

Psalm 77

- Psalm 77 like a few other psalms follows a pattern; it starts off with a positive affirmation of God, then it sinks into seeming despair, and discouragement - “*I know that God is good, but...*” Then the psalmist turns a corner and views things differently (focus) he regains an eternal or heavenly perspective, then once again he declares his confidence and trust in God, finally ending up praising God.

V: 1 He cried out to God, and God gave ear, He listened, He heard:

- He is “**Jehovah-Shammah**”.

Psalm 34:17 “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles.”

- God answers prayer, which is the basic affirmation of this Psalm. This is then the incentive to pray, to pray more - because God hears and answers.

James 4:2 “You have not because you ask not.”

V: 2 Often times that is exactly what draws us close to God, we’re in trouble and we become acutely aware of our need for Him, so we cry out to Him.

- Hopefully we come to realize that we need Him all the time and stay close to Him, not wandering back and forth depending on how life is going.
- “*My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing...*” I was reaching out for God in desperation, crying out to Him, and it was as though God didn’t answer.

(KJV translates this part of the verse “... I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not...” King of like I was sore vexed, in misery through the night - I think the NKJV expresses the thought better here.)

- I sought the Lord and there was no answer; I’m sure we’ve all felt that way at times.
- I’m sure that as Mary and Martha were praying, crying out to God on behalf of their brother Lazarus they felt that way.

John 11:3-4 “³Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” ⁴When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

- When Lazarus died in front of them in spite of their prayers, they must have wondered what was going on.

- This brings up the issue of when we pray, is it so that our will would be done on earth, or so that God's will would be done?
- The purpose of prayer is that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- Lazarus' sickness was so that the "... Son of God may be glorified through it."
- Lazarus was in the tomb for four days - when Jesus arrived and called him out of the tomb, there had been a great work in Mary, in Martha, and in those who saw Lazarus raised from the dead - and Jesus was glorified through it.

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- Back in the final days of the judges, just prior to Samuel the prophet; Israel was in a desperate state. Eli the priest was corrupted, along with his sons, the priesthood was corrupted and the nation was suffering because of it. God wanted to raise up a deliverer for the people but there was none.
 - About that time we see a woman by the name of Hannah who seemed to have a curse upon her life because she was unable to have children. At the same time her husband's other wife (Peninnah / Fertile Myrtle) was cranking out the kids one after the other.
 - Myrtle was throwing it in Hannah's face and Hannah was very grieved. In those days, not being able to have children was grounds for divorce and considered a curse.
 - No doubt Hannah and her husband Elkanah prayed and prayed over this situation, yet God didn't seem to answer. When she went with her husband to Shiloh to worship the Lord there and she prayed at one point in such anguish of spirit that she couldn't even utter the prayer out loud anymore.
 - When Eli saw her he thought that she was drunk - but she prayed one more time in desperation saying "God if you'll give me a son, I'll give him back to you..." And that is exactly what God was looking for.
 - Israel is in a desperate state. The priesthood is corrupted, the nation is suffering, and God wants a specific man - a man consecrated from birth. God wants a man, but to get a man he needs a woman. He shuts up her womb, which causes her to seek God and pray. She prays God if you'll give me a man, I'll give him back to you - which is what God was looking for. Now she's in line with the purpose and will of God - and she has a baby boy named Samuel.
 - God is looking for those who are in line with His purposes:

2 Chronicles 16:9 “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...”

V: 3 The psalmist cried out to God in his trouble, but there was no relief. The thought of God became bitter, he was troubled at the thought of God - because he didn't understand God.

Isaiah 55:8-9 “⁸For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

- So often when we're facing a problem, we think we've got it figured out. If God will just do this or that then it'll all come together, we got it all worked out. The problem comes in when God doesn't do it the way we want it.
- As we direct our prayers to God we have to be careful not to seek to direct God in the process, but instead we need to yield ourselves to God's purposes, to His will.
- As he remembered God he was troubled, he complained: Anybody else able to relate to this?
- As his spirit is overwhelmed it becomes a spiritual problem and as such needs to be dealt with in a spiritual way:

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 “³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds.”

Ephesians 6:11 “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

V: 4 Loosing sleep, getting to the place where you can't even talk about the issues anymore.

V: 5-6 Starting to look back, to remember and reflect on the great things that God has done, his / their history with God.

- This is a turning point
- He's lapsed into the depth of despair, his spirit being troubled and overwhelmed, he can't sleep, can't even talk about it - kind of bottoming out, now looking to God in a different way.

- He begins to ask a series of 6 rhetorical questions that border on the absurd because the answer to each is an emphatic “NO!”

V: 7 Of course we know that He won't cast us off forever.

Jeremiah seems to respond to Asaph's cry:

Lamentations 3:31-32 “³¹For the Lord will not cast off forever. ³²Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.”

Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Matthew 28:20 “... lo, I am with you even to the end of the age.”

“^{7b}... *will He be favorable no more?*”

Psalm 30:5 “For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” (Season)

Isaiah 60:10 “... for in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you.”

V: 8 Again the answer is no because God can't deny who and what He is, He is mercy:

God describes Himself:

Exodus 34:6-7 “⁶And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”

Deuteronomy 4:31 “For the Lord your God is a merciful God, He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.”

Jeremiah 31:3 “The Lord appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”

“^{8b}*Has His promise failed forevermore?*” (Will He keep His Word?)

Psalm 138:2 “I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.”

Matthew 5:18 “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

Isaiah 40:8 “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever.”

V: 9 Does God forget anything? (He chooses to forget our sin, once it's covered by the blood of Jesus.) He can't forget us!

Isaiah 49:15-16 ¹⁵“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. ¹⁶See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands...”

- Has He changed His nature: No!

Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

“^{9b}... *Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?*” Again the answer is no.

Lamentations 3:22-23 ²²“Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning: great is Your faithfulness.”

- The fact they he hasn't been consumed is proof that God hasn't shut up His tender mercies.

V: 10 So it's not God's problem, it is his problem: this is a general bible truth; we're the culprit, we're the problem - it's our wicked hearts. (**El-Elyon**)

It has been well said that:

“We should never doubt in the darkness what God has told us in the light.”

V: 11-12 *“I will remember the works of the Lord...”* When you're down, take time to count your blessings! Regain a right perspective.

- This is one of the coolest things about God's Word; as like the Psalmist we begin to go back through His word and we watch how God interacts with His creation, how He dealt with the patriarchs, with the nation of Israel. We see this composite picture of God's faithfulness, His kindness, His love towards them. We see His goodness manifest through all the various accounts - and it gives us confidence that as His child He will be just as faithful, just as merciful, and patient, and kind, and loving to each of us!

- God's Word is His love letter to each of us, and each time we read it and re-read it we're reminded of our relationship with Him and how much He loves us.

1 Samuel 12:24 "Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."

"I will..." 3x's = he's made a decision, a commitment. (**Joshua 24:15**)

- **Remember** the works of the Lord, **meditate** on the works of the Lord, then **talk**, speak, testify of the works of the Lord to others!

V: 13-15 Notice that from V: 13 forward (16x's) all the pronouns change from "I" & "my" to "Your" & "you." The focus completely changes from himself to the Lord.

- His ways are the ways of holiness.
- "*Sanctuary*" (H-6944) "qodes" - holy thing, holiness, sacredness, something consecrated for God's exclusive use.

Psalm 145:17 "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and Holy in all His works."

- This is very much like **Psalm 73** - when Asaph was grieved but what he was seeing until he went into the Sanctuary, the Holy Place of the Lord.
- He sees the power of God, the glory of God, and the works of God; he sees God in a very positive light.
- Now the question is who is a god like our God?

Our God is incomparable:

Isaiah 46:5 "To whom will you liken Me, and make Me equal and compare Me, that we should be alike?"

Isaiah 44:6 "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God."

V: 16 Speaking of the waters of the Red Sea when it seemed that the children of Israel were trapped. The mountains on two sides, the Red Sea before them, and Pharaoh's army bearing down upon them.

- We're reminded because of the language used here that this is Hebrew poetry.

V: 17-20 The waters peeled back, it was a stormy tempestuous event.

- His way was in the sea, He made a path for them, He made a way that was in the sea.

John 14:6 “Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father except through Me.”

- Jesus is the One, the only one who will see us safely through to the other side!
- He led His children safely through to the other side like the Shepherd He is.

Isaiah 40:11 “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”

- Asaph looked back through the history of Israel to see the faithfulness and love of God manifest.
- As NT believers we look back to the cross of Jesus where He demonstrated His love for us, where the Father sacrificed the Lamb of God to take away our sins.

1 John 4:10 “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”