

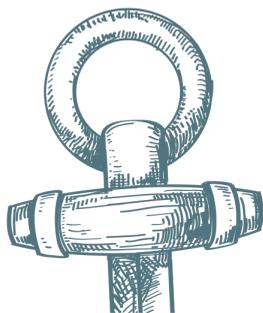


STEADFAST



A STUDY OF PSALM 107

LAUREN CHANDLER



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LAUREN CHANDLER

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Chandler is a wife and mother of three. Her husband, Matt Chandler, serves as the lead teaching pastor at The Village Church in Dallas, Texas. Lauren is passionate about writing, music, and leading worship, not only at The Village Church, but also for groups across the country. The Lord has taken Matt and Lauren on a challenging journey, beginning with the November 2009 discovery of a malignant brain tumor in Matt. The Lord has been infinitely merciful to provide peace and comfort in uncertainty and joy in times of victory and healing. Lauren and her family have been given a deeper trust in clinging to the Lord and His cross during this appointed season of valleys and storms.

INTRODUCTION

I grew up a church girl. From the Cradle Roll to Graduation Sunday, I rarely missed a Sunday morning sitting on a wooden pew beside my father, mother, and little brother. Squirming in a starched dress and suffocating stockings, I would catch my mother's correcting glare and surrender to an hour of big words on bulletins. Now, this is all from the perspective of an elementary student who grasped more of the gospel through songs and Bible stories in Sunday School than through Mrs. Williford's solos and Dr. Hall's sermons. The gospel was there; my little heart and mind just didn't have the capacity to catch it—yet. It was (and is) an important practice to sit as a family and hear the Word sung and preached.

But back to those big words on bulletins. "to call for with earnest desire."¹ This is why the invocation may also be termed the "call to worship."

If you didn't grow up a church kid or your church was of a different denomination, you may have tripped over the word *bulletin*. What in the world is that? The bulletin was a piece of paper on which the order of worship was printed for all to follow along. Think of it as a less lustrous Playbill; but instead of "Act One" there were words like *invocation*, *invitation*, and *benediction*. The invitation is as it sounds: a chance for those who heard the sermon to respond, either by putting their faith in Christ, receiving prayer, or deciding to join the church. The benediction came at the end of the service. It was a time to receive and bestow a blessing—a time to remind each other that, for the believer, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit [would] be with [each of us]" (2 Cor. 13:14). I saved the term invocation for last because I want this concept to stick with you for the rest of the week. To *invoke* means

At the beginning of a praise and worship service, the invocation may be interpreted two different (although often happening simultaneously) ways. One may view the call to worship as a corporate prayer to the Lord to make His presence manifest among them. We know God is omnipresent. King David penned a psalm describing God's inescapable presence. He could go down to the depths and God would be there. He could climb upon the heights and still, God would be there (Psalm 139). But there were also times where David, although he knew God's presence remained, had a hard time perceiving Him (Psalm 71:12). As Christians, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit—He takes residence within us—so He certainly isn't far. But aren't there times when you want to experience His manifest presence? When you want

to “feel” His nearness? When a word preached or spoken or sung hits square in that tender spot? That’s the heart behind this interpretation of invocation. We are calling upon the Lord to come closer—close enough to feel His breath, smell His scent, and hear His heartbeat.

While it is certainly good—it’s even encouraged in Scripture—to ask God to draw nearer to us as we draw near to Him (James 4:8), the call to worship can also be an opportunity for the worship leader or pastor to implore the congregation to “come closer.”

Let’s face it. Who among us hasn’t stumbled into a worship service with the cares of the week heavy on our shoulders, or with sleepy eyes and foggy brains, or maybe simply out of duty because we sure haven’t felt Him for quite a while? Most often we are the ones who need to be invoked—drawn out, called for with earnest desire.

I don’t know how you’re coming into this Bible study. I wish I could know what shape your spiritual life is in. I wish I could sit across from you at my favorite coffee shop and hear you pour out your heart. I know as many of you as there are, there are just as many different shapes and stories. Some of you are eager to jump right in—your spiritual life is vibrant and you are humming along smoothly on all cylinders. Some of you are cautiously stepping forward—this whole God thing is new to you, or it’s been a long time since you’ve tried a Bible study. You have been hurt or

simply dropped off the attendance roll and never had the courage to peek back in. Others of you are limping or crawling into this. You are barely getting by. Every morning is a painful reality that you are still here and so is the loss.

Friend, there is good news. The God of every season, the God over every storm, the God who loves you no matter the state of your spiritual health is here—ready and waiting for you. Yes, we can call out to God to make His presence manifest among us, but we can also be assured that He is right here waiting for us.

Psalms 107 is a call to worship—a call to the people of God to remember all the ways He has rescued and will continue to rescue. The psalmist is imploring the people to speak out loud of His faithfulness and thank Him for it. He invites us to invite each other to tell it. Because some of us need to hear a certain word right now, and all of us need to be reminded that God is here.

So I am inviting you to remember with me. The things we “remember” together may not be shared memories from our own stories but rather remembering how God has been faithful in history—in His story, for our stories are woven into His. I am asking God to make His presence manifest among us over the next seven weeks. But more importantly, I am reminding you (and myself) that He is already there, ready and waiting.

PSALM 107

- 1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
 - 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble
 - 3 and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.
-
- 4 Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in;
 - 5 hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.
 - 6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.
 - 7 He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in.
 - 8 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!
 - 9 For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things.
-
- 10 Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons,
 - 11 for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
 - 12 So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help.
 - 13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.
 - 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart.
 - 15 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!
 - 16 For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.
-
- 17 Some were fools through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;
 - 18 they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.
 - 19 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.
 - 20 He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.
 - 21 Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!
 - 22 And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!
-

-
- 23 Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the great waters;
- 24 they saw the deeds of the LORD,
his wondrous works in the deep.
- 25 For he commanded and raised
the stormy wind, which lifted up
the waves of the sea.
- 26 They mounted up to heaven;
they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in
their evil plight;
- 27 they reeled and staggered like
drunken men and were at their
wits' end.
- 28 Then they cried to the LORD in
their trouble, and he delivered
them from their distress.
- 29 He made the storm be still, and
the waves of the sea were hushed.
- 30 Then they were glad that the
waters were quiet, and he brought
them to their desired haven.
- 31 Let them thank the LORD for his
steadfast love, for his wondrous
works to the children of man!
- 32 Let them extol him in the
congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly
of the elders.
- 33 He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,
- 34 a fruitful land into a salty
waste, because of the evil of its
inhabitants.
- 35 He turns a desert into pools of
water, a parched land into springs
of water.
- 36 And there he lets the hungry dwell,
and they establish a city to live in;
- 37 they sow fields and plant
vineyards and get a fruitful yield.
- 38 By his blessing they multiply
greatly, and he does not let their
livestock diminish.
-
- 39 When they are diminished and
brought low through oppression,
evil, and sorrow,
- 40 he pours contempt on princes
and makes them wander in
trackless wastes;
- 41 but he raises up the needy out of
affliction and makes their families
like flocks.
- 42 The upright see it and are glad,
and all wickedness shuts its mouth.
- 43 Whoever is wise, let him attend
to these things; let them consider
the steadfast love of the LORD.
-

The image features a dramatic seascape. The top half is dominated by a heavy, grey, overcast sky with dark, brooding clouds. The bottom half shows a turbulent sea with dark blue-green water and white-capped waves, suggesting a storm or rough weather. The horizon line is visible in the lower third of the frame.

Week One

A CALL TO WORSHIP

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!
Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
whom he has redeemed from trouble
and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

PSALM 107:1-3

Welcome to the *Steadfast Love* Bible study! Each week, I've provided some discussion questions here to get the conversation started. Feel free to discuss what you learned throughout the week of study, ask any questions you may have, and share what God is teaching you.

Discussion Questions:

Read Psalm 107 aloud.

Which section of the Psalm stands out to you? Explain.

What do you think of when you hear the term "Call to Worship"?

What drew you to this study? What do you hope to learn?

Day One

THE CALL

READ PSALM 107. Yes, all of it. If possible, out loud. This will take you two to three minutes at the most (I timed it).

With which section of the Psalm can you most readily identify?

Which section is puzzling?

Think back to the video and introduction. Psalm 107 is described as a _____ to _____.

We talked about “big words on bulletins.” Which one means “to call with earnest desire”? (circle one)

- Invitation*
- Invocation*
- Benediction*

We can invoke the Lord to “come closer,” but we can also keep in mind that He is already there waiting for us to draw near to Him that He may draw near to us (Jas. 4:8). How have you come into the Bible study? Are you sprinting, jogging, dragging your feet, or crawling? Why? Be specific. Be honest. God already knows. Sometimes we need to put pen to paper to let ourselves know!

Let me level the playing field. The reality is that we are all on the same footing. We are all in need of Jesus. Every last one of us (yours truly included, if not more so than most).

Turn to Galatians 2:16 and complete the following:

"... yet we know that a person is not _____ by _____ of the law but through _____ in _____ ..."

Define justify (grab a dictionary or use a dictionary app on your device). Choose the definition that most likely fits in this context.

Try writing the verse in your own words:

I'll move my cover sheet over to let you peek at my answer: *No one is made right by what they do but by believing that what Jesus has done for them is enough. We can't earn it, we can only receive it.*

What did Jesus do for us? I've heard it summarized like this, "Jesus lived the life I couldn't live and died the death I should have died."¹

Let's mine the Scriptures for this truth (write out the verses word-for-word or in your own words):

Lamentations 3:19-24

Galatians 3:10

Galatians 3:13

Ephesians 2:8-9

Christ lived a sinless life that is impossible for me to live. He didn't keep it to Himself though. His obedience made me (and anyone who trusts in Him) righteous. And not only that, He willingly took my place in the shameful death on a cross that I deserved to die.

No matter how you've come to this study, we're all in the same boat. The only difference is that some of us may know the truth of our need for gospel grace more than others. But you can't tell from the outside. There may be those who are sprinting to the finish with medals dangling around their necks. This is just another "check" to put by a long list of works that we use to try to earn favor with God. Listen, I have been there. Don't fool yourself, you will grow tired. Your works are not enough. Others of you may be scraping along, barely clawing forward but fully convinced that every bit of progress is by the grace of God. You are leaning heavily on Christ for every breath. I have been there too. Don't despise these days, God is doing a deep work in you. Most of you are probably somewhere in between. Welcome.

Write a prayer of confession, surrender, gratitude, or whatever cry is in your heart.

We start on the same footing responding to the same call. God is here, ready and waiting for us. Will you come closer?

Day Two TO WORSHIP

Break out your dictionaries again! Write down the first three or four definitions for worship below.

I appreciate that *dictionary.com* frames worship as mostly a religious activity (because it is), but it doesn't exclusively occur inside the walls of a church, synagogue, or mosque.² Worship is the air we breathe. In other words, if we're breathing, we're worshipping. Now, the question is *what* or *whom* are we worshipping?

To worship means to have our mind's attention and heart's affection focused supremely on an object or person.³ This doesn't have to be a deity. It can be absolutely anything.

Ask yourself the following questions to discern the object of your worship (answer with gut-level responses, not with what "should" be your answer):

What occupies your mind the most?

What do you love?

What can absolutely ruin your day?

What can absolutely make your day?

All of us have something that occupies our minds, has our love, can ruin our day, or make our day. It's part of being human. It's part of being created in the *Imago Dei*, the image of God.

Turn to Genesis 1:26-27 and write out the verses in the space below.

Genesis 1:1-25 recounts the story of creation—light, dark, heavens, earth, sky, waters, vegetation, fish, birds, creeping things, beasts of the earth, and livestock. (I'm convinced horses were one of the last to be created because they're my favorite. Jesus returns riding on a white one; I'm just saying.) Finally, He makes man (male and female). Mankind is distinguished from the rest of God's creatures in how we resemble God, represent Him in the world, and relate to Him and one another.

How do we resemble God? How do we not?

What does a representative do? How might we represent God simply by being human (not necessarily Christians)?

How were we created to relate with God and each other? (Hint: read Genesis 2:15-25.)

How is mankind doing at all of this? How are you? Not awesome, right? Even if you love God and seek to worship Him, it's a struggle to resemble, represent, and relate with Him in a way that honors Him, isn't it?

There's good reason for this. It's called the fall and it happened in Genesis 3. The serpent deceived Eve while Adam stood beside her doing nothing to prevent the worst catastrophe in the history of man. We will get into the ins and outs of this exchange later in the study, but for now, let's focus on its consequences. The bottom line is that the *Imago Dei* was marred and all creation suffered. Adam and Eve's choice to believe the serpent over God resulted in a fracture that makes resembling, representing, and relating with God in the way He intentioned impossible on our own.

Instead of simply resembling Him, we want to *be* Him. Instead of being His representatives on the earth, we abuse and exploit creation for our consumption. Instead of relating with God and each other from a place of being freely loved and freely loving, shame and selfishness infiltrate every relationship.

Essentially, we replace the Creator with the created. Our worship is broken but it's not extinct. We are still worshipping something.

Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God, your functional savior.⁴

MARTIN LUTHER

When I first read “confides in,” I immediately thought of a line in *The Golden Girls’* theme song. You know, the lyric that says, “Your heart is true, you’re a pal and a confidant.” It took me years to finally understand the last word. A confidant? What is that? Then, as I grew to have sensitive information about myself and others, I understood what it meant to confide—to trust someone with the deep and the dark. Although “confides” certainly means that here, it can also mean putting our trust in someone or something—much like how I “confided” in the chair I’m currently sitting on to be strong enough to hold me.

What are some things (or people) in which you “confide” or find stability?

After the fall, not only are we now more prone to worship and confide in something other than God, creation itself groans. Pain, suffering, and death plague us. We are desperate to find something that can sustain us, especially on darker days. Throughout the rest of this study, I will be using the image of the anchor to represent the object of our worship—that which we cling to and confide in. The anchor symbolizes hope and stability in the uncertain current of a post-Genesis 3 world.

In our broken worship, we tie our hope to false anchors—people or things that don’t have the strength to save us. My prayer for you in this study is that you will let God use the seasons of pain, struggle, and uncertainty to expose the false anchors. And in exposing the false, I pray you are able to see, cling to, and confide in the true Anchor—the God of steadfast love.

Day Three

THE LORD

Write your name here:

Do you know the meaning of your name? If so, what is it? If not, take a few minutes to do a little research online (if you're "unplugged," come back to this exercise and complete it later).

Have you ever gone by another name? This is a mental exercise (you're welcome). Do some names recall good memories and emotions, and others not so good?

Growing up, my parents called me "Boo-Boo" or "Boo" for short. I'm not exactly sure where the name originated but it's always been a term of endearment. In fact, Matt and I call our girls "Boo" too. I can recall other names given to me, one in particular that I acquired during junior high. As with many junior high memories, I'm sure you can imagine that it stirs up awkward, anxious, and self-conscious feelings. I still have a complex over the body part this name mocked! To be fair, I cringe over the teasing I dispensed at that time in my life. I was by no means only a victim!

Names are powerful, aren't they? They may evoke various feelings and moments that have been seared in our minds—for better or worse. They help *define* and *distinguish* the named. So if our "names" have less than pleasing meanings or connotations, they can negatively mark our perceptions of ourselves and how we feel we are perceived by others. Likewise, if our names mean something profound or pleasant, we tend to flourish under their influence.

Names are a big deal to God. In various places throughout Scripture, He took the initiative to change a person's name to signify a new thing He was doing in and through that person.

Fill out the following table using the Scriptures listed in each row as a reference:

SCRIPTURE	ORIGINAL NAME	MEANING	NEW NAME	MEANING
Genesis 17:5		exalted father		Father of a multitude
Genesis 17:15		princess		Princess
Genesis 25:26; 32:28		takes by the heel; he cheats; supplanter ⁵		He strives with God, or God strives
John 1:40-42		He (God) has heard ⁶		Rock
Acts 13:9		Asked/ prayed for ⁷		Little or small ⁸

Saul is an outlier among the others. He did not have a “you shall no longer be called” moment with God. From what we know in Scripture, it appears he chose to go by his Roman name, Paul.

Knowing that the name “Saul” is of Hebrew origin and “Paul,” Roman, why do you think he chose to go by his Roman name? (See Acts 13:44-49.)

Paul recognized the call of God on his life to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Paul’s name change signified his acceptance and made him more accessible to those to whom he’d been called.⁹ That Paul means “little or small” endears him that much more to me. It echoes what he wrote to the Christians in Corinth:

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

God has given Himself names that define an aspect of His character that makes Him relatable to us.

NAMES OF GOD

Look up the Scriptures listed below and complete the table (aren't these fun?).

SCRIPTURE	NAME OF GOD	HEBREW NAME
Genesis 14:18		El Elyon ¹⁰
Genesis 17:1-2		El Shaddai ¹¹
Exodus 3:14; 6:2		Yahweh ¹²

We could fill pages with names for God mentioned in the Bible but I want to hone in on the last one in the table—Yahweh. Most often, it is translated as *the LORD* in English.

Read Exodus 6:2-8. To whom did God reveal His name the LORD (Yahweh)?

Who knew Him by another name? Which name?

What were God's people experiencing when He revealed His name Yahweh (see v. 5)?

Circle every time you see the word "I." Underline the action verbs (a verb that expresses mental or physical action).

Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD."

EXODUS 6:6-8

Who is doing most of the acting in the passage above?

Yahweh, the LORD, is God's covenant-making and covenant-keeping name. He is reminding His people that He has not forgotten about them. He has heard their groaning. He knows their oppression. And He is about to do something about it. In Psalm 107, Yahweh is the name the psalmist chooses to use. I like to think that he is reminding God's people that the LORD—Yahweh—will deliver, free, and redeem those who cry out to Him.

The very next verse after God tells Moses all He will do for His people says, "Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery" (Ex. 6:9).

Lord, let it not be so of us. May we not miss hearing your promise to deliver because our ears are more attune to our brokenness and pain. May we cry out to the LORD—the One who is who He says He is and will do what He says He will do.

Where are you? Can you hear His promise to deliver over your brokenness and pain? Or is His voice drowned out? Write a prayer of confession. Confess where you are and where you want to be.

Day Four

COVENANT

Yesterday, we talked about God revealing the fullness of His name, Yahweh, the LORD, to the Israelites just before He delivered them from Egypt. We learned this is His “covenant-making and covenant-keeping” name. *Covenant* is a word we rarely use in modern times but the Bible is thick with it. So let’s break out our dictionaries again (we went a whole day without it!).

Define covenant:

The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* tells us that a *covenant* is an:

Oath-bound promise whereby one party solemnly pledges to bless or serve another party in some specified way. Sometimes the keeping of the promise depends upon the meeting of certain conditions by the party to whom the promise is made. On other occasions the promise is made unilaterally and unconditionally. The covenant concept is a central, unifying theme of Scripture, establishing and defining God’s relationship to man in all ages. ¹³

The Bible dictionary goes on to explain that the Hebrew word translated as *covenant* in the Old Testament is closely linked to the Hebrew word for *bind*. So, a covenant is an arrangement in which two parties are bound together.¹⁴ It is an important theme of Scripture.

Let’s look at several covenants throughout Scripture. I’ve filled in all the blanks for the first one, but I’ll let you fill in some of the blanks for the others.

EDENIC COVENANT: GENESIS 2:15-17

Party 1: *God*

Party 2: *Adam*

Initiator: *God*

Promise: *Eat of any tree in the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus have everlasting life.*

Condition: *Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you'll die.*

Is there a method of restoration? *No*

COVENANT OF GRACE: GENESIS 3:14-15 (FOCUSING ON V. 15)

Party 1:

Party 2:

Initiator: *God*

Promise: *Eve's offspring would crush the head of the serpent's offspring.*

Condition: *None*

Who might Eve's offspring be (Col. 2:13-15)?

NOAHIC COVENANT: GENESIS 9:9-17

Party 1:

Party 2: *Noah, his offspring, and every living creature with him*

Initiator:

Promise:

Condition: *None*

Sign of the covenant:

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT: GENESIS 12:1-3

Party 1:

Party 2:

Initiator:

Promise:

Condition: *Go*

In Genesis 15, God ratified His covenant with Abraham. He employed a practice common in Abraham's day. He instructed Abraham to cut several animals in two and lay them directly apart from each other on the ground, creating a path between the pieces. The custom required the parties to walk through the severed animals signifying, "may this be done to me if I do not keep the covenant."¹⁵ Instead of both parties walking through the pieces, only God (symbolized by a smoking fire pot and torch) passed through.¹⁶

What is Abraham doing in 15:12?

Abraham was in the most vulnerable, helpless state when God made His covenant with him. And God didn't make him sleepwalk through the animal carcasses. Instead, He alone tread the path declaring, "may this be done to me, if this covenant is not kept."

How might this relate to Him being called "Yahweh"?

MOSAIC COVENANT: EXODUS 19:5-6

Party 1: *God*

Party 2: *Moses and the Israelites*

Initiator:

Promise:

Condition:

Again, as with Abraham, the Lord incorporated a custom familiar to Moses and His people. Suzerain treaties were pledges by a suzerain (king or overlord) "to provide benevolent rule and protection to conquered peoples in exchange for their loyalty."¹⁷ The difference was that God did not "conquer" these people, He graciously extended His steadfast love to them. His commandments were not meant to be a burden but a picture of what He meant life to look like for human flourishing.

DAVIDIC COVENANT: 2 SAMUEL 7:7-16

Party 1:

Party 2:

Initiator:

Promise: *Your throne shall be established forever.*

Condition:

Read Romans 1:1-4. Who is a King descended from David?

NEW COVENANT: JEREMIAH 31:31-34

Party 1:

Party 2:

Initiator:

Promise: *Put my law within them; write it on their hearts; I will be their God and they will be my people; they will know me; I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more*

Condition:

Complete the following from 2 Corinthians 1:20:

For _____ the _____ of God find their _____ in _____.

Christ fulfilled every covenant for us. He perfectly obeyed all of the Father's commands. He defeated death. He is the promised seed who would crush the serpent's head. He is the promised Son who would be a blessing to all nations. He kept the Law of Moses and became an empathetic High Priest. He is the King who descended from David and sits enthroned forever. He instituted the new covenant.

I realize this day's study may have made some giggle with glee and others struggle to trudge through biblical history. I get it. My aim for homework today is to help you see God as the covenant-initiating and covenant-maintaining God. I want you to see that what He said He would do, He has done. There's still more to come. All is not as it will be. We still struggle against sin. Death has yet to finally die. Pain remains a part of life. But we can trace the goodness of God in keeping His promises throughout history so that we can trust He will keep His promise to be with us always, to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20) and that Christ has not left us. He will return (Acts 1:11).

Day Five

REDEEMED FROM THE HAND OF THE ENEMY

On Day Two, we discussed our brokenness as human beings—our broken worship, our innate tendency to cling to and confide in false anchors. We can be our own worst enemy. We can lie to ourselves. We can heap shame upon ourselves. Without Jesus, we are (to quote the artist Pink) a hazard to ourselves. But we're not our only enemy.

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his faithful love endures forever.
Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim
that he has **redeemed them from the power of the foe**
and has gathered them from the lands—
from the east and the west,
from the north and the south.*

PSALM 107:1-3, CSB (emphasis mine)

We have a somewhat daunting task today. We are going to (try to) tackle the (very real) topic of Satan—the enemy, or foe, of our souls. Some of us are strangely fascinated with the supernatural while others wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole. There can be error in both. We can make too much of Satan and demons—giving them more credit than they're due; or we can deny their existence altogether—choosing to ignore a large chunk of Scripture. My aim is to offer you a balanced, biblical view of “the power of the foe.”

THE ENEMY OUTSIDE

Read Genesis 3:1-13. Focusing on verse 1, what do we know about the serpent from this verse?

Let's take a look at the dialogue between the serpent and Eve:

"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

GENESIS 3:1

What did God actually say?

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

GENESIS 2:16-17

What did Eve say God said? Was she correct? Why, or why not?

What was the consequence for eating from the tree (Gen. 2:17)?

How did the serpent respond? (complete the following)

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and _____ will be _____, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4-5

How do you think Eve felt about God after hearing this? How would you have felt?

Was the serpent right? Explain.

How did Adam and Eve respond to having their eyes opened?

Did the serpent make Adam and Eve take the fruit?

List the three things Eve noticed about the fruit (v. 6):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

According to James 1:14, how is "each person tempted"?

What's interesting is that Eve's desires alone weren't evil. How she looked to fulfill those desires was evil. God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed and more in the garden.

Read Genesis 2:9 and complete the following:

And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is _____ to the _____ and _____. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

What about obtaining wisdom, you ask? How did God provide that in the garden? God is wisdom. What He told them about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was wisdom—don't eat it or you will die. Would it have been wise for them to have obeyed and avoided it? Yes! We wouldn't be in this whole mess if they had!

But what about death? Did God get His bluff in?

James 1:15 goes on to say, "Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." Eve looked for her desire to be fulfilled in the wrong thing, which birthed disobedience (taking the fruit and eating it). For a moment it seemed the serpent was right; they didn't die immediately. But the life they knew came to an immediate end. They no longer enjoyed fellowship with God and with each other. For the first time ever, they knew shame and hid from God; they lied and played the blame game. The gates to Eden were closed to them; the tree of life guarded by a flaming sword. The countdown to physical death started with the first bite of the forbidden fruit.

The serpent used his wiles to accomplish his will for Adam and Eve. Believe me, he has a will for your life too. He is a thief who comes "only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). He is our adversary that "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). But, praise God, we are "not ignorant of his designs" (2 Cor. 2:11).

Satan doesn't have a new bag of tricks. He uses the same old designs or schemes. Let's take a peek into his bag:

1. He pretends to be your friend. ("He said to the woman ...")
2. He prompts you to question what God says and who He is. ("Did God actually say ...")
3. He appeals to our desires. ("The woman saw that the tree was good for food ...")
4. He provokes you to take matters into your own hands. ("She took of its fruit and ate ...")
5. His path leads to death. ("Therefore the LORD God sent him out ...")

Is there an area of your life where you feel you're somewhere stuck in his bag of tricks? Put a star by any (or all) of the above schemes/designs that resonate with you. Feel free to expound on the following page.

What lies about God have you been led to believe?

THAT ANCIENT SERPENT, THE ACCUSER, AND JOB

You may be asking, what does the serpent have to do with Satan? He's not called Satan here. Revelation 20:2 makes the connection: "He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years." Pretty direct statement.

He is the deceiver, accuser, tempter, and enemy of our souls. Unlike ninety-nine percent of Hollywood's interpretations of him, he is not on equal footing with God. He is created. God is uncreated—no one made Him. Now, that can open up a whole litany of questions. Why would God make Satan? Why would He allow evil? There's always an element of mystery with the Lord. As much as He has revealed about Himself in Scripture, our thoughts are not His thoughts, and our ways are not His ways (Isa. 55:8). What we can do is look at another interaction between God, Satan, and a human.

Job was an outstanding man. Job 1:1 says, "that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil." He fathered seven sons and three daughters. His estate included seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and many servants. He was "the greatest of all the people of the east (Job 1:3)." Needless to say, he was a man surely blessed.

Read Job 1:6-22. Who mentioned Job first?

How does Satan respond to God's statement about Job? What is his accusation against Job?

How does God respond?

Satan had to ask permission to sift Job. That's part terrifying and part comforting. Terrifying that the Lord would allow something hard into my life; yet comforting to know Satan isn't running unchecked. John Piper aptly calls him "a lion on a leash."¹⁸ The Lord tells Satan how far he can go and he can go no further.

Fast-forward to the end of the Book of Job.

Read Job 42:10-17. How does it end for Job?

Satan didn't know what the end would hold, but God did. Job didn't know how it would all turn out, but God did. There's a song we sing at our church with a bridge that reminds us, "Even what the enemy means for evil, You turn it for our good."¹⁹

We may not be at the place where we can see "the good." We might be smack-dab in the middle of the hard. But we can remember that Satan is merely a pawn in God's hand. Not only that, Satan has been checkmated. He may still have moves to make on the board, but Colossians 2:15 tells us that he has been ultimately defeated by Christ. For the Christian, we can trust that "all things work together for good" (Rom. 8:28).

Whew, friend. This was a doozy of a day of homework. So much here and yet so much more we could cover. I want to leave you with this: There is a very real enemy of your souls who wants to do everything he can to trick you into trusting false anchors and make you question the strength of the True Anchor. Do not be dismayed, though, he has been defeated, and no matter the schemes he designs for you, the Lord can turn it for your good.

God is the great Redeemer.