

**Psalm 107: 23-32; “Giving Thanks to the Lord for His Goodness”,**  
**A Thanksgiving Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on**  
**November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012, in the Morning Worship Service.**

It is verse 31 that I want to focus our attention upon this morning. The words of this verse are repeated 4 times in this psalm; verse 8, verse 15, and verse 21; all with the same wording. “Oh that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” If it is repeated this many times it must be very important that we actually do give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to us, the children of men. It seems evident to me that if our God longs for anything, it is for men to be thankful, and to give Him thanks for His wonderful works to them. It seems evident that many people who should be giving Him thanks are not giving Him thanks; otherwise the word, “Oh” would not be used by the Psalmist. “Oh, that men would give Him thanks...” He was certainly guided in his choice of words by the Holy Spirit. Let me ask you this morning whether you praise the Lord for His goodness to you? Some of you might say to me, “Well, if you knew what I was going through in the experience of my heart, the ups and downs, the highs and the lows, you would realize that it is very hard for me to thank the Lord for His goodness when I am feeling so low.” “It’s like there is a storm in my soul.” And I would answer you, that it is true that your experience may not presently be leading you to thank the Lord for His goodness, but after hearing me preach this sermon to you, I trust that it will. These verses are about mariners. They are about sea-faring men. And I am going to compare their experience with yours for a few minutes here this morning. I think that you will be able to be a more thankful person if you will consider 3 things with me from these verses. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – You should consider that God is sovereign over all the storms of your life, and for this you should give Him thanks. (verses 23-26a) 2<sup>nd</sup> – You should consider that God can calm the storm, and give you quiet, and for this you should give Him thanks. (verses 26b-29) And 3<sup>rd</sup>- You should consider that God is the One who guides you to your desired haven, and for this you should give Him thanks. (verse 30-32)

**1<sup>st</sup> – God is sovereign over all the storms of your life, and for this you should give Him thanks.**

Verse 23 - “Those who go down to the sea in ships, who see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep.” For thousands of years in the history of the world there have been men who have done their business on the sea; men who do their business on great waters. They are men who are transporting people or goods; going from one destination to another. They are men, more than others, “who see the works of the Lord”. They know that the seas are the bridges to the continents of land where they can go, taking their precious cargo, so that it can be bought or sold. Some men have been brave enough or foolhardy enough to do

their business upon these waters. They take their chances and they hope that they will be safe. That is how many people think. They think of the safety of their journeys as matters of chance. Some men make it all the way through their journey to their desired destination. Others have been shipwrecked or lost at sea in a storm. Some men are kept safe and brought back to land. We must ask: But Who is the One and the only One who brings the mariner safely through the stormy seas to the land? Our text says that it is God. And for this the mariner should pray, and for this, he should give thanks when he is brought safely through. But not only the mariner, but you too. For you are a mariner on the sea of life. Your precious soul is the passenger in the ship of your body, traveling upon the seas of life, and the desired destination is heaven. Not all people make it there, for all people do not know how to navigate stormy waters, or what to do when the waves are lifted up, but we all do our business on these waters of life.

I am here this morning to tell you that stormy waters are only navigated by faith in Jesus Christ. We all fear storms; we all fear shipwreck, or we should. All unbelievers should fear the punishment of hell; of the everlasting torments that await those who forget, or neglect, or despise God and their own eternal soul. All professed Christians fear, or they should fear, the shipwreck of their faith. But how many of us understand that God is the One who sovereignly brings the storms that we pass through in this life? He brings them to accomplish His good purposes in justice, in grace, and in guiding and directing our lives and the course of nations as well. For this we should give Him thanks. Storms are not brought by mother nature. They do not happen because “El Nino” is off the course of South America. They happen at the command of Almighty God. Notice the language used here in verse 25 – “For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea.” “They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble.” God is sovereign in giving such men good sailing and fair weather, but God is sovereign in bringing the storm as well. He commands the kind of weather that the sailing men will have.

Let’s look at what God can, and does do, in bringing a storm. Turn with me over to Jonah Chapter 1. “Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, ‘Arise go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.’” “But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” “He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.” “But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.” “Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load.” “But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, and had lain down, and was fast asleep.” “So the captain came to him, and said to him, ‘What do you mean, sleeper?’” “Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we

may not perish.” Now, notice here that this is almost an exact scenario of what is written in Psalm 107, verses 25-28. “For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea.” “They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble.” “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.” “Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble...” Here in Jonah it says that the Lord “sent out a great wind on the sea.” The NAS says, “The Lord hurled a great wind on the sea, and there was a great storm on the sea”.

You see how sovereign God is over the weather. You see how he can, any time that he pleases, bring a great storm to accomplish His purpose. What was his purpose? Well, I think that His purpose was to save certain men. His greatest purpose was to save Nineveh, that great city, in which there were more than one hundred twenty thousand persons who couldn't discern the difference between their right hand and their left. It was his express purpose that they as a city be brought to repentance. God can save cities as well as individual people. We can give thanks this morning that God's express purpose is to most definitely save some men; a great number which no man can number. He did not choose other cities to hear the message of salvation in that day. Out of all of them, He chose Nineveh, that great and mighty, but wicked city. We should see from this that the only reason that people come to repentance, the only reason that they are saved from their sins, is because God purposes to do so. They cannot save themselves. They cannot change their own hearts. Many, if not most, are ignorant of the gospel unless someone brings it to them. The storms of life are the trials that we go through. We will either build upon the words of Jesus and be wise, or we will suffer the shipwreck of our soul. God purposes to save some men through the foolishness of the preaching of the gospel. In relation to our day, the gospel is being freely offered to all men. the Lord Jesus says, “I came not to call the righteous”, that is those who already think that they are righteous in their own eyes, “but sinners to repentance”. Just before that statement, in Luke 5: 32, Jesus was asked by the scribes and Pharisees, “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.” So we see from this that there is a general love of God (His good-will in the gospel) which is extended to sinners of all kinds and nations of people. And then there is God's Providence which so orders the storms in your life, that you have the opportunity to see Him and His purposes more clearly. His sending of His own dear Son into the world caused a storm. It pointed out that all men were in danger of perishing on the sea of life. Jesus came into this world as the Great Physician who associated with sinners. And yet He knew that all sinners would not be saved, but only those who are effectually called by God the Father. But He would cause a storm in the thinking of many, so that they could be saved. God is entirely sovereign in whom He chooses to bring to salvation. But yet He invites all those who are weary of their sin to come to His

Son. Listen to Matthew 11: 25 – “At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.” “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father.” “Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” And then He gives this invitation – “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Let me ask you if you are thankful for this, this morning? That God in his sovereignty brought a storm into your life, into your thinking, so that you in particular might be saved? God providentially ordered all things in accordance with the counsel of His will, that you would most definitely be saved; not that you simply might be saved, but that you would most definitely and completely be saved. With men there are many maybes and perhaps’ but with God, He most certainly knows what He intends to do, and He does it. This leads us to our second point concerning Psalm 107, and also the book of Jonah –

**2ndly - You should consider that God can calm the storm, and give you quiet, and for this you should give Him thanks.** (verse 26b-29)

Verse 26 says, “They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble.” “They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end.” “Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses.” Some storms are worse than others. Some storms are of greater strength and duration than others. But no storm lasts a moment longer than it takes for God’s purpose to be fulfilled, and for this you should give Him thanks, and ask the question, “What will it take for God’s purpose to be fulfilled in my life?” Will it take me coming to “my wits’ end?” Let’s go back to the book of Jonah, Chapter 1, again. Verse 6 – “So the captain came to him and said to him, ‘What do you mean sleeper?’ “Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.” A heathen man, one who has gods, but does not know the true God, will pray when a storm comes into his life. Often he is concerned about his own life and the life of others around him. In this case, these heathen men were more zealous for prayer than the man who did know God, the man who was supposed to be praying more than they all; the one who should have been on his way to Nineveh but took the ship to Tarshish because he had a sinful problem that God was going to deal with. Jonah was not only not at his wits’ end, but he was trying to ignore the fact that he had a problem at all. His problem was that he did not want God to show mercy to the wicked Ninevites. He thought that God ought to be judging them rather than having mercy upon them. It is an awful thing to see that some heathen people can be more zealous in their duty to pray than those who know God; those who ought to be more fervent in prayer because of the power of the Holy Spirit within them. But sometimes it is so. It is an awful thing when those who are Christians are more for seeing judgment come upon a city or a society than for God showing them mercy.

Ask yourself this morning if you are praying for sinful people who do not know God; whether you want them to be shown mercy and be given grace by God to repent and to come to know Him? Jonah was falling down in his responsibility, and in this regard it was displeasing to God, but it was not beyond God to find a solution. For this we should give Him thanks. Verse 7 – “And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.’” “So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.” “Then they said to him, ‘Please tell us!’” “For whose cause is this trouble upon us?” “What is your country?” “And of what people are you?” “So he said to them, ‘I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.’” “Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, ‘Why have you done this?’” “For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.” “Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?’” “For the sea was growing more tempestuous.” “And he said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you.’” “For I know that this great tempest is because of me.” Do you see, dear people, that the Lord can hear the prayers of even unbelievers if they earnestly seek Him and ask Him for wisdom and grace. God answered their drawing of the lot. God showed them that Jonah was indeed the greatest reason for the storm. But God also showed them something of their need to know Him according to truth. For verse 13 says, “Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous.” “And he said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you.’” “For I know that this great tempest is because of me.” These mariners had a human love for each other and they even a care and concern to get Jonah to land with them. But they did not know the ways of God. So what did they do? They prayed again, and this time not to their own gods, but to the One and Only True and Living God. Verse 14 – “Therefore they cried out to the Lord and said, ‘We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.’” “So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.” “Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.” God convinced them that He was indeed the God above all of their Gods and so they revered Him, and offered sacrifice to Him, and they even took vows, perhaps in relation to their having regard for Him alone. They apparently were saved by the Lord, as far as we can tell, even though their knowledge was so primitive. Let us understand that God is able to calm the storm of your life, when you acknowledge Him and pray earnestly and fervently to Him and take vows to have Him to be your God. He is able to calm the storm and even make it quiet for you.

But notice on what basis that all this happened. It was when they threw Jonah into the sea. I wonder if you have noticed that all during this time when the mariners were trying to find out whose fault it was that this great storm had come

upon them, that Jonah was really quite calm and deliberate Himself. In this regard Jonah is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Except for the fact that Jonah was running away from the Lord and from his responsibility to preach to sinful men, and the Lord Jesus was running toward the cross and to his responsibility to preach and to suffer for sinful men; we need to understand that both were calmly deliberate that they would have to suffer so that others could know the peace of having the storm calmed for them. It was when Jonah told them to throw him overboard that the sea then became quiet. Even though the mariners resisted throwing Jonah overboard, they eventually did it, because the storm was that great. They came to see that they could not save themselves by their own efforts at rowing against the wind of the storm. Even so, it was because Jesus deliberately went to the cross and suffered there on behalf of sinners, that you now can find by faith in Him, that your personal storm related to God's wrath coming against you for your sins, ceases. You had to cease from our own works and efforts to save yourself, and in your mind you could not spare His having had to suffer for you. You come to believe that Jesus most definitely did need to suffer for you so that you could find peace from the storm of God's wrath coming against you. Now that you know Christ, you continue to cling to Christ, and you find further, that He by His powerful grace can cleanse your conscience and give you peace and quietness of heart in relation to all of your troubles; sinful or otherwise. The winds and the high waves of an heart agitated by the troubles of how they see themselves in the sight of the holy God are stilled. "He calms the storm, so that its waves are still." "Then they are quiet. Let me ask you this morning if you have a quiet heart, because you have come to know and experience the power of the risen Christ giving you grace and peace to meet every emotional and spiritual need? Jonah was 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the fish, but the only way that he ever came out of there was because Jesus would be crucified for him. And Jesus was 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the earth. For this we should give God thanks, because as believers, we now know the power of Christ to deliver us from all of our fears. Listen to Psalm 34: 4 – "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." "They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed." "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Will you not entrust the Lord Jesus with your greatest cares, your fears, and the worries of your soul? "Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you." Find peace and quiet in your heart, even now.

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> - You should consider that God is the One who guides you to your desired haven, and for this you should give Him thanks.** (verse 30-32)

Verse 30 – "Then they are glad because they are quiet; so He guides them to their desired haven." "Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" "Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the elders." Here is

another indication that these verses are to be applied to the people of God when they are going through storms in their Christian life. When the Lord calms the storm for these mariners, then they should exalt Him in the assembly of the people, and praise Him in the company of the elders. I suppose that this could mean the elders of the city in which they lived and company of townsfolk gathered to hear of their great deliverance from a literal physical storm. But it seems better to apply it to Christians who have experienced the grace of Christ at work in their hearts bringing them out of their distresses by calming the storms in their hearts. The desired haven for the Christian is heaven; there is no doubt about it. But it is also very desirable to find that haven in your heart now of being made glad in the presence of Christ, that you can be quiet because you know that Christ is leading you and guiding you all the way to heaven. The Lord would have you to be able to give thanks in everything. Indeed, this is His will for you in Christ Jesus. And you should praise Him not only in private, but also in the assembly of the saints; God's dear people. You should praise Him to the elders of the church as well. He is your hope and stay. He is your refuge, your strong tower, and your deliverer. For you have come to know the reality of the blessed words of that hymn – *On Christ the solid Rock I stand*. “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' Name.” “When darkness veils His lovely face; I rest on His unchanging grace.” “In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.” “His oath, His covenant, His blood support me in the whelming flood; when all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.” “On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand; all other ground is sinking sand.”