

HISTORY OF MERCY

Friday, May 25

Reading: Psalm 78:34-72

Psalm 78:34 *Whenever God slew them, they would seek him; they eagerly turned to him again. 35 They remembered that God was their Rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. 36 But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues; 37 their hearts were not loyal to him, they were not faithful to his covenant. 38 Yet he was merciful; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. 39 He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.*

The story is told of England's King Richard III who one night went out and found a sentinel asleep at his post. The king promptly stabbed him through the heart and left a note on his chest with the stern inscription, "I found him asleep and I left him so."¹ What a contrast to the mercy and patience of our Lord! ¹

Psalm 78:34-39 is a dividing point in this psalm. Before and after these verses is a recital of Israel's history of rebellion.² These verses describe not only the cycle of sin, but God's response. God showed He loved His people in two ways. First, He rescued them and provided for their needs despite their constant disobedience. The second way He showed His love is through discipline. God's judgment would cause the people to remember and turn back to God. But eventually the nation's worship would turn to mere lip service and they would wander away to their old sinful ways and idolatry. Phrases like "time after time" (78:38) and "again and again" (78:41) tell the repetitive nature of their sin and God's mercy.

The history of Israel is a history of God's grace and mercy. Unlike Richard III who had no mercy on the sleeping soldier, the Lord is "slow to anger and abounding in mercy." Even though Israel as a nation still rejects Jesus as Messiah today, the Bible promises that someday all Israel will believe in Christ and be saved (Rom. 11:26-29).

Don't ever doubt the reach of God's mercy. If He were to give us what we deserve when we deserve it no one would survive. But God is patient. No one can be saved without the rich mercy of God.

Ephesians 2:4 But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

¹ <http://www.moreillustrations.com/Illustrations/mercy%201.html>

² Outline of the History in Psalm 78

Exodus from Egypt 78:9-13

Provision in the Wilderness 78:14-33

People rebelled (v. 17-22) --- God mercy (v. 23-29) --- God's judgment (v. 30-33)

Rebellion in the Wilderness 78:40-41

More Detail of the Exodus 78:42-53

Conquest of the Promised Land 78:54-55

Period of the Judges and Samuel 78:56-64

Period Leading to King David 78:65-72

People rebelled (v. 56-58) --- God's judgment (v. 59-64) --- God's mercy (v. 65-72)

THRU THE BIBLE Reading: 2 Kings 7-9; Acts 16