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Coming July 17: Weekly Content from Ken Boa's Unpublished Works!

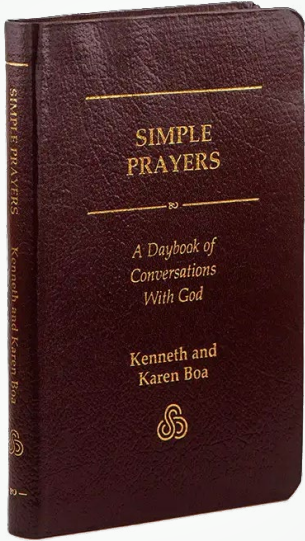
In honor of Ken Boa's 80th birthday in July, we're launching a weekly blog and Substack!

- The weekly blog will include a condensed version of Ken's unpublished works, along with thought-provoking questions for reflection. Subscribe for free at kenboa.org.
- Our Substack (an online publishing platform) will offer a deeper exploration of each week's topic in addition to Bible studies, prayers, and thoughts from Ken. Subscription details coming soon!

Please share these new resources with friends and family!

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THE END OF EVIL

Read Matthew 24:14

The turning of the millennial clock on December 31, 1999, was a sort of crisis point for the world community. Debates over the true beginning point of the new millennium notwithstanding, New Year's Eve 1999 became the *de facto* turning point. Speculation ran rampant about what would arrive with the new millennium: Y2K computer crashes? Asteroids from outer space? The end of the world?

As it turned out, the most exciting thing that happened was the traditional drop of the glowing glass ball in New York's Times Square. So much for the cosmic significance of rolling nines into zeros on the universal odometer.

But one important issue that millennial discussions did bring to the fore was the end of the world. More precisely, when will this event happen? Many who speculate on this issue—including many Christians—could relieve themselves of undue anxiety on this subject by heeding Jesus' simple statement about the end times: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, *and then the end will come*" (Matt. 24:14, emphasis added).

The end of the world will not come about as God's reaction to encroaching and increasing evil in the world. It will not come as a result of a "man of lawlessness" arising to dominate world affairs (2 Thess. 2:3). Nor will it come about in a predictable way or at a predictable time. It will only come when the gospel of the kingdom has been preached throughout the whole world. This is God's ultimate purpose—to establish His kingdom

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and the King who will one day rule over that kingdom for eternity. God, who is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), is orchestrating everything on earth for that ultimate goal.

Evil is present, but it's not predominant. Sin is a reality, but it's not a roadblock. Opposition is formidable, but it's not forever. God will prevail. When all the world has heard His good news, the end will come. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10–11).

God's Promise:

Evil will end at His appointed time—not a second sooner or later.

Reflections Ministries
One Piedmont Center, Suite 130 • Atlanta, GA 30305
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REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging believers to develop a clear mind and a warm heart



THE STRUGGLE OF TRUST

Lord of all creation, You made us for Yourself, and You always take pleasure in granting us every good and perfect gift. Your Word is trustworthy, and Your promises are sure. In spite of this, I struggle with trusting You enough to surrender to Your better way. I often succumb to my own devices and desires, foolishly hoping that I can successfully order my life without conscious dependence on You. When I rebel against Your goodness by choosing my will above Yours, I only grasp dust and ashes. Give me the grace to believe that You really do know what is best for me, while I do not. May I cling to Your character and rejoice in Your pursuit of me. I thank You that in spite of my waywardness, You never let me go. May I honor You so that my influence on others will be for their moral and spiritual good rather than to their detriment.

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Psalm 107: Keep a Grateful Memory Alive

Martin Luther once held a rose in his hand and said, “’Tis a magnificent work of God: could a man make but one such rose as this, he would be thought worthy of all honor, but the gifts of God lose their value in our eyes, from their very infinity.”¹ Luther was also known to quote the proverb, “Nothing ages more quickly than gratitude.”

In Everything Give Thanks

The spiritual disease of taking grace for granted and responding with ingratitude to the riches of God’s kindnesses may be reaching epidemic proportions in our time. Few believers begin the day with a sense of wonder at the lovingkindness of God, gratitude for their health, amazement at the undeserved blessings they have received, or anticipation of another opportunity to love and serve God and others. Instead, we are more inclined to murmur and complain over the things we do not possess rather than stand in awe at the good things bestowed on us by “the Father of lights” (James 1:17).

Since it is impossible to give thanks and complain at the same time, the antidote for our malaise is a heart of gratitude cultivated by a regular routine of remembering the history of God’s redemptive acts in our lives.

Psalm 107 is a rich resource in this process because of its wise counsel to keep a grateful memory alive. This beautifully constructed psalm of thanksgiving for the grace and redemption of God begins and ends with the theme of the loyal love of the LORD:

Oh give thanks to the LORD,
for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is
everlasting. . . .

Who is wise? Let him give
heed to these things,
And consider the
lovingkindnesses of the
LORD.” (Ps. 107:1, 43)

Four Images of God’s Grace

In Psalm 107, the psalmist describes four different scenes to depict the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity. He uses the same refrain of thanksgiving near the

end of each scene: “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men!” (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31).

In the **first scene** (vv. 4–9), a caravan of travelers is lost in the desert, and the people are on the brink of perishing. “Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses” (this expression—found in verses 6, 13, 19, and 28—forms part of the pattern in all four scenes). God responds to their cry for help by leading them directly to the city they could not find by themselves and by satisfying their hunger and thirst. Similarly, to those who are lost, Christ offers Himself as the way of life; to those who are hungry, the bread of life; to those who are thirsty, the water of life; and to those who are exhausted, the rest for their souls that can be found only in Him.

The **second scene** (vv. 10–16) portrays the Israelites as prisoners who are afflicted because of their rebellion against the prophets and the divine counsel graciously given through them. In the first scene, the people are lost in a world that is too wide; in this scene, they are confined in a world that is too small. In their hopelessness, toil, and bondage, they cry to the

LORD, who rescues them, removes their fetters, and sets them free. “Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin,” but when we turn to the Son of God, the truth sets us free (John 8:32, 34, 36).

The **third scene** (vv. 17–22) uses the image of fools who take the advice of no one and are afflicted with illness because of their insolence and rebellion. The fool in Scripture is not intellectually impaired but morally deficient. Only when these people drew near to the gates of death did they cry out to the LORD in their distress. But when they turned back to God, He healed them and delivered them from destruction. Likewise, many people come to Christ only when they have reached the end of their tether.

In the **fourth scene** (vv. 23–32), a crew of seafarers encounter a storm of such magnitude that their skill is swallowed up in the violence of the waves. When they are at the end of their human resources, they cry in their desperation to the LORD, who responds by calming the storm and guiding them to their desired haven. Our voyage may seem perilous, but when we put our hope in the LORD Jesus Christ, He will bring us safely to the other side of the

sea (cf. Mark 4:35–41).

He Is Sovereign and Faithful

All four scenes depicted in Psalm 107 reveal the folly of thinking we are masters of our fate. God is sovereign over the affairs of nature (vv. 33–38) and over the affairs of mankind (vv. 39–41), and there is no security outside His care. We would be wise to recognize ourselves in the fourfold picture of plight and salvation: we are the wanderers, the prisoners, the sick, and the storm-tossed who have been retrieved, released, restored, and rescued.

Four times we are told in this psalm to cry to the LORD in our distress, and four times we are told to be thankful for His deliverance. In His severe mercy, God occasionally takes us to the end of our rope, but He is always faithful to those who cling to Him during the tough times of life. We must cultivate an ongoing attitude of gratitude by remembering the good things He has done for us:

Who is wise? Let him give heed to
these things;
And consider the lovingkindnesses
of the LORD. (Ps. 107:43)

1. In *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. William Hazlitt, accessed at www.ntslibrary.com.