



Psalms 76-78

Psalms 76-78
Tape #7190
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to Psalm seventy-six as we continue our journey through the Bible. During the reign of Hezekiah the king his chief counselor was Isaiah the prophet. Sennacherib was the king of Assyria and his juggernaut had been bludgeoning the world into submission. The Assyrian Empire was becoming a dominant force in the world. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen to Assyria and now the Assyrian has moved this great host numbering into the hundreds of thousands of their fighting army against Judah.

As the Assyrians move in they send their emissaries to taunt the god of Israel and to demand capitulation. They send blasphemous letters, letters that blaspheme God and letters that challenge the faith of Hezekiah. Hezekiah in turn went in before the Lord, laid out the letters and said, "Look what they are saying about you. If I were you I wouldn't like this. If I were you I'd wipe them out". Isaiah the king was counseling Hezekiah to trust in the Lord. The battle was not his but God's.

We read that one morning when the children of Israel woke up and stood on the wall to see the enemy troops that had blockaded the city, they looked out and saw a field of corpse. The angel of the Lord had passed through the army of the Assyrians and a hundred and eighty-five thousand of the front line troops of the Assyrians were smitten by the angel of the Lord in one night. That was the night that Isaiah tells us that fear took hold of the hearts of the sinners in Zion. I would imagine so. They said, "Who amongst us can dwell in the midst of this devouring fire?"

This psalm was written in celebration of this occasion. Psalm seventy-six, written by one of the descendants of Asaph, one of the family of Asaph, the descendant of the chief musician of the time of David wrote psalm seventy-six in response to God's tremendous power being manifested in his destruction of the Assyrian army. In Judah is God known, his name is great in Israel.

In Salem (76:1).

Which is a shortening of Jerusalem.

also is his tabernacle [temple of God], and his dwelling place in Zion (76:2).

Mount Zion there in Jerusalem.

There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle (76:3).

That is the beginning strophe of this psalm. It's in three strophes; three verses, six verses, three verses. Now in praise and exaltation of God.

Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mount of prey. The stouthearted [Assyrian army] are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep (76:4-6).

The acclaiming of God's marvelous victory over that Assyrian army, wiping them out.

Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still. When God arose to judgment, (76:7-9).

That is the judgement upon the Assyrians to save all of the meek of the earth. Now the final strophe.

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Vow, and pay unto the LORD our God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared [reverence]. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible [awesome] to the kings of the earth (76:10-12).

When you understand the background of the psalm, the psalm just sort of flows and follows the battle scene, the great victory of God, his marvelous works in delivering his people and the response of the people to that work of God standing in reverence and awe of him.

Psalm seventy-seven is a psalm that is quite parallel to psalm seventy-three in its thought and progression. As psalm seventy-three begins in a positive affirmation, “Truly the Lord is good unto Israel and to such as fear his name” and then the psalmist, after declaring this positive affirmation of God, sinks into deep despair. I know that God is good but “as for me my foot almost slipped,” I was almost wiped out, “I was envious at the prosperity of the wicked”. He almost is destroyed. Then as he comes into the sanctuary of God he gets his bearings; he sees things in their eternal perspective. It changes his whole attitude and it ends on a positive note.

So psalm seventy-seven sort of follows that same kind of a pattern where he makes a declaration of God in a positive way but then he lapses into the depths of despair, despondency, discouragement and depression but then looking at things from a different perspective, from a divine perspective, he has confidence, he gains confidence and he begins his declarations of confidence and praise in God. Let’s follow it in seventy-seven.

I CRIED unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me (77:1).

God answers prayer. This is the basic affirmation of the psalm. We know that this is true, that the basic thrust or incentive to pray is the fact that God answers prayer. It does follow that there are many prayers that go up to bring nothing down. When God doesn’t answer prayer, our first reaction is to blame God for not answering prayer rather than looking at our prayer or at ourselves we have a tendency to immediately blame God. He affirms that I did call and he gave ear, God does hear the prayers of his people and God answers the prayers of his people, that’s the chief thrust for praying.

James said, “You have not because you ask not”. Many people just haven’t prayed about it, that’s why they don’t have it. Then he went on to say though, “You ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you might consume it on your own lust”. So your prayers are for the wrong things. I do believe that there is a vast misunderstanding of prayer within the church, within the Christian body, because so often we look at prayer as an agency that God has devised whereby we can accomplish our will upon the earth. Unfortunately that’s being preached really in some quarters. Prayer is that and faith are those divine agencies by which you can get your will done upon the earth, you can write your own ticket with God, you can become a sovereign god yourself because you can create your own realities. That’s never the purpose of prayer. The real purpose of prayer is to get God’s will accomplished upon the earth.

When Jesus was in the garden, surely he expressed it when he said, “Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not what I will but thy will be done”. Any prayer that is offered to God that doesn’t have that “Nevertheless not my will, thy will be done isn’t really true prayer”. You don’t understand the real purpose of prayer. It’s not to get your will done; it’s to get God’s will done. Thus many times we are asking amiss because we are asking to consume it upon our own lusts. Our purpose is to get my will accomplished rather than getting God’s will accomplished here on earth. He affirms the fact of God I prayed and God does hear our prayers.

In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: (77:2).

That is, I sought the Lord and there was no answer to my cry, to my prayer. It was as though God did not answer the prayer. The problem continued. We've all had that experience haven't we? Where we brought an issue to God in prayer and it seemed like nothing happened, the problem persisted.

I think of how Mary and Martha sent the urgent message to Jesus when their brother Lazarus was so sick, was dying. Jesus was down at the Jordan River and they sent that urgent message that said, "Lord, come quickly. The one you love is dying" and Jesus, it said, continued there at the Jordan River for two days with his disciples after receiving this urgent appeal. After two days Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go to Bethany that we might see Lazarus". Now it's a two-day journey from Jericho to Lazarus at Bethany.

By the time that Jesus is approaching the village his friend has already been dead for four days, he's been buried. Martha, when word came to the mourners that Jesus was approaching Bethany, went running down the road towards Jericho to meet Jesus as he came. When she caught up with him she said, "Lord, if you would have only been here my brother would not have died." She was rebuking him. She was in essence saying, "Lord, what took you so long to get here? Lord, why didn't you respond to our prayer? The request was to come quickly, the one you love is dying".

Why didn't Jesus respond immediately? Because Jesus wanted to demonstrate his power in even a greater way than they ever dreamed. They wanted Jesus to come and heal Lazarus. Had he just come and healed Lazarus everyone would have said, "O isn't Jesus wonderful. He came and Lazarus was healed but he probably would have gotten better anyhow". It's so easy for us to cry unto the Lord and ask God to do something. After God does it we can attribute it to natural things, "O well had we just waited another day it would probably been alright anyhow so no sweat".

Jesus really wanted to do something even more amazing. He stayed down at the Jordan River for two days. He allowed Lazarus to become thoroughly dead. Four days wrapped in those grave clothes in that tomb and when Jesus came to the tomb and he ordered the stone to be rolled back they objected. They said, "Lord, it's been four days. He's smelling pretty bad by now" and Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus come forth". Someone has suggested it's a good thing he said Lazarus come forth or he would have emptied the whole cemetery. Lazarus came forth and the power of God was revealed in even a greater way.

Sometimes God delays the answers to our prayers so that when he gives he might give more than what we were ever anticipating or desiring. I think in the Old Testament of Hannah who had a curse, from a cultural standpoint in that she was barren. That was a cultural curse. It was grounds for legal divorce; no one would have questioned Elkanah had he said to beat it woman. If a woman could not bare a son or a child for her husband, that was legal grounds for divorce. It was a curse to not be able to bare children.

In that day polygamy was practiced and the other wife of Elkanah could have all kinds of kids. She was throwing it into Hannah's face that something was wrong with her. Hannah was just vexed by this and no doubt had prayed and prayed and prayed for God to give her a son. Yet God didn't answer, the delay of the answer. She and her husband were going to Shiloh to worship God for at that time the tabernacle was at Shiloh. While she was there she was in agony of spirit. Of course on the way there she was depressed, she was down and her husband said, "What's the matter? What kind of a traveling companion are you? Cheer up". She would be saying, "How can I be happy when I don't have a child? Give me a child or I'm going to die". He got upset "Do you think I'm God, what can I do? God knows we've tried".

She was in such bitterness of spirit that as she was lying there in the temple area she couldn't utter the prayer aloud anymore. It was the agony of the heart. She was lying there probably contorted and just her mouth moving with no words coming out. Eli the priest came by and said, "Hey woman get rid of booze it's going to ruin you". She said, "I've not been drinking sir. My heart is grieved before God. I've been asking God to give me a son" but she had done one more thing, she said, "God if you would just give me a son I will give him back to you all the days of his life". That's what God was wanting.

Israel was in a desperate state. Eli the priest was corrupted. With a corrupted priesthood you have a corrupted condition through out the land. God needed a deliverer for the people and there was none. So God

needed a man and to get a man he had to get the woman first. What he did was shut up her womb. She prayed and sought God and nothing happened until finally she prayed, "God if you'll just give me a son I'll give him back to you". Now she's in line with the purpose of God.

God is just looking for people who are in line with his purpose. "The eyes of the Lord go to and fro throughout the entire earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect". Now her heart is perfect towards the Lord. The priest said, "God your way. God has heard your prayer". Samuel was born. That one that God raised up to be a prophet and a judge to the Nation of Israel that brought them out of their spiritual morass and led them into a worship and an acknowledgement again of God as the Lord over the nation. God again delayed the answer that he might give more and that is often the case.

The psalmist cried unto God in his trouble but there was no relief. It continued. The problem did not cease until he went into a depression.

my soul refused to be comforted (77:2).

The thought of God became bitter. When I would think about God it would only trouble me because I don't understand God. That often is troubling because I desire to understand what God is doing in my life. But God said, "My ways are not your ways saith the Lord. For my ways are beyond your finding out". I am thankful that God is not limited to my ways.

So many times when I am facing a problem I get it all figured out. If God would just do this and this and this then it will come together here and it will be great. I've got the whole thing worked out. If I will just win the Reader's Digest sweepstakes coming up on the fifteenth, all of my problems are going to be over. O God, let them draw my number now. Let that thing pop out of the computer, the one that they sent me, that special card that I got. I am praying now direction prayers rather than direct prayer. I'm directing God how to do it because I've got it all figured out. Then July fifteenth passes and I don't get any call and no telegram. God, how could you let me down? What am I going to do now? This was the last hope. I'm all upset because my debts are still here. God didn't come through, I prayed that I might win.

God has a completely different way to work out the problem and suddenly here it comes along and wow, that wasn't as complex as I thought it was. How could God think of that? Why didn't I think of that? That was so simple. What a simple solution. I've got this whole complex thing worked out and God has got to work through this maze and if he makes it to the end then I'll get the reward. He doesn't always follow my complex methods and he has usually such a much more simpler way of doing things. Our prayers need to be direct prayer. Lay the need before the Lord and leave it at that.

I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, (77:3).

Yes I have at that. Have you ever complained to God? Do you know what that is about?

and my spirit was overwhelmed (77:3).

It now became a spiritual problem. Often times these things can turn into real spiritual problems in your life. That endeavor by man with this finite mind to understand the infinite God. I am running up against all of these impenetrable walls. I can't understand what God is doing and I can't understand this infinite God and I can't understand the ways of the infinite God because we are looking at the situation from a different perspective.

I am looking at it from my temporal material perspective of how it's going to affect me now and God is looking at it from the eternal perspective of how it's going to affect me eternally. Because we are looking at the issues from a different perspective I cannot understand the eternal perspective of God, the eternal plan that God is working out because I am so interested in my temporary comfort, temporary convenience because I'm living in this day to day world and I want things to work out now because I'm not going to be here long. "Why tarry ye Lord?" Let's get things going God. You may have eternity but I don't.

He began to lose sleep. His eyes in the night are wide open looking at the ceiling.

Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak (77:4).

Getting to the place where you can't even talk about the issues anymore.

I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times (77:5).

Now he is beginning to reflect on the past of what God has revealed of himself to the fathers.

I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search (77:6).

This is the turn around point. He had lapsed into the depths of despair. His spirit is troubled and overwhelmed, he can't sleep and he can't even talk about it. Coming to the bottom things begin to change. He began to ask a series of questions concerning God in which he took it to the absurd, reducing it to the absurd.

Will the Lord cast of for ever? (77:7).

Of course we know he won't.

and will he be favourable no more? (77:7).

Has God ended his favors? Has he quit working? Has God abandoned his creation? Sometimes we are prone to think that aren't we when we look around and see the conditions that are going on.

Is his mercy clean gone for ever? (77:8).

Will he never again be merciful?

doth his promise fail for evermore? (77:8).

Are the promises of God something that you can't trust anymore? Has God failed to keep his word? "Heaven and earth will pass away" Jesus said, "but my words will never pass away".

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? (77:9).

Has he changed his nature?

hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? (77:9).

All of these are sort of rhetorical type of questions that immediately call for a "No, of course not. No, that's foolish. That's stupid to think that".

And I said, This is my infirmity: (77:10).

It isn't God's problem, this is my problem. The problem isn't on God's side of the wall; the problem is on my side of the wall.

I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old (77:11).

I will remember the past. There is where the scripture comes in, as I read of God's faithfulness to his word, to his people. I read of the work of God amongst his people, the delivering hand of God when it seemed like there was no hope at all.

I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings (77:12).

As he turns around, rather than looking at God in a negative light he is beginning to look at God in a positive light.

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou has declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph (77:13-15).

He turns things around and he sees the power of God, the glory of God and the works of God and he sees God in a positive light. Be careful when you start looking at God in a negative light. That's a trick of the enemy to take you to the bottom. "I don't think God really cares about me. I don't think God is interested in me at all. I don't think God loves me anymore. I think that God's forsaken me." You are looking at God in this negative light and man, talk about despair, that'll take you to the bottom. We need to look at God in a positive light. Surely there is no God as great as our God. He does such marvelous things. He is manifested his strength to his people.

He begins to talk of the waters. That is the waters of the Red Sea when the children of Israel had come and they seemed to be trapped, there was no way out. The Egyptians were behind them, the sea in front of them and the hills of Pihahiroth beside them. They are in this valley and they were trapped.

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled (77:16).

He speaks of this now in a very poetic beautiful way.

The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not know. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron (77:17-20).

You brought them through.

Psalms seventy-eight is the first of what they call the historic psalms. The psalmist said I'm going to give you a parable but really he is going to give to you now a review of the history of the nation in this psalm in a poetic form. He's going to follow the history of the nation from the beginning of it being a nation up until that present time which was the time of David's reign. In the book of Acts when Stephen was brought before the council, we find that Stephen in his defense gave to them a preview of their history.

It was very important to the Jew to understand their history as it related to God and to look back and to see how God relates to the historic events of a nation. It is an important thing to see how that when that nation served and honored God they were blessed of God and prospered of God. When that nation turned against God, God delivered them into the hands of their enemies. Thus was the case of Israel when they followed after God, God blessed them and when they followed after the flesh and turned from God, then they experienced the judgements of God. As the psalmist is looking over their history he sees it as it relates to God.

So he calls to the people to give ear or to listen to his Torah which is literally teaching.

GIVE ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth (78:1).

He's calling them to take consideration of this now.

I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us (78:2-3).

For the most part the stories were passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. I'm going to tell you the things that our fathers had told us.

We will not hide them from their children, (78:4).

We have got to pass the truth on to the next generation. That is always the challenge of every generation to pass the truth of God onto the next generation. That is our calling, that is our responsibility and if we fail to do so the nation is destined to go down the tube. We can't let our children grow up in a godless society. It is important, it is incumbent upon us to somehow communicate God's truth to the next generation if we are going to survive. So it is imperative really to pass on the truth of God to the next generation.

We have seen the work of God here at Calvary Chapel in a very unique and special way. We are very grateful for what God has done. We could look across the country and see hundreds of pulpits in the greatest churches of the United States being filled by people who were once those teenagers that came through our doors and found Christ here. God has certainly done a remarkable work as the church was able to communicate to the truths of God and they caught hold of the truth and they went out to spread the truth.

I remember a few years ago my absolute shock when Mike MacIntosh came up with his teenage daughter, in her late teens. I remember when Mike was just barely out of his teens around here and Raul Ries came up with his teenage boys and suddenly I had the realization that there's a whole new generation coming along and we need to communicate the truth of God to them also. That's when I started up the Monday night classes again because I felt here's a new generation. We've got to bring the truth of God to them also. We can't let a generation come up without knowing the truths of God. I thank God that Greg Laurie is been raised up now on Monday nights and I can sort of step out for a little bit now. I brought it to Greg's generation and he can take now to the next generation. That's what it is all about, communicating the truth of God to the next generation so that we pass it on.

Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them [truths] from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done (78:3-4).

We need to teach the kids to praise the Lord for his marvelous works, for his strength and for the things that God has done.

For he established a testimony [witness] in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: (78:5).

God, when he gave the law, commanded them to pass it on their children.

That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: (78:6).

The perpetuation of the truth of God from generation to generation to generation. Thus it is our responsibility, our generation, to pass it on to the next generation. If we fail then there is chaos. Now we come to the purpose of passing on these truths of God.

That they might set their hope in God, (78:7).

O my. People are setting their hope in so many empty things. People are hoping right now that this is a genuine change in Russia. Gorbachev represents a new frontier for Russia and peace is around the corner. Everybody is saying peace and safety, how wonderful. We know that the Bible says, "Beware when they say peace and safety for then comes sudden destruction". That they might not have their hope in this world system, even in democracy, but they've got to set their hope in God.

and not forget the words of God, but keep his commandments: (78:7).

I think that it is absolutely criminal what the Supreme Court has done to our school system in the ruling out of God from the school curriculum. Declaring that it is not lawful to put the Ten Commandments up on the wall of the classroom even though it is on the walls of the Supreme Court building. Something's wrong. You see, Satan would keep us from passing it to the next generation. Since those doors are closed, we've got to find ways to pass the truth on to this generation. When one door closes God has other ways. Let's discover God's ways and let's get the truth on. We don't want them to forget the works of God and we want them to keep his commandments.

And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God (78:8).

We saw the affects and the results of that generation of their fathers, the disaster that came of it.

The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle (78:9).

Ephraim was the greatest of the tribes and yet because they did not keep the law of God there was a weakness from a moral standpoint. Thus they turned back in the day of battle. They turned their backs to their enemies.

They were defeated. We see the United States and the fiasco of Vietnam. Here this great powerful nation unable to win a victory in that war, which should wake us up to something is desperately wrong. When we turn our backs to our enemies in battle, when we go out but we can't win the battles, there is something desperately wrong with that nation. With Israel, Ephraim, they turned their backs. Why? Because they kept not the covenant of God and they refused to walk in his law. There is definitely a parallel and there is an association between a nations relationship with God and their power as a nation.

And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them. Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, (78:11-13).

Of course now he is giving their history. The wonders that God did for them. They forgot these, they weren't really impressed upon them. Their parents had not passed on the truth.

He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap. In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave [split] the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths (78:13-15).

He opened the springs as the rock was hit and the waters gushed forth.

He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness (78:16-17).

There are lessons to be learned from history. He that does not learn the lessons of history is doomed to make the same mistakes.

And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? (78:18-20).

Here God had just done this marvelous miracle who rather than being truly grateful they were almost cynical. "Ya he brought water out of the rock but can God give us a table here in the wilderness? Can he give us bread and meat?"

Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth [angry]; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: (78:21-22).

Because they failed to just believe God and trust in God the anger of God was kindled against them.

Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven (78:23-24).

Manna is the wheat of heaven.

Man did eat angels food (78:25).

So God took some of the angels food and just dumped it on them there in the wilderness.

he sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: (78:25-27).

We read in Exodus how that the quail came flying in and it says, “until it was two cubits”. Actually, what happened is that the quail came flying in at the height of two cubits, it wasn’t that they were stacked up two cubits high. They came flying in at the height of two cubits, thirty-six inches, perfect for batting. These guys went out with their bats, their sticks, and were whopping these quail as they came flying over. The little kids were gathering them up and stacking them in a pile. He provided them with meat until it was coming out of their nostrils. They were so greedy.

And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire; (78:28-29).

Be careful when God gives you your own desires because our desires are often destructive to our spirit.

They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel (78:30-31).

The fighting men, their strength.

For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity [emptiness], and their years in trouble (78:32-33).

Because of this they wandered for forty-years until they died in the wilderness. Their lives were really in vain. They were just waiting to die. God swore that they would not be able to go into the land because of their unbelief. He said, “This generation shall remain here in the wilderness until they all perish and your children which you said would be a prey to the enemy, they shall go in and take the land”. So they spent their days in vanity and their years in trouble.

When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God (78:34).

When the judgements of God are in the land, he’ll cause his people to turn to righteousness.

And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer, Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues (78:35-36).

It was only a surface kind of a thing. It was “God get me out of this trouble” but it wasn’t really a turning of their hearts completely to God.

For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, (78:37-38).

Now when people come along and tell you “I believe in the God of the New Testament, God of love and sweetness. I have a hard time with the Old Testament, a God of wrath, I have a hard time with that”. What’s it say?

But he, being full of compassion, (78:38).

Are we reading Old Testament or New Testament? God is compassionate. The God of the Bible. He isn’t the God of the Old Testament or the New Testament, you don’t have a single God and he’s the same. In the New Testament, yes, we hear a lot and read about the love of God but also in the New Testament we read “But the wrath of God shall be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness”. In both, he is revealed not only as a God full of compassion, gracious, loving and kind but also a God of truth, righteousness and judgement.

But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: (78:38).

Justice would have been to destroy them.

yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered (78:38-39).

O thank God for this.

that they were but flesh; (78:39).

God looks down and he sees us in our failure and we're so upset and miserable with ourselves and God says, "O look at that, they're just flesh aren't they?" We think we are just super saints, that's our problem. We have an exalted opinion of ourselves. Here I come, super saint, to save the day. We think that we are so strong and all and God looks at us and says, "You're just flesh". The Bible says, "He knows our frame that we are but dust". I'm glad that God remembers that. In my weakness he remembers that I'm just flesh.

I expect more of myself than God does. I don't surprise God, I only surprise me when I fail. I don't disappoint God I disappoint myself. God's not disappointed, he knew it all the time. I'm the one disappointed when I fail. He remembers that we are but flesh. This is what a graphic picture of life. Here is life.

a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again (78:39).

For you who are trusting in reincarnation to have good karma and have a better life the next time around you are like a wind who passes away and you do not come again. This is it, "cometh not again" (78:39).

How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back (78:40-41).

They came to the border of the Promised Land where they could enter into the promises of God but they turned back.

and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel (78:41).

Here's an interesting thing. God announced himself to Abraham as El Shaddai, the Almighty God, the Omnipotent God, and yet that almighty, omnipotent God can be limited by man. Israel limited what God wanted to do for them.

You can limit God in his desires of what he wishes to do for you. God wants to bless you. God wants to use you. God want's to use you in a mighty and powerful way but you could limit the work of God in your life. The things that God is desiring to do, you could put a limit o God's work in your life. God help us that we will not put limitations by our unbelief or by our manner of life but that God will be free to do all that he is desiring to do in us in order that he might do all that he desires to do through us. They tempted God and they limited the Holy One of Israel.

They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy (78:42).

They forgot the power of God in their history.

How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan: And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods that they could not drink. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. He gave also their increase [of their crops] unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them (78:43-49).

An interesting phrase here, God sending them by allowing them to come. God, I believe, does put up barriers by which he holds back those evil forces that would like to move in and take over. I believe that God has Satan under restraints, there are limitations.

Satan complained about it in the case of Job. Sons of God presented themselves to God. Satan also came with them. God said, "Hey where have you been" and he said, "Cruising around the earth. Going up and down to and fro through it". "Have you considered my servant Job, he's a good man. Loves good and hates evil". "Ya, I've seen that guy. I know him and I know also that you put a hedge around him. You won't let me get to him. If you'd just let me get to that guy, you see, you put that hedge around him and blessed him. You've given that guy everything he could ever possibly want. Anybody would serve you if you blessed him like you blessed Job. A guy would be a fool. Let me take away that which you have given him. Let me at him. Take the hedge away and I'll prove to you that guy will curse you to your face".

The hedge, the hedge, the limitations. When a people are evil, I believe that God just removes the limitations and allows the evil angels to come amongst them to wreck havoc.

He made a way to his anger, he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence, And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: (78:50-51).

The descendents of Ham populated Africa, Genesis ten.

But made his own people to go forth like sheep, (78:52).

He wrecked havoc upon the Egyptians but his own people, the Israelites, they came forth like sheep.

and guided them in the wilderness like a flock (78:52).

Here's God's flock being guided by him through the wilderness and he led them.

And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies (78:53).

Swallowed them up.

And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. He cast out the heather also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents (78:54-55).

He brought them into the land that he had promised to Abraham. He fulfilled his word and his promises to them.

Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies [law]: But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow (78:56-57).

A deceitful bow is a bow that would break. You are in battle and you go to draw your bow but the thing snaps. You can't depend upon it. So the people, they snapped. You couldn't depend upon them.

Now we come to the period of history during the period of judges. God had brought them in and he gave them the land under Joshua. They divided the land as an inheritance. The tribes dwelt in their appointed places. Yet, now in the land blessed of God, they turn their backs on God and deal unfaithfully with him like their fathers did.

For they provoked him to anger with their high places, (78:58).

They began to build places to worship.

and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel: So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among them (78:58-60).

When they first came into the land Ephraim was the major tribe, a descendent of one of the sons of Joseph. The tribe of Ephraim was figured by its size and nature to be the dominant tribe. Thus they set the tabernacle, that they had in the wilderness, in the tribe of Ephraim in the city of Shiloh. The tabernacle remained in Shiloh for many, many years. At some period of time and we don't know exactly when, the tabernacle was moved to Gibeah. So that at the time of Samuel the tabernacle was then in Gibeah but it was originally in Shiloh. This is a reference that he forsook the tabernacle.

It's a tragic thing when God leaves the church. Jesus said to the church of Ephesus,

"I know your works, your patience, your discernment but I have this against you. You left your first love. Therefore I want you to remember from where you are fallen. I want you to repent. I want you to go back and do your first works over or else I will come and remove the candlestick out of its place."

In going back to chapter one when John saw the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. The seven golden candlesticks are interpreted to be the seven churches of Asia. So as he writes to Ephesus he said, "You've left your first love and if you don't repent and get back to that first love" then he said, "I'm going to remove its candle stick out of its place". Where was the place? Christ was in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. What Jesus is saying is that "I will remove my presence from that church that doesn't have my love flowing amongst the people".

How important that we remain in the love of Jesus Christ. That love be a predominant factor and feature of the church. That we don't get puffed up and so interested in our self that we are not reaching out in love to others. So he forsook the tabernacle even as he has forsaken in many places the church.

And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand (78:61).

Here's Ephraim, the strength; he gave them into captivity into his enemy's hands.

He gave his people over also unto the sword: and was wroth with his inheritance. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage (78:62-63).

The nation was wiped out. The young people were destroyed.

Their priests fell by the sword: and their widows made no lamentation. Then the LORD awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: (78:64-67).

The tabernacle was moved from Shiloh, the tribe of Joseph. He refused to choose the tribe of Ephraim as the governing tribe.

But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved (78:68).

They are of Jerusalem.

And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established for ever. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: (78:69-70).

I love this.

From following the ewes treat with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, (78:71).

God reminded David of his humble beginnings when the prophet came to him and said, “The Lord took you from the sheep coat, from following after the sheep and he made you the ruler over his people. David never forgot those humble beginnings. God’s training for David to be king was putting him over a bunch of sheep and making him responsible for those sheep. Learning to take care of them learning to have great concern for their needs and for their welfare. That was great grooming for the ruling over the people of God. So God made David to feed Jacob his people.

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands (78:72).

A beautiful parable giving us the history and lessons to be learned. Lessons that we need to pass on to our children, to the next generation, if we are to survive.

May the Lord be with you and strengthen you by His Spirit in your inner man. May He give to you a spiritual revelation that you might know the exceeding riches of His love and grace towards you in Christ Jesus. That you might comprehend what is the length, the breath, the depth, the height, to know the love of Christ which passes human understanding. May you experience that love as He works in your life this week and may you share that love with others as you go forth as His witness to the world. God make you a shining light and a powerful witness for Jesus Christ.