

Psalm 77

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My life for the past few months has felt like I have been caught in a gray cloud. And in that gray cloud, worship has been hard, prayer has been hard, community has been hard, I have never questioned God's goodness but many times I have felt like He was so far away.

Which brings me to today. I have a sense that I am not the only one dealing with these feelings and if I am that is ok. I want to anchor my heart and your hearts around a passage that directly speaks to these exact feelings I have just described.

[Psalm 77](#) is going to be our passage today. Before I start reading we should know a few things about Psalms in general and this Psalm in particular:

- Psalms are ancient worship songs and poems that used to have musical accompaniment.
- Historically, the instrument of choice was the harp.
- The Psalms have a beautiful way of explaining God and His character in a way that made it easy to grasp.
- The Psalms include a lot of vague or metaphorical struggles and trials, and this is intentional. It is intentional so that people across all times and situations could identify with what was going on in the author's lives. That's why we can connect so deeply with this literature.

This is actually still a common practice with songwriting. Oftentimes, songs are a form of therapy for the writer. Which makes for a beautifully authentic experience but sometimes can be SO specific that people can't connect. So what will happen is that songs written in this manner will undergo a revisionary period to make the language more broad and easier for people to connect.

[Psalm 77](#) (ESV)

TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO JEDUTHUN. A PSALM OF ASAPH.

NOTE:

IT IS A COMMON MISCONCEPTION THAT KING DAVID WROTE ALL OF THE SONGS...THIS IS NOT TRUE. HE DID WRITE THE MAJORITY OF THEM UPWARDS OF 70-80. BUT THERE WERE OTHER AUTHORS. Asaph, the author of this particular Psalm, was a top worship leader for King David and was even described as a private prophet for David.

¹ I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, and he will hear me.

² In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;
my soul refuses to be comforted.

³ When I remember God, I moan;
when I meditate, my spirit faints. *Selah*

⁴ You hold my eyelids open;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

NOTE:

The first couple of verses are depicting an awful pressure of circumstance. To the point where the author cannot be comforted and cannot sleep or pray. In this state, the memory of God is too painful. There is an intense darkness that exists for the author. The next section is especially haunting.

⁵ I consider the days of old,
the years long ago.

⁶ I said, "Let me remember my song in the night;
let me meditate in my heart."

Then my spirit made a diligent search:

⁷ “Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favorable?

⁸ Has his steadfast love forever ceased?
Are his promises at an end for all time?

⁹ Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?” *Selah*

NOTE:

In the end of the last section, we see a sleepless night. A scene that is all too familiar in stressful times. In the condition of a sleepless night, the author remembers when times were good. He remembers the time he used to be able sing and pray. In this memory, it causes him to wonder if things will ever be the same with God. Will He ever love me again? Have I fallen out of favor with Him? Did God forget to be gracious? Is He so angry with me that He forgot His compassion? The author’s soul was so crushed by life’s troubles that he could not deal with it any longer. Surely God had forgotten him.

St. Augustine says this about the author’s condition: “so great weariness did here possess me, that my soul did close the door against all comfort”.

At this point, you may be like “I have never heard a worship song like this. This is depressing. Where’s Good, Good Father? Can you play the latest Elevation album?”

This carries the mood of a Nirvana song more than it does most worship we are familiar with. The best part is we are only halfway through.

Something big happens in verses 10-11 but we’re going to skip those right now. We’ll come back to those.

¹² I will ponder all your work,
and meditate on your mighty deeds.

¹³ Your way, O God, is holy.

What god is great like our God?

¹⁴ You are the God who works wonders;

you have made known your might among the peoples.

¹⁵ You with your arm redeemed your people,

the children of Jacob and Joseph. *Selah*

NOTE:

What the heck happened here? Just a few verses ago. This dude was like a teenager going through a breakup: “I hate everything. Life sucks. I can’t sleep. God you forgot me. Why do you hate me...sad face emoji.”

Now he’s like, “God you’re so good. You’re Holy. What other god is great like you? You do miracles and save your people.

The passage concludes in this same manner. And has some neat Old Testament imagery

¹⁶ When the waters saw you, O God,

when the waters saw you, they were afraid;

indeed, the deep trembled.

¹⁷ The clouds poured out water;

the skies gave forth thunder;

your arrows flashed on every side.

¹⁸ The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind;

your lightnings lighted up the world;

the earth trembled and shook.

¹⁹ Your way was through the sea,
your path through the great waters;
yet your footprints were unseen.

²⁰ You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

We almost have two different songs. We have a song of lamenting (God this sucks and I am pretty sure you do too) to a song of praise (God you're holy and I praise you).

I immediately think two things:

- The human mind and heart is so fickle.
- The other thing is a question...what in the world happened in verses 10-11...the ones we didn't read yet? My assumption is that it seemed like whatever happened there changed the entire mood.

Let's check it out:

Psalm 77:10-11 ESV

¹⁰ Then I said, "I will appeal to this,

to the years of the right hand of the Most High."

¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the LORD;

yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

These two sentences held the key to the entire shift? Immediately before this he was questioning God's compassion and immediately after He was saying God you're holy. Why was this so impactful?

Examine

Nothing that was said here is unique or life changing. There were no 7 keys to breakthrough or overcoming depression in 5 ways. There was a simple remembering.

But if we are eagle eyed we would see that the Asaph, the author, tried this already. In a sleepless night, he tried remembering His time with God when it was good.

Why is it that when Asaph was remembering God when he was suffering from insomnia it didn't produce the same effect?

Because in the first case Asaph was searching his own soul for God. He was saying, I remember what God did for me. It was an exercise of comparison. God you USED to deliver me from things. You USED to move mountains for me. Asaph found no comfort in remembering because Asaph was more so comparing which led to deep disappointment.

See what Asaph found out by doing this is what we should know to be true. God treats us with as much love when he moves mountains for us as when he doesn't move mountains. In other words, love motivates God to move and motivates Him to wait.

It is loving to be shoved out of the street when a car is coming towards you. It is also loving to not be bailed out when you have been sent to jail for the third time.

But how can it be considered love if you are in jail and have done nothing apart from your natural sinful nature? How is it love when God says no for no clear reason? There are people here that I know and love who have been told no for no discernable reason.

I can't claim to know exactly things do or do not happen. But I do know that his ways are higher than ours and no one can counsel the most high. And I do know that when the thorn is in our side that his grace is sufficient and his power is made PERFECT in weakness. I do know that God likes to use conflict and hard times to reveal areas where our hearts are not surrendered.

“Can you sacrifice your long awaited son that I promised to you, Abraham? Or do you not trust him with me?”

We as humans know and remember when God moved and therefore we get angry and think that it is unloving when God doesn't move. Asaph was caught in the comparison trap. Because he was remembering what God did for Him less of who God was. He was reducing God to a solution to problem. This was “God as genie” behavior.

What changed the second time is that Asaph got outside of himself. He stopped wining about how God used to be amazing and he remembered how God was always great to His people. He remembered how God was Holy. He remembered How God revealed Himself through signs, wonders, and delivering His people. And that was it. That is what broke Asaph. No longer was God a solution to a problem. God was a source of wonder. His greatness and holiness was overwhelming. He was the great redeemer, he was powerful, and he led His people to freedom.

Apply

So then, what does all this leave us with? How are we to live differently because of what we heard today?

1- Pray Honestly

How many of us lie to God in our prayers? Our feelings are like that of Asaph, God has left us, He used to be more faithful, he used to actually love me? But instead of bringing our hurts to God we either stop praying entirely or we pray shallow.

We treat God like we treat other relationships in our life. People hurt you, you stop talking to them. People hurt you, you put a mask on around them. People hurt you, you think they should know what is wrong.

Well doesn't God know everything, YES, and he also wants you to surrender. You are allowed to tell God that you doubt Him. You are allowed to tell God you are scared. You are allowed to tell God you can't feel Him. He is big enough to handle that.

“Come to me all who are heavy burdened and I will give you rest”

Catch this, He loves you enough to care for you in those places. The safest of human relationships are drawn closer in times of hard honesty. How much more so is this true with God? How much closer does our heart know him when we bring our hurts to him? When we pray honestly and deeply like this psalmist did...desiring to draw closer to the Father again. God will draw near.

2- Remember Who God Is

Asaph's breakthrough came when he stopped wishing God would move like He moved in the past and when he started to remember How God's character has always been on display.

So to that is what I charge us with. Remember the wonder of who God is. Remember his Holiness and how great that is. Remember how He has always been faithful to redeem. Remember God's power. Remember that no matter how and where He has led you. Whether out of Egypt, through the red sea, through desert storms, or through shepherds. God has always been faithful and always will be faithful.

“Though I walk the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff the comfort me”

One thing that has completely and utterly changed my life about two years ago is meditating on the fact that God is God and I am not. He is creator and I am creation. He is holy and perfect and I am in need of redemption. This truth has anchored my heart on Him even when it didn't make sense. And As I was studying for this message, one commentary I read put into great language about [Psalm 77](#) what I was just saying:

“Here indeed is comfort. The holy God is totally free to do what he will and in his will is our peace. Wherever he leads he will also provide.”