

Psalm 77.

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[0 : 0 0] If I could encourage you please now to turn back to Psalm 77. I just want to read through the psalm and make a few comments as we go.

Just a short meditation on this psalm this morning. Some weeks back Mary and Anna were away somewhere.

I can't quite remember where they were. It was a Saturday night. I remember that much. It was getting late. It was 7ish round about that kind of time.

And Shoros our wee dog was becoming increasingly hyperactive. You'd had a walk in the morning. You hadn't had a walk in the afternoon. I thought maybe we could get away with just one walk that day.

But he was telling me as time went on that definitely he needed more. So he was getting more and more agitated and more and more disruptive. The girls were away for the weekend as I said.

[1 : 0 3] And so I thought well I need to walk him. And it was just me and the house. So I thought well we're all going to have to go out. So Lois and Grace and myself went out for a walk with Shoros.

Now that's okay. On the main street. Going out at 7 or 8 o'clock at night. Because there's the streetlights and you can see where you're going. But when you live on the call.

There's no streetlights. It's just black. And Lois was not happy about going out for this walk.

It's so black. She was saying. I can't see anything. I can't see where my feet are going. So if she was going to go out for a walk.

She wanted somebody to take her by the hand. And we understand that. The children have shown us that already. In the children's talk.

[2 : 0 7] When it's difficult for us to see. What's ahead. When we're not sure of our footing. When we're not very clear. On the right way to walk.

We'd much rather have somebody. To hold on to. Someone who knows the way. Someone who will take us by the hand. And that's a picture.

That I want to. Just take into the first day of a new year. We don't know. What's up ahead for us. In this new year.

We may have hopes. We may have plans. We may have ambitions. We may have concerns. And anxieties. But we're not sure of the terrain.

We may have plans. I know some here are thinking. About the prospect of retirement this year. Some are thinking. Of the prospect.

[3 : 0 9] Of overseas mission work. Some are making. Preparations to get married. Some are thinking. About leaving school. Some may.

Increasingly be feeling. The reality of. Health failing. And there may be anxieties. About the way ahead.

There's various things. On the horizon. Of our year. Some. That are in our calendars. And as we look at them. As they come closer. They fill us with excitement.

And some that we're. Somewhat fearful of. Some things that we're aware of. And there's some things. That this year will hold. That we have no clue about.

So as we step out. First steps. Into 2019. It would be good to know. That the one. Who knows the future.

[4 : 11] The one. That we sang of. Who holds the future. It would be good to know. That he's holding us. By the hand. And that's the assurance.

That the psalmist has. It takes him a wee while. To get there in the psalm. But the psalm finishes. With that assurance. He says in.

In verse 20. In this prayer. Which. Is what the psalm is. As so many of them are. The psalmist. Asaph. He says. You led your people. Like a flock.

So Asaph. The psalm writer. He has. He has assurance. Looking to the future. Because he knows. That the God. Who held the hand. Of his people.

In the past. Would continue to lead his people. Asaph included. Into the unknown. Future. And this is an assurance.

[5 : 07] That. That we can share. Sometimes we. We read passages. And. We read promises. And we think. Are they for us? Now is this.

Something that. Is the experience. Of the psalmist. Is this. A diary page. From a personal. Private. Journal. That we're. Being allowed to read. Or is this.

A promise. That the psalmist. Got hold of. And is extended. To us. A promise. That we can take hold of. By faith. And. The answer. To that. Is this. Assurance. This confidence.

This courage. That the psalmist. Had. Is something. That we are invited. To share. And and take hold of. Through the psalm. We learn that. Even before the psalm.

Properly begins. The title. In my bible. Says. For the director. Of music. So this is a psalm. That's not marked. Private and confidential.

[6 : 04] It's been handed over. In its form. To the director. Of music. To be used. For public worship.

It's a psalm. That's. It's instructive. It's for our teaching. It's for our. Encouragement. If you want to. To use. Social media. Language. This. Psalm.

Is not. A private. Message. It's a shared. Public. Post. And it's a psalm.

Through which. We can be encouraged. And receive. Assurance. As we step out. Into the unknown. Of this. Year. So. As we seek. That encouragement.

And that assurance. What. Does God. Call us. To do. Through. The psalmist. Three things here. There's a call.

[7 : 00] To prayer. There's a call. To remembrance. There's a call. To worship. Verses.

One. And two. A call. To prayer. I cried. Out. To God. For help. I cried. Out. To God. To hear. Me. When I was.

In distress. I sought. The Lord. At night. I stretched. Out. Untiring. Hands. And my soul. Refused. To be.

Comforted. It's a perplexing. Last line. We'll come to. But what I want us. To see is. This is a psalm. That starts. With prayer. With crying.

Out. To God. And that's. The best way. That you and I. Can start. Any new year. In fact.

[7 : 56] That's the best way. That you and I. Can start. Any day. To pray. It's why we're here. This morning. We're here.

To meet with God. We're here. Collectively. Corporately. To pray. To cry out. To God. And just a wee.

Helpful teaching point. Helpful for me anyway. Spurgeon. In his notes. In this psalm. He underlines. The crying. Out. Out. And he.

He just makes that note. In his. In his. Gleanings on the psalm. Of the benefit. Of using the voice. In private prayer. And I find that.

Personally. As something. That's really helpful. And maybe you do as well. Or maybe you will. As you go into. A new year. Because. If you're anything like me. You probably have a.

[8 : 53] A resolve. To want to pray more. It can be hard. To pray. There's so many distractions.

You know. And when we pray. Silently. It can be really. Easy. I think. As our phones bleep. And as we hear. Things ticking off. In another room.

And as we see things. On our desk. That just catch our eye. In a moment. When we're praying. Silently. I find it can be. Really easy. To drift out of prayer. And get distracted.

But when we actually. Speak out. Even in private. It can be. Easier. To stay focused.

On the psalmist. He speaks out. In fact. The psalmist. He didn't so much. Speak out. In prayer. He cried out. There's an urgency. There's an intensity.

[9 : 55] There's a. There's a desperation. In this psalm. He's in distress. We see that. At the. The outset. Of the psalm. Verse 2. When I was in distress.

When I was in trouble. When I was struggling. I cried out to God. Now what was going on. In Asaph's life. What trouble.

What distress. Was he going through. And the answer to that. Is we don't know. We have no idea. He doesn't tell us. It's left. Blank.

And it's left. Deliberately. Blank. So that we. When we're in trouble. And when we're in distress. Of any kind. Any situation.

We can pick up this psalm. We can join. With Asaph. In this. Prayer. And we can be encouraged.

[10 : 54] To cry out. To God. For help. In our distress. So this is a psalm.

First of all. Where we are taught. To call. Upon. The Lord. In prayer. And the Bible. Is full of promises. For those.

Who will do that. Romans chapter 10. Often quote it. Everyone who calls. On the name. Of the Lord. Will be saved. And we do that.

Calling out. In prayer. So let me ask. Each one of us. This morning. Have we called out.

To the Lord. In prayer yet. You know. The biggest distress. The biggest problem. That you and I have.

[11 : 52] Is a heart problem. And it's sin. But we have the promise. That as we call.

Upon the name. Of the Lord Jesus. In prayer. We'll be saved. We'll be saved. From the penalty.

Of our sin. The punishment. We'll be saved. We'll be saved. We'll be saved. From the destructive. Designs of Satan. Who wants to destroy us. We'll be saved.

From the. The clutches of death. So that we'll be able. To pass through it. We'll be saved. Into a life. Given.

Relationship. With God. God. But in order to have that. We have to ask. We have to call.

[12 : 50] Out. Cry out. To God. In prayer. As the psalmist does. So that's the first. Point. Within the psalm. It's a call.

To prayer. The second. Thing we can note here. Is that it's a call. To remember. Some of you were there. Yesterday.

Evening. Or this morning. Very early hours. This morning. Over 200 people. Gathered at the war memorial. Here in Tarbird. Some are gathering. Just now. In Stornoway.

In a. In a service. To remember. As we did at the beginning. Of the service. The. The sinking of the aisle. Layer. To remember. Those who died. To remember. Some who survived.

To remember. The distressing. Devastating. Cost. At which our freedom. Was secure. And it's right. To remember. Sometimes it can be painful.

[13 : 52] But it's important. That we remember. And in the spiritual realm. The psalmist. He remembers.

He remembers God. In the midst of his distress. Whatever that distress was. He remembers God. He doesn't turn away from God.

When he's faced with tragedy and trouble. As many people do. He doesn't turn his back on God. But he turns to God. He remembers God. God. And he comes to God.

In prayer. Which initially was. Was not an easy thing. For him. To do. It says at the. End of verse 2. He speaks about.

His soul. Refusing. To be comforted. And there's a wrestle. In this prayer. There's an honesty.

[14 : 52] About the psalmist. Wrestle. In prayer. As he comes to God. Look at verse 3. And following there. The psalmist says. I remembered you.

Oh God. And I groaned. It's not rejoicing initially. There's a groaning. I amused.

And my spirit grew faint. Selah. As he pauses. This is a. This is not something that happened in five minutes. This is something that is. Meditative. You kept my eyes from closing.

I was too troubled to speak. I thought about the former days. The years. Or long ago. I remembered my songs. In the night. My heart mused.

And my spirit inquired. And then he says these words. Which we. We would want to censor out almost. He says to God.

[15 : 48] Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love. Vanished forever?

Has his promise. Failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?

And he pauses again. To think through. All these things. That he's just said.

And these are deep. Searching. Honest. Heart questions. But through sounds like this.

We're given permission. We're given a warrant. To ask them. People of faith.

[16 : 45] Are the people. Who do ask these. Honest questions. Sometimes. There's much.

There's much that we reflect on. At the end of one year. And going into another. We do tend to look back. As we look forward also. And there's situations that.

You and I might think back on. There's regrets. Sometimes that we revisit. And we struggle to. To come to terms with. There's providences.

There's things that happen. In our experience. And we just can't understand them. I was listening to that concert.

Last night. That was broadcast. From Stornoway. There was a song. That. The artist. Willie Campbell.

- [17 : 41] Sang. There was a line in the song. That spoke about providences. That we can't understand. In relation to the Isle of Lair.
- And can you just think back. A hundred years. Can you imagine. Just that devastating. Tsunami of grief. That swept.
- Over the islands. As the news. Of the Isle of Lair tragedy broke. All these souls. Lost.
- Within sight of the shore. And yet the people on the shore. Didn't even see them. Having survived the war. Having come. So close. And then being lost.
- You know. How can one. Understand these things. We can't. So what do we do. With these things. What do we do.
- [18 : 44] With these. Mysteries. That we. To use the psalmist words here. Can be too troubled. To speak to one another about. But we don't bottle them out.
- We don't bottle them up. Because. That will blow at some point. But we pour them out. To God. In prayer.
- We take them to the Lord. In prayer. Even when we don't understand them. The situations that pass through my.
- Mind every day. I don't understand them. I don't try to understand them. But I take them to the Lord. In prayer. Because.
- We have a God. Who knows. What it's like. To suffer. And cry out. In anguish. So we can speak to him.
- [19 : 43] About these things. So there's an honesty. About the psalmist's prayer. And these remembrances. That he calls. To mind.
- But then. As he perseveres in prayer. This prayer. Which is actually very dark. Up until this point. As he perseveres. In prayer. As he perseveres.
- With these remembrances. There's an overwhelming. Hope. That breaks through. Go from honesty. To hope. Verse 10.
- Is the. Is the point. Where the. The clouds of distress. They start to lift. And hope. Is found. As Asaph. Begins to see the Lord. Clearly again. Look at verse 10.
- He says. Then I thought. To this I will appeal. The years. Of the right hand. Of the most high. I will remember. Note that. Determination of will. He may not feel like remembering.
- [20 : 41] Other people may be saying to. Just forget about God. Walk away. But he says. I will remember. The deeds of the Lord. Yes.
- I will remember. Your miracles. So long ago. I will meditate. On all your works. And consider. All your mighty deeds. And it says. It's as Asaph.
- Is determined. In his. Remembrances. As he perseveres. In prayer. As Asaph. Thinks beyond. The span. Of his own. Short life.
- As he thinks. Beyond his own. Particular troubles. As he lifts his eyes. To see. The wonder. And the character. Of God.
- Which is unchanging. As he begins. To look back. And survey. The works of God. And the history. Of his. His people's salvation. His works. Which are good.
- [21 : 34] Then he begins. To receive the assurance. And the hope. That he needed. And for us.
- The formula. Is the same. If we're still. In the darkness. If we're still. Sinking.
- As the psalmist was. In. The opening verses. We come to God. In prayer. And we persevere.
- In prayer. We remember. As we open. God's word. As we look to Christ. We remember. Who God is. And his character. We remember. The wonder.

Of all that he has done. And even though. We may not get answers. Helping us. To understand. The past. We have to wait. To heaven.

[22 : 30] To get them. We're given a hope. And assurance. For the future. A hope. That stirs us. To worship.

God. So there's a call. To prayer. And there's a call. To remember. And finally. There's a call.

To worship. And that's. Verse 13. Through to the end. Your way. So God. Our holy. What God. Is so great.

As our God. You're the God. Who performs miracles. You display. Your power. Among the peoples. With your. Mighty arm. You redeemed. Your people. The descendants.

Of Jacob. And Joseph. Shelah. He thinks. About that. For a while. And he goes.

[23 : 24] Back to the situation. The waters. Saw you. Oh God. The waters. Saw you. And writhed. The very. Depths. Were convulsed. The clouds. Pour down. Water. The skies.

Resounded. With thunder. Your arrows. Flashed. Back and forth. Your thunder. Was heard. In the whirlwind. Your lightning. Lit up the world. The earth. Trembled. And quaked. Your path. Led through the sea.

The exodus. Remember. Your way. Through the mighty waters. Though your footprints. Were not seen. You led your people. Like a flock.

By the hand. Of Moses. Moses. And era. So as Asaph. Calls. Upon God.

In prayer. As he calls. Back to. His memory. Who God is. And his greatness. And his holiness. And his saving. And redemptive power.

[24 : 20] He's encouraged. He's lifted. From the depths. That he was in. Into a spirit. Of worship. And he calls us. Today. To join.

Him. In worshiping. This God. And to anyone. Who might have. Said to Asaph. And observed. The change. In his demeanor. In the.

In the progress. Of this. Psalm. If anybody. Was to say. To Asaph. Why are you. Singing praises. Asaph. Why are you. Why are you. Praising God. When you're.

So deep. In so much. Trouble. Asaph. Well. Asaph. Takes them. Back to the. Exodus. He. He reminds them. Of all. That God.

Had done. For his people. When he saw. The waters. Park. Remember. When that whole. Nation. Were carried.

[25 : 16] Over. Miraculously. On dry land. Through to the. Land that God. Had promised them. When the Lord. Miraculously. Saved them.

From slavery. In Egypt. Asaph. He goes. Back there. To anyone. Who questions him. He says. Remember. What God. Did for us.

Remember. How he. Delivered us. Remember. How he. Saved us. And. As he. Goes back. There. In his mind. And his. Remembrances. He's encouraged. To worship. God.

Verse. Nineteen. Your path. Led. Through the sea. Your way. Through the mighty. Waters. Though. Your footprints.

Were. Not seen. I didn't know. Until last night. When he and Myrtle. Spoke. At the. War Memorial. That that verse.

[26 : 14] Was inscribed. In the. The Isle Lair. Memorial. In. Lewis. I didn't know that. Until last night. But as I was reading this.

And. Doing some preparation. Yesterday. It struck me. That this. Verse 19. Is a verse. That we know. To be true. For. For.

For. So many. Who were lost. On. The Isle Lair. So many. Men. Who.

Disappeared. Into the sea. For those. Who are trusting. In Christ. We know. That there was. A path. Of God.

Which led. Through the sea. Through the mighty. Waters. Of. Of suffering. Through death. Into life.

[27 : 10] That knows. No end. And. Where was that way. Of salvation. Opened. Well. The Israelites.

Could look back. To the exodus. That's where we. Saw the way. Literally. Opening. Before them. Miraculously. Where are we called.

To remember. Where. Was the place. Of our. Redemption. Where. Do you and I go. To be.

Reassured. Of the loving kindness. And mercy. And salvation. Of God.

Where do we go. We go. To Calvary. We go. To the cross. Where Jesus died.

[28 : 09] To redeem. His people. Not from slavery. In Egypt. But from slavery. To Satan. And sin. And death.

On the cross. As the blood of Christ. Was shed. The price. For our freedom. Was paid. On the cross. Where Jesus.

Cried out. It is finished. The curtain. Tore. From top. To bottom. Them. Showing. That the way. Through. To the promised land. Was now.

Wide open. Salvation. Redemption. Was now. Complete. And available.

To all. Who will believe. In the. Savior. Who died. And rose. For us. So. On the dark days. Where you and I.

[29 : 08] Are tempted. To say of God. As your unfailing. Love. Vanished forever. As your.

Promise. Failed. Have you forgotten. To be merciful. Have. Have you in anger. Withheld your compassion. On the days.

When our. Heart. Says. Honestly. That's what we're feeling. We go back. To survey. The wondrous cross.

Where the prince. Of glory. Died. To save us. We go to the empty tomb. That the savior. Burst out of.

And then we respond. In worship. Of this great God. Is he your God. It's a question.

[30 : 05] To finish with. Is he your God. And as you and I. Step out. Into. 2019.

Do we have the. Steadying assurance. That he is holding us. And he is leading us forward. Let's.

Pray. Heavenly father. We thank you for. The psalm.

We thank you for. The honesty of it. And yet. The hope of it. We thank you that you are. The God. Who understands. The distresses.

And the troubles. And the struggles. That we go through. We thank you. That we don't have. A high priest. Who is remote. From us. Who has not entered. Into any.

[30 : 58] Of our experiences. But we. We come to Christ. Who understands. Every. Struggle. That we could ever. Experience. He is the man of sorrows.

He is the one. Who is familiar. With suffering. So we thank you. That we can come. In honesty. Before you. In prayer. But we thank you.

Lord. That as we look. To Christ. Who died. And rose. For us. We are given hope. A hope. For today. And I hope. For every day.

That we are given. In time. And I hope. That takes us. Through. Into eternity. So enable us. We pray. This day. As we call. Upon you.

Lord. As we remember. Your goodness. And your grace. Enable us. We pray. To respond. In worship. And to go forward. Knowing.

[31 : 52] That we. Are holding on. To you Lord. And more importantly. You are holding on. To us. And we ask this. In Jesus name. Amen. We'll sing.

To finish. Mission praise. 1072. To re- sperm. And. And. To finish. You. Thank you. Martin
osu P. And.

Thank you. You. vous. You. You. You.

You.