

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes Book of Psalms
5-25-11

Psalm 77

The Story Behind the Psalms: 75-83

These Psalms formed a little book of Psalms. They were written by Asaph upon God's people being delivered from an enemy. We do not know exactly what deliverance this was. These were just general songs. They were used for congregational purposes. They were songs of praise thanking God for deliverance.

The Way They Were Used by God's People

They were used for public worship and praise. What a vital part congregational singing has in the service of the Lord! How it prepares the heart! Think of the blessedness of the choir specials, solos, duets, trios, quartets, sextets, singing groups, and of the congregational singing. Think of the pastors whose hearts have been prepared to preach and of the people in the congregation who have been prepared for the message by Spirit-filled singing. Thank God for the Asaphs who write music and for the Asaphs who direct it. Praise God for the influence of the songs that we use day after day, week after week, year after year, songs that we sing sometimes too carelessly, songs whose meanings we overlook as we sing them. Just as the aforementioned songs and hundreds of others have blessed us, even so these Psalms were a similar blessing to the people of Israel.

Theme: We are comforted through the hard times by remembering God's help in the past. Recalling God's miracles and previous works can give us courage to continue.

Author: Asaph

For Jeduthun, the choir director: A psalm of Asaph

PSALM 77:1-12

Asaph cried out to God for courage during a time of deep distress. The source of Asaph's distress (77:4) was his doubt (77:7-9). He said, "I cry out to God." But in 77:13-20, the *I* is gone. As Asaph expressed his requests to God, his focus changed from thinking of himself to worshiping God: "You are the God of miracles and wonders!" (77:14). Only after he put aside his doubts about God's holiness and care for him (77:13, 14) did he eliminate his distress (77:20). As we pray to God, he shifts our focus from ourselves to him.

PSALM 77:11, 12

Memories of God's miracles and faithfulness sustained Israel through their difficulties. They knew that God was capable and trustworthy. When you meet new trials, review how good God has been to you, and this will strengthen your faith.

PSALM 77:16

This statement refers to the miraculous parting of the Red Sea. This great event is mentioned many times in the Old Testament (Exodus 14:21, 22; Joshua 24:6; Nehemiah 9:9; Psalm 74:13; 106:9; 136:13-15). The story of this incredible miracle was handed down from generation to generation, reminding the Israelites of God's power, protection, and love.

Psalm 78

Theme: Lessons from history. Asaph retells the history of the Jewish nation from the time of slavery in Egypt to David's reign. It was told over and over to each generation so they would not forget God and make the same mistakes as their ancestors.

Author: Asaph

A psalm of Asaph

PSALM 78:1

The people of Israel rebelled and were not faithful to God (78:8). They forgot about the miracles God had done (78:11, 12) and put God to the test by making demands of him (78:18). They lied to him, tried to flatter him (78:36), and continued to turn away from him even after he did great works on their behalf (78:42-56). This is recorded in God's Word so that we can avoid the same errors. In 1 Corinthians 10:5-12, Paul used this classic story of Israel's unfaithfulness to warn the early Christians to be faithful.

PSALM 78:5

God commanded that the stories of his mighty acts in Israel's history and his laws be passed on from parents to children. This shows the purpose and importance of religious education: To help each generation obey God and set its hope on him. It is important to keep children from repeating the same mistakes as their ancestors. What are you doing to pass on the history of God's work to the next generation?

PSALM 78:9, 10

Ephraim was the most prominent tribe of Israel from the days of Moses to Saul's time. The Tabernacle was set up in its territory. There is no other biblical record of Ephraim's soldiers turning back from battle, so this is probably a metaphor referring to Ephraim's failure to provide strong leadership during those years. When David became king, the tribe of Judah gained prominence. Because of David's faith and obedience, God chose Jerusalem in Judah to be the place for the new Temple and rejected Ephraim (78:67). This caused tension between the two tribes. This psalm may have been written because of that tension in order to demonstrate once again why God chose Judah. God works through those who are faithful to him.

PSALM 78:36, 37

Over and over the children of Israel claimed that they would follow God, but then they turned away from him. The problem was that they followed God with words and not with their hearts; thus, their repentance was empty. Talk is cheap. God wants our conduct to back up our spiritual claims and promises.

PSALM 78:71, 72

Although David had been on the throne when this psalm was written, he is called a shepherd and not a king. Shepherding, a common profession in biblical times, was a highly responsible job. The flocks were completely dependent upon shepherds for guidance, provision, and protection. David had spent his early years as a shepherd (1 Samuel 16:10, 11). This was a training ground for the future responsibilities God had in store for him. When he was ready, God took him from caring for sheep to caring for Israel, God's people. Don't treat your present situation lightly or irresponsibly; it may be God's training ground for your future.