

Psalms 74-77

Psalm 74:1-23

Maschil of Asaph

“O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rood of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs. *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land. We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom. For God *is* my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons [or whales] in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers. The day *is* thin, the night also *is* thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter. Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude *of the wicked*: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth

thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth [ascendeth] continually.”

Introduction

“Psalm 74, 75, 76, 77, kind of the same flavour. If you remember, these are Psalms now, 73 through 83, of Asaph. Remember we mentioned that last week. And Asaph, someone to a large degree we’re not familiar with. But again, if these are some written directly by Asaph, if even some of them are Asaphian, written by the family of Asaph, if the ones they at least think are written by Asaph were written again by Asaph, then he wrote more of the Bible than Jonah, than Amos, than Micah, than Joel, than Malachi, than Zechariah, than Habakkuk, then Nahum, than Haggai, Peter, and James or Jude. That’s a remarkable personage, Asaph, this man. And many of the things we read in these next few Psalms are in the spirit of Psalm 73. *‘Why injustice in the world? God, if you’re on the throne and you’re good, why are things going wrong? Why do wicked people seem to have things their way, why in your own sanctuary, why amongst your own people?’* And Psalm 74 seems to be a cry of *‘God, you seem inactive, there’s a terrible thing that’s happened here in regards to the sanctuary now.’* Some try to say this is during the Babylonian invasion, we have no strong evidence of that. It certainly could be a song of Asaph’s family about the [time of] the Assyrian invasion, in 2nd Kings 19. It seems to me that it may be Meshach in 2nd Kings chapter 14 and in Chronicles tells us that the king of Egypt came up during the days of Rehoboam and carried away all of the gold, you hear of all of the gold and all the treasures that was gathered by David and Solomon, unimaginable wealth, that Shishak came up and carried that all away in the days of Rehoboam, when Asaph was still alive [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kings/1.html>], and he sees the sanctuary in Jerusalem plundered. And it seems to be that context. Either way, look, we’re told in 2nd Chronicles chapter 29, verse 30, that Asaph is a Seer, and it says in those early days before they were called Prophets they were called Seers, because they saw things spiritually. So some of these Psalms, when he writes about injustice and the wicked overthrowing the righteous, and seeming like they’re going to rule everything, then he returns to God’s might and God’s power. Some feel that he’s all the way down to the days of the anti-christ and some of these things. So, here’s an interesting man, he’s looking at a current problem, he assesses that problem in the

present, and then he looks to God's faithfulness in the past, and he quite often looks to then the horizon and says **'LORD,, we know it's not always going to be like this.'** So let's look at this Psalm here, beginning in Psalm 74. It says **"O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? (verse 1)** And it seems that here there's something illogical, one of the old commentators I read says, *"The stricken heart is illogical."* When we're in that much pain, then we accuse God of things we know are not true. He says here **'LORD, why are you casting us off for ever?'** The Psalmist knew that was impossible, it wasn't true. **"why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?" (verse 1b)** seems illogical, he's stricken, he's wrestling. And now here, in this first prayer, there's a request to God to remember. Look, just for your own notes here, there's a prayer, from verses 1 to 3, then there's a prayer, central prayer, verses 10 and 11, and there's a concluding prayer in verses 18 to 23 where again the Psalmist asks God to remember.

So he says here in **verse 2** here, look, **"Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod [or tribe] of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt." 'LORD, remember, it seems like you've cast us off forever.'** **"Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary." (verse 3)** Now if it's Shishak, Shishak carried away all of the golden shields, we're told, that Solomon made, and he carried off an unimaginable amount of wealth that was in the Temple. [Comment: Like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* portrayed, that wealth could be buried somewhere under the Egyptian sands in the region of the Nile Delta, maybe even in the region of Tanis where real archaeologists have been snooping around.] You read of literally the tons of gold and silver and jewels that were gathered by David and then by Solomon, that amount of wealth is unimaginable. And how much of that was carried off? Was some of that hidden? You know, there are legends that the treasures of Solomon's Temple were hidden before this took place. If you ever get a chance to go to Amman, Jordan, I've been there, and in a museum there they found the copper scroll, and the copper scroll is like out in a shoebox, so they haven't taken a lot of time to make a nice display of it, I can't imagine the value of it, but it's an encrypted message that no

one's ever broken down, and supposedly the copper scroll is the directions to where the treasures of Solomon's Temple are hidden [not to be revealed until the 2nd Coming, that stuff belongs to God, Yeshua, the Messiah]. So there's a lot of intrigue around that. If that amount of gold and jewels were ever discovered, it would upset the economies of the world and the markets. So, it's an interesting idea, that that still exists and is hidden somewhere. But here, Jerusalem is rifled, you know, whatever enemy comes. The Assyrians never got into the city, but here it seems the sanctuary has been rifled, which would be Shishak. He says in **verse 4**, now, **'LORD, your name is being profaned amongst your enemies,'** **"Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs."** ***their banners, LORD, in your land.*** **"A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees."** (verse 5) they're deforesting the area, **"But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. (verse 6)** They're destroying, no doubt, the carved work in the sanctuary area, perhaps in the Temple itself, **"They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land."** (verses 7-8) **"synagogues"**, the Hebrew here is "meeting places," **"all of the meeting places of God in the land."** Ah, those of you who like to torture yourself, some scholars like to argue for a later date because there no synagogues earlier, but actually the translation is "meeting places." **"We see not our signs:"** in other words, in verse 9 here, the word "signs" is the same exact Hebrew word in verse 4 where is says "ensigns", the Psalmist says **'We don't see our own banners anymore.'** **"We see not our ensigns: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long."** (verse 9) ***there's no one that can tell us how long this is going to go on. How long will this keep up? What is really going to happen here?*** So, he's looking and saying **'LORD, have you forgotten us? You're enemies are profaning your name.'** Look at the culture today, look at the media, look what's going on, look sometimes how aggravated we get with it all. And he says, **'LORD, it seems that there's nowhere where they can put up a banner with your name on it anymore, and ensign, there's no more prophets, there's no one tell us how long is this going to go on, how long is it going to keep up.'**

Now the central prayer in verses 10 and 11 are based around two questions, if you look in **verse 10, 'How long?'** and **verse 11, 'Why?'** and he says, **"O God,"** now, the cry to the LORD, his prayer, **"how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?"** (verse 10) **'LORD, how long are you going to let this happen? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?'** **"Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom."** (verse 11) There's a bunch of boldness here, he says **'LORD, it seems like you're just resting, like Napoleon, with your hand inside of your robe there, you're not doing anything. You're just standing there watching this? How can you let this happen?'** It reminds us much of Habakkuk saying **'LORD, how could you ever use the Babylonians, they're a people more wicked than we are? This doesn't make sense, LORD, why are you allowing this to happen?'** and the LORD having to say to Habakkuk **'If I told you what I was going to do, you wouldn't believe it, you wouldn't understand, just because you're not able to measure the way and the work that I do, doesn't mean that it's out of kilter.'** So here, the question, the Psalmist Asaph asks, **"how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom."** (verses 10-11) he's asking the LORD to get to work.

Looking Back To God's Power That Was Demonstrated In The Past

And in verse 12 he starts to kind of look back at the past, and to God's power that was demonstrated in the past, and draw a measure of peace from that. He says **"For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons [tameen, probably the whales here] in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness."** (verses 12-14) Now you go back to Job 41, if you want to listen to the tapes, we took a lot of time looking at leviathan there. In **Isaiah chapter 27, verse 1** it says **'In that day, the LORD with his great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the seas.'** So there seems to be, looking at something that is obviously extinct now,

it would seem, who was of great notoriety in those days, some type of beast that lived in the ocean and the waters, leviathan. He says, **“Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.”** (verse 15) it seems he looks at the Red Sea in part of this, the parting of the Jordan. **“The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.”** (verse 16) *‘In creation, you rule over the day, you rule over the night. There’s a light, there’s darkness. It seems in our experience, LORD, there’s only darkness. In your creation, there’s day, and there’s night,’* **“thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all of the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.”** (verses 16b-17) *‘LORD, you’re all-powerful, LORD, in creation, in your works you’ve done this.’*

His Appeal For God’s Intervention Continues

Now verse 18 he begins to pray again, and again, ask God to remember, you’ll see he says “forget not,” down in verse 22 he says “remember” again, verse 23, “forget not” again. So he’s appealing to God’s conscience as it were here. He’s saying **“Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.”** *‘Remember this, O LORD, the foolish are blaspheming your name, the enemy is reproaching.’* **“O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.”** (verses 18-19) Now, “turtledove” was a term of endearment in that day. You may have looked at your wife and instead of said “darling,” “my turtledove.” Try it, when no one’s around, so how it goes. [laughter] In verse 1 he called them his sheep, here he calls his people his “turtledove,” it was an endearing term. Let me know how it goes, you can tell me on Sunday. *‘My turtledove wants the credit card to go shopping,’* **“deliver not the soul of thy turtledove, O LORD, unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. Have respect unto the covenant:”** he’s reminding God, he’s a covenant God, **“for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.”** (verses 19-21) talking about his own people that have been carried away. Now he puts it on God, **“Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.”** (verse 22) as he concludes this, he says *‘LORD, this is*

your deal, this is your reputation LORD, I'm reminded now LORD, arise and defend yourself. Because in an uncomfortable situations, you know, quite often we want to complain because of our own discomfort. Imagine what it's like being carried away by an enemy. Imagine what it's like being up at night, not able to sleep because they're around the walls where you live, there's enemies firing weapons, there's no time to rest, and it seems like there's great injustice. And then, coming into Jerusalem, and sacking the Sanctuary, these are real issues. It's not just the parking lot's crowded, or some other thing that's disquieting or in our life this person did this to me or that to me. These are real issues. And finally, he comes to the point where he says ***'You know what? Arise O LORD, and plead your own cause, this is your cause, this is your city, this is your Zion, these are your people, this is your reputation.'*** And all of a sudden he seems to take a deep breath, and says, ***'LORD, you do this.'*** We should be able to do that in our day, because he's going to arise, he's going to catch his Bride out of here, and he's going to work in the earth, and Jesus says ***'There will be days such as the world has never seen or ever will again.'*** And he's going to come, and he's going to set up his Kingdom in power and in glory [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kingdomofgod/mkg1.htm>]. Here Asaph says, ***"Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth [ascendeth] continually."*** (verses 22-23) Now this is a song that was sung in the Temple.

Psalm 75:1-10

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, A Psalm or Song of Asaph

"Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare. When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is

full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*. But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”

Introduction

Psalm 75, now as we move into that, it says this is “to the chief Musician,” it has the idea of ‘*LORD, do not destroy,*’ some wonder if this is the end of Psalm 74 or the beginning of 75. There’s much the same spirit. This Psalm is short, it’s powerful, it kind of goes through the history of the LORD, and going through his history, his reputation, the Psalmist is finding great comfort in the things that are wrong. He says, **“*Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.*”** (verse 1) **‘*LORD, we give thanks to you, LORD, that thy name is near thy wondrous works, it’s associated with the wondrous works, LORD, and what they declare, what you’ve done.*’** And then he says this, it seems in verse 2 the LORD begins to speak, Psalmist crying out, ah, King James, I think if you have an RV you have a better translation here, King James says **“*When I shall receive the congregation*”** the Hebrew says **“*When I shall take a set time, I will judge uprightly.*”** **“*I will judge uprightly.*”** (verse 2) It begins, God answers and says **‘*Look, there’s a set time.*’** Here’s the Psalmist beginning to cry out, **‘*LORD, I’m giving thanks, I’m giving thanks, your wondrous works declare who you are,*’** as it goes down we see there’s difficulty, here the LORD says, **‘*You know what? There is a set time, and I’m going to judge righteously. You need to remember that, I have my own clock, and I have my own calendar. And the problem with your clock and your calendar, when you don’t get what you want, is it seems that I am delaying.*’** But God’s going to say **‘*The truth is, the righteous are always rewarded, and the wicked are always punished. But when you think that I am inactive and not doing anything, that seems to be contradicted, you misinterpret my longsuffering, you misinterpret my timing and the way I do things,*’** and so do I, and so do you, quite often. So here, the LORD says, **‘*You know what? I have my own set time,*’** he’s speaking in verse 2, **‘*and I will judge uprightly, I’m going to handle this the right way.*’** **“*The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.*”**

Selah.” (verse 3) ‘As the whole world is falling apart, I’m the one that has the ability to reach in and stabilize things. What do you think about that?’ (verse 3) There it is, “Selah”, ‘What do you think about that?’ ‘I have a set time, I’m going to do what’s right, you don’t have to loose your hair over it [I’m loosing my hair waiting], and the whole earth, when it starts to dissolve, I’m the one that reaches in and bears up the pillars of it, gives it stability. What do you think about that?’

“I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck.” (verses 4-5) ‘I’m the one who said to them, Don’t elevate yourself,’ the horn was symbolic of power, the horn of the ox, the horn of the ibex, it was always symbolic of authority or power. He’s saying, God is saying to the Psalmist, **‘I’ve said to the wicked, and I’m the one that declares that, Don’t lift up your horn, don’t speak foolishly, don’t act with a stiff neck, don’t be rebellious,’** and he says here’s why, **“For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.” (verse 6) ‘Lift not up your own horn,’** he’s saying, **‘your own authority, your own power,’** to the wicked, **“For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” (verse 7)** Ah, the theme in Daniel is that God sets one man over a nation, and he brings another down, and in Daniel’s prophecy it says **‘he sets up over a nation even the basest of men,’** in other words, **‘for his purposes.’** When you look in the world, and think **‘How could, that dictator in this country or that tyrant,’** you see these things going on, and God says, **‘You know, sometimes I set up over a nation, even the basest of men, because it’s working my purposes.’** Here, to the wicked, he says **‘Don’t lift yourself up, because first of all, if you’re in a position, understand this, it’s not your dealing, promotion,’** he says, **‘doesn’t come from the east or from the west or from the south, the LORD is the one, he’s the judge, he puts down one, he sets up another.’** And interestingly now, it says **“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.” (verse 8)** Here’s the final analysis, you know, about the wicked, the injustice there is on the earth. “dregs thereof” the very

particles on the bottom of the cup of wine. They're going to be taken, it's interesting, because here's the LORD saying **'Look, I have a time, I judge righteously. Even when the whole earth, all of its inhabitants are being dissolved, I'm the one that reaches in and establishes the pillars of it. And the wicked, they're not getting away with anything, they don't raise up by their own power, they haven't gotten there by themselves, I'm the one by whom promotion comes, neither from the east or the west or from the south. But I lift up one and I take down another.'** You look how crazy the world is, sometimes it seems like things are out of control. But he says, **'Understand this, in the hand of the LORD, there's a cup, and that cup is filled with the wrath of God.'** And he says, **'I'm going to pour that out, and the wicked of the earth are going to drink that to the dregs, they're going to wring out the last drop of that cup, they're going to drink it.'** And of course the amazing thing about that cup is, that no doubt is the cup in Gethsemane, when Jesus prayed and said **'Father, is there any way, let this cup pass. Not my will, but thine be done.'** So much weight was in the prayer, and here he was looking into the depth of that cup in Gethsemane, the dregs of it, that it says he began to sweat as it were great drops of blood, you know, the doctors call that hemotydrosis, when you're under enough stress, the capillaries in your sweat glands can actually burst and sweat can actually be mixed, blood can actually be mixed with sweat. Here's Christ agonizing, sweating. And it tells us that night, Peter warned himself at the enemy's fire because it was cold, and Jesus is sweating in prayer that night. He never sweat when he rebuked the wind and the sea, he never sweat when he raised the dead, it was no sweat to heal the lame or the leper, there was no sweat in anything he did. But that night, agonizing in prayer. And as he pleases with the Father, the only answer he receives is an angel comes to strengthen him, it says, so he can continue to agonize. And it's that cup that he would drink, Revelation tells us this of the cup, it says **'the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image or receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and for ever, and they have no rest day or night.'** You know, when Christ agonizes in Gethsemane, it isn't over the beating, and it isn't over the fact

that his beard would be ripped out of his face, it isn't over the scourging. The agonizing in Gethsemane was because he knew, as it says in Isaiah 53 that the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all. In 1st Peter chapter 2 it says he bore our sins upon the tree. And look, you look at the whole sacrificial system in the Old Testament, it wasn't just that the blood was shed, it was then that the animal was laid on the fire and burned and consumed. And there was in the picture of that sacrifice, yes, the death of the animal, but there was also the picture of eternal suffering in the fire. And Christ knew in Gethsemane that if he was going to drink the cup, it was going to be this cup, and that he would drink it to the dregs, and it was the cup that was poured out of God's wrath without mixture, and that the smoke of the torment of that cup would ascend forever and forever, and somehow in those three hours of darkness, and no cinematographer could ever put that down, in the ages to come we'll still be learning of his mercy and his grace. Somehow in those three hours of darkness, coming out of it he cries, **'Eli, Eli, lamasabachthani, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'** First thing he says is **'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.'** Last thing he says is **'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'** You never hear him call God, God, in the Gospels except there. He begins, talking to his Father on the cross, he ends talking to his Father on the cross. But in those three hours of darkness, it's **'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'** because he's speaking on your behalf and my behalf. Because it wouldn't have just been death for us, it would have then been separation of God from us eternally, the cup of God's wrath poured out without mixture, the smoke of the torment of it arising forever and forever. And somehow, in those three hours of darkness, Christ died eternally, because when he comes out of the darkness, he says **'It is finished.'** He wasn't dead physically yet. He had already died eternally. He said **'It is finished.'** Then he gave up the ghost, after that, physically. So this, here's God saying **'Look, I have a time, it's a set time, and I will judge righteously, and when the whole earth seems like it's being dissolved, I'm the one who reaches in and stabilizes it. Selah, what do you think about that? And the wicked, you think they're getting away with something, and I don't know that?'** He said, **'I'm the one to tell them You're not going to elevate yourself, you're not going to lift yourself up, your horns, because promotion doesn't come from the east or the west, it doesn't come from the south, it comes from the LORD.'** and you and I are of the wicked, and on behalf of us, his Son has drunk this cup to the dregs so you and I could be here

this evening. You know, you watch him in the Last Supper, and he gives the Cup of Fellowship [called by the Jews, the Cup of Blessing in this Passover service] of the New Testament to the disciples, and then he goes out into Gethsemane after they sing a hymn, he goes to Gethsemane, and then he finally accepts our cup [the cup of wrath]. So that night was a night of exchanging of cups. He gives to you and I, who don't deserve anything, we deserve to go to hell, we deserve to suffer forever, who deserve to be cut off from God, he gives us, through his own sacrifice, the Cup of Fellowship, of Forgiveness, of Atonement, and then he goes to Gethsemane and accepts our cup, the cup of God's wrath, poured out without mixture, that cup that the wicked of the earth who refuse to turn to Christ are going to drink it, they're going to drink dregs thereof, it's going to be wrung out to them. If you're here this evening and you don't know Christ, listen, it's such a simple decision. There's a cup of fellowship you can have, that, acquired by the suffering of Jesus Christ, he offers it to us, and the cup of eternal suffering that you should have, he's taken that from you, on your behalf, and he's entered into that suffering, and gone through it, and come out victorious. It's your choice from which cup you want to drink from. But what an interesting picture here, as Asaph looks forward...[tape switch-over, some text lost]...it **“is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.”** (verses 8b-9) Jacob the scoundrel, the God of Jacob, that's our God, I'm thankful. **“All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.”** (verse 10)

Psalm 76:1-12

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm or Song of Asaph

“In Judah, is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thou didst

cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Vow, pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.”

Introduction

Psalm 76, again, there seems to be an injustice, an invading force, an enemy. The Septuagint in the beginning of the Psalms says that this Psalm is related to the Assyrian invasion in 2nd Kings 19. So, we're not sure of that, it says in the Septuagint. But the theme of it is kind of **'The Mighty Are Overthrown,'** there's a picture of that, that God can do that, that God can do that. And look, it begins with a picture of God as deliverer, and it's very specific. It says **"In Judah is God known: his name is great"** look **"in Israel."** then it says, **"In Salem"** which is Jerusalem, **"also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion."** (verses 1-2) so then **verse 3** says, where, in Judah, in Israel, in Jerusalem, in Zion specifically, **"There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah."** There, that was the center of it, that was the place where the LORD made up his mind, he drew a line, and he said **'That's it, nobody goes past here.'** And how remarkably he's able to do that. He's also allowed Jerusalem to be carried away by Nebuchadnezzar [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kings/6.html>]. And then, in the Book of Daniel, which is in that context, **'I allow, sometimes I raise up a nation,'** Nebuchadnezzar in that context, **'even the basest of men.'** Here though, it seems to be the Assyrian army, coming through the area, they had carried away the northern tribes, they come into the area Jerusalem, they're there, surrounding the city, no doubt there were many impaled, you could look over the walls, you could hear people screaming, there were women that were raped, the forests were cut down, this army, everybody fell in front of this army. In fact, Rabshakeh, on behalf of Sennacherib, if you remember, he comes, and he stands outside the walls of Jerusalem, and he starts to talk to them in Hebrew. And he says, **'Who do you think your God is, all these other gods have fallen before us, now you think, you're deceiving the people inside the city that your God can protect them from us,'** and then some of the Levites get on the wall and say, **'Hey, do us a**

favor, don't take to us in Hebrew, talk to us in Syriac, because we understand that tongue, we'll talk back and forth,' because they didn't want Rabshakeh, who was blaspheming God, to freak out everybody in the city. And here, it says God drew the line. Where? At Judah, in Israel, at Jerusalem, in Zion [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/kings/4.html>]. It is **"There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah."** (verse 3) **"Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands."** (verses 4-5) you know, they, the Jews, got up in the morning, they're all laying their dead, 185,000. He says **"The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands."** there's no battle. **"At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast down into a dead sleep."** (verse 6) everybody gone, outside the city walls. And in **verse 7**, now he begins to say this God is to be feared and held in awe, the God who did these things that we're talking about, **"Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?"** it's a shame that our culture doesn't realize that, today. Again, we're told in the Old Testament, that the might of a nation depends upon its righteousness, not in its ability to track its threats and stop ICBMs from coming over the North Pole. All of that's wonderful, but the might of a nation depends upon its righteousness. And the greatest threat to our nation is there's no fear of God any longer. But he says **'Thou art to be feared,' "and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?"** talking about all these 185,000 Assyrians just gone [and that was half of Sennacherib's army that he had in Judah. The other 185,000 were stationed with him in northern Judah]. He says, **"Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah."** (verse 8) So wrath mingled with mercy there, **'Selah, what do you think about that?'** He can arise to judgment, and at the same time save the meek of the earth. It's an interesting picture.

Ah, in verses 10 to 12, the end of this Psalm, he's basically saying, you know, the wicked in the earth, really, are to be pitied, not to be envied. You know, in Psalm 73 he said **'I envied the prosperity of the wicked,'** they're not to be envied. And here he's going to say **'They're not to be feared.'**

Sometimes we're afraid because of whose in power in the world, whose got their hand on the trigger, who can push the button. He says, he's going to tell us, that they are to be pitied, because of their future. They're not to be feared, or envied. **"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee:"** man's got nothing to stand up, **"the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth."** (verses 10-12) Is Asaph seeing all the way down to the Kingdom Age here? It says **"let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth."** (verses 11b-12) he's ruling over everything, it seems like Asaph, this Seer, is seeing down now to the end. [or is this his sons or maybe his grandsons, who probably wrote this in the time of Hezekiah, so this would have been written by the "family of Asaph" in that sense, a family of Seer's.]

Psalm 77:1-20

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of Asaph

"I cried unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary: who *is* so great a God as *our* God? Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and

Joseph [i.e. Ephraim and Manasseh]. **Selah.** **The waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way *is* in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."**

Introduction

"As we come to this last one, Psalm 77, we'll finish there this evening, ah, it does something every interesting here. It tells us that in remembrance, sometimes, in the first Psalm he's asking the LORD to remember, and in this last Psalm, after these Psalms where he talks about injustice and God working, now in Psalm 77, he says, **'He finds his consolation in remembering the LORD'** now. So he's not going to now say, pleading to the LORD, remember, he's going to plead with you and I and say **'Look, in your worst day, what do you think about?'** In the worst of times, when you're down, what do you do? And he's going to say over and over again, **'That's the time to remember the LORD.'** Look in verse 3, you'll see he says **"I remembered God,"** in verse 5 he says **"I have considered the days of old,"** in verse 6 he says **"I call to remembrance"**, in verse 10 he says **"I will remember"**, in verse 11 he says **"I will remember"**, second time he says **"I will remember"**, verse 12 he says **I will meditate"**. So over and over he's saying, **'When I was overwhelmed, when the worst thing happened, I needed to fall back on what I knew.'** And kind of the challenge of the Psalm, I remember my Pastor used to say, **"You never trade away what you do know, for what you don't know."** When you're in a circumstance, and it's painful, and things around you don't seem fair, it doesn't seem like it's making sense, what you need to do then, ***is you need to fall back on what you do know. 'I don't know what you're doing here, Lord, I don't know why you're allowing this to happen, but I do know that you love me, I do know you let your Son die on a cross for me, I do know you promised me eternal life in the Kingdom of God, not because I'm worthy or because I could earn it, or because I deserve it, but because you're gracious. I don't know how all that gels with what's going on in my life right now, but I am not going to trade away what I do know, Lord, for what I don't know. I'm going to fall back, I'm going to remember'*** And it's the advice that the

Psalmist gives here, Asaph gives us as we look. And it's kind of divided into two halves. Ah, interesting, scholars throughout the ages draw this picture, they say the first 9 verses are, is the sigh of Psalm 77, the pain of it, and the second half, verses 10 to 20 is the song of Psalm 77. So the sigh, and then the song.

He begins here by saying, **"I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted."** (verses 1-2) We do that, don't we? In the day of our trouble, isn't it easier to run to him in the day of your trouble? Then he says *'I've been waiting to meet with you, it's nice to see ya.'* *'O Lord, why are you letting this happen in my life.'* *'Oh when everything's wonderful I never hear from you, I just thought this might get us together again.'* **"I cried unto God with my voice, and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted."** (verses 1-2) there was just no rest from this, and he says, **"I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah."** (verse 3) they only did that thousands of years ago, you know, believers don't do that anymore [said tongue-in-cheek]. **"I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah."** *'What do you think about that?'* *'I cried unto the LORD, I cried unto the LORD with my voice. He gave ear unto my cry, in the day of trouble I sought him, my sore, this pain, it was like an open sore, it ran all night, it ceased not, my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled, LORD, how can this be happening? I you are who you say you are, why is this happening in my life, if you're on the throne and you love me, how can this be going on? If I was God...'* he's always open to hear about that, **"I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah"** *'What do you think about that?'* Have you ever been in that place? If you haven't, you will be. Then he says, **"Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak."** (verse 4) **"my eyes waking"** the idea is, *'I can't sleep, I can't close my eyes,'* **"I am so troubled that I cannot speak."** Evidently he could write. **"Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak."** (verse 4) even been there? I've been there. **"I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit**

made diligent search.” (verses 5-6) Now he says this, he says, **‘I couldn’t sleep, I couldn’t find rest, I couldn’t find peace, this is killing me,’** he says. And he said, in the middle of that, **‘I considered the days of old, I remember the Ten Commandments, Charlton Heston, I remember the movie, I remember the Red Sea parting, I remembered all the miracles, I remembered how powerful God is, I remember who he was, the years of ancient times, I called to remembrance my song, LORD, I used to worship you, I would lay in bed at night, and I would fellowship with you and worship you. I call to remembrance my song in the night,’** **“I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.”**

Six Questions Now That He Asks

Verses 7 to 9, he tells you about that search, and he asks, look, there’s six questions here, there should be six question marks in your Bible. They’re all rhetorical questions, he’s arguing from the absurd, what he’s saying, he’s asking six questions and saying **‘Well can it be that God has changed? I remembered God, the God of ancient times, I thought on those things, I remember how faithful he was, I remember what he did for ancient Israel, I remembered who he is, I remembered my song in the night. I began to commune with my own heart, and then I made this diligent search,’** and now here’s these six questions now that he asks. He says, **“Will the Lord cast off for ever?”** question mark, **‘Is that who he is? Is that who the God that we worship is? Does he cast off forever? Then why be here, just, why not be somewhere else?’** It’s a rhetorical question, the obvious answer is **‘No, God does not change, he’s rescued his people in the past.’** As he is diligently searching with his heart, it’s the turning point here. **“Will the Lord cast off for ever?”** Number two, he says, **“and will he be favourable no more?” (verse 7)** has God cut off his grace, it’s not gonna happen again? Look, these are good questions if you’re miserable tonight. Because I am, sometimes. My wife will even tell me, **‘You’re miserable,’** and I’ll say **‘I AM NOT!’** that proves it. **“Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?” (verses 7-8)** Look, if you’re in misery tonight, is his mercy clean gone forever? You’re the last one, the Bible said he’d be merciful, and his mercy is renewed every morning, but didn’t realize you would show up, and wear him out. You see, they’re

ridiculous questions, **“Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore?”** (verse 8) **‘Are his promises are not going to be good now that I’m in a mess?’** **“Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.”** (verse 9) **‘What do you think about that? Aren’t those ridiculous questions? What do you think about that?’** **‘In my suffering, when I cried out, in my trouble, not able to sleep, tormented at night, feeling like I have a running sore, in great pain, I called to remembrance things about God, this God of ancient times. In my remembrance, I remembered the songs I would sing in the night, I began to commune with my own heart, my spirit began to make diligent search, and I realized how ridiculous all these conclusions were that I was coming to. Is God going to cast off forever? Will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise fail forevermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious, hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah. Think about that, how ridiculous that is.’**

Verse 10 now, the song begins, he says, **“And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.”** **‘This is my infirmity that I’m going through, I’m torturing myself with this ridiculous argument, this is my infirmity,’** **“but”** he says, instead of dwelling on that, look, here’s great advice, **“I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.”** **“LORD, you have been so faithful and so good to me in my life, LORD, your right hand, you’re strength, your power. Instead of being eaten alive by this present circumstance that’s been digging into me, I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.”** **“I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember the wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.”** (verses 11-12) **‘I will meditate on thy work,’** it’s around us in Creation, it surrounds us, there’s no way to escape it in history, in his reputation, in his creation, **“and I will talk of thy doings.”** Instead of complaining, instead of saying *‘The LORD’s cut me off, he’s not going to be favourable, he’s forgotten to be gracious,’* he says, **“I will talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?”** (verse 13) Listen part of national life in ancient Israel in the sanctuary, it was inescapable, part of national life in this

country for the first 200 years, was the sanctuary. It was inescapable, you know, those who came from Europe to observe us in the beginning, you read D'Toquequill's estimate of America, and he said her greatness was no in her commodious harbors, it was not in her great universities, it was not in the busyness of her business and her great trade. He says, "*Finally I realized, America was great because America was good, and America was good because her pulpits flamed with righteousness...her pulpits flamed with righteousness. And when America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.*" We're proving that, sadly. **"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" (verse 13)** you're brokenhearted, you're tortured, you're asking yourself all of these ridiculous questions, you're questing God about things you should never question about, remember, remember his goodness, remember to speak of his goodness, meditate on his work, talk of his doings, realize that his way is in the sanctuary, get to fellowship, don't neglect the gathering together of yourselves, especially as you see the day drawing near, stir one another up to faith in good works. It says here, **"who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah."** (verses 13b-15) that arm that had a cup in it, **"thou hast with thine armed redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah, what do you think about that?"** And then again, he quickly rehearses the history, **"The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled."** (verse 16) looking back to the Red Sea, so often throughout the Old Testament that the Red Sea is such a standard of God's greatness. **"the depths"**, not the swamp, **"the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightning lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook."** (verses 16c-18) and now look what he says, **"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known."** (verse 19) isn't that interesting? [As a former subsailor I find it interesting, this is definitely a subsailor's verse.] Because he had just said back in verse 13, **"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary."** And when he's realizing God's greatness, and the unchanging character of God, now he's realizing, **"You know what, LORD, when they were trapped there, at the Red Sea, with the Egyptians on their heels, and it looked like they were gone, they were dead, you're way, LORD, not just in**

the sanctuary, thy way is in the sea, and thy path through the great waters. LORD, something was seen of you and learned of you in great trial that vastly outweighed just sitting in the sanctuary,’ which is a delight, and we should do on a regular basis. All of a sudden the Psalmist is saying *‘Your way, that was your way, too, LORD, there is no Red Sea that will not part before you.’* There is no great trial that comes to us, that you can’t deal with, and LORD, there is something about watching the works of the LORD, and being an eye-witness of his grace and of his power and his glory, even through the most difficult things, that is his way, and it is his path, and it is the place that we come out greatly changed, acknowledging his faithfulness and his power and his goodness. **“Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.” (verse 19)** Look, who likes being trapped at the Red Sea with the Egyptians behind you? Anybody [no way, man!] Yea, there’s one, God, he really likes that. He likes playing against a stacked deck. We don’t enjoy the game. He does. That’s where he says, speaks to Moses, *‘Behold, the glory of the LORD.’* God loves that! And then his people talk about it through the entire Old Testament. Not dragging them through a muddy swamp, leading them through great waters. Isaiah said *‘It’s like an ox that goeth down into the valley, so they went down into the great deep.’* It says *‘The water was a wall on either side of them,’* the same word used for the walls of Jericho, the walls of Jerusalem, and the walls of Babylon. **“Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.” (verse 19)** it’s a matter of following and being led. **“Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.” (verse 20)**

‘So, Lord, when the worst days came, the day of my trouble, Lord I sought you, it felt like a sore just running all night, it didn’t cease, my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered you LORD, but when I remembered you, what I do, I complained. Imagine that. And LORD, you wouldn’t let my eyes close, you kept me awake, I was troubled, I couldn’t speak. I considered the days of old, the years of ancient times, and then I began to call to remembrance, LORD, how great you were, my own song that I sang in the night, I communed with my heart, my spirit was diligent, I searched, and then I realized how ridiculous it all way. LORD, are you casting off forever? will you be favourable

no more? Is your mercy clean gone forever? Are your promises failing forever more? Have you forgotten to be gracious? In your anger have you shut up your tender mercies? God, you can't change, that's not who you are. I said in my infirmity, I'm going to remember the years of the writing of the most High, remember his works, remember the wonders of old, I'm going to meditate on thy work, the talk of your doings, your way O God is in the sanctuary, you're so great, you do wonders, you declare your strength to your people. With your own arm you've redeemed your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. And the waters saw you, who you were, the depths, they were parted, the clouds, the voice of thunder, your power, your way LORD, I realize also is in the sea, and thy path is also in the most troubling circumstances, in the great waters thy footsteps are not known, thou leddest thy people like a flock,' and still does, 'like when you led them by the hand of Moses and the hand of Aaron.' Let's have the musicians come, and let's sing a last song. I'm sure Carlos knows exactly where to go. And let's stand, and let's pray...

[transcript of a connective expository sermon on Psalms 74:1-23, Psalm 75:1-10, Psalm 76:1-12 and Psalm 77:1-20, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116].