



## PSALM 78, PART 1

### Gods Remarkable Deeds from Generation to Generation to Generation

This is Holly with Presence Point and welcome to our *Psalms for Shepherds* series. Today we're in *Psalm 78*, 72 verses of Asaph, the psalmist, recounting how God had been faithful to his ancestors, the Israelites, and how they had often repaid Him with disobedience.

Please join me in the first eight verses of *Psalm 78*.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

<sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth in a parable;  
I will utter dark sayings from of old,  
<sup>3</sup> things that we have heard and known,  
that our fathers have told us.

<sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their children,  
but tell them to the coming generation...  
the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might,  
and the wonders that he has done.

<sup>5</sup> He established a testimony in Jacob  
and appointed a law in Israel,  
which he commanded our fathers  
to teach to their children,

<sup>6</sup> that the next generation might know them,  
the children yet unborn,  
and arise and tell them to their children,

<sup>7</sup> so that they should set their hope in God  
and not forget the works of God,  
but keep his commandments;

<sup>8</sup> and that they should not be like their fathers,  
a stubborn and rebellious generation,  
a generation whose heart was not steadfast,  
whose spirit was not faithful to God.

It's often been said that one thing we learn from history, is that we just don't learn from history! Having been married to a high school history teacher for nearly 38 years, believe me, I've heard that truth a lot over that time. Well, God knew it before we did. Sadly, He knew it would be true of us just as it was of the Israelites. So, it seems with that inspiration in mind, the Holy Spirit inspired Asaph to tell the worshippers in the temple of the importance of knowing their history and learning from it.

As you hear in verse 1, he starts by saying what many parents will say to their children, "Look, I'm about to tell you something really important, and I need you to listen to me and to remember this. Okay. Are you with me here?" Have you ever done that with your kids? I know I've done it. Well, if you have then you know that it's not after you think you have their attention that you begin your dissertation or your lecture or whatever important truth you hope to impart to them and you pray they take it all in.

Well, Asaph, said, literally "Give me your ear" or point that organ on the side of your head in my direction, Israelites, so you don't miss any of this. He clearly wanted the listeners in close proximity so they would not miss anything he had to say. Then, before he even finishes that sentence, he says "incline your ear to the words I'm going to say." Basically, he repeats himself. We know the Hebrew here is literally referring to the ear, the organ on the sides of our head that the body uses for hearing.

What Asaph is saying here by extension is this: Listen. And respond by obeying what I'm about to tell you. Then, what he hopes will get their attention comes next: "I'm going to tell you a parable - a story with much deeper meaning than it seems to have on the surface." In other words, this story he's recounting isn't just to entertain them with happenings of years gone by, of their ancestors and forefathers, but it has a deeper meaning, and he's reminding them that he really, really, really wants them to get it.

In Verse 4, he basically says, "My generation is not going to shirk our responsibility, our duty, to pass on the wonders of God that our ancestors experienced. In fact, they were commanded to do it." Asaph wanted the current generation to know of God's remarkable deeds and how God had displayed His might and power. But he did not want them to know this just because they were cool stories (even though they were) and this is what's important for us to remember, to take away from this psalm immediately apply: Asaph wanted them to know the way God had displayed His power to previous generations so the psalmist's generation and the following generations would

have the stories to repeat to their children and their children's children, and they would not be forgotten. Why? In order that:

1. Every generation would continue to put their hope in God, and
2. They'd be encouraged to keep His commandments.

Rather than be like their forefathers who were stubborn and rebellious with hearts that were not steadfast; they were not loyal, established, firm, prepared, set in place, and secure in the Father. That's the why.

God wanted future generations to have hearts and minds that responded to Him and He knew those stories would spur on those generations to follow Him.

This tells me that God did not just perform those miracles for that moment. Whether it was crossing a sea or a river on dry ground, or having manna to eat each day, or having sandals that did not wear out even after 40 years of walking in the desert, or fresh water coming out of a dry rock, as always, God had a bigger plan in place. One that He hoped would encourage future generations to stay true to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The first eight verses in this psalm serve so great a purpose, we cannot move on to the rest of the chapter, what I'm calling the "yets" and the "therefores" and the "so's," of what God did without being reminded, that God always has a bigger purpose than we think. In everything He does. My encouragement to you today, dear shepherd leader, is to evaluate what God has done in your life or in previous generations of your family that your children need to know in order that they and generations after them may continue to put their hope in God and keep His commandments. What stories do you need to share that will help them have a steadfast heart?

Or, if you don't have generations of believers in your family, how do you begin to share what God has done in your life? How has He displayed His might and power to you, personally? Have you shared those stories with your children or your children's children?

And, lastly, how have you seen God work in ways that were far beyond what they looked like on the surface? What are the testimonies in your life, of God having a bigger purpose than you imagined? Have you shared them and allowed them to encourage others?

It's so easy to scan the psalms and forget that every one of them has practical application for our lives today. Every jot and tittle of God's Word has a purpose and, just like the shepherd leadership

message, that purpose is universal – no matter your generation, your gender, your occupation, your culture, or your history. He is not a “by chance” God.

So, I challenge you this week, dear fellow under-shepherd, to rewind this message a bit, and answer the questions I posed, meditate on them and allow the Good Shepherd to work in your heart. Be sure you’re shepherding well your children and your children’s children in this regard. And then, in Asaph’s words, “do not hide them from your children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.”

Thank you for joining me this week. May you live deeply into your calling as shepherd in the lives of those you influence.