Thank Jesus When Calamity Strikes

Psalm 107:31–43
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We had a great experience at the parade on Friday evening. The collective effort of six people was encouraging. We came into the evening with a positive attitude. We left having given out lots of candy and numerous cards with info about our church and a scripture passage. I talked very briefly with students who like my I love Jesus shirt. I was able to look people in the eye. I heard people say that they loved Jesus. I give thanks to the Lord that in about forty-five minutes of walking and talking we had the opportunity to reach out to hundreds of people. If our service to the Lord helps one person draw closer to Jesus, praise the Lord.

I knew some of the people I saw. I've shared the gospel previously with some of the people I saw. We spent a little bit of time scattering the seeds of the gospel. As our Wednesday Bible Study group will tell you whether the soil is hard, shallow, filled with weeds, or good soil our ministry is to scatter the seeds.

I want to let you know that through the ups and downs of life we can be faithful and we can praise the Lord. God will take care of the rest just like He always has and always will.

Psalm 107:31–32 (NIV) Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people and praise him in the council of the elders.

Every moment and situation is an opportunity to <u>praise the Lord</u>. The sun, moon, stars; the food on your table; your friends; your job; your family are gifts from God. Our God is the provider of our lives. Saints and sinners alike have God as their provider. He provides for all of us. Those who give thanks are the people who trust Him. They see God's hand intricately involved in their lives. They are able to rejoice and give thanks every day of their lives. They are able to praise the Lord regardless of their situation. Their trust in the risen Savior and Lord grows, becomes deeper.

We don't worship the sun, the moon or the stars, we worship the Creator God. We don't worship our food, we worship the Provider God. We don't worship our job, we worship the Sustainer God. You see where I'm going?

Some people are consumed by the weather. They may not say they are worshiping it, but it's what controls their thinking and their actions. Some people are captured by food, they use it to control their emotions. They follow their cravings and indulge until they feel better. Some people need their jobs to give them meaning and purpose. They are devoted and put their work ahead of everything else in life.

God still provides the sunshine and the rain, the food on their table, along with their family and friends. They don't trust Him, they don't follow Him, they don't give thanks to Him. Their trust is in so many other things. They don't see what they are trusting. They don't see what God is doing for them.

Meeting together with other believers empowers us to praise God. What I've just described is the life of so many people who are Christians. God provides for their needs, but they fail to give thanks to

Jesus for His blessings. Jesus has saved them from their sins. He has redeemed them from the punishment of their sins. He has delivered them to a new life now and for eternity.

What's the problem? They don't see God in their daily lives. They don't give thanks to God as they go through their day.

Many Christians live day after day for their own desires and pleasures. As each day goes by Jesus is on the margin, the edge of their lives. There is little to interaction with Jesus. When the calamity hits they cry out to the Lord. They want the help of God to provide a miracle in their lives. They want God to rescue them from their situation. They want their lives to go back to when they thought they were in control.

As we come together, as we set aside time each week worshiping Jesus with other believers we move from a crisis Christian to a Christian who is giving thanks each day.

Psalm 107:33–40(NIV) God turned rivers into a desert, flowing springs into thirsty ground, and fruitful land into a salt waste, because of the wickedness of those who lived there. He turned the desert into pools of water and the parched ground into flowing springs; there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle. They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest; he blessed them, and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish. Then their numbers decreased, and they were humbled by oppression, calamity and sorrow; he who pours contempt on nobles made them wander in a trackless waste.

God has been directing our lives, but we fail to <u>thank Him and trust Him</u>. Psalm 107 is most likely for the gathering of God's people in Jerusalem. As the once scattered Jewish people were returning to Jerusalem, they were reminded of what God had done. They had been held as captives for over seventy years. Most of the generation of people who had witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem were dead. Now they are coming to the land of their ancestors. They are there to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. They are coming back into a land of sinners who worship idols.

Throughout this psalm a new practice is recommended to the people. They are to give thanks to God. God is worthy of their thanks because He loves them. God is worthy of their gratitude because He has provided for them, sustained them and rescued them over and over again. This psalm has countless reminders of God's provision for their lives. Many of these accounts are moments we remember: the travels of Abraham, deliverance from Egypt, the conquering of the promised land, the building of their nation.

We are reminded that God gave them what they needed each day. They received blessings they could not comprehend. Too often on these occasions the people failed to give thanks. Their lack of gratitude lead them away from God toward idols. We see God's judgment upon them again.

They were despicable in their attitude toward the Lord and received what they deserved. It's their willingness to return to idol worship that brought about God's judgement time and time again. A lack of gratitude brought about their own decline. A lack of trust brought their destruction. A lack of spiritual vision demonstrated their faithlessness.

Nothing has changed in the attitudes of people. Over the thousands and thousands of years since God has created us, we have made the choice to do our own thing. We say we are following the Lord, but we're still guilty of worshiping something other then the Savior of the world. We praise ourselves,

we see our accomplishments and fail to see God's hand making our success possible. We blame God when it all goes bad. We fail to repent of our unfaithfulness.

Here is the love of God, here is God acting with mercy, here is the grace of God: He is always ready to forgive. We can be filled with pride that makes a balloon float away in the sky. We can be as disgusting as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. We can be as foolish as people who build their house upon the sand. We can be as self-absorb as baby with bottle. God is ready to welcome us back. Jesus has paid the price for our sin. Jesus has given us the power to overcome our weaknesses and the devil's temptations.

Psalm 107:41–42 (NIV)
But God lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths.

Those who see God's power and grace will be <u>singing God's praise</u>. Everybody who is raised up and singing praises is needy. We think of needy people as those without food, clothing or shelter. We think about people who are homeless or nearly homeless. Needy people can be those who are abused and oppressed.

Our need is not always for the physical things of this life. God has always been ready to help those who were afflicted physically. The Word of God is filled with one account after another of people who lacked food, clothing and shelter. The Lord came to them, provided for them and sustained their lives.

Our need is often times emotional and mental. We are so easily susceptible to the mood swings from sad to bad to glad to mad. There are bad thoughts, negative thoughts in our heads. The ideas of the world beat us down, get mixed around in the space between our ears. Anyone can be discouraged, depressed, and even feel defeated. Jesus said to these people come to me and I will give you rest.

Our need is always spiritual. We cannot live without God. We can exist: eat, work, sleep over and over again. But we aren't alive unless we have Jesus. We aren't alive until we give our sins, our lives to Jesus. Jesus said I have come to seek and save the lost.

Everyone in this room at some moment in our lives rejected the Lord. We have at some point looked out for number one. We have been selfish, self-centered, self-indulgent when we should have been trusting Jesus. We have sinned intentionally, without regard for our soul, but merely for the pleasure of the moment. Jesus loves you in spite of yourself.

Everyone of us in this room at some moment in our lives experienced the blessings of God and didn't give thanks. We asked for God's guidance and direction. Jesus made a way, opened a door, provided an opportunity. We went through the door, took advantage of the opportunity. We didn't say thank you Jesus. Jesus cares about you even though you're indifferent to Him.

Everyone of us in this room at some moment in our lives received God's grace. But, our eyes were closed, we weren't listening, we didn't pay attention. God provide for our needs. God sustained our lives. We just took it, went about our own business, doing our own thing. Jesus gave His life in exchange for your life.

God sees our need as self-inflicted troubles. God sees our need as being without a Savior. God sees us as needing Him. When we call upon Jesus, His power is released into our lives. We experience

His peace. We realize His hope. We see that we are in His hands, under His protection, receiving His provision for life.

When we see that God has the power to rescue us and to save us, we give thanks. When we see that God gives the grace to set us on a new path, with new attitudes we give thanks.

This is when we have our spiritual eyes opened by casting off the blinders of selfishness and sin. Our spiritual heart and mind become aware of God's glory. We find trusting Jesus is as easy as breathing. Trusting Jesus becomes as simple as keeping our eyes open.

Psalm 107:43 (NIV)
Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord.

Look for the Lord's mercy and strength <u>praising Jesus all the time</u>. Through all the ups and downs, through all of our sin, Jesus has saved us. Are you wise enough to see that? Are your eyes open and your ears listening?

When you open your eyes and ears you will experience something remarkable about Jesus. He loves you. He is worthy of praise and adoration. He is worthy of your devotion and loyalty. He can always be trusted. He will never fail you.

I've gone through moments in my life when everything seemed like a nightmare. It was so difficult, so disruptive, so debilitating that I was spinning out of control. I could not imagine what to do. I didn't have an answer for all of it was happening. I wondered where was my Savior and Lord. What was my strength and my hope doing while all that happened?

I came to realize that Jesus is who He says He is. That made all the difference. Even though I was a Christian, Jesus was directing my life. Even though I was disciple committed to making disciples Jesus was working through all of my junk to make me see how much I needed Him.

My eyes were open to the mercy and grace of God. My ears could hear the love and the instructions of the Lord. My life was transformed as I came to trust Jesus more, to rest upon Him more, and to understand what I need for each day. I needed Jesus. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus for letting me experience my own selfishness to the point of seeing it's futility. Thank you Jesus for letting start to sink in the waves of my anxiety. Thank you Jesus that you were there with me.

Whether you believe God has been calling you to Him, there is one simple truth: Jesus wants to save you. You are selfish. You are the product of your own self-destructive nature. Jesus can save you from yourself, from all of your sins, and from every temptation.

You need to believe Jesus. You need to believe His Word. You need to believe His promises. Most importantly you need to believe that He died as your sin, then rose from the dead. When Jesus died He forgave you of every kind of sin you have committed, and you have thought about committing. When Jesus rose from the dead He gave you the opportunity for a new life.

He is waiting for you to call out to Him. God has brought you to this moment in your life. He has prepared everything in your life so that you will choose Him. Agree with Jesus that you need to be saved. Agree with Jesus that you have failed to trust Him. Agree with Jesus that He can give you a new life now and for all of eternity. Will agree to follow Jesus? Will you commit your life to Jesus? Will you turn away from you sin and live for Jesus?