



THE PSALTER

A SEASON THROUGH THE PSALMS

Psalm 78

You've probably heard it said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Those are the famous words of George Santayana. If only it were that simple. There are many people who know history and continue to make poor choices. Consequences are not only experienced by those who are historically ignorant; most people - arguably all people - know the right thing and fail to do it.

Psalm 78 is the second longest in the Psalter. It retells the story of Israel's history. The Bible teaches that every generation needs to hear for themselves the story of God. In Deuteronomy 6:1-3, Moses commands the people to share all that God has done for them as a people with their children and grandchildren. He tells them to do this so that they would have a long life and enjoy the Land God promised them.

Joshua picks up where Moses left off. In his opening address, Joshua challenges the people to be strong and courageous as they enter into the Land. He also warns them to carefully observe (obey) everything God commanded. Just like the wise person described in Psalm 1, Joshua commands the people to meditate on God's Word day and night in order to succeed and prosper in everything they do.

Psalm 78 describes two truths found throughout Israel's history. The first truth is that every generation fails to follow God faithfully. The second, and more important truth, is God demonstrates Himself faithful to every generation. This lesson teaches us that as helpful as history is, it is more important to rely on God and His faithfulness.

Spend time reading the psalm carefully and note the sections that describe God's faithfulness and those that describe Israel's rebellion. Notice how they walk side-by-side through the entire psalm.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul uses Israel's history to teach the struggling church in Corinth a very important lesson. He reminds them over and over that the story of Israel serves as an example to us (10:1, 6, 11). We will struggle and consistently fail to be faithful to God, but God remains faithful through it all. Paul ends this section by reminding the people that when they are tempted, God will provide a way of escape because he is faithful (10:13). You probably feel the weight of living faithfully. Part of that is an

appropriate response to a holy and righteous God. And part of it is a burden that you are incapable of bearing by yourself. Your relationship with God is more dependent on His faithfulness than yours.

Discussion

1. Does the reality of human failure, sin, and rebellion frustrate and even depress you?
 2. How can we admit our sins and failures without embracing them? Why is confession of sin so helpful when remembering our sin and God's grace?
 3. What verses in Psalm 78 speak directly to your current spiritual condition?
 4. How has this Psalm encouraged, strengthened, or challenged you?
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Our Corporate Prayer

God, we can obey you with our actions, but that does not satisfy you. You want and deserve our hearts. We confess desires within us that resist you. We worry because we forget your Word, we hide and hold onto our sin because we forget your mercy, we covet because we forget your provision, we sin because we forget your holiness, we fear because we forget your faithfulness. But you always remember us. Help us to always remember you. Replace our wandering hearts with ones that love and obey you. In the saving name of Jesus, Amen.