

Psalm 77

by Andrew Bonar

In Psalm 77, Asaph navigates through despair by recalling God's past faithfulness and wonders.

Scripture: Psalm 77:1

Topics: "Remembering God's Faithfulness", "Hope in Despair"

Description

Andrew Bonar reflects on Psalm 77, emphasizing the deep struggles of the soul during times of darkness and despair. He illustrates Asaph's lament, where he cries out to God in his trouble, feeling overwhelmed and questioning God's grace and mercy. Bonar encourages believers to remember God's past faithfulness and mighty works, reminding us that even in our darkest moments, God remains sovereign and powerful. The sermon highlights the importance of recalling God's past deeds to find hope and assurance in His unchanging love. Ultimately, Bonar reassures us that God leads His people through trials, just as He did in biblical times.

Transcript

PSALM LXXVII (77)

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 forever ? and will he be favourable no more ?

Is his mercy clean gone forever ? 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. Selah.

The waters saw thee, O God, 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.

The title.

"For Jeduthun," the choir over which Jeduthun and Heman presided (1 Chron. 16:42). They are to sing now a plaintive psalm. Asaph's harp's strings are moaning to the chill night-wind.

The tone.

Instead of triumphing in the Mighty One, whom all must fear, Asaph is full of unkindly fears, fears arising from clouds around his soul.

Our Lord on earth had such changes in his soul as we find in this Psalm. One day, under the opened heavens at Jordan ; another, in the gloom of the howling wilderness ; one evening, ascending the Transfiguration-hill ; another, entering Gethsemane. And so with every member of his body. Not that the

love of their God varies toward them, and not that they themselves feel that love exhausted ; but providences and trials of strange sort, and temptations buffeting the soul, hide the sun by their dark mists.

The contents.

We find, verses 1-4, The time of darkness pictured to us most pensively and plaintively. "In the night my hand was stretched out, and grew not numb,"(Alexander). And the "Selah" in the midst of it, verse 3, seems to give us time to observe the dismal plight of the soul.

In verses 5-9 we have remembrance of former days, leading to the profoundly melancholy question- "Has El (the Mighty God) forgotten to be gracious."

"Hath he in anger shut the spring

of his eternal love?

And another "Selah" leaves us to pause and ponder.

At verse 10, The cause of this darkness. "This is my sickness," (Jer. 10:19). My present circumstances of body, and the oppressive providences around, have averted mine eye from God's love. Tholuck renders it, "This affliction of mine is a change of the right hand of the Most High ;" but we prefer another view, viz., after having mournfully admitted "This is my infirmity," the thought flashes in, "The years of the right hand of the Most High !" Yes, let me recall what he has done !

At verse 11, The light breaks - God is seen, still mighty to save. Asaph is taught by "the years of the right hand of the Most High," seeing "his way in the sanctuary ;" and in such past "wonders" as Exod 15:11. He sees God redeeming "the sons of Jacob" from their Egypt exile, and doing it so as to remind us of "Joseph," once separated from his brethren, but afterwards the head of them all, (11-15).

A "Selah" again bids us to ponder, and the Psalm closes by recounting some of his wonders in providence. "God's way in the sanctuary" (ver.13) suggests composing thoughts regarding his "Way in the Sea." (ver.19)

There is a day coming when we shall, with Christ our Head, sing of the Church's safe guidance to her rest, in such strains as these, remembering how often by the way we were ready to ask, "Has God forgotten to be gracious ?" We are taught by the harp of Asaph, in moments of despondency, to "remember the days of old," and assure ourselves that the God of Israel liveth - the God of the Passover-night, the God of the Red Sea, the God of the Pillar-cloud, the God of Sinai, the God of the wilderness, the God of Jordan,- the God, too, we may add, of Calvary, and the God of Bethany, who shall lead us as he led Israel, even when the earth shakes again, till that day when he comes to cast some light on "his way that was in the sea, and his paths that were in the great waters, and his footsteps" that were a mystery.

Asaph has been the instrument of the Holy Ghost to cheer us here, by bidding us to look on this picture of

The Righteous One under the cloud recalling to mind the Lord's former doings.

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