

Are You at the End of Your Rope?

One of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible is found in the book of Psalms. Chapter 107 is remarkable because it shows us how God used discipline to bring Israel back to Himself so they could experience His deliverance and joy. Doesn't sound very fun, does it?

The people of Israel were constantly straying from God. And God over and over brings them back. But the way He did that was definitely not pleasant most of the time. He had to bring them to the end of themselves before they were ready to come back to Him.

Look at verses 4 and 5.....some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

In verses 10 through 12....some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, for they rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help

In verses 17 and 18...some became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities. They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.

In verses 25 and 26...He spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end.

Four times in the chapter God allows the people of Israel to come to the end of their rope, the end of their resources, in order to get them to look up and change the direction of their hearts and lives.

Then four times the chapter says that when the people cried out to God, He delivered them. He brought them out of their distresses and led them by a straight way (v.6,7), brought them out of darkness and broke down barriers (14,16), sent forth His word and healed them (v.20) and stilled the storm to a whisper (v. 29).

It seems that God in His infinite patience waited until they were hanging onto the knot at the end of their rope before He would reach out and rescue them. They had to call out to Him and acknowledge their need of Him before He would deliver them from their troubles.

Then also four times in the chapter (verses 8, 15, 21, 31) God writes the challenge: Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for his wonderful works to men!

He wants us to praise Him and acknowledge Him without Him having to send difficult circumstances to draw us to that end. But so often we choose to walk the path that brings us to the end of our rope instead. We often refuse to look up and acknowledge that He is our sole provider, protector and guide. We want to do things our way.

I believe that God would rather have it as He ends the chapter in verse 43:
"Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD."

In other words, learn from the people of Israel and God's dealings with them. Don't fall into the same trap as them by being stubborn and trying to make it on your own without God. If you don't take their example and learn from it, you will experience the same discipline from God.

God uses discipline to show us this part of His character, His unfailing love. It may not seem very loving or kind at the time, but His thoughts and ways are higher than ours. His holiness and justice are implied by the action he takes to bring Israel to their knees. I know I don't want to experience that side of His character! Both are, however, God.

He IS unfailing love and as such He knows nothing unkind or unloving. So, even though it may

look like it isn't unfailing love, because we know God's character and that He does not act out of that character, we can trust that the way He leads and disciplines is out of love, and for our best.

So when you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot, hang on, and look to the God of unfailing love! He will rescue you and then you will sing His praises.

"Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of His works with songs of joy" (v. 22)

All scriptures quoted from NIV Translation of the Bible