

Remember, When Forgotten

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[0 : 00] I'll pray for us. God, we have gathered on another Friday evening because we love you, because we want to speak to you and hear from you.

So we pray, God, that you would lead us, that you would speak to us from your word during our prayer time, and that as we cry out to you, that you would meet with us in a powerful way.

And help us to pray according to your will. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Psalm 77.

Subscription of the psalms is to the choir master according to Judithon, a psalm of Asa. I'll read it out loud first. We'll go through it section by section.

I cry aloud to God. I cry aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearing.

[1 : 05] My soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan. When I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah. You hold my eyelids open.

I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of all the years long ago. I said, let me remember my song in the night. Let me meditate in my heart.

Then my spirit made a diligent search. Will the Lord spurn forever? And never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased?

Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion? Selah.

Then I said, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord.

[2 : 03] Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work and meditate on all your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy.

What God is great like our God. You are the God who works wonders. You have made known your might among the peoples. You, with your arm, redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

Selah. When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid. Indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water.

The skies gave forth thunder. Your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind. Your lightnings lighted up the world. The earth trembled and shook.

Your way was through the sea. Your path through the great waters. Yet, your footprints were unseen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

[3 : 08] Whether it's during a period of prolonged loneliness or illness or aimlessness, we all face, at times, trouble.

And when we face trouble, sometimes we can feel like we've been forgotten by God. And the psalmist is writing this song from that perspective. And in it, he teaches us that when we feel forgotten by God, we should remember how he redeemed us.

And we see in the first nine verses the trouble in the present that he's facing. And then in verses 10 to 20, it turns attention to remembering the wonders of the past that God's got this.

So trouble in the present, wonders of the past. And in verse 1, he begins, I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and you'll hear me. A more literal translation would be, my voice cries out to God.

My voice to God, and he will hear me. So this emphasis on the psalmist's voice is important, as we'll see later. But for now, the repetition communicates the psalmist's distress. He's desperately crying out to God so that he might hear.

[4 : 13] And then verses 2 to 3 continue. In the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord. In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearing. My soul refuses to be comforted.

When I remember God, I moan. When I meditate, my spirit faints. So he uses both the imageries, right? Day and night. So during the day, he's crying out to the Lord.

And during the night, he's stretching out his hand. So basically, he's seeking God all the time. He's doing it without getting weary. And yet, he says, my soul refuses to be comforted. Even though remembering God should be a delight, and meditating in God's work should be strengthening, because the psalmist is so enmeshed and entangled in his present trouble, thinking about God instead of filling him with delight makes him moan, and to complain, and for his spirit to faint.

So he's always seeking God, but he's never finding him. No matter how hard he tries to make sense of his present situation. And then in verse 4, he adds, You hold my eyelids open.

I'm so troubled that I cannot speak. So because of his affliction, he can neither sleep nor speak. And he feels like this is what God's doing to him. And so disillusioned by the present, he tries to turn his attention to the past in verses 5 to 6.

[5 : 34] But before he's able to do that, he lets out a series of heartfelt, very emotional questions to God in verses 7 to 9. Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable?

Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion? I don't know if you've ever felt this way before.

It's just a feeling neglected by God, abandoned by him. Maybe some of you feel like that now. It's the, I feel like the Lord's spurning you, or turning his face away from you.

He no longer loves you. That his promises to you have been made void. That he's no longer gracious or compassionate toward you. That rather he's angry at you. And so there may be times in our lives when our troubles are so severe, like the psalmist, that it may seem impossible to square God's goodness and sovereignty with our current situation.

And that's the kind of situation that we see here in the first half of the psalm. But then starting in verse 10, the psalmist successfully transitions from his present trouble to the wonders of the past that God did.

[6 : 48] And he says, Then I said, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old.

I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds. The word meditates repeated right here in verse 12. It was twice mentioned already in verses 3 and 6.

Same thing with the word remember. It repeated twice in verse 11. It was already mentioned two more times in verses 3 to 6. So remembering and meditating, that's really the main point of this psalm. That's the key to maintain hope when life seems hopeless.

And that's scripture's simple but profound answer is we need to remember God and meditate on his works in those times. And when he starts to do this, something remarkable happens in the psalm.

Because up to this point, the psalmist has been predominantly using the first person language. I did this. I did that. But as soon as he starts remembering God and his mighty deeds, his focus shifts from pitying himself to exalting God.

[7 : 50] And so the language shifts from the first person to the second person, verses 13 to 15. He says, Your way, O God, is holy. What God is great like our God.

You are the God who works wonders. You have made known your might among the peoples. You, with your arm, redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

Selah. It's a powerful repetition. Helpful for us to remember, right? When we feel forgotten by God, right? When we are given to self-pity because of our situations, when our circumstances, our troubles loom larger than God himself, right?

We have to remember that God, with his own arm, redeemed us as his own. And he's not going to leave us to our devices because if he took us as his own in that way.

So when we feel forgotten by God, we should remember how he redeemed us. And then, finally, in verses 16 and 20, the psalmist remembers the climactic instance of God's redemption in Israel's history up to that point, which is the Exodus.

[8 : 53] He writes, It says, Because he had mentioned, Remember I said that my voice cries out to you, the psalmist said twice in verse 1.

So that his voice is emphasized in the beginning. And it also mentioned his hand, right? He stretched forth his hand to God, right? For help. Now at the end of this psalm, we see the two words voice and hand again, right?

And so the word thunder, actually, is just another translation of the word voice. So it's the voice of the sky, right? And then the word crash, again, is the same word, voice.

And then you see at the end that God led them out from the sea like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. And then we saw earlier in verse 10 that God delivered them with his right hand.

And in verse 15, that he redeemed those people with his arm, right? So these are all conveying that. So the cries with which the psalmist cried out, the voice with which the psalmist cried out to God in verse 1, now is answered by the voice of God and how he delivered Israel in the past.

[10 : 28] And the hand with which he stretched out to God in verse 1 is answered at the end of the psalm by God, which is saving them with his own arm and with his own hand. And that's what assures us.

And I love that little addition there. It says, yet God's footprints were unseen. It's just, even after this great redemption, it's not like you could see God's footprints there, right?

And sometimes his providence, his deliverance may seem hidden to us, and yet God moves in those ways, in powerful ways, he delivers. And as Christians, of course, we have an even greater evidence of that, of what God's, of God's redemption in the past than Israel did, than the psalmist did.

Because, you know, Paul compares in 1 Corinthians 10, the exodus to Christian baptism, right? And Christian baptism represents our salvation through Jesus. And so, when we feel forsaken by God, then, like the psalmist is doing here, we can instead remember what Christ did, right?

That Christ was forsaken on our behalf so we can be received and restored to God. And when we feel like God doesn't love us or care about us, that we should remember that God cared so much about us that he sent his son to die for us.

[11 : 40] When we feel that God is angry toward us, we should remember that God's anger was fully satisfied in Jesus who bore our punishment for our sins. And so, because of that, what's left for us is only grace and mercy.

And then, when we do that, even though for the psalmist, the situation hasn't changed, likewise for us, even when our circumstances do not change, we can still have faith, we can still have hope and continue to love God.