

Remembering the Wonders of God

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Date: 22 June 2018

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[0 : 00] Psalm 78 It's a longer Psalm so I was thinking maybe we could just go around and read it if you guys are okay with that Maybe we could each read 10 verses or so and then I'll read the first part Give ear on my people to my teaching incline your ears to the words of my mouth

I will open my mouth in a parable I will utter dark sayings from of old things that we have heard and known that our fathers have told us we will not hide them from their children but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might and the wonders that he has done he established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children that the next generation might know them the children yet unborn and arise and tell them to their children so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God but keep his commandments and that they should not be like their fathers a stubborn and rebellious generation a generation whose heart was not steadfast whose spirit was not faithful to God the Ephraimites armed with the bow turned back on the day of battle they did not keep God's covenant but refused to walk according to his law I'll give it a quick question He forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them in the sight of their fathers he performed wonders in the land of Egypt and the fears of Zion he divided the sea and let them pass through it and made the water stand like a heap in the daytime he led them with a cloud and all the night with a fiery light he split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep he made streams come out of the rock and cause waters to flow down like rivers yet they sinned still more against him rebelling against the most high in the desert they tested God in their heart by demanding the food they crave they spoke against God saying can God spread a table in the wilderness he struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflow can he also give bread or provide meat for his people therefore when the Lord heard he was full of wrath the fire was kindled against Jacob his anger arose against Israel because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power yet he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven and he ran down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven man ate of the bread of angels he sent them food in abundance he caused the east wind to blow in the heavens and by his power he led out the south wind he rained meat on them like dust winged birds like the sand of the seas he let them fall in the midst of their camp all around their dwelling and they ate and were well filled for he gave them what they craved but before they had satisfied their craving while the food was still in their mouths the anger of God rose against them and he killed the strongest of them and laid those the young men of Israel in spite of all this they still sinned despite his wonders they did not believe so he made their days vanish like a breath and their years in tears when he killed them they sought him they repented and sought God earnestly they remembered that God was their rock the most high God their redeemer but they flattered him with their mouths they lied to him with their tongues their heart was not steadfast toward him they were not faithful to his tongues yet he being compassionate atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath he remembered that they were but flesh a wind that passes and comes not again how often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert again and again they put God to the test they vexed the Holy One of Israel they did not remember his power the day he redeemed them from the oppressor the day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt his wonders in the region of Zon he turned their rivers to blood they could not drink from their streams he sent swarms of flies that devoured them and frogs that devastated them he gave their crops to the grasshopper their produce to the locust he destroyed their vines with hail

and their sycamore figs with sleet he gave over their cattle to the hail their livestock to bolts of lightning he unleashed against them his hot anger his wrath, indignation and hostility a band of destroying angels he made a path for his anger he did not spare them from death but gave their lives over to the plague he struck down every firstborn in Egypt the first fruits of their strength in the tents of Ham then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock he led them in safety so that they were not afraid but the sea overwhelmed their enemies and he brought them to his holy land to the mountain which his right hand had won he drove out nations before them he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents yet they tested and rebelled against the most high God and did not keep his testimonies but turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers they twisted like a deceitful bow for they provoked him to anger with their high places they moved him to jealousy with their idols when God heard he was full of wrath and he utterly rejected Israel he forsook his dwelling at Shiloh in the tent where he dwelt among mankind and delivered his power to captivity his glory to the hand of the foe he gave his people over to the sword and he bunted his wrath on his heritage fire devoured their young men and their young women had no marriage song the priests fell by the sword and their widows made no lamentation the Lord awoke as from sleep like a strong man shouting because of one and he put his adversaries to wrath he put them to everlasting shame he rejected the tent of Joseph he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim but he chose the tribe of Judah

Mount Zion which he loves he built a sanctuary like the high heavens like the earth which he has founded forever he chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfold for following the nursing news he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people Israel his inheritance with upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with a skillful hand yeah you guys have heard the quote I'm sure it's from the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana he said those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it and the Bible obviously said said that long before Santayana did and that's really the theme of the psalm because twice in verses 7 and 11 the word forget is repeated and then the verb remember is repeated three times throughout this psalm and the idea is that the first part of it the verses 1 to 8 really is an exhortation to the future generation to remember the wonders of God the wondrous works of God and then the rest of it really is a recitation of the past generations forgetting the wonders of God so using them as an example really a negative example the psalmist exhorting the future generations to remember the wonders of God and so that's really what you see in verses 1 to 8

God had charged them after rescuing them and making a covenant with them to observe his commandments and to remember the covenant that they made and then to teach it to their children and that's what the psalmist is trying to do because the fathers their fathers from whom they heard the story were actually themselves unfaithful to the covenant and so they it says in verse 8 that they should not be like their fathers a stubborn and rebellious generation a generation whose heart was not steadfast whose spirit was not faithful to God and so the main point of the psalm really is that we should remember the wonders of God and be steadfast and faithful toward them and then we get to the second half which is most of the psalm verses 9 to 72 which is recounting of the past generations forgetting the wonders of God and it begins in verses 9 to 11 by saying the Ephraimites armed with the bow turned back on the day of battle they did not keep God's covenant but refused to walk according to his law they forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them so Ephraim was the leading tribe of Israel they were the biggest tribe

[9 : 17] Ephraim was the younger son of Jacob or Joseph that received Jacob's blessing the greater blessing and so Ephraim became the leading tribe of Israel so often the name Ephraim is used to stand for the entire nation of Israel so that's what's going on here which is why the name Israel is used repeatedly interchangeably throughout the psalm when it's referring to the tribe of Ephraim it singles out that it's a tribe of Ephraim like it does later in verse 67 and Ephraim turning back from battle it's probably a reference to 1 Samuel 4 where the Israelites are fighting against the Philistines and Israel is defeated because they have been idolatrous and the ark of God is lost in the battle and it says they fled every man to his home so that's probably the reference and I think that's most likely to be the background of this psalm because the psalmist mentions that specifically that instance more in detail later in verses 59-64 what's remarkable is in verses 12-56 we see repeated rebellion by the Israelites just persistent sin and rebellion and they forget the wonders that God performed it's in verse 12 in the sight of their fathers he performed wonders in the land of Egypt in the fields of Zohan so he's going back a generation further than the ones that he's currently addressing the ones that are in the promised land and then he's saying that their fathers saw the wonders of God in the land of Egypt and fields of Zohan is another way to say land of Egypt

Zohan is a city in Egypt that's the area of Goshen it's a city inside the region of Goshen where the Israelites Joseph and Jacob and his families lived and their descendants and then the way the unfaithfulness of Israelites and the faithfulness of God is described is exactly contrasted so in Hebrew poetry the poetry is divided into colons and in verses 12-16 there are exactly 10 colons that exclaim the wonders of God and then in verses 17-20 there are exactly 10 colons of Israel's rebellion and the kind of pattern repeats and so it's showing us that the faithless behavior of Israel is the exact opposite of what you would expect from God's faithfulness that he had shown them in Egypt and he recons different things he's done in Egypt God brought various pests and plagues upon the Egyptians and killed their firstborn to rescue and deliver Israel when they were in the wilderness right

God provided rock you know water from the rock he poured down manna the bread from heaven and he poured down quail from heaven meat from heaven he parted the sea to take them out through the Red Sea and in spite of all of this we keep hearing the refrain throughout this psalm verse 17 yet they sinned still more against him rebelling against the most high and then verse 32 in spite of all this they still sinned in verse 40 how often they rebelled against him and then finally in verse 56 yet they tested and rebelled against the most high God the word rebel and the word test are repeated in conjunction with each other throughout this psalm three and four times to describe the Israeli forefathers so this really is kind of gets at the heart of sin right instead of submitting to God we rebel against him and instead of trusting God we test him and how many times have we done this in our lives right when we when God's word is clear and the demands the commands of God are clear we disobey we rebel instead of submitting and when God calls us to trust him in spite of uncertainty when God calls us to trust him and we take things into our own hands and by doing that we test him instead instead of trusting him and so really this psalm calls us to repentance that in spite of the repeated forgiveness and repeated deliverance and the constant love of God that we have been turning against him and being unfaithful to him and then by verse 56 we return to the second generation because it's and and yet they even though God had driven out the nations before them and given them the inheritance of the promised land even they as it says in 56 they have rebelled against the Lord and we see the details of the rebellion in verses 57 to 58 it says they turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers they twisted like a deceitful bow the mention of the bow is ties this verse back to verse 9 which describes the Ephraimites as those who are armed with the bow and and so it's it's probably referring to the same incidents incident and and like a twisted bow like a deceitful bow so I mean like when your bow is twisted and you shoot it it misfires and it it basically treacherous because you can hit anything you can even hit your own people or and so that's how the Israelites responded behaved toward God they acted like a treacherous deceitful bow turned against him who was his Lord and and and the reason why and and and they do did that it says by following the idols so they were pursuing idols and

God rejected them in response to that and so I mentioned this earlier but the incident that verse 8 is referring to is probably from 1st Samuel 4 right so they're worshipping Baal worshipping the Asherah and and and and at the time in the tabernacle was where God's presence dwelt and it was God's presence was represented by the Ark of the Covenant and the Ark of the Covenant resided in in Shiloh that's the place that's mentioned here but then even though they were idolatrous they thought that they would do live service to God and make and and get maybe good luck charm as they go into this battle against Philistines they brought the Ark of God to accompany them and of course God would not be mocked and so they lose the battle and Hophni and Phinehas who are the two priests who priest sons of Eli die in the battle and then the Ark of the Covenant is stolen and then they the news reaches Eli the priest and he's an overweight man and he's elderly and he's so shocked by the news he tips over backward in his chair breaks his neck and dies and then when his daughter-in-law who is Phinehas his wife was pregnant hears the news she gives premature birth and she dies after giving birth and as she names as she dies she names her son

Ichabod or Ichabod and which means it says the glory has departed from Israel that's what that's what verses 59 to 64 is talking about it says he forsook he forsook his dwelling at Shiloh the tent where he dwelt among mankind and delivered his power to captivity his glory to the hand of the foe their priests later says fell by the sword and their widows made no lamentation so that's kind of the low point really of Israel's history before the monarchy began but even in that case it turns out that God does not reject his people forever so he says in verses 65 to 66 then the Lord awoke as from sleep like a strong man shouting because of wine and he put his adversaries to rout he put them to everlasting shame and of course it's not saying that God was literally asleep but he woke up as if from slumber as like a strong man who is energized invigorated by wine he came in power and routed his enemies and restored them but then when that happens

[17 : 04] God's grace the focal point the locus of God's really grace and blessing shifts so Ephraim was the leading tribe in Israel but that now shifts to Judah the tribe of Judah and the house of David is chosen by God to be the ones that will lead and so that's what verses 67 to 70 is talking about he chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfold and so it was under the established under the Davidic monarchy that Israel achieved victory from the surrounding nations and the ark of God was finally restored to its new dealing place in Jerusalem and that's kind of really what the psalmist is celebrating and so the psalm really ends in a hopeful note right because and most likely because that's the period that the psalmist lived in so he's saying oh yeah all this happened now we should remember this so that this doesn't happen to us again but that we can stay with God's blessing but as people who know the rest of scripture we know that it doesn't play out the way the psalmist envisions or hopes and they sin again they turn to idolatry again and then they're exiled and they lose

God's favor and so it seems that things are just hopeless maybe this vicious cycle will continue indefinitely but then that's exactly why God has to send a second David a better David because the first David could not accomplish once and for all what God intended to accomplish and so Jesus was the prophesied offspring of David he's described that way in 2 Samuel 7 12-16 as the one the Davidic offspring who will reign forever in God's stead as a representative and then during his life he was given the messianic title son of David Matthew 1-1 other places and then so similar to David who David was a champion of Israelites he defeated Goliath on behalf of the Israelites defeated the Philistines and cut off the Goliath's head in a similar way Jesus now as the champion of his people dies on the cross for our sins on Golgotha rises again and he crushes the head of Satan David was only able to deliver his people temporarily but Christ is able to deliver his people eternally and permanently because he fights not only the physical temporal enemies but the spiritual enemies the sin and the devil and world and flesh and the devil and even though we continue to sin and because of that this cycle really should continue because Christ bore all the punishment and we deserved and the justice of

God and the mercy of God was satisfied it was made one in him we are no longer under condemnation under judgment and so that's that's really what this is talking about so that in verse 2 when the psalmist says I will open my mouth in a parable I will utter dark sayings from the world right dark saying meaning obscure saying something that's perplexing a riddle and then and that verse is cited in Matthew 13 35 to just describe Jesus's teaching that Jesus is described as I open up my mouth in parable and how is this a parable it's a parable because the story of Israel their history is supposed to function as a parable for us so that it's supposed to be a parable of the gospel for us that if we are faithless God remains faithful 2 Timothy 2 13 right that where sin increased grace abounded all the more right Romans 5 20 right that's that's the truth that's the parable of the gospel the Israel history their ups and downs their their constant their repeated unfaithfulness and God's constant faithfulness is the parable for us to learn the mystery of Christ that he's the one who saves us and is faithful with us in spite of our sins and so that's when we remember that that's when we're able to be steadfast and faithful toward God so when we are plagued by doubts or we remember how faithful

God has been toward us when we are tempted to sin disobey him and rebel against him instead of obeying him that's when we remember his goodness and kindness toward us and that's what enables us to be still