

Psalm 107:1-22  
The City of FreeWord  
May 7, 2017

**Main Point:** The redeemed of the Lord know and remember from what God has rescued us. As we reflect on what God has done for foolish, sinful people like us, we overflow in sacrifices of thanksgiving to Him.

**SI:** Are you good at remembering? There is always so much before us that we sometimes neglect reflecting. This Psalm helps us. It is all about remembering what God has done to rescue His people.

**Intro:** God's supreme willingness to forgive! To welcome home, to bring back, to redeem, to receive the returning wayward rebel... **this is the core message...** Not only is He willing to forgive, He super-abounds in giving His children confidence that they are forgiven.

How does He do this? By moving you out of loneliness, out of bondage, out of lies and into the City of Free Word.

He takes you out of the desert, and brings you to a city.  
He takes you out of prison, and gives you freedom to be who has made you to be.  
He takes you out of lies, and brings you to the truth of His Word.

These physical descriptions are pointing to spiritual realities > the heaviness of the consequences of sin. Loneliness, Pressure of spiritual pain, discipline, restlessness, brokenness.

### **1From the Desert to the City (verses 4-7)**

A desert waste – a place of wandering, unsettled, always searching, never satisfied. Addiction would be a modern equivalent.

Vs. 4-5 - Image of a city as a place of refuge and provision, a place of dwelling

They were in a desert, and then God led them to a city. This means that God led them to where people are. You cannot make it on your own. You need others. God created us to need community. If you are doing life alone, you will be hurt.

ILLUS of predators > they get that one victim off all alone. But there is safety within the city, the city of the church.

Some of you are ashamed of your sin and so that drives you to further alone-ness and then drives your sin deeper and stronger b/c you want a way out of your alone-ness and you seek relief through your sin.

But you are here! This is a hospital. There are sick people and well people, and people who used to be sick but are now well who are here to point each other and carry each other to the Healer, the Great Physician.

Epidemic of loneliness in our culture. > F3, purpose is to deal with the #1 problem of middle age men > loneliness.

The cry of the young... in the midst of social media access to everything there is a lack of true social connection... the illusion has gotten stronger... you can have social media “friends” and have no friends who truly care about you.

**City** > In ancient times, cities had walls – a place of protection from the desert, a place of community, synergistic interdependence.

And so the biblical picture of health and vitality, of safety and growth is the picture of a city. Hebrews 12 says that Christians have come to the city of the living God, we have joined a city. We are inside the walls. And in Rev 21-22, we see the New City, the Heavenly City of which we are citizens.

Some of you know what it is to wander, to be alone, to suffer loneliness. Some of you are in this right now. This is God proving to you that you cannot make it alone. You will be taken out.

Community

Opposite of loneliness, of individualistic, loner, hero, flying solo

(The Lone Ranger even had Tonto)

Synergistic, interdependent

Team

Full humanity is found in community

**App:** Therefore, b/c of what we have been given, what we have received, we work hard to bring the gospel of the kingdom, of this New City, to bear. To put it on display through our thanksgiving-ness. We are a thankful people, an optimistic people, a rejoicing people. What is going on with them? Why are they so... happy? Let the redeemed of the Lord say so... b/c of what He has done!

## **2From Prison to Freedom (verses 10-16)**

Vs. 10-11 – natural consequences of rebellion against God, rejecting His counsel, going their own way. They are suffering from their own guilt. They are chained up, in a dungeon, in darkness. Iron gates and bars keep them locked up.

The discipline of the Lord. When you reject God's counsel, you are believing that consequences won't happen to you, that you are different somehow.

The repeated theme of "Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble..."

ILLUS of Wayne Nevlous – why aren't you reaching out to these guys? I need to let them go and do life on their own so they experience some pain...

"Then they cried to the Lord..." There is a crying to the Lord, and then there is a crying to the Lord. A crying to the Lord of one of many options, and then a crying to the Lord as the only option. A crying out that is one of anger – why aren't you helping me? – And a crying out to the Lord – You are my only hope.

A crying out that is a mini-surrender – I acknowledge I need a little help over the top, but most of this is on me – and a crying out that is full surrender – I cry out of my weakness, my complete powerlessness, my utter inability to do anything on my own.

There is a crying out of blaming God – why am I in this situation, God hates me! – to a crying out of, help me, for I have gotten myself into a horrible mess and I deserve it, I have rebelled, I have done terrible things.

What kind of crier are you?

Don't rescue people too quickly! Some need to experience the far country, the desert, the pain of loneliness.

Wandering in sin is bondage... for some it feels like freedom... freedom to do what you want to do... but for some, God leads them to wallow in it until they come to their senses... this is not freedom, this is bondage!

Image from Rose Marie Miller: I'm a caterpillar in a ring of fire – I have no way out except from above.

B/c you see that these rebels were locked in prisons of God's making. He is punishing them, He made these prisons. So how can He free them from what they deserve? Doesn't it seem unjust? Doesn't it seem wrong? Didn't He justly sentence them for disobeying, for rebelling against Him? Yes.

How can He do this? He can do this only because He bore His own judgment in Jesus. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13). He satisfied His own justice the only way it could be perfectly met, through the payment of His own death.

Can you pay that price? If you reject Jesus, you will > the eternal suffering of bondage, shame, loneliness, and darkness of Hell. But through Christ, by faith in His work, you are forgiven, and you are welcomed out of bondage and into freedom.

### **3From Lies to the Word of Truth (verses 17-20) (see Christ)**

The City of FreeWord

Vs. 17-18 – foolish decisions that brought suffering.

What is foolishness? Proverbs – the fool goes his own way. What is sin? The exaltation of the self. My way is best. Why can't people see things my way.

The second two have in common the willful, deliberate, repetitive scorning of God's Word and ways. (see p. 41 in Unlimited Grace – warn people for presuming upon God's grace and making no effort to honor Him or that dishonoring Him with your behavior is no big deal b/c you are not under law but under grace.)

The healing power of the Word > Here is the diagnosis... here is the truth of what you need, what medicine, what prescription, what course of healing you need to embark upon... The Word makes promises. Will you take them in? Will you believe?

**Response > So what? What now? Praise, thanksgiving, sacrifices > what does this look like?**

Do you have an attitude of usability? Some margin in your life? The joy and connection and intimacy you have in small groups could work against your spiritual growth if that group becomes too important to you...

**Word** > Healing power of His Word, words that heal and restore (counseling gifts)

**Conc** >

This is a salvation story... Who are Christians? What are Christians? Why outreach? Why tell others? Why sing about it? B/c this is who we are, what we have received that we want to shout about...

Where is the City of FreeWord? The Church. The Church is the City of FreeWord. We are an outpost of the New City, the Free City, the City where the Word is Heard, Loved,

Taught, Caught, Enjoyed, Received. This is where you live. This is where Jesus has brought you b/c He bought you. He has you on the path of restoration through living in this City, the city of the church.