

**Tuesday, January 10, 2023 • Read Psalm 77**

Questions from the Scripture text: Into whose hands was this Psalm committed (superscript)? With what instruction? By whom? What had the psalmist done to Whom (v1)? With what? What did He do? When did the psalmist do what (v2a)? How does v2b describe the urgency and importunity? What else will comfort the psalmist (v2c)? What does he do in v3a, but with what result? What is he doing, and in what condition (v3b)? In what personal way does he describe his sleeplessness (v4a)? Why isn't he able to pray in this situation (v4b)? What has he thought about (v5)? How carefully is he thinking about this (v6)? But what does it seem to him is happening (v7-9)? What does he set over-against these circumstances (v10-12)? With Whom does he interact over these memories in vv13-15? What does he specifically remember in v16-19 (cf. Ex 14:21-22)? What did the Lord do then, in the hardest of circumstances, that encourages the psalmist now (v20)?

**What can a believer do when everything in his circumstances suggests that God has abandoned him?** Psalm 77 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these twenty verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **when circumstances seem to suggest that God has abandoned us, we can meditate upon the holy, great, powerful, saving character of our God, and how He has consistently demonstrated it in the history of His dealings with His people.**

**Urgency in prayer** is often shown by using our voice (v1a), while we still can (v4b).

If God gives us difficulty to turn our hearts—and our voices!—to Him, let us learn not to paper it over easily (v2c). There are many things that we should be disturbed about.

**When we can't sense His presence.** Sometimes, the Lord sustains us (cf. 3:5). But sometimes, He withholds the sense of His presence, and this is a providential call to be uncomfortable and yearn for Him persistently and urgently (v1-4)—even sleeplessly (v2b, 4a).

In the midst of this withholding of the sense of His presence, remembering Him can even be painful (v3a). He doesn't seem to be doing us good, as He has done to others before (v5), or even as when sleepless nights still had that presence of His that made us sing (v6a).

**When the moment is too great for us to bear.** Sometimes, instead of seeing the parallels between our lives and His previous work, it can seem in the moment like the answer to the flood of questions in vv7-9 is "yes." Yes, He has cast me off. Yes, I am no longer under grace. Yes, His mercy is gone. Yes, His promise isn't coming true for me. Yes, His compassions have run out. It can seem that way *in the moment*.

When *the moment* seems that way, it is a Spirit-provoked mandate to remember that though our troubles in this world—and ourselves (!) in this world (cf. 39:4-5; 90:9-12)—*are momentary*, God is NOT momentary (v10-11)! How can time-bound creatures weigh the actions of a timeless God?

**When God's ways are too great for us to evaluate.** Even more, how can creatures bound to creatureliness analyze all the works (v12) of Him Whose way is shrouded in holiness (v13a) behind which it is unimaginably immense (v13b)? The painfulness of the impossibility of the task can become the way forward to the remedy: the task is not impossible because there is no answer; the task is impossible because the answer is greater than we can imagine (v14a)!

It is at this point that the Psalmist begins to remember that God's deliverances (v15) have been dreadful to all creatures (v16-18). There is a mixture here of references to the great storm that split the Red Sea and how the fury that was displayed at Sinai recalled the flood itself. At both instances, Israel were terrified! Now, the analysis is not "God isn't delivering me, as He has did deliver them before" but rather "God is terrifying me, as He terrified them before."

But how did the terror end? Straight through the sea (v19a)! They could not see the path that God had laid out (v19b-c), because He lays out paths that simply cannot be seen. Sometimes, the answer to "Why is God taking me through agony, terrifying me, and withholding the sense of His presence from me?" is simply this: because this is sometimes how He leads His sheep (v20).

**When the only thing that we perceive of Him are His means (especially prayer and the Word).** We aren't to live by bread alone. We also mustn't live by the sense of His presence. Sometimes, we are simply to cry out in agony and be sure from His Word of those things that there isn't a hint of a way to know from our circumstances or our feelings.

When have you had not only horrible circumstances, but no sense of the presence of God? If you haven't, yet, then how will you act on this Psalm's reminder that believers ought to expect it?

*Sample prayer: O Lord, Your ways are hidden from us in Your holiness. And if we could see them, we would only know that we cannot understand them. Sometimes, You not only give Your people agonizing circumstances, but even withhold from us the sense of Your presence. Even then, You have given to us to cry out to You with our voices, and to remember from Your Word that You have done this before. But we ask that You would not do this with us now—that You would not withhold the sense of Your presence. But make us to know Your favor now. Make us to know Your mercy now. Make us to see the fulfillment of Your promises. Make us to know Your grace know. By Your Spirit, make us to know the pouring out of Your tender mercies in Christ, giving us the full sense of Your presence in Him, in Whose Name we ask it, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP77A "My Voice to God, Aloud I Plead" or TPH76 "I Cried Aloud to God for Help"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

Second kings, 12. These are the words of god. From the seventh year of jehu, your ass became king. And he reigned 40 years in jerusalem. His mother's name was zibia of bircheva. Jehoist and what was right in the sight of Yahweh all the days. In which joy to the priest.

Instructed him. But the high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. And who has said to the priests, all the money of the dedicated gifts that are brought into the house of yahweh. Each man sent us money each man's assessment money, and all the money that a man purposes in his heart to bring into the house of yahweh, but the priests take it themselves each from his constituency and let them repair the damages of the temple.

Wherever any dilapidation is found That was so by the 23rd year. Of king jehaash that the priests had not repaired the damages of the temple. So, king jehosh called joy to the priest and the other priests and said to them, why have you not repaired the damage of the temple?

Now therefore, do not take more money from your constituency. But deliver it for the repairing of the damages of the temple. And the priests agreed that they would, neither receive more money from the people nor repair of the damages, the temple, enjoy to the priest. Took a chest or the hole that's lit and said it beside the altar on the right side.

As one comes into the house of yahweh and the priest who kept the door. Put there all the money brought into the house of y'all way. So, it was whenever they saw that there was much money in the chest. That the king's scribe and the high priest came up and put it in bags and counted the money that was found.

In the house of yahai. Then they gave the money which had been apportioned into the hands of those who did the work. Who had the oversight of the house of yahweh? And they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of yahweh. And the masons and stonecutters and for buying timber and hewn stone.

To repair the damage of the house of yahweh. And for all that was paid to repair out to repair the temple. However there were not made for the house of yahweh basins of silver trimmers sprinkling bowls trumpets any articles of gold or articles of silver from abundant he brought into the house Of your But they gave that to the workmen and they repaired.

The house of y'all play with it more where they did not require an account. From the men into his hand, they delivered the money to be paid to to be paid to workmen. For they dealt faithfully. The money from the trespass, offerings, the money from the sin offerings. Was not brought into the house of yahweh.

It belonged priests. Patio king of cereal went up and fought against Gaff and took it and had seal outside his face to go up to jerusalem. Don't you have asking that took all the sacred things? That his father's Jehoshaphatan jahorem and ate his eye, kings of judah. A dedicated and his unsacred things.

And all the gold found in the treasuries of the house of yahai and the king's house. They sent them, taxi out king of Syria. Then he went away from jerusalem. Now the rest of the oxy joe ash and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of judah.

And his servants rose and formed a conspiracy and killed Joe Ash in the house. Of the mellow, which goes down decilla. For years of car, the son of shimmy up and yahoozabad. The son of showmer, his servant struck him. So he died and they buried him. With his fathers, in the city of david.

Than amazon, his son. Friend in his place.

So far. Reading of gods inspired and inherent word.

Second kings 12 is. Really badly, miss labeled. And at least my copy. Of english translation. The editors have put in these subtitles. It's called joash, repairs the temple. Would have been better titled. The subtlety of infidelity. Or. The d templing. Of the temple.

The comparison between second kings 12. And Second chronicles. 24 is very interesting. Because second chronicles, 24. Very carefully delineates. What happens when jehova, the priest dies? And just josh apostatit and persecutes, the priests. For resisting his sin and his rebellion. And how? The assassination of joe ash is a judgment from the lord.

And for what he does. But that is all just hinted in. The phrase at the end of verse two, then second kings 12. So Ashton was right in the side of Yahweh's, Yahweh all the days. In which jehoid of the priest instructed him. The implication of course. That. When those days in ended, he did not do right.

And the site of y'all might. Uh, but now, what the rest of the second kings 12 shows us? Is that this isn't something. That is actually super brand new when joya dies. That joe ash's infidelity, the incompleteness and lack of sincerity. In his. Uh, supposed godliness of his reign.

Was there the whole time. If you look closer, Immediately, you read. Verse 3 and the high places were not taken away. The people still sacrificed and earned incense. On the high places. And apparently jehosh knows that it's a problem. But he concludes that. The problem is Uh, external. Oh We should really repair the temple, so that they'll come and offer sacrifices and incense at the temple.

Let's make the temple building impressive. Again, you know make jerusalem worship great again. And the people will turn away from their highlights. Uh worship. Is the is the idea. So there's a transitional relationship between verse 3 and verse 4, Now. Hey, he first assigns, the priests To lead the temple renovation.

But after 23 years of the priests getting to temporal renovation, When they have time for it. Surprised. They've never had time for it. They've collected the salary. Uh, that is in part for temple renovation. Uh, but They have not done any temple renovating. And before you think that the priests are lazy, i mean, Before you get down on the priest as if they're the only ones being lazy, they are lazy.

Uh, The one who's in charge of them and who has assigned. Let's do them is also lazy. For allowing 23 years of the same inaction to pass. Before he does something about it. The problem is, That when it gets turned over to other supervisors of the workmen. Uh, by the collection box method.

Which the collection box method is fine. The money doesn't even need necessarily to go into the house of yahweh. You look at verse 16, a lot of what has collected has other purposes. And it's really not part of the worship. Uh, so money from trespass offerings and send offerings, doesn't even come into the house of yahua it just goes directly to the priests.

But the problem with a non-priest-led renovation, As you get renovation of a building, but you don't get renovation of worship. And so when they make the switch at the 23 years and they develop the new collection box system and work actually happens. The the carpenters and masons and stone cutters.

By timber and hunstone, and they repair. Uh, the temple. However, And it's a huge. However, There are not made for the house of yahai basins of silver. Trimmers sprinkling bowls trumpets. Articles of gold, or articles of silver. From the money brought into the house of yolkey. In other words, The actual parts of the holy worship that belong both.

Uh, to that, which was instituted at cyani by god. And then that which was further instituted by david as a prophet in the arrangement of the priestly families for the different aspects of worship. That were instituted with the building of the temple. None of that is reattended to. They just have a rebuilt renovated building.

And then even worse. And you can tell a lot about a man's spiritual observation, or commentator. Spiritual observation based on what he thinks is happening. Second kings, 12 17 to 18. Joash has not saving the people of israel here. He is d israeli israeling israel. He's de jerusaleming. Jerusalem is detempling the temple.

So not only have the needed articles for worship, the new needed articles, force have not been supplied. But when Hatfield is on his rampage, having Um, Completed his Uh, murderous destruction in the north and even against the Philistines and gas and he comes up to jerusalem. Rather than having a Hezekiah moment.

In which they cry out to god to deliver him. He actually takes the holy things that belong to god. And uses them as a bribe. And you might think, oh, he spared jerusalem. No, he didn't. He did jerusalem to jerusalem. So, this is not the chapter of Joash repairs the temp.

This is a tractor that reminds us that even that which begins very promising with, A seven-year-old boy who has been taught from birth, And who at the age of seven? Can enter conscientious covenant with god. And who has care? That the worship of god would not be on the high places but would take place in the temple.

And who has a good relationship with the priesthood. It starts out. You starts out well. But it's superficial. It's not complete from the heart. And it doesn't last. And so this is a chapter of warning. Isn't it? How subtle infidelity is. This. Incomplete. Worship and complete obedience. This has been a theme, hasn't it?

We saw the same thing with Jesus. How subtle laziness is. I'm sure the priests were busy with lots of things. I'm sure the king was busy with lots of things. But sometimes laziness is Not attending to nothing, but it's attending to the wrong things. So that the most important things don't get attended to And how easy disaster comes.

It would have took a long time to prepare the building. And,

It would have taken a long time to reproduce and maintain. All of the articles of worship and yet in one fell swoop. One moment of panic one moment of anxiety. He gives away everything. That they needed. For the worship of god, for the proper worship of god in the temple.

And that is the story of jehosh jehosh's reign. Now, the rest of the act of joe ash and all that he did, In other words, did a bunch of things. But they don't matter before the eyes of yellow, at the way, Has presiding over the decline, the emptying. Of the worship of god of the temple.

Matters. Now, the rest of the actual action, all that he did, Are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? May god spare us. From having such a life. In which the Accurate. Spiritual summary would be They did some good things but they didn't do the most important things.

And, They slacked and they slacked, and they slacked. And then in one or two, Critical moments. All the good that was could have been done with their lives. Was completely reversed. And the rest of the exit they did, you could read it in the biography of the newspaper. Now all the organizations that they were a part of all the successful businesses, they ran all of the charitable contributions they made.

All of the certifications and honors, they had. Now, the rest of their acts, they not written Wherever it is that men write About what? They care about. But here god is writing what he cares about. And it is his worship. That comes through his son. Which in the case of joe ash, Is indicated to us by.

The proper worship that was to be. In. In the temple. The flip side, however, is That when we are attending to go out and growing in our knowledge of him, And offering him worship morning and evening. Day by day week by week in the lord's day assembly. Everything else that has added is gravy.

And he helps us to do that was which is right and we want to make a difference. And live, assault and light and as far as God's providence will allow us, To build something that will bless not just our contemporary neighbors, but our neighbors and time for future generations.

And especially our families And those things all end up being sanctified. So that, when the story of our life is written, it's And he, and she Loved Yahweh with all his heart, all her heart, all their days. And maybe a couple examples are given of how things that we did were an outworking of that.

But we take care of the main thing. As the main thing, the first thing is the first thing. And then everything else. Also brings honor to yahweh. But it's second. Second. Worship first. Work. A second. Or. As the old monks used to say, Or at lepora, Pray and work.

And then, let's pray. Of father helped me, help my family. To have our life properly oriented. As a walking with you as a Worship of you in honoring, you in worship times. Morning and evening, and Lord's day. And then an honoring of you in work times. In between that morning and evening, day by day, the six days.

And on those six days week by week between the sabots, Oh, lord. We read of those whose Beginnings. Make us blush like joash you begin? Better than any of us did. And, We see how. Yet superficial That even that beginning once we thank you, For the work that you have done in our hearts and we ask Than it might continue that it might persist that it might perfade.

That we That we would not be. Incomplete. In our desire or zeal or obedience, Help us. Oh god how we thank you, that christ is our righteousness. That. What Jehu wasn't, what? Joes wasn't, what joyada Couldn't be. As he died. That jesus is perfectly been what we ought to be.

And we cling to him. We thank you for. Making us perfectly righteous before you in him. And we pray that you would continue applying now his character to us by your spirit, even using this portion of your word that we Have just worshiped you by considering before your face.

So help us, we ask in jesus name. Amen.