

Psalm 107, Ezra 5-10 (#84) Revised 2023

Psalm 107 — This is a song which reminds us that God is faithful to forgive and rescue us when we falter. *This chapter describes different adversities that God allows us to endure, whether caused by our own choices or by circumstances we can't control. What did this adversity cause them to do? See verses 6, 13, 19, and 28. Have you ever had such an experience that you responded in the same way? If so, describe.*

Ezra 5— Now God intervenes to get the construction work moving again by sending the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to challenge the people to finish the temple. After being strengthened by the Lord, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the leaders were not intimidated by Tattenai, the governor, when he questioned them about what authorization they had to rebuild the temple. The letter by Tattenai sent to King Darius contained the correct facts that were given to him by Zerubbabel as to why they had the right to build the temple. King Darius was asked to search the archives to verify the words of Zerubbabel. *Describe the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah, its results, and how is it similar to the same gift in the New Testament? See I Corinthians 14:3.*

Ezra 6— King Darius searches for the scroll giving the original decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and eventually finds it at the fortress of Ecbatana. The King orders Governor Tattenai and his colleagues not only to not hinder the work, but to facilitate the building of the temple by supplying the funds and materials necessary to complete it. Within four years the temple is finished (515 B.C.), and the Passover and seven-day Feast of the Unleavened is celebrated with great rejoicing and with the offering of sacrifices to Yahweh recognizing that He had changed the heart of the king. “The priests were appointed by their divisions and the Levites by their groups to the service of God in Jerusalem (v. 18 CSB).” *What lesson can we learn in this chapter concerning our relationship with rulers, elected officials, or those in authority over us? See verse 22, Proverbs 21:1, and I Timothy 2:1-2.*

Ezra 7— Ezra, a descendent of Aaron and expert in the Law of Moses, was commissioned by King Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem with as many as would go with him to appoint magistrates and judges, administer justice, and teach the law of His God to all the people who live in Judah. The hand of Yahweh his God was with Ezra so that the king encouraged the people to send large quantities of gold, silver, wheat, wine, and oil and commanded that all those who serve in the temple would be free of paying taxes. Ezra praised the Lord his God for putting in the king's mind to glorify the house of the Lord in Jerusalem and also for being able to persuade the Jewish leaders to return with him. *What are the godly qualities you see in Ezra in this chapter?*

Ezra 8— The family leaders with their family members accompany Ezra on his journey with a total number of men being 1496 plus their wives and children. After traveling three days, Ezra stopped to find out how many Levites accompanied them and found none. Through the gracious hand of God, they persuaded 20 Levites with their families to go with them in order to share teaching duties in Judah. Ezra and all the people spent a time of prayer and fasting for protection for the long four-month journey (900 miles on foot), and the Lord granted them their request. They all arrived in Jerusalem and brought with them a large treasure of gold, silver, and other articles to the house of God and offered hundreds of burnt offerings to Yahweh. *In what way did Ezra show himself to be a great man of faith? Explain the circumstances. See verses 21 to 32.*

Ezra 9— Ezra became devastated when he heard that many of the men had married pagan wives including leaders and officials. Tearing his garments and pulling out his hair and beard, Ezra sat appalled and cried out to the Lord in repentance and humiliation. He gave a stirring and powerful prayer of repentance mentioning that the reason God's people became slaves in Babylon was for participating in the detestable practices of the heathen nations around them. Now with the evil of intermarriage practiced by many of the Jews, Ezra feared that they would return to the same sins that their forefathers had committed before the captivity and thus suffer the same consequences. *What was the reason Ezra said that intermarriage with the surrounding nations was wrong? See verses 10-15. Is it wrong for a Christian to marry a non-believer? See II Corinthians 6:14-16 and I Corinthians 7:39. Why?*

Ezra 10— “While Ezra prayed and confessed, weeping and falling facedown before the house of God, an extremely large assembly of Israelite men, women, and children gathered around him. The people also wept bitterly (vs. 1 HCSB).” Ezra called an assembly of everyone who lived in Judah for the purpose of confronting the sin of marrying foreign wives. Those who would not come to the meeting in Jerusalem within three days would forfeit all property and be excluded from the assembly. With nearly unanimous agreement, the people believed that this sin of marrying foreign wives was heaping great guilt on them and could eventually cause the complete annihilation of their nation. Starting with the priests and Levites, all those who had married foreign wives separated themselves from them. Because of this time of repentance and confession, the Lord worked in the heart of Nehemiah to come and lead the Jews in rebuilding the walls twelve years later. *What is the importance of repentance and confession in the life of the believer and the life of the church?*

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Psalm 108, Colossians 1-4, I Thessalonians 1-2 (#85) Revised 2023

Psalm 108 — David recalls God’s promises while asking for help against Israel’s foes. *David feels like God has rejected Israel (v. 11). What is his response? See verses 1-6, 12-13, also 7-9.*

Colossians— This book was written by the Apostle Paul about 60 A.D. when he was under house arrest in Rome. Paul had never been in the city of Colossae and so this church was founded by Epaphras, who was one of his converts who had reported to Paul heresies in the church. The theme of this epistle is the “Preeminence of Christ in all things.” “Jesus Christ is the supreme Lord of the universe and Head of the church and therefore He is the only One through whom forgiveness is possible, making legal obligations or philosophical studies irrelevant in matters of salvation.” #11 p. 309. In chapter two Paul condemned legalism, mysticism, and asceticism which began to cause havoc on the churches in Asia Minor. In chapter 3 through 4:6, Paul explains true godly behavior in the believer’s personal life as well as in the family and the workplace. The book ends with personal greetings to many believers in the church.

Colossians 1— Paul begins by commending the church for their faith in Christ, love for the saints, and hope that is reserved in heaven for them. This spiritual health of the believers was produced by the powerful message of the gospel which is bearing fruit and growing all over the world (vv. 1-8). He prayed that the saints in Colossae would know the will of God and have the power to obey it through right living. Because of the work of Christ, they were rescued from the dominion of darkness and received the forgiveness of sins (vv. 9-14). False teachers were trying to influence the church by saying that Christ did not actually become human flesh but was only spirit. The verses that follow (vv. 15-24) clearly define the person, nature, and work of Christ showing Him as the Lord of Creation (vv. 15-17) and the Lord of redemption (vv. 18-20). The very purpose of redemption is to take alienated and hostile creatures and reconcile them to their Creator through Christ’s death on the cross and present them holy and blameless. Now Paul shares the once hidden mystery that now he is making known to both Jews and Gentiles which is Christ living in us that gives us the “assurance of sharing His glory (NLT).” Paul’s goal was to preach Christ so that he may present everyone mature in Christ. *Explain the meaning of the following phrases given by the Apostle Paul about Christ: (1) “He is...the firstborn over all creation” (2) “He is...firstborn from among the dead,” and (3) “God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.” Verses 15, 18, and 19.*

Colossians 2— Although the Gnostics taught that there was a secret knowledge hidden from most believers, Paul taught that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, and therefore because we are united with Christ, all that we need is provided to us (v. 3). By faith we can live a Christ-centered life by letting our roots grow down deep in Him and allowing our lives to be built on Him. “For the entire fullness of God’s nature dwells bodily in Christ (v. 9 HCSB),” and “you also are complete through your union with Christ (v. 10 NLT).” Through this union, we have buried the old life of sin and have become alive in Christ with all our sins forgiven. The legal demands of the Old Testament law were erased and taken away by being nailed to the cross, thus disarming and defeating Satan and his host of evil spirits. Now Paul fights the legalism of false Jewish teachers who tried to add dietary laws and special days as part of the means of being saved in addition to believing in Christ. Paul said that these rules and rituals are only a shadow of the reality which is found in Christ. Don’t allow yourselves to get caught up in ascetic practices like the worship of angels, the seeing of visions, or other dietary regulations which are commands and doctrines of man but will not give you victory over evil desires. Only when we stay connected to Christ who is our head will we grow up healthy, strong, and properly nourished. *What were the philosophies that Paul warned the believers not to be captivated by (v. 8)?*

Colossians 3— A life honoring to Christ does not come through legalistic practices or ascetic behavior (chapter two) but comes when we set our hearts and minds on heaven’s priorities and eternal realities and thus receiving power for godly living through the indwelling presence of Christ. In order to do this, we need to put to death sins of sexual attitudes and behavior as well of sins of speech. #3, p. 2041. Since we are Christ’s chosen ones, we need to put on the six signs of love given in verses 12 and 13. Although the heretics were trying to cause division in the church, the believers were to allow the peace of Christ and the word of Christ to rule in their hearts. Verses 18 to 4:1 deal with the home and work-place by addressing wives and husbands, children and fathers, and slaves (employees) and masters (employers). Each believer has his or her own duties and rights, but everything is to be done for the Lord, knowing that if we properly respond to those in leadership or authority, we will receive an inheritance as our reward from the Lord someday. *How do you understand the role of husbands and wives in marriage as taught in the scriptures? See Verses 18-19, Ephesians 5:22-33, and I Peter 3:1-7.*

Colossians 4— In verses 2 to 6, Paul speaks of a believer’s responsibility to devote themselves to prayer and to share their faith to others. With the exception of Romans, Paul’s closes his epistle with more personal news, greetings, and final commands than any other of his books. To summarize this book, “Paul makes it clear in Colossians that Christ alone is the source of spiritual life, the head of the body of believers. Christ is Lord of both the physical and spiritual worlds. The path to deeper spiritual life is not through religious duties, special knowledge, or secrets; it is only through a clear connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. We must never let anything come between us and our Savior. “#3 p. 2042. *What did Paul say was the proper way to communicate the gospel to the non-believer? See verses 5-6. What are some creative ways we can share our faith to our neighbors and friends?*

I Thessalonians 1— In this first chapter Paul expresses his great joy for the transformed lives of the believers in this church. In every way they showed the genuineness of their election by their “work produced by faith, labor prompted by love, and endurance inspired by the hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3).” When Paul preached the gospel to them, the Spirit of God radically convicted them of their sins, turned them from idolatry, and made them a model of true faith to all the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. The ability to endure suffering came because of their living hope in the imminent return of Jesus. *What indications or evidence might we show that the gospel has truly been heard and believed by a person or a local church in our day?*

I Thessalonians 2— In this chapter Paul opens up his heart and life in full transparency to this beloved church as he shares his godly motives and conduct. First, he defended himself from any evil ulterior motives but stated that he treated them with the gentleness of a nursing mother and conducted himself blamelessly. As a father with his own children, he encouraged them to walk worthy of God (vv. 1-12). The apostle thanked God that the message he preached was received as the very words of God with the effect that they were imitators of the churches of Judea who had gone through great suffering at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. Although he was forced to leave them because of the great persecution, he greatly desired to be with them but was hindered by Satan to do so. Paul was looking forward to the reunion with them at the coming of the Lord Jesus (vv. 13-20). *From verses 1 to 12, what were the evil motives and actions that Paul said were not a part of his ministry to the Thessalonians?*

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Psalm 109, I Thessalonians 3-5, II Thessalonians 1-3 (#86) Revised 2023

Psalm 109 — David appeals to God against wicked enemies who tried to destroy him. *Do we have the right to ask God to judge those who have wronged or betrayed us? Consider vv. 4-7, Luke 23: 34, and Romans 12:14, 17-19.*

I Thessalonians 3— Because of his anxious concern for the welfare of the church in Thessalonica and his fear concerning the persecution and strong opposition they were receiving, Paul sent Timothy to them to find out if their faith was strong and to encourage them in their suffering (vv. 1-5). Upon hearing the good news when Timothy had returned to him, Paul was filled with joy because of their love for him and their continued faith in the Lord. He prayed earnestly that he would be able to return to them in the near future to be with them and fill in the gaps that are missing in their faith (vv. 6-10). He closes the chapter with a pastoral prayer that the church would overflow with love for one another and present themselves blameless in holiness at the coming of the Lord Jesus (vv. 11-13). *If someone were to tell you that God promises a trouble-free life for Christians, how would you answer them? Is there anything you are struggling with right now? #1 p. 1543.*

I Thessalonians 4— Paul encourages the believers to learn how to live in a way that pleases the Lord. The first area of teaching to the church was the importance of living a life of moral purity. It is God's will that each person lives a life of holiness recognizing that all who commit sexual immorality will be judged by God. A second matter of importance is for them to continue in brotherly love, to live a quiet, Christ-honoring life before the outside world, and to work with their own hands so that they would not have to depend on anyone else (vv.1-12). Paul then addressed the question as to what would happen to those believers who had already died. He made it clear that though we will grieve for the passing of fellow Christians, we have the confidence that when Christ comes back both those who have died and those who are still living will be resurrected and caught up in the air to forever be with the Lord (vv. 13-18). *How is acting out sinful desires harmful to the believer? #3 p. 2048-9*

I Thessalonians 5— After revealing the coming of Christ for His saints (rapture), Paul then begins to speak of the timing of His second coming. He brings encouragement to the church by stating that they will not have to suffer the wrath of God when the Day of the Lord suddenly comes on the people of the world (vv. 1-11). The Apostle Paul ends his letter with exhortations on community conduct and relationships. We are to give our spiritual leaders proper recognition for their labor and care, as well as warning, comforting, helping, or showing patience to the believers in accordance to what each person needs (vv. 12-15). He then gives seven concise commands for our personal and community life (vv. 16-22). He concludes with a benediction expressing complete confidence that the God who started with the work of salvation at the moment they believed will finish the work of sanctification when Christ returns (vv. 23-28). *If we really believe in the reality of Christ's return, what are ways our lives will be affected?*

II Thessalonians— This letter is in response to confusion by the church of Thessalonica about the timing of the Lord's coming since they thought that Christ's return was imminent because of the increase in persecution. Furthermore, someone had written a letter using Paul's name saying that the Day of the Lord and Christ's coming had already taken place. Paul writes this letter to clarify the timeline of the events that must take place in order for the day of the Lord to come. He also encourages them to stand firm in the teaching he has given them and exhorts the church not to enable idleness or take care of the needs of those who will not work.

II Thessalonians 1— After his normal greeting, Paul commends the believers for their increasing love and great endurance in light of their persecutions and afflictions. God is just and righteous and will one day reward the believers with Christ's eternal kingdom and repay those who are afflicting them with everlasting destruction from the Lord's presence. Paul prays that God would consider them worthy of His calling and that they would receive power to accomplish all the good things their faith prompts them to do. Through all this may the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified, and may the saints likewise be honored at His coming. *How did Paul encourage the believers in this chapter who were suffering persecution?*

II Thessalonians 2— Because of the misinformation about the Day of the Lord and the coming of Christ for His church, Paul clarifies biblical teaching about the events that must take place first. The Day of the Lord begins with the appearance of the man of lawlessness (antichrist) who will show himself to be God and demand to be worshipped (vv. 1-4). Although the mystery of lawlessness has been working since

Paul's time, a restraining force will be taken out of the way so that the lawless one, who operates under Satan's control and power, will reveal himself to the world. Those who rejected the truth of the gospel will be under a powerful delusion by the counterfeit miracles and wonders of the lawless one (vv. 5-12). Paul thanks God for these believers who were chosen by God to be saved and share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He encourages the saints to stand firm in the faith and hold to the teaching he has given them (vv. 13-17). *Who or what is the restraining force that is now holding back the appearance of the lawless one?*

II Thessalonians 3— As he closes his letter, Paul requests prayer that the gospel will spread rapidly and that all of them would be delivered from wicked men and the evil one. Even after a previous warning (I Thess. 5:14), those who were idle and not working persisted so Paul wrote an extended passage to address the problem of idleness and its solution. During his visit to Thessalonica, Paul set the example by laboring with his own hands so that he would not be an expense to anyone. He commanded the church that no one should associate or help financially those who would not work. *Why is idleness and laziness wrong?*

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