism of the holidays, but always seem to join right in! And Thanksgiving is no exception. Lots of food and festivities are often preceded by a very brief prayer of gratitude and followed by sleepy men watching football and harried ladies looking for the best shopping deals. I won't join the scoffers in reminding you that every day should be a Thanksgiving day (we already know that). But I will join with this week's lesson in reminding us of three reasons we ought to be thankful.

The children of God are redeemed (vv. 1-3). As is the case so often in the Psalms, the first verse sets the theme for the entire passage. As such, the phrase "Give thanks to the Lord" is not so much a command as an expectation. His goodness is an essential *attribute*. His faithful love is that goodness in *action*. So how has He expressed this essential goodness, this faithful love? There are two ways. First, by *redeeming* His people (v. 2). The word *redeem* means "to pay a ransom for" or "to buy back." Some early writers assumed this ransom was a payment to the devil who was holding the sinner in bondage to sin. But this is incorrect, as the payment for sin must be paid to the one most offended by it, and that is God. Hence, Christ's death "*redeemed us to God*" by His blood (Rev. 5:9). So great is this deliverance, that those who are redeemed are expected to proclaim it themselves. Second, His goodness is displayed in His *gathering*. In the various captivities, God's people were scattered. But by redeeming them, God brought them back from all four corners of the globe, to both Himself and the land He had given them (v. 3). For reflection: *While the context here is Israel's wanderings, what are some applications we can make today? Take a moment to thank God that He is our redeemer...and we are His redeemed!*

The children of God are rescued (vv. 4-7). Continuing with the theme of those who were scattered, verses 4 and 5 recount the various trials His people faced while apart from Him. The wilderness apart from Him was a desolate place, void of people and with no city in which to find sanctuary (v. 4). With no provision to nourish them, they were weak. "Their spirits failed" (v. 5) in the Hebrew connotes a *covering of darkness*. Hence, they were enveloped in their own cloud of misery. But in their despair, "they cried out to the Lord" (v. 6). His response was three-fold: First, He rescued (literally, *delivered*) them from their torment. Then He put them on the right path. The phrase "led them" (v. 7) is significant, indicating a deliberate and steady march out of the desolation. Finally, He provided them a city *where they could abide*. The Old Testament city was a place of refuge as well as stability, as opposed to the desert that was both dangerous and inhospitable. For reflection: *Consider the plight of the Jews wandering in the desert. Why do you think the dream of a city was so important to them? Read Hebrews 11: 8-10. How does this relate to our lesson?*

The children of God are rewarded (vv. 8-9). While verse 8 recounts the general theme of the psalm (see v. 1), the application is broadened. Here, God's love is expressed as *wonderful works* and is applied this time to *all humanity*. This is an important principle. Critics of Christianity often speak of the injustice of Bible wrath being poured out on unsuspecting innocents. But while the innocent have always suffered along with the guilty, the guilty have always enjoyed the

blessings of God, even in their sinful rebellious state. Jesus said in Matthew 5:45, “For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” In this case, God provides satisfaction for all who thirst, and good things for all who hunger. For reflection: *Think of some ways the lost still benefit from God’s grace. How can this be used as a witness during the Thanksgiving celebration?*