

Psalm 77

“Exercising Your Mind”

Good evening. Thank you for joining me tonight as we look at Psalm 77. We’ll notice that the psalmist does not shrink back from expressing the full extent of his doubts and questions. But we’ll also see what it is that allows the psalmist to find peace and confidence amid whatever troubles sparked his honest questions.

Verses 1-10

The psalmist’s language makes it obvious what kind of condition that he’s enduring. He’s in some sort of trouble. His soul refuses to be comforted. When he thinks of God, he’s distressed and grows faint. Listen to his questions:

- Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?
- Has his steadfast love ceased forever?
- Are his promises at an end for all time?
- Has God forgotten to be gracious?
- Has he in anger shut up his compassion?

What is the psalmist doing? He’s being incredibly honest and open. But notice, he’s being incredibly honest and open *before* God. Right there in verse 1, we’re told that he cries aloud to God, that God may hear him. In verse 2, he says that in the day of his trouble, he sought the Lord.

But what we notice is that when the psalmist goes to God in prayer, he does not initially receive or find any comfort or resolution or peace. There’s no quick fix.

And because there’s no quick fix that means he eventually reaches the point where he asks the most honest and penetrating questions about God. And that’s when things begin to change. It’s when the psalmist probes and questions the character of God that his prayer begins to change.

We don’t know what the psalmist was enduring, but it’s clear it wasn’t pleasant. And oftentimes, it is our unpleasant and difficult circumstances that lead us to pray. And what we’re doing in those situations, is usually asking God to change our circumstances, to make the unpleasant things more pleasant. And there’s nothing wrong with that.

Verses 10-20

But the turning point for the psalmist is not due to his circumstances changing or improving. Instead, what happens is that the psalmist is able to exercise his memory and recall what he knows to be true of God. In other words, the psalmist’s circumstances don’t seem to change, but his view of God does. He remembers the way God led the people out of Egypt and performed mighty deeds on their behalf.

There are times when our troubles cast a cloud over our knowledge and experience of God’s goodness and faithfulness. Like the psalmist, there are times when our meditations do not produce comfort and peace. Very often, the present moment is full of things that lead us to doubt and question what we’ve known about God. And that’s why we need to exercise our memory. We need to recall the past and remember God’s faithfulness to His promises. That’s why prayer needs to be anchored and centered in God’s Word.

If I'm trying to remember something that happened on a family vacation, I'm better served if I ask my family members to help me recall what happened. I'll have a better recollection if I utilize their memories. The same is true of prayer. When we listen to what God has faithfully done for His people, we're strengthened to endure the present moment and filled with hope for what's ahead.

So, this evening, join the psalmist and exercise your memory, but don't simply depend on your own. Fill your mind with the testimonies of God's faithful deeds in His Word. Remember who this God is who has redeemed His people through the cross and will one day come again to lead you and welcome you home.

Amen.

Reflection Questions:

1. What honest questions do you need to lay before God this evening?
2. Who has helped you recall the goodness and faithfulness of God? Who are you helping to remember these things as well?
3. Read Romans 8:32. What is Paul's logic, and how does it relate to what we read in Psalm 77?