

PSALM 77

For the director of music. For Jeduthun. Of Asaph. A psalm

1. I cried out ("my voice") to God [for help]; I cried (or "called") out to God to hear me.

- a. When I was in distress (or, "affliction, anguish, trouble"), I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. (See Gen 37:35, Jer 31:15)
- b. I remembered You, O God, and I groaned; I mused and my spirit grew faint.

Selah

2. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

- a. I thought about ("considered") former days, the years of long ago.
- b. I remembered my songs in the night.
- c. My heart mused and my spirit inquired:
 - Will the Lord reject forever?
 - Will He never show His favor again?
 - Has His unfailing love vanished forever?
 - Has God forgotten to be merciful?
 - Has He in anger withheld His compassion?

Selah

3. Then I thought, "To this will I appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High."

- a. I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes I will remember Your miracles of long ago.
- b. I will meditate on all Your works and consider ("meditate" or "speak") Your [mighty] deeds.

4. Your ways, O God are holy. What God is so great as our God? (Ex 15:11)

- a. You are the God who performed miracles; You display ("make known") Your power ("strength, might") among the peoples.
- b. With Your mighty arm You redeemed Your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
Selah
- c. The waters saw You, O God, the waters saw You and writhed; the very depths convulsed.
- d. The clouds poured down water, the skies resounded with thunder, Your arrows flashed back and forth.
 - Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked.
 - Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, though Your footprints were not seen.
 - You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Vs 1: The psalmist relates a time when he cried out to God. God heard him. Why do we pray? It doesn't change God's mind. It isn't informing Him (Mtt 6:8). The most obvious reason is because He commands us to pray (e.g., Lk 18:1). It is a means by which He wants us to seek Him and through which He works in our lives.

Vs 2: He relates a time when he had been afflicted/in distress and had spread out his hands in prayer all night long without any sense of comfort. The KJV relates it as "my sore ran" - a better translation would be that all night the psalmist had "stretched out his hands without tiring." The idea here is that he had been consumed by a concern and brought it to God. I can remember many a prayerful, sleepless night when one of our children was wrestling with life. I have always felt that if the Spirit has me wide awake and I am worried, it is time to pray.

Vs 3: He remembered God and groaned, he meditated (the word can also mean to complain but the normal use of this word is to muse, meditate) and his spirit grew faint (or "*feeble*").

Vs 4: He says that God held his eyes open - i.e., he was unable to sleep. Phil 4:6-7 describe not an event but a process! And he was so wound up with worry that he couldn't speak (Rom 8:26-27).

Vs 5-6: He thought about days passed, of ancient times. He remembered his past songs of praise to God and diligently search his heart (Ps 4:4) and he asks himself questions:

Vs 7-9: He wonders if God is done with Israel. Has He "kicked them to the curb." In trials, especially when we face disaster stemming from our disobedience it can seem as if God is finished with us. Yet consider - Is 49:13-21, Mal 3:6, Lam 3. God is faithful and will not forsake His children (Heb 13:5-6). Think about it - has He ever failed?

VS 10: He is tormented by the thought yet is determined to focus on God's faithfulness in the past, knowing that He does not change. See Is 63.

Vs 11: He then thinks, "Ok, this is my infirmity/grief - that God's right hand has changed. That is why I am so torn up." Or a perhaps better translation would be that "Ok, this is my issue, but - I will remember God's right hand (and faithfulness). The next verse makes this seem best.

Vs 12: His solution? To call to mind God's faithfulness in the past and review it; His wonders done on behalf of His people. Think about their deliverance from Egypt, manna, water from the rock, the parting of the Jordan and the Red Sea etc.

Vs 13: God's way is holy - a word also used to describe the temple (sacred place) but here meaning "hallowed, apart, sacred, most holy." God is "other," unlike anything in creation. Complete, righteous, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, uncreated. His way is like Himself in holiness - perfect and dependably so. He alone is God.

Vs 14: Asaph determines to focus on God's wonders ("*unusual, extraordinary acts*") that reveal His strength to His people.

Vs 15: God alone redeemed His people. His strength was and is sufficient. (Is 59:15b-20).

Vs 16-20: Asaph recounts God's powerful deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian bondage. The waters "writhed," churned, the deep was agitated and disturbed. God's arrows (*lightning*) flashed, the sound of His thunder and the flash of His lightning rocked the world. God led His people by supernatural means.

On what does your life depend? What determines your outlook?

Do you pray, seeking Him in hard times, discouragement, as well as in perceived blessing?

Do you seek Him in everything (and with persistence, patience and penitence)?