



## PSALM 78, PART 3

### A Pure Heart

This is Holly with Presence Point and thank you for joining me for our *Psalms for Shepherds* series. Today we're completing our time in *Psalms 78*. As a quick recap, the first 8 verses included Asaph's encouragement to remember and tell others how God had demonstrated His faithfulness in their lives. Side note: I do hope you took time to personalize that challenge!

In verses 9 through 66, we walked through a narrated, fairly comprehensive Jewish 101 History course. Now, with verses 67 through 72 before us, we see a consequence of the earlier rebellious behavior of the tribe of Benjamin. Because of that behavior, God removed the Ark of the Covenant (remember, that's His presence) from Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, who were also Joseph's descendants. Of course, although the Ark left Shiloh, God did not leave the Israelites. As one commentator points out, our "God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed!"

When God did not choose the tribe of Ephraim to house and care for the Ark, also Joshua's tribe, He did choose the tribe of Judah because that is the tribe of which Jesus was to be born. One much greater than Joshua. And, from that tribe of Judah, who did God choose to lead Israel? David, the seed from whom Jesus would come.

Please join me as we finish *Psalms 78* with verses 67 through 72.

<sup>67</sup> But he rejected Joseph's descendants;  
he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim.

<sup>68</sup> He chose instead the tribe of Judah,  
and Mount Zion, which he loved.

<sup>69</sup> There he built his sanctuary as high as the heavens,  
as solid and enduring as the earth.

<sup>70</sup> He chose his servant David,  
calling him from the sheep pens.

<sup>71</sup> He took David from tending the ewes and lambs  
and made him the shepherd of Jacob's descendants —  
God's own people, Israel.

<sup>72</sup> He cared for them with a true heart  
and led them with skillful hands.

Of course, as an advocate of shepherd leadership, I love this passage! Kings were called “shepherds” in biblical times and aptly so because God’s chosen people were the sheep of His pasture and because the responsibilities of a King included doing exactly what a shepherd does for his or her sheep, providing what they need, protecting them from their enemies, and being present for those they led, normally, even in battle.

It seems that no one was better qualified to hold the title of “shepherd” than David. He had demonstrated how much he loved his literal sheep by risking his life when wild animals attacked, but even more so, he had already demonstrated how much he loved God’s people by how he had risked his life for them on the battlefield.

The closing verse of this chapter tells us that David led God’s sheep with a true heart and with skillful hands. He certainly had already demonstrated the skillfulness of his hands! He could play the harp so beautifully that the music soothed King Saul, he was so adept with a sword that he killed “tens of thousands” in battle to protect the Jewish people, and he even used a pen, so to speak, as he authored melodic and meaningful songs of praise, lament, and encouragement. It would seem that he would most certainly hold a scepter with honor.

But, his heart is what Asaph listed as the first, and therefore, it seems the most important quality. A “true heart,” a pure heart, a heart of integrity toward the Father. He loved God. There was no denying that, and he was wholly devoted to Him.

Whether shepherding the people of Israel, a family, a business, a non-profit, or a ministry or church, integrity and skill need each other. No amount of ability can offset a sinful heart, and no amount of devotion to God can overcome a lack of ability. We need both, fellow under-shepherd, a true heart and skillful hands. And that is the question I leave you with today.

You may have the physical, mental, or even psychological ability to shepherd those within your sphere of influence, but how’s your heart? Is it true? Is it pure? Is it one the Father looks on and sees integrity? Are you spiritually armed for the work ahead?

I pray that you'll take some time right now and search out the answer to that question. Seek the Holy Spirit's assistance. Bow your head, open your soul to His voice and ask Him. Then follow the lead He provides. You can always trust the shepherding the Father offers you.

Thank you for joining me this week. May you live deeply into your calling with a true heart and skillful hands with those you influence and impact today.