

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
CVII. Learning To Adjust To God Amid Trials
(Psalm 107:1-43)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Last Monday, a local radio talk show host expressed dismay over his ignorance of God's intentions with mankind in view of the significant trials that people face today. Many others are concerned, too, and as an example, several columnists have recently aired alarm over the world's population. For years, we were told that "the world would be better off with fewer people" with "less depredation of natural resources, less urban overcrowding, more room for other species . . ." (Michael Barone, "The world's disastrous population implosion," Republican-American, May 20, 2024, p. 8A) This view has actually influenced the world's birth rate to shrink, but not with good results:

(1) "China's economy, the world's second-largest, teeters on the verge of collapse thanks to the prolonged deflation of a nationwide real estate bubble and a worker shortage that was an inevitable result of its 'one-child' policy" for married couples. ("International Whack-a-Mole," Ibid., May 24, 2024, p. 8A) "Should China's economy go under, a severe worldwide recession would be all but inevitable." (Ibid.)

(2) "(Russia's) economy is threatened by a population decline on par with China's," but the "underlying cause is that life under President Vladimir Putin and his kleptocracy has been so dismal for so long that Russian couples simply don't want to have children." (Ibid.)

(3) "(B)irthrates are also falling in . . . Latin America . . . the Economist reports that now 'the region is home to some of the fastest falling fertility rates in the world.'" (Megan McArdle, "The only fix to Social Security's problems? More babies." (Ibid., May 17, 2024, p. 6A)

(4) "American Enterprise Institute scholar Nicholas Eberstadt" writes that "as Japan, South Korea and China boomed economically, their fertility rates fell below replacement . . . (T)he result is that East Asia's working-age cohort is now shrinking . . . These countries . . . 'will find it harder to generate economic growth, accumulate investments, and build wealth; to fund their safety nets; and to mobilize their armed forces.'" (Ibid., Barone)

(5) "(O)n the other side of the Pacific Rim, between 2020 and 2023, California's population fell by 538,000, or 1.4%. This is a reversal of more than 150 years of above-U.S.-average growth, and despite the state's physical climate and beautiful scenery. This astonishing trend owes much to dreadful public policies that have incentivized modest-income people with families, including immigrants, to move out." (Ibid.) (f) "(T)he negative effects of sub-replacement population growth are already being felt . . . in the United States and Europe" as "(g)overnment pensions and elderly medical care are proving difficult to sustain." (Ibid.)

Need: *So, we ask, "With all the trials facing the world, how can we discern God's interests so as to adjust well?"*

- I. Though Psalm 107:1-3 opens with a call to praise God for His "loyal love" (*hesed*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1070; H. A. W., Theol. Wrdbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. I, p. 305-307) and continues by explaining God's application of His "loyal love" to Israel in her history in Psalm 107:4-42, Psalm 107:43 concludes with a call to examine verses 1-42 to learn a huge lesson from Israel's history about God's "loyal love":**
- A. Verse 43 states that he who is wise, let him "observe" (*shamar*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 1036-1037) Israel's history in verses 1-42 and "diligently consider" (*bin*, "discern," Ibid., p. 106-107; here, the intensive reflexive Hithpolel stem [*yitbonenu*]) the "loyal love" (*hesed*, Ibid., Kittel, p. 1071) of the Lord.
- B. Psalm 107:1-42 is then instructive, telling how and why God dealt with His people in trials and in blessing.
- II. In Psalm 107:2-3, the psalmist reported that the Lord had just redeemed Israel from captivity, and Deuteronomy 28:15, 58-68 reveals that this captivity would have occurred due to God's discipline for sin.**
- III. Israel's release from captivity had been a great blessing, expressed in four word pictures in verses 4-32:**
- A. Release from national captivity was like people who were lost in a wilderness, hungry and thirsty, who cried unto the Lord only to see Him lead them to a city where they could settle and have their needs fulfilled, v. 4-9.
- B. Release from national captivity was like people who were sinful prisoners suffering in chains in a dungeon and subjected to hard labor only to cry unto the Lord for help to see Him completely liberate them, v. 10-16.
- C. Release from national captivity was like people who were very ill in punishment for rebelling against God until they cried out to the Lord for help only to see Him deliver them from death, healing them, v. 17-22.
- D. Release from national captivity was like people who were sailors facing a terrifying storm at sea until they cried out to the Lord and He delivered them, bringing them to their safe haven, Psalm 107:23-32.

IV. In Psalm 107:33-42, the psalmist summarized Israel’s historical experiences, noting how God had alternately blessed or punished His people due to their obedience or sin as a result of His “loyal love”:

- A. God’s *hesed*, His “loyal love,” works two ways – either to discipline severely or to bless greatly, depending on how His people respond to His commands to them (as follows):
1. The Mosaic Covenant at Deuteronomy 28:1-14 promised great, comprehensive blessings for obedience.
 2. However, since Israel was in covenant relationship with the Lord, if she disobeyed Him, God would discipline her to the degree of her rebellion against Him (Deuteronomy 28:15-68), for whom the Lord loves, He corrects as a father corrects the son in whom he delights, Proverbs 3:12 (cf. Hebrews 12:6).
- B. Thus, Psalm 107:33-42 summarized how God had punished Israel for sin (verses 33-34) or blessed her for obedience (verses 35-38) only to punish her again for more sin (verses 39-40) while blessing the upright so that the upright rejoiced in the Lord (verses 41-42a) while God kept the mouths of the wicked shut (v. 42b).

Lesson: *By diligently considering God’s dealings with Israel in her history, we observe that God’s loyal love is so intense, that if His people disobeyed Him, they faced great trials, but if they heeded Him, He greatly blessed them.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we get to know God’s Word to discern His expectations of us that we obey Him for great blessing instead of disobeying Him only to face dreadful trials!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and provide additional guidance . . .)

Scripture reveals God’s will regarding the issues of concern noted in our sermon introduction, and we view them for our understanding as to what God wants us to do for His blessing (as follows):

(1) On the issue of the world’s population, Genesis 1:28 has God telling mankind at creation to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth with people! God has not modified that order, so producing children is a blessing!

(2) On real estate bubbles [and livelihood needs in general], (a) 1 Timothy 6:8 shows that God wants believers to obtain *diatrophas*, “the means of subsistence” (Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 189) and “clothing and housing cover” (*skepasmata*, *Ibid.*, p. 761). (b) Though President Biden is indifferent to the inflation-adjusted shrinkage of Americans’ paychecks under Bidenomics (E. J. Antoni, “Biden’s appalling indifference to soaring food prices,” *Ibid.*, *Republican-American*, May 29, 2024, p. 7A), Scripture reveals steps we can take to help ourselves: (i) We must obtain an adequate, secure income before owning a home (Proverbs 24:27), and (ii) a house is built by wisdom, (iii) established by understanding, and (iv) filled with treasures by knowledge, Proverbs 24:3. (c) In application, according to investment firm Acorns’ “2024 Money Matters report,” regardless if “23% of Americans are concerned with becoming homeless over a number of financial pressures” (Brad Smith, “23% of Americans are worried about becoming homeless: Acorns,” May 28, 2024; *finance.yahoo.com*), debt and failure to save and invest largely fuel this crisis (*Ibid.*), so we must obey God’s call for responsibility, wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

(3) On “kleptocracy” in government (in Russia), but elsewhere, what constitutes oppressive government taxes and regulations, (a) Romans 13:6-7 orders us to pay all tributes and taxes due. (b) However, Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 called believers to work independently to meet their material needs, so our part as believers should be to seek to be independent of the government in livelihood issues with God’s promise that our needs will be sufficiently met.

(4) As for the unsettled future prospects of our nation’s Social Security program, of pensions, of savings, etc. due to today’s world problems that affect the economy, Proverbs 27:23-27 guides us: (a) Collected wealth (v. 24a KJV “riches”) from the Hebrew noun *hosen* (*Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 340) that applies to collected valuables like retirement accounts, savings, annuities, pensions, Social Security, etc., do not last forever, and a “crown” (v. 24b KJV) from the Hebrew noun *nezer* (*Ibid.*, p. 634), representing political influence, is also temporary. (b) Thus, in view of the future uncertainty of collected wealth and political influence to secure it in today’s world, we must focus on our accessibility to time-proven, regular, even lowly income streams that may involve manual labor like hay mowing for raising lambs and goats to provide for a household and even to maintain one’s servant girls, what the wealthy in Solomon’s era had! (c) So, while saving and investing in regular instruments for collecting wealth, we must also look for opportunities for regular income streams of time-honored stability, regardless how lowly or menial the work effort involved.

(5) On medical care for the elderly, (a) we should first try home remedies (1 Timothy 5:23), but if more help is needed, seek (b) many counsellors for advice, planning or waging war [on disease] (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. May we get to know God’s Word to discern His expectations of us that we obey Him for great blessing instead of disobeying Him that leads to facing dreadful trials!