

Hope in God

Psalm 78:1-72

Halifax: 15 May 2011

Introduction

Today, Mike and Crystal Parker are presenting their daughter Lily to be baptised.

- It is a tremendous privilege for us,
 - as a part of the church of Jesus Christ who have set our hope in God,
 - to be baptised and to have our children baptised.

- **Baptism is a sign and seal of God's covenant of salvation.**
 - As a sign, it is symbolic of the washing away of our sins in two ways.
 - The human race fell into sin almost as soon as we were created and our sin has separated us from God in two ways.
 - It has turned God against us and us against God.
 - Let me explain each of these...
 - Sin has turned God against us because it makes us offensive—even repulsive to Him!
 - God is holy and He abhors sin.
 - And so He has pronounced us guilty and sentenced us to suffer under the pains of His eternal wrath and curse.
 - That is why I say that sin has turned God against us.
 - But secondly, sin has turned us against God.
 - We have been corrupted by sin such that we don't even want to serve the true God.
 - We are blinded so that we suppose that we would be unhappy if we were to turn to Him.
 - Our condition is that we can't even do the things we know we ought to do without stumbling.
 - We all do things that we know are not really right.
 - Even those who don't claim to believe in God would surely have to admit that they have said things that ought never to have been said.

 - **But baptism, you see, is a sign of cleansing.**
 - That is why water is used—ideally sprinkling with clean water.
 - It symbolises what God does when He saves us...
 - There are two aspects to His cleansing that correlate to the two ways that sin has separated us from God.

- First, when we He saves us, He washes away the guilt of our sin so that we are no longer offensive to Him or under His wrath and curse.
 - Secondly, He washes away the corruption that is in us so that we want to serve Him and to be holy.
- We are baptised in the name of Jesus Christ because it is through Him that both of these washings are accomplished.
 - He washes away our guilt by applying to us the sacrifice that He made when He died on the cross 2000 years ago to pay the penalty of His people's sins.
 - And He washes away our corruption by giving us new life in union with Himself.
- Both of these washings are applied to us by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus instructed the church to baptise disciples with water, but Jesus Himself baptises His elect with the Holy Spirit.
 - The Holy Spirit works in the sinner so that the sinner sees his guilt and corruption and turns to Jesus for forgiveness and new life!
 - The sinner comes to see that Jesus' was offered on the cross to atone for sin, so He comes for forgiveness...
 - And He sees that Jesus promises to impart new life, and so the sinner looks to Jesus to destroy sin in him and make him holy.
 - The Spirit makes the sinner's union with Jesus real and effective so that the sinner,
 - who was dead in sins, becomes alive in Christ.
 - He is both forgiven and cleansed from His sin through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ.
- And water Baptism, you see, is the sign or symbol of this cleansing or baptism of the Holy Spirit...
 - of the washing away of guilt so that God is no longer against us...
 - and of the washing away of corruption so that we are no longer against Him—though we will struggle with sin until the work is complete at the last day.
 - Baptism is a marvellous sign of a marvellous work of grace that God does through Jesus by the Holy Spirit!
 - We are most privileged to receive it!

- **But Baptism is not only a sign, it is also a seal of this cleansing from sin.**
 - A seal is something that guarantees something to be true and valid.
 - God wants us to speak of His promise of cleansing when we baptise because it is His intention to seal this promise to His people.
 - He wants to make it sure to us, because sometimes it is hard for us to believe that He really has washed away our guilt and has already begun to wash away our corruption.
 - He seals His promise, not because His word is questionable,
 - but because of our weakness.
 - He loves us and He wants to make it certain to us that He really means it!

And so it is very important for us to receive baptism with hope in God (not in yourself).

- Baptism is about what **God** does to save us.
 - It is not about our faithfulness or what we do—it is about what He does!
 - It teaches us to do the only thing that we are required to do to receive forgiveness and new life...
 - *Look to the Lord Jesus for this cleansing!*
 - He came to save filthy sinners and baptism simply teaches you to look to Him for that salvation!
 - God's sure promise is that whoever believes in Jesus—relies on Him—for forgiveness and cleansing will receive forgiveness and cleansing.
- It is for this reason that we do not baptise anyone until he or she professes that he or she is trusting in Jesus for forgiveness and new life.
 - It would be foolish to give the sign to someone who does not want new life from Jesus or who does not think he needs new life...
 - Baptism is only for those who believe God's covenant promise in Christ—with but one exception.
 - It is also for the children of believers.
- You see, little children are not able to profess faith in Jesus the way adults do.
 - When they are babies, they can't even talk.
 - But Jesus is still able to bless them by baptising them with the Holy Spirit.
 - For example,
 - John the Baptist was said to be filled with the Spirit from His mother's womb.
 - And God's promise is that He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh—from the least to the greatest, both young and old.

- It may seem strange for God to establish His covenant with children before they can even speak,
 - But that is clearly what He does.
 - When He established His covenant with Abraham,
 - He declared that He was making His covenant with Abraham and his seed—
 - Now we might have thought that God simply meant that He would establish His covenant with them when they got older...
 - But the LORD makes it clear that He establishes His covenant with them while they are yet babes.
 - He does this by commanding Abraham to circumcise his sons on the eighth day after they are born!
 - And He says that the man-child who is not circumcised has broken His covenant.
 - Nothing could be clearer.
 - God considers these little ones to be in covenant with Him before they can even speak.
- And so it is no surprise that when we come to the New Testament and God declares His New Covenant promise with the New Covenant sign of baptism,
 - He declares that the New Covenant promise of the Spirit is for you and your children...
 - Once again, He establishes His covenant with believers and their seed.
 - And it comes as no surprise that in every case where a man or woman who has a household is baptised, the entire household is also baptised.
 - Even before our children can speak for themselves,
 - the Lord receives them and establishes His covenant with them to be their God.
- But this does not necessarily mean that they are saved.
 - They can break the covenant in the same way an adult can.
 - It is required of them to continue to look to Jesus for forgiveness and new life as long as they live.
 - If a parent teaches his child to do this, most little kids will do it—at least outwardly!
 - But if they turn away from Him when they get older, they must be removed from the covenant.
 - It is just the same for those who are baptised as adults.
 - There are adults, like Simon Magnus, who are baptised and then turn away and have to be put out of the church.

- They are then no longer considered to be among the redeemed.
 - They have broken the covenant.
- It doesn't matter if they were 8 days old or 80 years old when they were baptised,
 - if they reject His covenant, they are to be confronted about it and urged to return to the Lord,
 - but if they will not hope in God, they must be removed from the church.

But it is a very sad thing that many parents in God's covenant neglect to tell their children the wonderful things God has done for us...

- How He has sent Jesus to cleanse us from our sins...
 - How He established His covenant of grace with our household.
 - They may take them to church and mention these things here and there,
 - but they show that they really don't think much of the gospel or the new life that Jesus gives because they are always dissatisfied—
 - looking to be filled with the things of the world.
- And children grow up in such a home not knowing the LORD or trusting in His promises of grace.
 - And so they do not continue in His covenant.

Psalm 78 is written to admonish parents to teach their children about the wonderful things that God has done so that they *will* hope in God.

- It admonishes us to keep on telling our children what God has done so that they will not be unfaithful to God's covenant, but will put their hope in Him.
 - This is a message that every believing parent needs to hear.

Back in October,

- I preached from the first 8 verses of Psalm 78 at the baptism of Evangeline Mosher.
 - And today I want to look at the rest of the Psalm.
- Those first eight verse are foundational because in them,
 - We, who sing this Psalm, promise that we **will** tell our children about the wonderful works of God...
 - Verse 4 says:
 - **Ps 78:4: We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.**
 - For Israel, God's wonderful work was delivering them from Egypt and making them His people...
 - for us, it is delivering us from sin by Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit.

- And the reason we are to tell our children is so that they will believe—so that they will set their hope in God and not reject Him—
 - Verse 6 & 7 say:
 - **Psalm 78:6-8: That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments; And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God.**
- You see that it is very simple...
 - We are to tell our children what God has done for us and we are to warn them not to forget the way God's people have so often done.

TRANS> And so now as we move along in this Psalm,

- I want you to see, in the first place:

I. The sad example of Ephraim—an example of unfaithfulness to God.

- Ephraim was the tribe that was in the ascendancy when Israel first came out of Egypt.
 - You may remember what Jacob did in Gen 48 when he blessed Joseph.
 - Instead of blessing Joseph directly, he blessed Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh...
 - In this way, he gave Joseph the double portion of the inheritance...
 - And you may remember that notwithstanding Joseph's protest, he put his right hand upon Joseph's young son Ephraim, giving him the ascendancy.
- For this reason,
 - when the twelve tribes were divided in the days of king Rehoboam, the ten tribes or Israel are often called Ephraim.
 - These ten tribes forsook the worship that God appointed at Jerusalem and worshipped the calves that Jeroboam set up at Dan and Bethel.
 - For this reason, the name Ephraim is sometimes used to refer to apostate Israel!
 - That is the case in this Psalm
 - Ephraim represents those who were cut off for breaking God's covenant.
 - We will see this rejection when we get to verse 67.
- Throughout the Psalms, the sons of Ephraim are the ones that the Lord tells us that we should **not** be like.

- A summary of the unfaithfulness of Ephraim is given from the time of the Exodus from Egypt until the time of their rejection.
- And a summary of the summary is given to us in verses 9-11.

A. First, you see in v. 9 that they are said to have turned back in the day of battle.

- **Psalm 78:9: The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, Turned back in the day of battle.**

1. There is no particular example of Ephraim's cowardliness (in distinction from the other tribes) in scripture...

- In fact, Joshua was from Ephraim,
 - and he was one of only two of the twelve spies who encouraged the people to go in and fight—
 - and the one that led them when they did go in forty years later!
- But it was under the leadership of those who came after him that Israel did not finish the task of killing all the people of Canaan as God commanded!
 - They found that rooting out some of the last pockets of resistance was too much trouble—some of them had iron chariots...
- The LORD gave them grace to do this, but they did not completely drive them out because their unbelief.
 - They did not finish the job!
 - They did only enough to make *themselves* comfortable, and they stopped fighting...
 - This is like an individual who receives new life from Christ...
 - who makes progress in grace and overcomes his old life...
 - but then reaches a point in his sanctification when he feels he had done enough—even though there is still more to do!
 - He is happy enough with his new life and is unwilling to go on.

2. What has God commanded the church to do today?

- He has commanded us to make disciples of all nations.
 - He has equipped the church to do this, but again and again the church has turned back from this task...
 - we turn back in the day of battle.
 - We are comfortable with our own inheritance and we don't proclaim the good news to the world.

B. Second, you see that Ephraim is charged with not keeping God's Covenant.

- **Psalm 78:10: They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law,**
1. When the LORD establishes us in His covenant, He calls us into discipleship.
 - We looked at this recently on Sunday afternoon.
 - I showed you how Jesus calls us to learn to observe all that He has commanded in loving devotion to Him.
 - Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church...
 - We are to observe the Lord's day and the Lord's Supper...
 - We are to put away lying and speak the truth...
 - all things that He has commanded
 - We were redeemed to live for God and not for ourselves.
 2. But most of all, we are to believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, trusting in Him for the cleansing that I have already spoken about—
 - We are to look to Him for forgiveness and for new life by His grace.
 - When we are looking to Him for true forgiveness and new life, we will indeed keep His commandments.
 - Not perfectly, for there is no one who does not sin...
 - but we will not live in defiance of His calling.
 3. But you see that it says that Ephraim did not keep God's covenant and refused to walk in His law.
 - And just as they would not do this, so the church often refused.
 - We forsake God's way to go in our own way!
 - Do we not see the acceptance of blatant immorality?
 - Do we not see worship that God never appointed?

C. And third, you see that Ephraim is charged with forgetting God's wonders!

- **Psalm 78:11: And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them.**
1. The LORD has done amazing things—worked wonders—to deliver us!
 - a. The Son of God has been sent from heaven to redeem us!
 - He has taken the form of a servant and has come in human flesh!
 - And then He went to the cross to offer Himself for our sins.
 - And God accepted His offering and raised Him from the death.
 - Then He was received into the highest heaven and poured out His Spirit on us to provide us with all we need for life with God.
 - And now by His power and grace, He gathers the nations to Himself!
 - These are the most amazing wonders!

- b. These are the wonders that we are to declare to our children again and again!
 - It is in these wonderful works of God that we see His love for us!
 - It is here that we see His power!
 - It is in these wonders that we have hope for new life for ourselves and for others.
 - It is in them that we have the assurance of forgiveness.

- 2. But we forget them!
 - How else could it be that a whole generation can grow up in the church and not even know the gospel!
 - It is just like it was with Ephraim!
 - There are whole denominations that have virtually lost the gospel!
 - They have forgotten the wonders that God had done.
 - What a dreadful thing it is!
 - That is why the church so often needs reformation.
 - We hold on to our customs but we lose the gospel that is the power of God to salvation!
 - There may be tradition or there may be activism, but there is no gospel!
 - This is what the LORD so often warns His people about.
 - This is what He is warning us about in Psalm 78.
 - Oh brothers and sisters—do not forget the gospel or its power!

TRANS> As the Psalm continues,

- it speaks first about the wonders God does for us after we have been redeemed...
 - in verses 12-39
- And then it speaks about the wonders He worked in our redemption itself...
 - in verses 43-64

II. So consider first the wonders that God does after He has redeemed us to be His own.

A. See first of all how He protects us and provides for us.

1. In verses 12-13, it speaks about when God parted the Red Sea so that His people could escape from the Egyptians:
 - **Ps 78:12-13: Marvellous things He did in the sight of their fathers, In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan [the city of the Pharaohs). He divided the sea and caused them to pass through; And He made the waters stand up like a heap.**
 - The LORD had already delivered them from the hand of the Egyptians,
 - by Pharaoh had changed his mind and pursued them.

- So it is with us after we have been redeemed...
 - Satan comes after us again, but God delivers us again and again by His power and grace.
 - The drunkard's thirst for his wine comes to capture him...
 - The sodomite's lust tries to take possession of him...
 - The coward's fears try to take him captive...
 - But by the mighty hand of the LORD, we are able to escape from Pharaoh's attempt to reclaim us.
 - God opens the sea for us by His power and we escape.
 - We escape from the pollutions of the world by the power of God when we come into Christ's kingdom.

TRANS> But that is not all that God does for us after we have been redeemed...

2. He also provides for us—even by supernatural power—all that we need to live!

- **Psalm 78:14: In the daytime also He led them with the cloud, And all the night with a light of fire.**
 - This speaks of His supernatural guidance and protection as the Spirit opens the word to us so that we can know God's will.
 - He shelters us from the heat of the sun so that we can go on for Him.
- Verse 15 & 16 speak of His miraculous provision.
 - **Ps 78:15-16: He split the rocks in the wilderness, And gave them drink in abundance like the depths. He also brought streams out of the rock, And caused waters to run down like rivers.**
 - In 1 Cor 10, Paul tells us that the rock from which they drank was Christ.
 - Jesus gives us the living water, even the Holy Spirit.
 - The Spirit fills us with the riches of Christ and shows us His love so that we never need to thirst again.
 - He gives to His church an abundance of grace upon grace!

B. But we are dissatisfied with His provision!

1. Oh it is a wicked and wretched thing!

- Even as the fountain is gushing forth with water,
 - we are complaining that God has not given us what we want!
- We think it is so wrong of Him that we even question if He is **able** to do so...
 - And He has spilt the rock in the wilderness—His own Son...
 - And the water of life—the sweet satisfying water is springing forth for us!
 - And we ask if He is *able* to provide for us!
 - How wretched we are!

2. This wretched behaviour is described in verses 17-20—
 - and it is called sin and rebellion!
 - **Psalm 78:17-20: But they sinned even more against Him By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. And they tested God in their heart By asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, So that the waters gushed out, And the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?"**
 - The language used here exposes the absurdity of it all?
 - “God made water gush forth from the rock—but can He give us bread?”
 - Of course He can!
 - But we ask this like whiny little children...
 - We want this and we want that—
 - Why had God not given me the husband I wanted?
 - Why is my wife not all that I want her to be?
 - Why are the children so difficult?
 - Why don't we have better health?
 - Why don't we have more money?
 - Is God not able to give me these things?
 - Does He care about us?
 - And all the while water is gushing from the rock the rock for you!
 - Living water is springing forth to satisfy you!

C. The LORD is furious when we act like this—

- Look at verse 21:
 - **Psalm 78:21: Therefore the LORD heard this [like a judge hearing a court case— He heard this...] and was furious; So a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also came up against Israel,**
1. He chastens us for our unbelief...v. 22:
 - **Ps 78:22: Because they did not believe in God, And did not trust in His salvation.**
 - Unbelief is the problem—
 - We do not believe that the LORD will bring us what He has spoken!
 - Rather than drinking from the living water to be satisfied, we doubt and question God—
 - Does He really care?
 - Does He really know what is best for me?

2. And look! There is not just water, but there is bread falling down from heaven for us!
 - **Ps 78:23-25: Yet He had commanded the clouds above, And opened the doors of heaven, Had rained down manna on them to eat, And given them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels' food; He sent them food to the full.**
 - The Lord is not only providing us with the living water, but also with bread from heaven—
 - Christ, the Son of God who gives Himself to us to feed upon.
 - We have everything we need!
 - We ought to be marvelling at God's provision for us!
 - Here we are in the wilderness and He has opened the sky and rained bread on us from heaven!
 - We ought to be overwhelmed by His goodness!
 - But instead we are craving meat—we are looking at what we don't have!
 - We are charging God with depriving us when we might be receiving from His fullness!
3. Verse 26-31 explain how He gives to us what we crave—
 - In effect, He says (I will not read it)—“here then—have your fill...”
 - He gives them the meat that they demand—their belly is filled, but their craving continues—as verse 30 says:
 - **Ps 78:30: “They were not deprived (or separated) of their craving.”**
 - They were still craving even while the meat was in their mouth.
 - Like little selfish children who are given what they demand, all we can do is demand more!
 - Let Jesus feed the 5000 and see how they demand a sign!
 - What? He just fed 5000 families!
 - He showed you a sign—but it is not enough!
 - You always want more from Him.
 - See what God does in His anger—verse 31:
 - **Isaiah 78:31: The wrath of God came against them, And slew the stoutest of them, And struck down the choice men of Israel.**
4. Surely that will smarten up His people!
 - People were dying!
 - Let send enemies to knock down the world trade towers in NY.
 - Let Him send floods and destructive storms...
 - Surely this will awaken His people!

- But no! They continue to rebel against the LORD!
- Verse 32 says it all:
 - **Ps 78:32: In spite of this they still sinned, And did not believe in His wondrous works.**
 - What hardness in us to be beaten with God’s rod again and again and just to go on in our rebellion!
 - There is satisfying food and drink, provided from heaven—
 - and we don’t regard it—we don’t receive it—
 - We do not believe that our portion is in Christ...
 - The teenage girl goes after her boy...
 - The teenage boy goes after his lust...
 - The man pursues his riches and honours...
 - The woman craves a better husband...
 - Everyone is craving... and God has provided a feast.

D. In faithfulness, He brings even more chastisement to correct His people

1. I say, “in faithfulness,” because the LORD *promises* to chasten us in His love when we go astray...
 - He keeps on pursuing us, correcting us, to cause us to return to our senses...
 - to come back to Him as our portion.
 - Listen to what it says in verse 33:
 - **Ps 78:33: Therefore their days He consumed in futility, And their years in fear.**
2. But even for all this, we only give Him a superficial repentance.
 - You know what Israel was like in the time of the judges...
 - God would raise up an oppressor—
 - Then they would return to the Lord and cry out to Him for deliverance...
 - But soon they were craving what God had not given them instead of rejoicing in His abundant provision...
 - He would deliver them over to another oppressor—
 - Then they would cry out to Him again and the cycle would repeat itself all over again and again and again.
 - This superficial repentance is spoken of in verse 34 and following:
 - **Ps 78:34-37: When He slew them, then they sought Him; And they returned and sought earnestly for God. Then they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue; For their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant.**

3. God is not impressed with your superficial repentance!
 - Yet, because of His great love, He does not utterly wipe us out but continues to restrain His wrath.
 - **v. 38-39: But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, And did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, And did not stir up all His wrath; For He remembered that they were but flesh, A breath that passes away and does not come again.**
 - The LORD always preserves at least a remnant of His people.
 - He never completely wipes us out.
 - His mercy goes on and on toward His church so that the church goes on and on despite our unfaithfulness.

TRANS> But what is the root of our problem?

- What is at the root of our discontentment with God's provision for us?
 - The root of that problem is that we have forgotten the gospel.
 - We have lost sight of the wonders God wrought to make us His people and of what a splendid thing it is to be His people.
 - That is why we are never satisfied.
 - Verse 40-42 summarise our problem in this way:
 - **v. 40-42: How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, And limited the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy,**

III. So in verses 43-64, He takes us back to remember what He did to redeem us at the first...

- A. He reminds us that by His grace and power, He brought us out of bondage!
 - In verses 43-51 He recounts many of the plagues that God brought upon the Egyptians!
 - God's power and wrath was revealed from heaven against our enemy until the enemy had to surrender and let us go!
 - Oh brothers and sisters!
 - We were held by the mighty grip of the devil—captives to him...
 - We were held by the iron fist of sin and death.
 - We had no resources or strength by which to deliver ourselves!
 - But God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, to redeem those that were under the curse!
 - He defeated Satan—He did not give in to his temptations...
 - He went all the way to the cross for us and bore our sins to set us free!
 - Free to be His people!

- Free to live in His house instead of in the service of sin!
- Free to walk in newness of life!
- Free from guilt and condemnation!

- What power! What grace was expended for us!
 - What love was shown to us!
 - God's Son bore the pains of hell for us!
 - And what is it you were craving????

TRANS> And the same grace and power that brings you out of bondage...

B. Brings you in to new life!

- I am fond of that phrase in Deuteronomy that God uses—He brought us out that He might bring us in!
 - He brought you out by power (from Egypt) and He brings you in by power (to Canaan) to live for Him!
 - Look at verses 52-55:
 - **Ps 78:52-55: But He made His own people go forth like sheep, And guided them in the wilderness like a flock; And He led them on safely, so that they did not fear; But the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to His holy border, This mountain which His right hand had acquired. He also drove out the nations before them, Allotted them an inheritance by survey, And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.**

- Eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who love Him, but He has revealed it to us by His Spirit!
 - A lovely new life as God's very own sons and daughters, living for Him!
 - Christ is given to you and His Spirit is given to you so that you can come in and live in that marvellous house where the Father, Son and Spirit live.
 - There is provision in Christ for you to love as He loves, to serve as He serves!
 - To really care for others and to lay down your life for them!!!
 - What a life!
 - To have true gratitude to God—true devotion and joy in him!
 - To put off selfishness and greed and sinful lusts and desires.

- Do you see—God's power is there for you if you would only feed upon God's provision for you.
 - He has given you all that you need for life and godliness.
 - He has brought you in to His righteousness kingdom to live!

C. But despite all that He has done to redeem us—we turn to idols!

- See verses 56-58:
 - **Ps 78:56-58: Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God, And did not keep His testimonies, But turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers; They were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, And moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.**

- 1. Why are you unhappy with God?
 - Why do you want to make Him into an image like yourself or like something created?
 - Why are you not thankful for all that He has done?
 - Why don't you love Him as He is?
 - Why do you want to change Him into something else?
 - Why do you refuse to walk in His ways?

- 2. If you keep on like this, eventually you and your descendents will be cut off!
 - a. I told you before that in Psalm 78, Ephraim represents all those who were gathered into God's covenant outwardly,
 - but who never truly embraced His grace...
 - They came out of Egypt and they went into the Promised Land—
 - but they still acted unfaithfully and did not keep His covenant!
 - They would not feed upon Christ even though He was continually offered to them.
 - The LORD brings them to trial (He hears their case) and then He cuts them off!
 - Look at verse 59-64:
 - **Ps 78:59-61: When God heard this, He was furious, And greatly abhorred Israel, So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, The tent He had placed among men, and delivered His strength into captivity, And His glory into the enemy's hand.**
 - This refers to what God did in the days of Eli the priest.
 - God had pitched His tent at Shiloh.
 - This is where the ark of His presence was, showing by symbols that He was with His people.
 - But He let the Philistines take the ark away to show His people that He was no longer present with them...
 - because of their wickedness!
 - This was one of the lowest points in all of Israel's history.
 - The awful description continues in verse 62...

- **Psalm 78:62-64: He also gave His people over to the sword, and was furious with His inheritance. The fire consumed their young men, And their maidens were not given in marriage. Their priests fell by the sword, And their widows made no lamentation.**
 - You will remember that when the Philistines came and took the ark, Eli the priest died and both of his sons (Hophni and Phinehas) who were also priests died in their sin.
 - And one of them had a pregnant wife who gave birth to a son, named him Icabod, and then she died.
 - The name means, “The glory has departed” because God had removed His presence from Israel.
 - This is what is referred to here in Psalm 78!
 - Eli’s wicked sons are the epitome of what is spoken about in Psalm 78.
 - They were sons of the covenant who did not keep the covenant and who completely forget God’s glorious redemption.
 - They had no regard for the gospel.
 - They did not embrace what God had provided for His people, but went after covetousness and fornication!
- b. Are there not millions in the church like this today?
- They do church!
 - They have their traditions!
 - They have their innovations and their new ideas!
 - They have their activism...
 - But they will not have the living Christ, the bread from heaven, the living water that He provides.
 - From such churches, God removes His lampstand!
 - Jesus threatened this in Revelation 2-3.
 - His Spirit is taken away and His glory departs and leaves them desolate.
 - Sometimes they don’t even notice that the Spirit and the gospel are gone.
 - They keep on doing church...
 - But they are turned over to greater and greater idolatry and wickedness...
 - to dead formal traditionalism...
 - or to immorality—even very blatant immorality...
 - The PCUSA just approved gays in the pulpit!

TRANS> But now I want you to see the really good news!

- God does not leave His people to utter ruin!
 - He never has and He never will because even though we are not faithful, He is always faithful to His covenant.
 - He awakens to act for His people!
 - **Ps 78:65: Then the Lord awoke as from sleep,**

IV. In the end, God's grace prevails for Jesus and for all of His elect people!

A. First, He deals with the Philistines (those who have never known our God)

1. They had taken the ark from Shiloh.

- This was God's will because He was withdrawing from His people for a time.
 - But think of it!
 - The Philistines thought they had captured God and could now control Him.
 - They were like the Jews after Jesus fed the 5000—they figured they now had someone who could give them all the things they craved.
- They brought the ark to the temple where Dagon, their god was.
 - The result was the Dagon fell flat on his face before the ark and that the Philistines in Ashdod (where the ark was) got tumours!
 - They set him up and it happened again, only the second time Dagon's head and arms broke off!
 - It is a great story in which the Philistines take the ark to Gath and then the men of Gath get tumours and then they are desperate to get rid of the ark.
 - Even though God's people are not fighting the battles He called them to fight against the Philistines,
 - the LORD Himself is humbling them before His glory and majesty!
 - As I say, it is a great story!

2. This is described in Psalm 78 with these words in v. 65-66:

- **Psalm 78:65-66: Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, Like a mighty man who shouts because of wine. And He beat back His enemies; He put them to a perpetual reproach.**
 - It was as if God had been sleeping when they took the ark away, but then He was like a mighty warrior aroused to destroy them.
 - The LORD does this kind of thing...
 - Years later when Nebuchadnezzar thought he had captured the LORD, He came to confess that God was the sovereign Lord who gives kings to reign.
 - The LORD will vindicate His name even if His people don't!

- B. Next, see how He deals with Ephraim, the tribe of Joseph...
- Ephraim represents all hypocrites...
 - **Psalm 78:67-68: Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved.**
1. This refers to the fact that Shiloh was rejected (which was God's dwelling place in the land at first).
 - Mount Zion was chosen in its place.
 - Ephraim (the ten tribes) were cut off and God made His dwelling place in Judah.
 - This came to full fruition when the ten tribes were cut off in the time of Jeroboam, and even more when they were carried away by Assyria with only Judah remaining.
 2. But the point is that the time comes when hypocrites will be cut off!
 - The LORD bears long with them in His church...
 - His promises of the gospel are there in His word...
 - His Spirit is there...
 - The heavenly manna and the living water and the protection are there...
 - His chastening hand is there working among them...
 - But eventually, if you will not repent, you will be cut off like Ephraim was cut off.
 - You will be cut off and God will give His blessings to others instead of you and your children.
 - That is what this Psalm is warning you about!
 - Quit messing around!
 - Quit refusing the manna and the living water that God gives you.
 - Quit ignoring the glory of what God has done in redeeming you and giving you an inheritance in His kingdom of righteousness!
- C. And now the Psalm reaches its glorious climax in verse 69-72:
- **Psalm 78:69-72: And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has established forever. He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds; From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.**
 - David is the One who represents our LORD Jesus Christ who has now been revealed from heaven for us!
 - He is the great shepherd who gives His life for His sheep!
 - He is the One who gathers all of His elect into His kingdom and keeps them by his power and grace!
 - He is the One in whom our salvation is eternally secure!

- Oh brothers and sisters—
 - Do you hear His call today?
 - It is a call to come to Him and feed upon Him!
 - Come to Him and take of the water of life that He gives!
 - Come to Him and feed on Him as the bread of heaven!
 - Don't waste your time as some other table!
 - Christ has been given for us and He is ours in the New Covenant!
 - He is the One who baptises us and our children with the Holy Spirit!
 - Don't hide Him from your children!
 - Feast upon Him!
 - He is yours if only you will believe!
 - Come and have all your sins forgiven!
 - Come and live forever in His house!
 - And by all means, bring your children with you and tell them how wonderful He is!
 - **“That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments”**