

When You're At Your At Wits' End - Psalm 107:27

They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end.

Introduction: The church's 200 anniversary celebration was a week away. For weeks, the anniversary committee had carefully planned every detail of the momentous occasion – even down to the exact time of the ringing of the church bell, commemorating the time of the signing of the official charter of the church.

But on Monday, the bell ringer learned that he was being called out of town on business, and would not be back on Sunday. Frantic, the church immediately began to advertise for another.

When someone responded, the pastor hired him sight-unseen, and asked him to meet the sexton at the church on the morning of the celebration. When the replacement arrived, the sexton led him up the steps to the bell tower, which stood some 50 feet above the ground. Just as they reached the landing, the replacement bell ringer tripped and fell face-first into the big bell. Bong!

Dazed, the bell ringer fell backward, broke the railing, and fell to the ground. When the sexton got to him, he saw that the man was stunned, and unable to talk, but otherwise, unharmed. However, he thought it best to call an ambulance.

When the paramedic arrived, he checked the man out, and told the man, *“You are one lucky guy. People don't usually survive a fall from such a height.”* Then he turned to the sexton and asked, *“Do you know this man's name?”*

The sexton replied, *“No, but his face sure rings a bell.”*
Have you ever felt like that man – that you've hit rock

bottom and you feel like you've just had your bell rung! People used to call this being at your wits' end, and the phrase comes from our text here in Psalm 27. Being at your wits' end is coming to that place in life when you've had just about all you can take and you don't know what else to do. It's that place that feels like a dark and deep pit with no way out. Have you ever been there? Maybe you're there now.

If so, you need to know that there is a place you go and someone you can turn to who can bring you up out of the pit and set your feet on solid ground again. In this place and in this person, you can find hope and peace and a calm assurance that no matter what comes your way, you're going to be ok.

The place we can go to when we're at our wits' end is God's word. One of those Scriptures is Psalm 107. This Psalm was written for people who were at their wits' end. It is a Psalm of restoration, a psalm of hope, and a psalm of encouragement.

I'm not going to read the entire chapter, but I do want to give you a brief outline. The first three verses introduce the overall theme. The middle section, vs. 9-32, is comprised of descriptions of four groups of people: the restless (4-9), the resistant (10-16), the rebellious (17-22), and the reeling (23-32). Then in v. 33-42, the Psalmist speaks of the way that God works in the world, concluding with verse 43, which says, *“Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the LORD.”*

Psalms 107:43 (NIV). So, if you want to do the wise thing today, then give heed to these things, and consider them as expressions

of God's great love for you when you need a lift.

What do you do when you've reached your wits' end? Today, we're going to see what God says to do. But first, let's look at:

1. The People Who Hurt

As I said, this Psalm describes four types of persons who are hurting in some way. First are those who "*wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way.*" (4). These are the **restless**. They are literally looking "*a place to sit*" – a place where they can find refuge. Life has knocked them for a loop, and they've been looking for a place to land - "*a city where they can settle.*"

Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt like you're traveling down the road of life so fast, that you just want to find a place to stop and rest for awhile, but you can't find the exit ramp?

Or maybe you're one of those people who are searching for a purpose and meaning in life, and you've tried this road and that road, but so far all you've found are detours and dead ends.

Or, perhaps you're searching for something to put your trust in, and something solid to hold on to, but your search only led you to discover that you were given wrong directions.

In a spiritual sense, there are people who are hurting because they are so busy doing the work of the church, they've missed the exit ramp where the church's real work is. There are people who are hurting because they've searching for truth and wandering from one religion, or one belief, or one church to another in pursuit of meaning and purpose, but they've hit a dead end. There are people who are hurting because they know they need Jesus,

but they've held on to so many other things, there's no room for Him in their life. There are people who are hurting because they're looking for fulfillment in their career, or their marriage, or their relationships, and they can't find it. This constant search and finding nothing but disappointment will leave you frantic and restless and still mired in a world of hurt.

Second are those who are hurting because they are **resistant**. The Psalmist describes them as sitting "*in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High.*" (10-11). These are the ones who have heard God's word, and perhaps even seen it work, but they've been not done what He says. Instead, they've looked to other ways of finding fulfillment in this world, and all they've found is more bondage. The Psalmist describes them as being "*in...chains?*"

Now there are many of types of chains that can bind us: we can be slaves to different types of sins such as slaves to drugs, and alcohol, and sexual perversion; we can be a slave to bitterness and anger and pride in our hearts. We can be a slave to all sorts of sinful habits. We want to get out of it, and many people try in their own power, but they can't.

But it's not just sin that can bind us. We can also be a slave to good things. We can be a slave to our career, or money, or popularity or prestige. These "*good*" things can bind us into thinking that we're being noble and powerful and worthy of respect and honor. But this pursuit of good things in life is

contrary to God's Word which says in **Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)** *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* If our hearts are bound to the things of the world – even the good things, we'll find ourselves avoiding or ignoring the better things God wants for us. And the real problem with this kind of bondage is that it is so hard to escape from. The more people have, the more they want because these things never fully satisfy. So these people are hurting because they may try to set themselves free, but they can't.

The third group of hurting people is described as the **rebellious** in vs. 17-22. These are people who foolishly continue in their rebellious ways in spite of being offered a way out. Vs. 18 says that *"They loathed (rejected) all kinds of food"* that could have given them nourishment. And as a result, they are afflicted, discouraged, hopeless, and they are ready to give up and die.

David Wilkerson tells a story of a pastor who found himself in this situation. He had been having marital problems, and one night, it all came to a head. They got into a heated argument, and this pastor ran out, started drinking – a habit he had whipped many years before. He returned in the middle of the night drunk. The next morning he went to see David Wilkerson, and told him, *"David, I just need to leave the ministry. I cannot continue in a life like this. I've lost it; I am worthless; there is nothing that I have to offer any more."* This is the type of person described here:

the one who has sinned, but believes Satan's lie that because of that sin, his life is hopeless and worthless, and there is no way that God can use him anymore.

Verses 23-32 describe a group of hurting people who are **reeling**. It equates them to sea merchants who are just doing their jobs when they encounter a terrible storm. It doesn't really say that these people have done anything wrong; they're just going through the normal routine of life. But in the middle of their normal activities, a storm comes up. In fact, vs. 25 says that: *"He (GOD) spoke, and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves."*

It's true that sometimes we can get caught up in a storm of our own making, but there are those times when we face storms that God will send our way just to get our attention. Sometimes, we can just be going through the normal routines of life, and then WHAM! Out of nowhere, a tragedy hits, or a trial comes upon them that we can't handle. We thought everything was under control, but suddenly in the blink of an eye, everything we'd trusted in, and what we thought was a sure thing, is gone, and we've been sent reeling. We find ourselves at our wits' end, and there is nothing we can do.

I think this would describe our cousins who were recently involved in that tragic accident a little over a month ago. There they were on vacation, sitting at a traffic light, three kids in the back seats of their mini-van, probably sleeping or playing video games, and then WHAM! A loaded delivery truck, traveling at full speed, slams into them from behind, and just like that, two

kids are gone, the other is critically injured, the mom is badly hurt, and the dad is left wondering, “*What happened to my family? What are we going to do now?*”

There’s a world of hurting people out there who are at their wits’ end. What are they to do? Well, we see that with all these people, they did the wise thing. These hurting people became:

2. The People Who Cried Out

All of these people responded to their crises in the same way. In vs. 6, 13, 19, and 28 it says of each group of people: “*Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble.*” When they came to their wit’s end they cried out to God.

Now, granted, we should all be so close to God that we know we can call on Him at any time, but unfortunately, sometimes people need a tragedy, or an addiction to wake them up. But whether we do it when things are going well or when a tragedy strikes, calling on God is always the right thing to do. We cry out to God because we realize our utter dependence on Him. But notice something else. When the people who are hurting, become the people who cry out to God; they are talking to:

3. The God Who Hears

Notice in verses 6, 13, 19, and 28, that when all these groups of people cried out to the Lord, “*He saved them out of their distress.*” For the **Restless** who were looking for a place to sit, “*He led them by a straight way to a city where they could settle.*” (7). For the **Resistant** who were bound in their chains: “*He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke*

away their chains.” (14). For the **Rebellious** who were at the point of giving up : “*He sent forth His Word and healed them; He rescued them from the grave.*” (19b). And for the **Reeling** who had been blindsided by the storm of life, God “*stilled the storm to a whisper.*” (29). In every case, we see that the God who Hears is:

A. The God of Undivided Attention. Notice that there was no hesitancy on God’s part. He wasn’t too busy with other things to notice what was happening. God can and always will give us His full attention when we call on Him. Why? Because He loves us, but more than that, it’s because it’s a sign that we trust Him, and that we love Him. You see, He knows that sometimes we’re faced with burdens we can’t handle. But He can handle anything, so when we clearly give an indication that we’re ready to trust Him completely; He’s more than ready to give us His undivided attention. But He’s also:

B. The God of Unconditional Acceptance. Some of these people were hurting because of bad choices they had made in life, but others were hurting just because life had hit them hard. But notice that in every case, when hurting people cry out to God, He hears them and comes to them in the midst of their distress. He comes to the ones who have strayed as the loving Father who welcomes the prodigal son home with open arms. But He also comes to rescue those who are caught in life’s storms as the one who walks on the stormy water bringing peace. God’s love for those who belong to Him is steadfast and never conditional.

But there’s one more thing we need to see in this passage.

When the people who are hurting cry out to God who hears them and answers their prayers, that's when they should become:

4. God's People Who Worship

There's a phrase repeated in verses 8, 15, 21, and 31: *"Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love."* When God does something wonderful for us, our very first response should be unrestrained and overflowing praise and thanks to God for hearing our cries and lifting us out of our troubles. Thanksgiving shows our appreciation for all God is and all He has done. So don't be like the nine men in Luke 17:11-19, whom Jesus healed of their leprosy, who never even came back to thank the Master. Our first response should be a heartfelt *"thank you"* to the one who delivers us when we call upon Him.

But worship of God also involves more than just giving thanks. In vs. 22, it says, *"Let them sacrifice thank offerings, and tell of His works with songs of joy."* And in verse 32 it says, *"Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people and praise Him in the council of the elders."*

Thanking God is great, but if we don't tell others of God's wonderful work in our lives, we're being selfish with our blessings. God wants us to share Him with others, and not keep Him to ourselves. Worshipping Him is telling others of His faithfulness. It's telling others of the joy that is found in Him. It's letting others in on the peace and hope they can have in God when they are going through tough times. Don't miss the opportunity to worship the Lord by sharing Him with others.

Conclusion: When we're at our wits' end, and we're at our weakest. That's when God wants to show His strength and prove His love and His faithfulness to meet us in our storm and be our rock. He may not always bring us out of our troubles instantly, but He'll always be there with us and walk with us in the midst of them. That is His promise to us.

That's why the Apostle Paul said, *"I have learned to be content whatever my situation."* He knew that God was with him. And God's promise to us in this Psalm is that no matter where we are, even at wits' end, God always answers when we cry out to Him, regardless of how the troubles came our way.

So, today, if you're at your wits' end, and thinking that no one sees or cares, remember that God does, and only He is able to meet you where you are and redeem you. Only He is able to pick up the broken pieces of your life, put them back together and make you useful again. So call on Him today. If you need a place of refuge, let Him lead you to it. If you've found yourself bound by some sort of chain, let Him set you free. If you're discouraged and feel that God can never use you, call on the Lord right now and let Him rescue you and make you useful again. And if you have been hit hard by an unexpected tragedy or failure and you're reeling right now, you need to know that Psalm 107 is for you. God promises that He will never leave you nor forsake you, and that He will always answer you. He'll give you His undivided attention, and His unconditional acceptance. Cry out to Him. Cast your care on Him, for He cares for you.