

May 18

Scriptures: Read Psalms 76 & 77

Key Verse: “I will also meditate on all your work, and talk of Your deeds.” (Psalm 77:12)

Overview

Psalm 76 is a song of Asaph or possibly one of his descendants. We read of the Lord’s deliverance of His people and protection of His royal city of Jerusalem (Salem/Zion). Psalm 75 prepared the way for the Lord’s judgment of wrath on the proud, wicked enemies of Israel, and Psalm 76 shows the administration of that wrath. The situation described may be referring to the Lord’s miraculous victory over the Assyrian army of Sennacherib, who had laid siege to Jerusalem and whom God had caused to die in their sleep (2 Kings 19:35). In this psalm we see that the Lord only had to speak the words of rebuke and all the mighty men were cast into a sleep of death (76:5-6). It reminded the psalmist of God’s great deliverance for the children of Israel when they escaped from the Egyptians who, along with their chariots and horses, perished in the deep waters (76:6; Exodus 15:23-28). Their many arrows, shields, and swords were rendered useless (76:3; compare Isaiah 37:33). These weapons and all the possessions of the strong men were plundered by the people of the Lord. The reaction of both Judah and Israel (possibly indicating that it was indeed during the time of the divided kingdom) was one of great praise to God, for the strong enemy had been defeated by the Lord alone.

All over the earth, the Lord is to be feared, for He is so great, No one can endure His wrath (76:7; cf. Nahum 1:6). Even the wrath of men against God will ultimately bring Him praise and glory (cf. Romans 9:17, 22-23). When those who are against God are destroyed, all the saints of the Lord will offer Him their thanks and glorify Him. The proud rulers of the earth will be humbled before the awesome and majestic Great King, who is mighty in deeds of deliverance for His people (76:12). This particular deliverance of the oppressed people of Judah represented the great deliverance yet to come when God will bring judgment and “deliver all the oppressed of the earth” (76:9). The worldly view says, “God helps those who help themselves”, but the Bible teaches: “God helps those who cannot help themselves.” God’s miraculous intervention on behalf of the oppressed, who were totally dependent upon Him, deserves not only verbal praise but active worship to God in sacrificial giving: “make vows to the Lord your God, and pay them” (76:11).

In Psalm 77, Asaph relates his personal experience of great distress. He begins by telling us the outcome when he cried out to the Lord: “He gave ear to me” (77:1). That which begins in prayer will usually end in praise and victory. Asaph reflects upon his desperate situation and the many questions going through his mind; then he remembered the Lord’s past goodness, and it gave him new-found faith and strength.

In recalling his trouble, Asaph remembers that he went right away to the Lord in prayer, and he continued to pray with his hands outstretched to God all the night, yet he found no comfort, and this is what puzzled him. After all, he was a child of God and a faithful keeper of the covenant. When he remembered God’s past mercies, he was even more perplexed at why God would not answer him now, and he complained against God. Because of his troubles, he could not sleep or

even speak. After remembering his former close relationship with God, he resolves to make a careful search of his heart (77:2-6). Obviously, Asaph's initial prayer to God was not done with the right attitude.

He asked six rhetorical questions about God's faithfulness and character (77:7-9). Recognizing that God is indeed faithful to His covenant and that His mercy and grace endures forever, the psalmist realized the problem was not with God but with himself: "This is my anguish [infirmity]" (77:10). His healing was well on the way when Asaph decided to meditate upon God's many wondrous deeds and glorify Him. He would do more than meditate, however; he would unselfishly tell others about the Lord's goodness. Asaph's faith increased when he remembered God's gracious deliverance of His people in parting the waters, which trembled at His presence, making a path for His people to cross the Red Sea. By this time, Asaph had faith that God would likewise lead him out of his troubles, and he was now in the proper spirit to receive an answer from God, no longer having a complaining spirit.

Prayer

Lord God, when we hit bottom in deep despair, may we not pray out of complaint but meditate on Your wonderful deeds of the past with thanksgiving in our hearts. Then Your peace, which passes all understanding, will come in answer to our prayers (see Philippians 4:6, 7).